Delaware is on the ball!

Location, venues and a proven track record

Dover International Speedway

DANIEL GAJDAMOWICZ

The Delaware Sports Commission (delawaresports.org) is letting the sports world know that Delaware has the facilities, the people and the location to serve as a prime destination for all types of sporting events and levels of competition from youth championships to nationally televised events.

"Delaware is showing leagues, teams and event rights holders that we can provide world-class facilities and hospitality, and the Sports Commission is here to help make every event a success," says Matthew Sparks, the commission's executive director. The commission has partnered with organizations and Delaware sports facilities to secure new sports events and ensure continued success with existing events, benefitting the economy and the community.

Sparks explains that Delaware already has a rich tradition hosting sports events throughout the State. For example, the University of Delaware Figure Skating Club hosted the 2010 U.S. Figure Skating Eastern Sectional Championships. For that event, the best skaters in all disciplines from the eastern United States competed in the Fred Rust and Gold Arenas at the University of Delaware last November, seeking to advance to the 2010 U.S. National Championships.

The University of Delaware also hosted the U.S. Team Handball Open Championship in the Delaware Field House and the Bob Carpenter Center. For that event, more than 350 athletes participated, and the event provided economic benefit to local restaurants and shops during a typically quiet Easter weekend.

Another major sporting event, the "Beast of the East" National Wrestling Tournament, brings the nation's top prep wrestlers to the Bob Carpenter Center each year (the 2010 event is set for December 18-19).

"These three events and others are a perfect example of how Delaware can play host for a variety of sporting events of all sizes," Sparks says. "Delaware is a great place to hold a junior world championship for a sport that already has events in the U.S., or is looking to get a foothold here."

In addition, Sparks notes that the University of Delaware enjoys a strong relationship with the United States Olympic Committee (USOC), primarily through the school's International Coaching Enrichment Certificate program, which is co-managed by USOC and the University. The program provides national level coaches and those responsible for the development of the sport national coaching structures in their countries with a practical program orientated towards developing proficiency in the areas of sport sciences, talent identification, athlete development, coaching education, coaching management, grass roots sport development and ethical aspects of coaching at all levels of competition and across multiple sports.

"Delaware is very strong on supporting the Olympic movement," Sparks says, adding that one of the Delaware Sports Commission's goals is to develop partnerships with people throughout the state, using successful international and Olympic-style sporting events to expand and attract new and future events.

Delaware also is home to the Senior League World Series of Softball (District3) for girls ages 14-16 (and a counterpart to the Little League World Series). The 2010 Series games were played at the Lower Sussex Little League Complex (Sussex County), located at the Pyle Center, which also hosted the Delaware State Softball Championships this past June.

Apart from its excellent facilities, Sparks cites Delaware's great location, as it sits between New York City and Washington, D.C. Athletes, fans and families coming to the state for a sporting event, for example, are close enough to use Delaware as a "home base" (once the event is concluded) for travel to two of the world's most dynamic, exciting cities. Plus, historical Philadelphia is a close drive as well (and on the way to New York). Conveniently, Delaware is easily accessible via major airports, bus and train routes, and Interstate highways.

University of Delaware football stadium

DELAWARE SPORTS COMMISSION

"We offer an outstanding platform for visitors coming into the Mid-Atlantic region," Sparks says. "Our location is ideal."

Of course, no discussion of Delaware as a host state for sporting events would be complete without mention of the two exciting weekends when NASCAR comes to Dover International Speedway welcoming 90,000 visitors per weekend. For 2011, NASCAR weekends are set for May and October.

The Dover International Speedway is a great facility and a real economic generator for the State. Equipped with an abundance of open field space, the site could be conducive for a variety of sporting events such as motor sports, skate boarding competitions, flag football, and long-field sports. Not to mention the potential of the huge black-top surfaced parking area that could be easily used for turnkey sporting events!

Along those lines, Sparks says that the Delaware Sports Commission is exploring ways to utilize Dover International Speedway for events that fall outside the two NASCAR weekends.

Delaware also has prime beaches, which offer family fun and at the same time, some excellent facilities and venues for events. For example, there is the 95-acre Sports at the Beach facility located in Sussex County that plays host to numerous regional and national events. Offering several fields for baseball (some lighted), this facility has a swimming pool and recreation areas as well for athletes when they are not playing. Apart from the already mentioned sports, Delaware offers venues for golf, basketball, handball, table tennis and ice hockey.

"Delaware has plenty to offer event rights holders, sports leagues and associations," Sparks says. "We have an ideal location, and we're ready to help make it happen for anyone looking to find a great venue to hold their event."

Most of all, he says, the Delaware Sports Commission will serve as a facilitator, so no matter what it takes, it can match an event or tournament with the best possible venue within the state, along with the necessary permits, hotel rooms, restaurant and dining information, etc.

"We are the point of contact," Sparks says. "So event rights holders can get in touch with local vendors and we can assist throughout the process. Delaware's size is a great advantage, enabling the DSC to be responsive and nimble. We can very easily get things done with minimal hassle and red tape." ■

Delaware Sports At A Glance

Bayside Resort & Golf Club

DELAWARE SPORTS COMMISSION

DELAWARE SPORTS COMMISSION

- Facilitates venue selection
- Assists with event sponsorship solutions
- Secures hotel room blocks
- Provides marketing and promotional support
- Offers government relations assistance

LOCATION

- Hub of the Mid-Atlantic region
- Within 175 miles of Baltimore, Washington D.C., Philadelphia, New York
- Easy access via airways, railways, and interstate highways

ACCOMMODATIONS/ AMENITIES

- More than 14,000 hotel rooms
- Resort conference and convention venues
- Meeting space ranging from 5,000 to 87,000 sq. ft.
- Tax-free shopping, dining, and entertainment
- Gaming, tourist, and coastline attractions

MAJOR SPORTS FACILITIES

- **Dover International Speedway**
  - 75-acre facility; seats 135,000
- **University of Delaware Athletic Facilities**
  - 11 multi-sport buildings & fields
  - Bob Carpenter Center seats 7,000
  - Delaware Field House seats 4,000
  - Olympic-size ice arena seats 2,500
- **Frawley Stadium**
  - Home of the Wilmington Blue Rocks
  - Ballgames; seats 6,532
- **Bayside Resort & Golf Club**
  - Jack Nicklaus signature course
  - 72 par; 7,545 yards
- **DuPont County Club**
  - 3 golf courses; 1 championship (par 71)
  - 19 tennis courts
- **Sports at the Beach**
  - 95-acre facility; 16 baseball fields
- **Delaware Interscholastic Athletic Association Facilities**
  - Modern, multi-sport facilities throughout the State

SPORTING EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

- NASCAR (2 races per year)
- Senior League World Series of Softball
- U.S. Figure Skating Eastern Sectional Championship
- U.S. Team Handball Open Championship
- Beast of the East National Wrestling Tournament
- ACHA Men's Division 1 National Championships

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