

Jacksonville Sports Foundation Officially Launches and Welcomes Atlantic Sun Conference Headquarters to the City

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – May 8, 2024 — The Jacksonville Sports Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization committed to harnessing the power of sports to unite people and elevate the city's profile as Florida's Championship City, launched today.

The new Foundation will work to attract sporting events of all types and sizes to Jacksonville, including collegiate athletic tournaments, surfing competitions, outdoor endurance races and large-scale international games. The Foundation will also work to increase sports-related efforts in Jacksonville, like the headquarters of one of the fastest growing conferences in college athletics, the Atlantic Sun Conference (ASUN) moving to Jacksonville from Atlanta.

Previous efforts to bring in big-time sporting events have been made, but the Jacksonville Sports Foundation will be focused on consistently working together as a community to bring events to Jacksonville year-round. The Foundation will work to bring everything from archery to Zumba to Jacksonville, working in partnership with Visit Jacksonville and entities across the city. So far this year, bids have been made to host the AAU Track & Field Primary Nationals & Club Championships, 14 NCAA Division I and Division II tournaments, USA Gymnastics competitions and various collegiate conference championships.

"The vision for the Jacksonville Sports Foundation is to not only leverage sports tourism to enhance the economic prosperity of Jacksonville, but to expand the appeal of the area," said Michael Corrigan, President and CEO of Visit Jacksonville. "By doing that we not only attract competitive sports events, but also sports-related entities like the Atlantic Sun Conference, to further the \$178 million estimated economic impact that sports had in Jacksonville in 2023 alone."

The Atlantic Sun Conference, established in 1978 as the Trans America Athletic Conference, currently has a membership of 12 institutions that provide a diverse range of collegiate experiences. Operating in the country's fastest-growing region, ASUN Conference broadcasts to over 16 million homes. The league's footprint extends into nine of the nation's top 80 media markets, including six within the top 50. In the classroom, 36 ASUN programs have recorded perfect graduation success rates in the last two years while on the field of competition, they have produced 13 national postseason wins.

"I am more than thrilled to be announcing our relocation to Jacksonville, a market that is growing exponentially in a location that will allow us to access and engage with our student-athletes, coaches and administrators at an unprecedented level," said ASUN Conference Commissioner Jeff Bacon. "As the only NCAA Division I conference headquartered in Florida, we have a unique opportunity to capitalize on the value that our membership brings to one of the fastest-growing states in the country. Thank you to the City of Jacksonville and to Visit Jacksonville for their support, and thank you to our Atlantic Sun Conference Presidents for their vision and support of this move. We look forward to the continued growth of the Atlantic Sun and our phenomenal institutions."

"As the Atlantic Sun continues to rise, this move is important for the continued growth and expansion of the Conference," said ASUN Conference President Dr. Susan Donovan. "With four members in Florida and a strong presence throughout the south, our new headquarters in Jacksonville will give our members new opportunities for collaboration in service of our student-athletes."

The ASUN headquarters announcement is the second major sports-related move to Jacksonville this year. In January, the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) announced Jacksonville as the new home of the AAU Track and Field Primary Nationals and Club Championships previously held in Orlando. This year the event will take place at Hodges Stadium at the University of North Florida, July 7-13.

"I've seen first-hand the impact of sports tourism in Jacksonville," said Mayor of the City of Jacksonville Donna Deegan, who is also the founder of The DONNA Foundation whose signature event is the annual 26.2 DONNA Marathon to End Breast Cancer. "Having an organization dedicated to attracting sport events to Jacksonville is a game-changer and I'm excited to see what the Jacksonville Sports Foundation brings here."

The Jacksonville Sports Foundation is actively seeking founding partners to help launch the work and volunteers to help carry out its mission. Those interested can visit jacksonvillesportsfoundation.com and complete the online form.

As the Foundation continues to evolve, it will have its own staff who will work in partnership with Visit Jacksonville, the destination marketing organization that promotes leisure and business tourism to Jacksonville. Until staff is hired, Visit Jacksonville will continue to lead efforts on behalf of the Jacksonville Sports Foundation.

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About Jacksonville Sports Foundation

The Jacksonville Sports Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to making Jacksonville Florida's premier sports destination to enhance the city's economic prosperity and contribute to the overall well-being and unity of the community. For more information visit jacksonvillesportsfoundation.com.

About the Atlantic Sun Conference

The ASUN, a Division I conference member of the NCAA, boasts a membership of institutions that share visionary leadership, bold ambition, and creative innovation. As an agile, adaptive conference unafraid to blaze a national pathway for better service to our student-athletes, teams, and institutions, the ASUN has a proud history of firsts, national academic and athletic achievements, and a conference culture that walks the walk with its four ASUN Beams. Students First! Rise. Connect. Impact.

#ASUNBuilt by Austin Peay (Clarksville, Tenn.), Bellarmine (Louisville, Ky.), Central Arkansas (Conway, Ark.), ECU (Richmond, Ky.), FGCU (Fort Myers, Fla.), Jacksonville (Fla.), Lipscomb (Nashville, Tenn.), North Alabama (Florence, Ala.), North Florida (Jacksonville, Fla.), Queens (Charlotte, N.C.), Stetson (DeLand, Fla.), and West Georgia (Carrollton, Ga.).

