



PRESS RELEASE

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BEACH VOLLEYBALL TO BECOME OFFICIAL HIGH SCHOOL SPORT IN FLORIDA

With the rise in popularity of beach volleyball, both the Sunshine State Athletic Conference and the Florida Region of USA Volleyball have partnered to initiate beach volleyball as an official high school sport in the state of Florida.

Tavares, FL – April 20, 2016 – The Sunshine State Athletic Conference (SSAC) and the Florida Region of USA Volleyball (USAVFL) are proud to announce that they have partnered to initiate the first official girl's high school sanctioned beach volleyball league in Florida! The SSAC High School Beach Volleyball League is set to begin in spring of 2017. Both organizations agree that the timing for this league couldn't be more perfect, especially with the Rio Olympics this summer and the recent addition of beach volleyball as an official National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) sport. With beach volleyball quickly becoming the fastest growing sport in the nation, the addition of this league will create more opportunity for high school athletes to play in college and beyond.

"Offering girl's beach volleyball to our members for the 2017 season was a decision that just made sense; girl's beach volleyball is the fastest growing sport in the country," said **Stuart Weiss**, President of the Sunshine State Athletic Conference. "We believe that partnering with the Florida Region of USA Volleyball is a logical choice, as they are the established expert in this sport and will help give the SSAC and its members a great platform to grow beach volleyball."

Jim Hoffman, Central Florida volleyball enthusiast, has been hired as the commissioner of the league. Hoffman has coached at both the high school and junior college level and believes that beach volleyball, a game of significant strategy, provides a multitude of both sporting and personal development for participants. His goal is to have at least twenty schools participate in the inaugural season of the league.

"The first season will be challenging as not only do we need to coach the players but also coach the coaches and educate the parents and fans," said Hoffman. "However, with the full support of both the Florida Region of USA Volleyball, which currently produces numerous beach tournaments around the state, and the SSAC Board of Directors, I'm convinced this program is destined to expand rapidly and become one of the favorite sporting events for the member schools."

The league's spring season will replicate most of the NCAA formula for matches and adapt USA Volleyball rules and regulations for play. The competition aspect will involve a minimum of three pairs of girls per squad, competing against the opponent school's squad in the best two out of three matches. The league will initially be for schools with a size 3A classification and below (681 students in grades 9-12.) Various venues throughout Florida will be used for in-season matches.

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The first SSAC High School Beach Volleyball Championships will be held next April at Hickory Point Beach, the 21-court beach volleyball facility located in Tavares, FL, at a date to be announced later. More information on the facility can be found at www.HickoryPointBeach.com. Interested schools should contact Stuart Weiss, SSAC President, at SSACAthletics@gmail.com.

Steve Bishop, Executive Director and President of the Florida Region of USA Volleyball, said this announcement is the next step in the maturation process in Florida for the continually growing sport of beach volleyball. “We have been offering a Florida Region high school beach volleyball league for interested schools to compete in a club format for the past two seasons and this exciting new partnership will create the first sanctioned high school league and state championships under the SSAC association,” said Bishop. “When the Florida Region of USA Volleyball partnered with Lake County and the Lake County Water Authority back in 2014 to build Hickory Point Beach, events such as this are exactly what we had in mind. We look forward to helping develop this league, producing the SSAC High School Beach Volleyball State Championships in 2017, and continuing to grow the game across Florida.”

About Sunshine State Athletic Conference:

The Sunshine State Athletic Conference (SSAC) was originally formed in 2008 as an alternative for Florida independent football programs. The conference has grown into a multiple sport athletic organization made up of private and charter schools that are located throughout Florida. The SSAC’s focus is to promote good sportsmanship and fair play. The SSAC will always strive to maintain high standards and a level playing field, so that all of its members and student athletes have the opportunity to succeed. Additional information on the SSAC can be found at: www.sunshinestateathletics.com.

About Florida Region of USA Volleyball:

The Florida Region of USA Volleyball is a 501 c3 non-profit that began operations in the 1960’s and was officially incorporated in 1982 to promote the sport of volleyball and to create competitive playing opportunities for volleyball enthusiasts of all ages throughout the State of Florida. The Florida Region is one of the 40 regional volleyball associations under the umbrella of USA Volleyball and currently serves over 13,500 members. Indoor and outdoor programming is available for adults, juniors, coaches and officials. The Florida Region of USA Volleyball headquarters is located in Eustis, FL. Additional information on the Florida Region can be found at: www.FloridaVolleyball.org.

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