

# NEWS RELEASE

Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau



## **Play Ball, Responsibly! Led by Outdoor Events, Sports Tourism Returns with Safety at Top of Mind** *Eight Baseball, Soccer and Softball Events Projected to Bring \$2.1 Million of Projected Tourism Economic Impact Over Next Six Weeks*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**July 9, 2020**

**ROCKFORD, IL — Play ball, responsibly!** On behalf of our community and its many partners, the Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (RACVB) is ready to welcome longtime event operators back to the region as part of our state's phased approach of reopening tourism responsibly. Stretching from early July through mid-August, eight tournaments are projected to bring \$2.1 million of tourism economic impact into the region.

Returning to the Rockford region for its fifth year of travel baseball events, **Quad Cities-based JP Sports makes its 2020 area debut** this Friday-Sunday, July 10-12, with its Experience the Turf #1 tournament at Mercyhealth Sportscore Two. Geared toward 9U-14U players, this weekend's Experience the Turf has 60 teams registered and is projected to generate \$171,282 in tourism economic impact for the region.

"JP Sports is excited to be hosting a youth baseball tournament in Rockford this weekend," said John Pieritz, president of JP Sports. "For the last several months, we have been working with our partner facilities, communities, health departments and elected officials to reopen youth sports in a safe and responsible manner."

In addition to this weekend's tournament, JP Sports has also scheduled Experience the Turf #2, #3 and #4 (July 31-Aug. 2, Aug. 7-9 and Aug. 14-16 for a combined \$695,972 of projected tourism economic impact) at Mercyhealth Sportscore Two. Baseball tournament play continues with **Game Day USA's Rockford Turf War and Super Regionals** (July 3-5, July 17-19 with 40 teams per weekend for a combined \$369,798 of projected tourism economic impact), and soccer returns with the **Puri Cup College Showcase Sponsored by Puma** (July 24-26 with a projected 100 teams and \$202,453 of tourism economic impact) at the same venue. In mid-August, softball makes its return to the area for the **2020 North American Fastpitch Association (NAFA) Men's World Series** (August 12-16 with a projected 80 teams and \$663,005 of tourism economic impact) at Mercyhealth Sportscore One.

"The gradual return of tourism events, and sports tourism in particular, to our community is another optimistic step forward," said Nick Povalitis, RACVB vice president of marketing & sports development. "As part of the hospitality and tourism industry's recovery, we're going to continue to shine a light on what we have to offer as a destination. We're thankful to be on this journey with partners like JP Sports and the Rockford Park District, which embody what it means to be committed to responsible and safe reopening practices."

In lockstep with the Rockford region's Clean Hands, Open Doors initiative, **some of the expansive precautionary measures JP Sports, Game Day USA, NAFA, regional venues and many other tourism event operators** are taking to help maximize public health and safety include:

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- Adhering to local and state public health guidelines, including Restore Illinois's phased approach to reopening
- Taking your temperature, wellness checks and staying home in the event of experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19
- Remaining socially distanced six feet apart (unless in the same household) and requiring mask wearing in common areas
- Requiring tournament participants and coaches to bring and use their own equipment (including their own water bottles and balls while fielding), disinfecting assigned dugouts common surfaces upon arrival, cleaning and sanitizing personal property, and discarding trash from the dugouts and venue spaces they use
- Requiring pre-pay options where admission is charged
- Suspending award ceremonies, the use of scoreboards, handshakes (which will be replaced by a tip of the cap), and other contact activities
- Assigning site coordinators to monitor player, coach and spectator behaviors to encourage distancing and sanitization protocols to maximize public health and safety
- Re-evaluating event and venue protocols weekly to ensure best practices remain current

"The Rockford Park District is working very closely with tournament directors to make any additional modifications based on guidelines from governing associations along with state and local health officials. Safety has been and will continue to be one of our top priorities," said Louis Mateus, general manager of Mercyhealth Sportscore Complexes. "We have worked with and followed guidelines from the CDC, IDPH, Restore Illinois, and local health officials to develop procedures and protocols to ensure we can provide a fun and safe recreational experience. Our team has and will continue to increase efforts to clean and sanitize our facilities and program areas in accordance with CDC guidelines."

As an extension of the community's open-for-business messaging, RACVB's tourism marketing and sales efforts are also making steady progress for rescheduling and creating new events alongside USA BMX, USA Table Tennis and USA Wrestling, which each had national event contracts in place at Rockford area venues prior to the pandemic.

Visit [www.GoRockford.com](http://www.GoRockford.com) for more information about **RACVB's destination marketing efforts**, and [www.RockfordCleanHands.com](http://www.RockfordCleanHands.com) to learn more about the region's **Clean Hands, Open Doors Pledge**.

***The mission of the RACVB is to drive quality of life and economic growth for our citizens through tourism marketing and destination development. [www.gorockford.com](http://www.gorockford.com)***

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