

NEWS RELEASE

Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau



Region Wins Big as Sports Tourism Grows RACVB Announces 10 Big Tournaments; Bowling, Lacrosse, Softball and Waterski Tournaments to Generate \$4 million, 50 New Jobs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 16, 2014

ROCKFORD, IL — Driven by a strategy to grow the impact of sports tourism by diversifying the region's mix of tournament clients, the Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau announced ten tournaments that will take place in the Rockford Region between 2014 and 2016. Collectively, participants, coaches and fans that travel to the region for the tournaments will spend more than \$4 million, supporting 50 fulltime equivalent jobs in the hospitality sector.

Announced at the Rockford Brewing Company, inside the historic Prairie Street Brewhouse, RACVB's President/CEO John Groh along with Rockford Mayor Lawrence J. Morrissey talked about the economic impact of tourism and the importance of visitor spending to the region's economy and redevelopment. Groh noted that visitors and residents often want the same type of amenities and experiences, such as the riverfront dining and entertainment options the new restaurant/brewery provides.

The 10 bowling, softball, lacrosse and show ski event will take place in 2014, 2015 and 2016. These wins improve Rockford's position as a leading sports tourism destination, providing positive economic development and growth for our community.

Don Carter Lanes/Cherry Bowl will host five prestigious bowling tournaments in 2014, 2015 & 2016:

- 2014 Bowling Proprietors Association of American **International Family Bowling Tournament, presented by QubicaAMF Worldwide**, (July 19-21, 2014) is expected to fill 500 room nights with an estimated economic impact (EEI) of \$67,500. Approximately 400 participants, spectators and fans are expected for the tournament. This will be the first time this event has taken place in the Rockford Region.

The tournament is a national finals event, where participants qualify to advance to nationals, and will feature seven divisions of competition, including youth/parent, teen/parent, youth/adult, teen/teen, youth/youth, youth/teen, and teen/adult. The tournament is the only bowling tournament today where parent/child teams compete for an international championship and \$70,000 in scholarship awards.

- 2014 Bowling Proprietors' Association of American **Women's All Star Bowling Tournament** and the **Bowling's Senior Women's U.S. Open** (July 19-25, 2014) are expected to fill 825 room nights with an EEI of \$148,500. These two tournaments will feature the absolute cream of the crop in women's professional bowling.

The All Star tournament will celebrate the 40th anniversary of formation of the Ladies Pro Bowling

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Tour and highlight the history of women's bowling. "Women have made valuable contributions to the sport of bowling and provided some of the best excitement on the lanes," said BPAA President Cathy DeSocio in a previous statement announcing the tournament. "It is only fitting that on the 40th anniversary of the formation of the Ladies Pro Bowling Tour we honor the stars of the past as well as showcase the stars of today and the future."

The Women's All Star Tournament was the pre-cursor to Bowling's U.S. Women's Open, which began in 1971. In addition to exciting competition on the lanes, plans include a dinner honoring women bowlers and other events to celebrate women's bowling.

Approximately 250 participants are expected for the tournament. The All Star tournament features a \$20,000 first place prize purse, and the Senior Women's tournament features a \$3,000 first place prize purse.

- The United States Bowling Congress **2015 Midwest Women's Bowling Tournament** (May/June 2015) is expected to fill 2,345 room nights with an EEI of \$449,100. This will be the first time this event has taken place in the Rockford Region, and the third year for the new event, which rotates between Midwestern states. More than 4,000 bowlers are expected to participate in the tournament, which will take place over seven consecutive weekends. Bowlers will come from Indiana, Iowa, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin and Illinois. The 2013 tournament was held in Lansing, MI and the 2014 tournament will take place in South Bend, IN.
- USBC's **Illinois Women's Bowling Association State Bowling Tournament** (February/March/April 2016) is expected to fill at least 3,900 room nights with an EEI of \$702,000. The tournament will bring nearly 3,200 bowlers to the area for up to 6 weekends. RACVB worked with the Rockford Women's Bowling Association to put together a comprehensive bid for the tournament, which was presented to the 250 delegates of the IWBA at a recent state association meeting.

The group has a long history in Rockford. IWBA state tournaments have been held in Rockford at least four times, most recently in 2012. Rockford also served as the host city for the group's 25th, 50th and 75th (2004) anniversary tournaments.

Lacrosse to Return for Three Years

- The Rock River Cup, organized by NXTsports, has signed a three-year commitment to hold the tournament in the Rockford Region in 2014, 2015 and 2016, at Sportscore Two. More than 90 teams are expected to participate in these tournaments each year. The sport of lacrosse continues to see significant growth across the country and in the Midwest. Within a five-hour drive of the Rockford region, participation in lacrosse is higher than the national average.

An on-going partnership has been established since RACVB first met NXTsports at TEAMS, an industry tradeshow where RACVB was exhibiting, in 2011. NXT Sports first hosted a lacrosse tournament in the region in 2013. The tournament is expected to fill 10,400 room nights and generate \$1,728,000 in local spending over the three years of the contract.

"After doing a site visit and seeing first-hand all the family-friendly attractions, lodging and restaurants that were in the area, as well as the fantastic facilities at the Sportscore Two complex, we were impressed. NXT is excited to continue to grow this relationship with Rockford and come up with fresh, creative and new ideas to continue to bring families back to Rockford for the Rock River Cup for years to come," states Robin Baxter, NXTsports vice president of events.

According to Sports Marketing Surveys USA, there are 143,510 participants within a five-hour radius, 264,372 lacrosse participants within 7 hours and dramatic growth in all youth age categories in the sport, demonstrating the lacrosse is a strong growth market for the region.

Show Ski Nationals to Return in 2015

- The local Ski Broncs water ski show team will host the National Show Ski Association Division I Show Ski Nationals once again, in August of 2015. This multi-day tournament features 14 teams and individual skiers competing in choreographed and competitive performances. The completion will utilize Shorewood Park in Loves Park with competition on the beautiful Rock River. Rockford hosted this tournament in 2013 as well as in 2003, 2007 and 2009.

The tournament is projected to fill 1,550 room nights with an EEI of \$279,000. In November, RACVB sports sales executive, Nick Povalitis, traveled with representatives from the Ski Broncs to present the region's bid to host the tournament.

"These tournaments, along with others scheduled throughout the next few years, will greatly impact the economic growth for the Rockford region. We continue to work with new and existing sports organizations on the local, regional and national levels to remain 'The Amateur Sports Capital' of the Midwest," states Lindsay Arellano, RACVB Director of Sales and Servicing.

United States Specialty Sports Association Softball

The Illinois-United States Specialty Sports Association will host three World Series fast pitch softball tournaments utilizing Sportscore One. The three tournaments, for divisions 12U A, 12 U B and Women's will take place July 25 – Aug 2. More than 2,500 participants, coaches and fans will travel to the region for the tournament, booking an estimated 3,550 room nights with an EEI of \$639,000.

"Our sales and servicing team works extremely hard to create and foster relationships that bring tournaments and business to the Rockford Region, and keeps them coming back. Thanks to our community partnerships and outstanding facilities, we are able to stand above the rest when it comes to amateur sports," stated Groh.

Groh continued, "We are tremendously grateful to our longtime partners and customers – including John Sommer of Don Carter Lanes, Brenda Paulson with USSSA, and Laura Heller and her team with Rockford Women's Bowling Association – who work tirelessly on behalf of our region and have continued to put their faith in our ability to host their most prestigious events. The Rockford Ski Broncs are to be commended for hosting the 2013 national tournament and jumping right back in and bidding to host the tournament again in 2015; that's dedication. And, of course we love when we are able to build new and deep relationships new customers like NXTsports. We can't wait to see where that partnership takes us."

***RACVB** is a private, non-profit organization established in 1984 to champion efforts to promote the Rockford Region as an overnight visitor destination. The RACVB adds wealth to the region's economy by investing in marketing programs that grow tourism. gorockford.com*

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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