

PRESS RELEASE



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FLORIDA REGION AND SUNSHINE STATE ATHLETICS EXTENDS PARTNERSHIP

The Florida Region of USA Volleyball and the Sunshine State Athletic Conference extend high school beach volleyball partnership through 2023.

Eustis, FL – June 21, 2018 – The Florida Region of USA Volleyball and the Sunshine State Athletic Conference (SSAC) are excited to announce a five year extension to the existing partnership for high school beach volleyball in Florida. The original partnership between the Florida Region of USA Volleyball and the SSAC began in 2016 and created the only sanctioned high school beach volleyball competition with a Florida state championship in 2017.

In 2017, the SSAC debuted its girl's beach volleyball league – the first-of-its-kind in Florida for high school students interested in the competitive collegiate and Olympic sport. The SSAC offers two classes for schools to compete in. Class A is available for private high schools and each team is allowed to field three pairs. Class AA is offered to public high schools and each team is allowed to field five pairs. In its first season, the conference brought in 22 schools and hosted the first High School Beach Volleyball State Championship. In 2018, the SSAC expanded the league and had 46 schools from across Florida participating. All state championship events are contested at Hickory Point Beach Sand Volleyball Complex in Tavares, FL.

Currently, Florida is the second state to have sanctioned high school beach volleyball. The Arizona Region of USA Volleyball began a partnership with the Arizona Interscholastic Association (AIA) in 2012. The Florida Region and the SSAC hope to inspire other state's athletic associations to develop relationships with their respective USAV regional volleyball association and sanction beach volleyball as an official high school sport.

“Since partnering with the Florida Region of USA Volleyball in 2016 to offer girls beach volleyball, we have far exceeded all of our expectation and goals,” said **Stuart Weiss**, President of SSAC. “We believe that with our new long-term agreement in place with the Florida Region of USA Volleyball, the next logical step is to allow others from around the country to experience this amazing sport. The SSAC and Florida Region of USA Volleyball will host the first ever National Girls Beach Volleyball Championship at Hickory Point Beach in 2019. We believe that this will be the spark this sport needs to continue its rapid growth.”

Beach volleyball is the NCAA's fastest-growing sport, starting with 15 Division 1 programs in 2012 and projected to top 100 collegiate programs by 2020. In addition, the NJCAA is officially launching beach volleyball as an official sport beginning in 2019. With the sport of beach volleyball growing at the junior level and the collegiate level, the continuation of this partnership will create even more opportunities for athletes to compete and be recruited. If you have any questions or are interested in signing up you may contact **Jason Smith**, Sunshine State Athletics' Director of Operations, at jason@sunshinestateathletics.com.

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The Executive Director/President of the Florida Region, **Steve Bishop** added: “The Florida Region had a vision to create high school beach volleyball in 2015 and initiated a club league to test interest across the state. This effort resulted in a Florida Region championship event in 2016 and then a formal partnership with SSAC in 2017 to produce the first sanctioned high school beach volleyball state championships. Our partnership with the SSAC has been outstanding. Stuart and his team truly have the best interest of the athletes in mind in everything they do and we enjoy working with them to manage beach volleyball here in Florida. This partnership extension will allow us to continue our efforts and create many more opportunities for high school athletes in the coming years.”

About Florida Region of USA Volleyball:

The Florida Region of USA Volleyball is a 501c3 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 14,000 members. Indoor and outdoor programming is available for adults, juniors, coaches and officials. The Florida Region of USA Volleyball is headquartered in Eustis, FL and manages the 21-court Hickory Point Beach Sand Volleyball Complex in Tavares, FL. Additional information on the Florida Region can be found at: www.FloridaVolleyball.org.

About Sunshine State Athletic Conference:

The Sunshine State Athletic Conference – Florida’s premier independent athletic conference – formed in 2008 as an alternative for Florida independent sports programs. The conference has grown into a multiple sport athletic organization made up of private and charter schools located throughout Florida. In 2017, the SSAC debuted its girls beach volleyball league – the first of its kind in Florida for the competitive sport. Since its debut, the league continues to thrive, with more than 40 teams participating in its second season, and led to the SSAC partnering with the USA Volleyball Association to host the upcoming National Girls Beach Volleyball Championship. SSAC’s focus is to promote good sportsmanship and fair play, and student-athlete safety. The goal of the conference is to provide members with a safe, equitable, and enjoyable athletic experience. The SSAC is Competition without Compromise. Additional information on the SSAC can be found at: www.sunshinestateathletics.com.

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