

Press Box

Sports Organizations



ALAN KIDD

Alan Kidd has been named president and CEO of the National Association of Sports Commissions. Kidd will begin his tenure during the 2017 NASC Sports Event Symposium, March 27–30. Kidd, the former president of the San Diego Sports Commission, is currently with BoldPointe Partners, a private equity firm. He will replace executive director **Don Schumacher**, who announced his departure last year.

Bill Hancock, executive director of the College Football Playoff, will receive a three-year extension on his contract. Hancock, the first executive director of the CFP, also served as the first full-time director of the NCAA Final Four and the first executive director of the Bowl Championship Series (BCS).

Major League Baseball has promoted **Billy Bean** to vice-president and special assistant to the commissioner, a newly created position. Bean will be a senior advisor to Commissioner Rob Manfred on human rights issues, with a focus on LGBT and anti-bullying efforts. Bean started at MLB in 2014 as its first ambassador for inclusion. In other MLB news, the league has named Olympic champion **Jennie Finch** as its youth softball ambassador. The Women's College World Series champion and former pro softball pitcher will work to grow softball at the amateur and youth levels and will support an effort to promote girl's baseball.

A new professional football league, **Pacific Pro Football**, has recently been formed.



The four-team league, based in Southern California, will hire players who have

NBA to Launch E-Sports League



Teams will play NBA 2K as part of an initiative that makes the NBA the first pro league to operate an e-sports league

The **National Basketball Association** and **Take-Two Interactive Software Inc.** have announced that they will launch the NBA 2K eLeague, the first e-sports league operated by a U.S.-based professional sports league.

Set to debut in 2018, the league will consist of teams operated by NBA franchises. Each of the founding teams will have five professional e-sports players. The league will follow a pro sports league format where

players will compete head-to-head throughout a five-month regular season, followed by a bracketed playoff system and a championship matchup.

"We believe we have a unique opportunity to develop something truly special for our fans and the young and growing e-sports community," said NBA Commissioner Adam Silver. "We look forward to combining our best-in-class NBA sports team operators with Take-Two's competitive gaming expertise to create a brand-new league experience."

Several individual teams have separately been partnering with or acquiring professional e-sports teams since last year. Last September the Philadelphia 76ers became the first team to venture into the space, acquiring Apex Gaming and Team Dignitas. Since then, several other teams or the owners of teams—including the Golden State Warriors, the Sacramento Kings, the Memphis Grizzlies, the Milwaukee Bucks and the Miami Heat—have invested in other e-sports entities. ■

—Jason Gewirtz

graduated from high school but are not eligible for other professional leagues. Teams will be coached by former professional and college coaches. The first games will be played in summer 2018.

Ironman and the **International Triathlon Union** have agreed to a cooperation framework. The deal includes ITU sanctioning for select Ironman events, establishing competition rules with specific distances, and recognition of ITU as the sport's international federation.

Hosts & Suppliers

The Detroit Metro Convention & Visitors Bureau has announced several

promotions including **Dave Beachnau** to senior vice-president of sales, marketing and sports, and **Kris Smith** to director of the Detroit Sports Commission. Beachnau



DAVE BEACHNAU

has worked at the DMCVB in several different capacities for the past 24 years and has served as the executive director for the DSC since 2001. Smith, formerly the DSC's national sports sales manager, joined the sports commission in 2012. He previously worked at the Hampton (Virginia) Convention & Visitors Bureau.



KRIS SMITH

Visit Phoenix has promoted **Lorne Edwards** to vice-president of sales and services. Edwards joined the organization five years ago as director of sales after having worked for 16 years with the Hyatt Hotels Corp.



LORNE EDWARDS

The Frisco (Texas) Convention & Visitors Bureau has named **Josh Dill** as director of sports and events, a newly created position. With more than 10 years of experience in the sports-event industry, Dill most recently served as the Frisco CVB's director of sports marketing.

Susan Koczka has been appointed director of national accounts at the Hartford-based Connecticut Convention & Sports Bureau. With nearly three decades of experience in the conventions, meetings and hospitality industries, Koczka most recently served as director of corporate relations and meetings at Association Resources Inc., an association management firm. She previously served as sales manager at the bureau when it was the Greater Hartford CVB.



SUSAN KOZKA

Libby Craig has been named sport sales manager at the Monroe County Sports Commission, the athletic business development arm of Visit Rochester (New York) and Monroe County. Craig most recently served as group sales manager of the Hyatt at The Bellevue in Philadelphia.



LIBBY CRAIG

Sites & Venues

The 2017 Major League Soccer All-Star Game will be held at **Soldier Field** in Chicago on August 2. The city also will host nearly a week of related events. The game will be broadcast live on FS1, UDN and UniMás in the United States,

THE LEADERSHIP COACH

The Importance of Sacrifice

Sanskrit is considered to be one of the first languages in the world. There is a Sanskrit word, "tapasya," which translates in English to "sacrifice." I believe this is one of the most important concepts in life to understand, especially for leaders.



fact that technology controls so much of our available time, we often fail to learn how to struggle. This is why sports are so vital to the health of our youth.

In the Olympics, the back stories of the athletes are truly inspiring. Before the events, we learn how

Every leader, whether it be a coach, a parent or a boss at work, should stress that nothing positive gets accomplished without sacrifice. Regardless of what path in life you take, every accomplishment is tied to the sacrifice that went into your effort. Because life has become so mechanized and the

much sacrifice goes into each athlete's journey. And it's not just the athlete's sacrifice that is evident. Coaches worked long hours, and parents sacrificed their time to drive their children to practice and events. That is why it is essential that every leader have "sacrifice" as one of their pillars of success. ■

The Leadership Coach is Peter Burwash, founder of Peter Burwash International, which manages tennis instruction programs worldwide. His books are available through the Media Zone at SportsTravelMagazine.com. He can be reached at leadershipcoach@schneiderpublishing.com.

TSN and TVA Sports in Canada, and in more than 170 countries.

The U.S. Soccer She Believes Cup will be held March 1-7 at **Talen Energy Stadium** in Chester, Pennsylvania; **Red Bull Arena** in Harrison, New Jersey; and **RFK Stadium** in Washington, D.C. The international tournament will feature four of the world's top-ranked women's national teams (Germany, France, England and the United States) competing in three doubleheaders.

Major League Triathlon, the first and only professional triathlon league in the United States, will host an event in **Atlantic City, New Jersey**, on June 3. The triathlon will feature 32 professional triathletes swimming 300 meters in the Atlantic Ocean, biking 4 miles and running 1 mile on the city's historic boardwalk.

The Professional Darts Corporation's U.S. Masters, part of the 2017 World Series of Darts, will be held at the **Tropicana Las Vegas**, July 13-15.

The tournament marks the first time a World Series of Darts event has been hosted in the United States.

The Pro Watercross Tour's Liberty Cup will be staged at **Lewisville Lake**, Texas, June 10-11. The annual tour for personal watercraft racing will feature both professional and amateur athletes.

The 2017 Powerade State Games of North Carolina, the state's largest multisport amateur athletic event, will be held in the Piedmont Triad region, with events in **Greensboro, Winston-Salem, Burlington** and **High Point**, June 3-June 25.



Phoenix International Raceway in Avondale, Arizona, is scheduled to undergo a \$178 million modernization project. Highlights include a redesigned infield featuring a Mon-

GOVERNING BODY DOSSIER

U.S. Equestrian Finds Its Gait

U.S. Equestrian recently unveiled a complete rebranding as part of a strategic plan to grow its membership and broaden its appeal. The national governing body for equestrian sports has undergone several name changes since its inception in 1917. More recently, it went from being known as the United States Equestrian Federation to simply U.S. Equestrian, with a new logo, a more user-friendly website and additional membership benefits to bolster its refreshed identity.

A fresh look.

One of the first items on the agenda was to reimagine the logo. "The design elements were there, they just needed to be repositioned," said Vicki

Lowell, the group's chief marketing and content officer, who took the rebranding opportunity by the reins. The old logo featured an image of a horse within a shield with "USEF" at the top and "United States Equestrian Federation" circling the horse. Lowell saw a need for simplification. "I said, 'OK, let's deconstruct this thing. We need to free the horse so that it is front and center.'"

The inspiration for the name change also came from a need to put the organization's mission and status at the forefront. "The United States Equestrian Federation was a mouthful," Lowell said. Dropping that word and abbreviating "United States" better aligns the group with other national governing bodies that compete at the Olympic level, she said.

New benefits. Appealing to people of all ages was important to USEF, which was concerned not only about a membership that skews a bit older, but also about being perceived as an elitist sport, Lowell said. In concert with the rebrand, U.S. Equestrian launched the Joy of Horse Sports

campaign, designed to capture the emotion of participating in horse sports at all levels. "What is so wonderful about this sport is the insight that drives people at the top is the same insight that drives people who first encounter a horse—the unique connection between horse and human," Lowell said.

U.S. Equestrian also made an effort

to connect with a younger age group, offering youth, scholastic and collegiate organizations complimentary educational memberships in hopes of piquing their interest and retaining them for the future.

The NGB also introduced a \$25 fan membership (the full membership rate is

\$55), ideal for enthusiasts who may not currently be competing but wish to take part in all of the governing body's benefits. These benefits include a new weekly newsletter, access to the USEF Network, delivery of the group's quarterly magazine (which also received a new look) and access to the online U.S. Equestrian Learning Center, which features educational videos aimed at members of all skill levels. "The content aspect is a whole new dimension to the brand," Lowell said. "We really are looking to expand the learning platform of the membership."

Into the fold. Although U.S. Equestrian's membership wasn't drastically declining, it wasn't growing either. But since the NGB began actively recruiting new members, it has already seen a rise in numbers. Since last fall, its membership has grown from about 80,000 members to about 100,000 members. "That's our mission—bringing the joy of horse sports to as many people as possible," Lowell said. "I hope that this new identity conveys the joy of horse sports." ■

—Jennifer Lee



U.S. Equestrian recently unveiled a complete rebranding, which included a new name and logo.

ster Energy NASCAR Cup Series Garage Fan Zone; a repositioned start/finish line; and a new pedestrian tunnel connecting the infield to new seating areas.

The **Motorsports Hall of Fame of America** recently celebrated its grand opening at Daytona International Speedway in Daytona Beach, Florida. The MSHFA relocated from Novi, Michigan, last year.

Sponsors & Licensing

The **NBA** has partnered with **Jack Daniel's**, making the distillery an official marketing partner of the NBA, the Women's National Basketball Association, the NBA Development League and USA Basketball. The brand is currently a partner of five NBA teams: the Atlanta Hawks, the Denver Nuggets, the Los Angeles Clippers, the Oklahoma City Thunder and the San Antonio Spurs.

The NBA's **Boston Celtics** and **GE** have announced a multiyear partnership in which GE will become the team's exclusive data and analytics partner. Headquartered in Boston as of 2016, GE will receive a number of marketing assets, including the team's first jersey patch partnership.

Major League Soccer and **Target** have announced a multiyear partnership. Target also will become the official partner of **Minnesota United FC** and the team's official jersey sponsor. The deal also includes on-field branding and in-stadium activation rights.

The **NFL** and **Special Olympics** have announced a partnership that will expand Special Olympics Unified Flag Football. The deal will provide opportunities for athletes of all abilities to participate in "Play 60," the NFL's youth health and wellness platform that helps kids get active for 60 minutes a day.

The **United States Tennis Association** and **Deloitte** have announced a long-term partnership. Deloitte will sponsor the U.S. Davis Cup and U.S. Fed Cup teams, as well as the U.S. Open. Deloitte also will become the first sponsor of the U.S. Open Wheelchair Competition.

Press Box

Delta Air Lines and its partner **Aeromexico** have been named the official airline partners of the **Los Angeles Football Club**, an MLS team expected to make its debut in 2018. The deal includes transportation, category exclusivity, community outreach, fan engagement, and interior and exterior digital signage.

The **Chicago Cubs** and **Jim Beam Bourbon** have announced a multi-year partnership. Chicago-based Beam Suntory—producer of brands that include Jim Beam, Maker’s Mark Bourbon, Effen Vodka and Hornitos Premium Tequila—will serve as the official spirits partners of the Cubs and Wrigley Field. Additionally, Jim Beam will have long-term naming rights to a new first-base club at Wrigley Field and a new left field bar at Sloan Park in Mesa, Arizona.

Uber has become the first official rideshare partner of the National Hockey League’s **New Jersey Devils** and **Prudential Center**. Uber has established a designated pickup and drop-off area outside of Investors Bank Tower.

The **International Olympic Committee** and **Alibaba Group** have announced a long-term partnership through 2028. Alibaba will become the IOC’s official cloud services and e-commerce platform services partner, as well as a founding partner of the Olympic Channel.

USA Wrestling and **FloSports**, a sports media company, have announced an extension of their partnership, which began in 2013 and will now last through 2024. The agreement includes the airing of some of the sport’s premier events exclusively on *FloWrestling.com* as well as use of FloArena meet-management software for select USA Wrestling events.

The **PGA of America** has named **John Deere** as its official turf-equipment provider. Under the terms of the five-year agreement, John Deere—a provider of products and services for agriculture, construction, forestry and turf—will also offer equipment programs to PGA-owned facilities and championship sites as well as dis-

counts on home lawn maintenance equipment for PGA professionals.

The **British Virgin Islands Tourism Board** will serve as the exclusive Caribbean destination sponsor for the **2017 Miami Open** tennis tournament, which will be played at the Crandon Park Tennis Center in Miami, March 20–April 2. More than 300,000 ticket holders attend the annual tournament.

The **National Hockey League** has announced a multiyear, corporate marketing partnership with **PPG**, a global supplier of paints, coatings, fiberglass and other specialty materials. The Pittsburgh-based company will serve as the official paint of the NHL in the United States and Canada. In addition to supplying paint for the Stadium Series, PPG will be featured at



future Stadium Series games and the NHL Winter Classic.

And Finally...

Donna de Varona is the recipient of the **2016 Theodore Roosevelt Meritorious Achievement Award**. Presented by the United States Sports Academy, the award is given to an individual in any sport who has excelled as a contributor to both sport and society over at least a decade. An advocate for women in sports, de Varona served as the first president of the Women’s Sports Foundation and was one of the first female sportscasters for a national network when she signed a contract with ABC at age 18. By the time she was 17, de Varona had broken 18 swimming world records and had won two gold medals at the 1964 Olympic Games in Tokyo. She currently serves on the executive board of Special Olympics International. ■

—Edited by Jennifer Lee



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