

Long Island: A perfect balance of sports, amenities

When it comes to holding a sporting event, whether it's a single game or match, or a multi-day tournament, you'd be hard-pressed to find a place with more features and benefits than Long Island, N.Y.

After all, not only does Long Island enjoy a tremendous track record of working with and welcoming event rights holders, it also has a rich history of offering the perfect balance of facilities for fans with all the amenities the New York Metro area has to offer.

No matter what the sport – whether it's water polo, lacrosse, golf, swimming/diving, professional beach volleyball, wrestling or many others – organizations such as the NCAA, USA Swimming and the American Junior Golf Association bring their events to Long Island for both the venues and the luxuries of high-quality hotels, restaurants and easy access to the media capital of the world. Additionally, apart from the Island's premier facilities, it's great location, it also offers the Long Island Sports Commission, which plays a pivotal role in ensuring that each event, along with its constituents, are treated as a top priority.

Regina Zara, director of sales and sports development for the Long Island Sports Commission, a division of the Long Island Convention and Visitors Bureau (www.discoverlongisland.com), points out that Long Island is home to a unique concentration of varied athletic facilities that meet the highest competitive standards for a variety of popular sports. But apart from that, visitors, especially those who come to Long Island for multi-day events, are able to enjoy all the feature-rich, exciting amenities and experiences of the New York Metro area.

When it comes to the events themselves, Long Island has hosted high-profile events such as the U.S. Open Golf Championship (the prestigious tournament returns in 2009 for the seventh time) and the Belmont Stakes (the third leg of horse racing's Triple Crown). And, of course, the NHL's New York Islanders call the Nassau Veteran's Memorial Coliseum home. Yet, those globally recognized events and teams are only part of the story. Long Island also has played host to dozens of exciting sporting events in the past, including:

- The Breeders' Cup – 1990, 1995, 2001, '05
- Big East Swimming & Diving – 1999, 2000, '01, '02, '03, '04, '05
- FINA World Cup (Swimming) – 2001, '02, '04, '05, '06
- Annual Commerce Bank Championship - PGA Champions Tour
- Annual Hampton Classic Horse Show
- 2006 NYSPHSAA Boys Lacrosse Championships
- 2006 Lessing's AJGA Classic (Junior Golf)
- 2006 National Beach Tennis Tournament
- 2006 ECAC Men's Tennis Invitational
- 2006 NYSPHSAA Wrestling Championships
- 2006 EISL Men's Swimming & Diving Championships
- 2006 NCAA Division I Men's Lacrosse North Quarterfinals
- 2005 USA Gymnastics American Cup
- 2004 NCAA Division I Men's Swimming & Diving Championships
- 2003 FINA Water Polo World League Super Final

- 2002 Junior Olympics Regional Championships - USATF
- 2001 Regional Jr. Olympics Cross Country Championships – USATF
- 2001 NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Championships – 1st & 2nd Rounds East Region)
- 2001 NCAA Division I Women's Swimming & Diving Championship
- 1999 Empire State Games
- 1997 US Figure Skating Association Eastern Sectional Championships

With that impressive track record, it is little wonder why more and more sports organizations find Long Island the perfect combination of facilities and amenities and either plan to return to the Island (USA Swimming, NCAA, AJGA) or are coming to the Island for the first time (EVP Tour).

EVP Beach Volleyball's First Event

In 2007, the Extreme Volleyball Professionals (EVP) Tour (EVPtour.com) will hold its first-ever stop on Long Island in August. According to Ross Balling, EVP commissioner, the one-day Long Island event will take place at Nickerson Beach in Nassau County.

"We have been primarily West Coast-based tour, but our goal is to become a national tour," says Balling. "Long Island was very excited to host an EVP Tour event, and that excitement caught our attention. Like any business or project, when people are really energized to host an event, it's a very important success factor."

Balling says the organizations like the Long Island Sports Commission, in partnership with officials of Nassau County, displayed a real willingness to make the EVP stop special, and that, along with the Island's history as an experienced sporting event host, convinced him that the EVP Tour would make Long Island its inaugural East Coast stop.

"It's on the ocean and at a beach, as are 90 percent of our events," Balling says.

Balling explains that each EVP event features professional volleyball players of both genders, but it also has an amateur division, which is filled with local teams. A typical EVP Tour event draws between 5,000-10,000 people during the course of the day. "Long Island not only has facilities," Balling says. "They have promised they really will roll out the red carpet, and that will make our event more than just us renting the beach."

Returning for More

For nearly a decade, the American Junior Golf Association (AJGA), which helps young men and women earn college golf scholarships through competitive junior golf, has been a steady patron of Long Island's impressive courses. During the past few years, for example, the Lessing's AJGA Classic has been held on various well-known Long Island courses, including The Links at Shirley, Shirley, N.Y., in 2003 (the qualifier was held at Tallgrass Golf Club in Shoreham, N.Y.), the Rockaway Hunting Club in Lawrence, N.Y., in 2004, (qualifier was held at Eisenhower Park Red Course in East Meadow, N.Y.), and the Eisenhower Park White Course in 2005 and 2006.

Another AJGA event, the Marsh Junior Tournament, was held at Bethpage State Park, Black Course, in Farmingdale, N.Y., in 1991. In 2000, the event moved to Rockaway Hunting Club, and in 2001, to the Bethpage State Park, Red Course.

"The key issue for us is our membership demographic in the New York Metro area is high, so there is a call for us to have an event there," says John Dolan, the AJGA's northeast regional director. "On Long Island, the quality of the venues – courses like Eisenhower Park and Bethpage – is extremely high, so it's nice we can host an event at those clubs."

On average, an AGJA event (there are 75 annually nationwide) brings about 250 people to the area, with an economic impact of about \$150,000. "Remember, our members are not just playing golf," Dolan says. "Members and their families are also shopping, eating at restaurants, etc. And Long Island has it all."

Another returning organization, USA Swimming, will hold its 2007 Spring Championships from March 27-31 at the Nassau County Aquatic Center, one of the nation's premier aquatic centers and among the top in the world.

USA Swimming held the FINA World Cup competition at the Nassau County Aquatic Center in 2001, 2002, 2004, 2005 and 2006 and also held its U.S. Open there in December 2001. So the organization has plenty of experience with what Long Island has to offer.

"We like going to Long Island," says Dean Ekeren, national events director for USA Swimming. "Of course, it offers a great, world-class facility. But it also has a really good group of people and plenty of hotels and restaurants. Long Island is such a destination for our athletes and their families, because when they come to Long Island, they often combine it with a visit to New York City and enjoy all the other aspects to being in the New York Metro area."

Wayne Burrow, director of championships for the NCAA, says that Long Island offers facilities and amenities that often are the perfect fit for some of the NCAA's championship events – a major reason why the NCAA has returned to Long Island over the years (and will be back in the future as well).

"Many of our events aren't on the scale of the Final Four or Super Bowl, but all the same success factors apply. The athletes and fans expect a high-quality experience," says Burrow, noting that the NCAA Division I Lacrosse quarterfinals were held at Long Island's Stony Brook University in 2006. "Apart from the sports venues, the folks at the Long Island Sports Commission really know how to get the best possible hotel room rates and manage other critical aspects of hosting an event. And not only do they have the facilities and hospitality, but we also have access to a great group of volunteers, and they are completely enthusiastic about hosting."

Zara says Long Island's powerful message to events rights holders is that the Island's fine athletic facilities combined with its close proximity to the media capital of the world, a strong transportation infrastructure and a host of accommodations that offer rates at every price point have competitively positioned the Island in the national and international sports marketplace.

"Event rights holders can expect a high

Continued on next page.



The EVP Tour brings professional beach volleyball to Long Island's Eugene Nickerson beach this summer; the Nassau County Aquatics Center is one of the premier facilities of its kind in the world; The Hofstra Arena hosts school sports events, but also exhibitions, trade shows, concerts and other special events; Stony Brook University Stadium is the home of the Seawolves football team.

Major Sports Facilities on Long Island

• **Baseball Heaven Sports Complex**
The complex consists of seven baseball fields and is equipped with all the amenities of a professional ballpark.

• **Belmont Park Racetrack**
Belmont Park is the site of the annual Belmont Stakes, the third leg of the Triple Crown. The park encompasses more than 400 acres and is available year round. The beautifully landscaped park includes large open spaces suitable for a variety of sporting events.

• **Bethpage State Park**
Bethpage State Park is best known for its five world-class golf courses, but visitors flock to the park to use its picnic facilities, bridle paths, hiking and biking trails, playing fields, tennis courts and cross-county skiing trails.

• **Citibank Park**
Citibank Park, a \$20 million, 6,002-seat state-of-the-art minor league ballpark, is home to the Long Island Ducks of the Atlantic League of Professional Baseball Clubs.

• **C.W. Post Campus, Long Island University**

• **Hofstra University**

• **Mitchel Athletic Complex, Track & Field Stadium**
A versatile state-of-the-art sports complex that provides a spectacular, professional setting for a full range of popular sports including baseball, field hockey, football, rifle/pistol, rugby, soccer, softball, track and field.

• **Nassau Community College**

• **Nassau County Aquatics Center**
One of the most premier aquatic venues in the country and among the top in the world. The facility can host national and international events in all aquatic disciplines.

• **Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum & Exhibition Center**
The Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum complex consists of an 18,000 seat arena, a 60,000 sq. foot exhibition hall, and 15,000 sq. feet of additional exhibit space.

• **The Red Course at Eisenhower Park, East Meadow**
Home to the Commerce Bank Championship-PGA Champions Tour.

• **Riverhead Raceway**
Riverhead Raceway is one of the oldest stock

car race tracks in the country and was built in 1949. It is a one-quarter mile asphalt, high-banked oval that includes a Figure 8 course. Riverhead Raceway is part of the NASCAR Winston Racing Series circuit and has been for most of its existence.

• **Sports Plus**
This facility features a 170,000-square foot indoor complex, which includes a 48-lane Bowling Center and full service pro-shop, an NHL Regulation Size Ice Rink with lockers and a full-service pro shop.

• **State University of New York at Old Westbury**

• **Stony Brook University, Indoor Sports Complex**

• **Suffolk County Community College Sports & Exhibition Complex**

• **The Rinx**
Located on 93 acres in beautiful Hidden Pond Park in the town of Islip. Offers two ice rinks, three outdoor pools, tennis courts, ball fields, picnic area, skating school, hockey school, hockey leagues, pro-shop, physical therapy and a conditioning center.



Continued from previous page.

level of professionalism and most importantly attention to detail from our staff," Zara says. "The fundamental foundation of our success is based on serving our clients' needs,

representing their interests to our constituents on a local level and most importantly working in partnership to ensure that we overextend ourselves to achieve the success of each event and surpass the expectations of our clients."

For more information about holding your events on Long Island, contact the Long Island Sports Commission at 877-FUN-ON-LI (386-6654) or 631-951-3900, ext. 315, or e-mail us at rzara@discoverlongisland.com or visit discoverlongisland.com/sports.

Historic Belmont Park is home to the Belmont Stakes, the third leg of horse racing's Triple Crown; in March 2007, USA Swimming will hold its Spring Championships at the Nassau County Aquatics Center.

We'll Show You What We're Made Of!

Experience • Exceptional Facilities • Excitement



Long Island Convention & Visitors Bureau

Long Island: Island of Champions

- US Open Golf Championships – 1896, 1902, 1986, 1995, 2002, 2004, 2009
- Breeders' Cup – 1990, 1995, 2001, 2005
- NCAA Men's Division I Swimming & Diving Championships – 2004
- FINA Water Polo World League Super Final – 2003
- 1998 Goodwill Games



Call us to book your next event: 631-951-3900 ext. 315 • www.discoverlongisland.com/sports