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Florida has historically been a magnet in attracting sporting events, and Palm Beach County is always a leader for organizing premier competitions in the Sunshine State. An ideal climate is paired with a beautiful natural backdrop of white beaches and blue ocean waters—making Palm Beach an obvious pick for golf, tennis, lacrosse, baseball, softball, equestrian events and much more.

Event organizers can always expect the necessary support when planning their sports contests. The Palm Beach County Sports Commission assists organizers in such areas as providing volunteers, booking hotel accommodations, selecting sites and facilities, helping out with public relations and marketing and managing the events. There are also financial partnership options as Commission experts can help organizers apply for funding through grants for qualifying events.

“The Palm Beach County Sports Commission diligently works with event owners to make sure their event is a success and their participants have the best possible experience in Palm Beach County,” said Gerry Baron, executive director at the Palm Beach County Sports Commission. “Palm Beach County is a sports paradise and home to some of the nation’s premier sporting facilities.”

Some of those facilities are Roger Dean Stadium (capacity: more than 7,000), Palm Beach International Raceway, the Delray Beach Tennis Center (capacity: 8,200), the International Polo Club, the National Croquet Center and many aquatic facilities. Of course, Palm Beach is world-famous for its golf and is home to about 120 country clubs and 170 courses. Palm Beach residents are keen to point out that this is The Golf

Capital of the World and home to the PGA Tour’s Honda Classic and Champions Tour Allianz Championship.

As well as the golf, Florida is also known for the great American pastime. For years, baseball’s big leaguers, especially those from colder climates, have migrated south for spring training.

Now joining the pros are college ball players who get to soak up the sun and hit the diamond every March in the Palm Beach Challenge. Sixty schools—from junior colleges to Division I universities—come to compete and play while their student athletes are on spring break.

“We offer all these schools a place to play,” said Michael Zeff, executive director of Palm Beach Challenge. “And it’s an ideal event because the Sports Commission is so supportive. The hotels, the community—everyone is very easy to work with.”

Zeff said the relationship is a win-win for both the schools and the Palm Beach area. The schools are provided with facilities, umpires, hotels and van rentals while Palm Beach enjoys the economic impact provided by 3,000 room nights and visitors enjoying the local attractions after the games.

Despite the recent economic downturn, 2009 was strong for Palm Beach. Having already hosted the 12th World Croquet Federation World Championships and the Tournament of Roller Hockey (TORHS) Nationals, there are still a number of premier events to come.

Scheduled to take place this coming fall and winter are the Advertising Softball World Series (October 17-21), the American Junior Golf Association Polo Junior Golf Classic (November 21-27), the Men’s Senior Baseball League Florida Fall Classic (November 12-21) and the PGA Tour qualifying finals (November 29-December 8).

Other noted events include the USA Baseball 16U Championships, the USA Boys 16s & 18s Clay Court Championships, the Optimist International Junior Golf Championships, the Under Armour Fall Classic, the ADT Golf Skills Challenge, the Marathon of the Palm Beaches and the Optimist International Junior Golf Championships.

Equestrian events create the largest impact of any sport. The Winter Equestrian Festival takes place every January through April at the Palm Beach International Equestrian Center. The longest running equestrian event in the world, about 3,000 athletes from the United States and Europe compete annually, generating 85,000 room nights and a \$57 million economic impact for Palm Beach County.

Palm Beach County usually provides a balance of sporting events throughout the year. And while the area is well suited to host indoors events, the area is very popular for outdoor athletics. Of course, the average annual temperature hovering in the mid-70s allows for year-round baseball, softball, tennis, swimming and everything else under the sun.

“Our county has a strong resume for hosting a variety of professional and amateur sporting events,” Baron said. “Overall, the sports industry generates more than 140,000 room nights to Palm Beach County, making it one of our county’s strongest niches that drive tourism.”

An added bonus for visitors includes the shopping districts and historic natural areas, such as the Everglades. Combining great weather, picturesque scenery, cultural venues, shopping and natural attractions, Palm Beach offers sports organizers and athletes an all-American setting for sports of all sorts.