



ESPN Wide World of Sports at Walt Disney World Resort Announces Mega Cheerleading, Dance Team Venue:

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. (Feb. 5, 2016) — With its sports business continuing to grow, specifically in the cheerleading and dance team space, ESPN Wide World of Sports at the Walt Disney World Resort is preparing to break ground on a new state-of-the-art cheerleading and dance team competition venue.

ESPN Wide World of Sports is planning to team up with the nation's top cheerleading organization, Varsity Spirit, to create the first venue in the world specifically designed for cheerleading and dance team competitions. The venue will include a flexible design for one large competition space that can be set up for as many as four competition areas. Additional areas are being tailored for warm up and practice, along with areas for judges and officials.

With the ability to seat over 8,000 guests, plus performance and warm-up space, the new multi-use sports and entertainment venue will also have the ability to host six regulation basketball courts, six regulation volleyball courts or concert configurations. There will be concessions throughout the building, and an additional box office and entry to the complex.

"As our sports business continues to grow, we're thrilled to work alongside Varsity Spirit to create a sporting and entertainment venue that will not only complement our existing venues, but will be a model for cheerleading and dance team competitions," said Maribeth Bisienere, senior vice president of ESPN Wide World of Sports. "We value our young athletes and want to give these incredible guests an experience that can only be achieved at Disney."

ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex and Varsity Spirit will continue to host the world's most prestigious cheerleading events at the complex, including Varsity Spirit's annual National High School Cheerleading Championships. This event draws more than 650 teams from more than 30 states and is the only National Championship endorsed by the National Federation of State High School Associations. Winning a coveted white satin National Champion jacket is seen as the pinnacle of success for thousands of cheerleaders from across the country.

"Varsity Spirit invented the modern day cheerleading and dance competition, and we are proud to be the force behind this project, which represents our commitment to providing the very best and safest environment in the world for our athletes and coaches," said Jeff Webb, Founder and Chairman of Varsity Brands. "Since this building has been designed specifically for spirit teams, we can't wait to provide an even more high quality competition experience to thousands of athletes each year."

According to Varsity Spirit, cheerleading continues to rise in popularity around the nation, as well as around the world. The competitive side of cheerleading focuses on

athleticism and entertainment, in addition to the traditional crowd-leading role of the cheerleader. Cheerleaders are the most visible representation of a school's spirit, whether at a pep rally or on the field and that spirit can play an important role in a school's success. According to research by Varsity Brands, students with higher levels of school spirit perform better academically, are more civically engaged, and are happier in general than their less-spirited peers.

The ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex hosts six cheer and dance team events annually through its collaboration with Varsity Spirit, bringing tens of thousands of athletes and spectators to Walt Disney World Resort. With an aggressive growth strategy that will include more competitions and record-setting participation, this new venue will draw athletes, spectators and fans from around the country and provide an even stronger, positive economic impact on Central Florida. While the venue will primarily host cheer and dance competitions and volleyball and basketball games, the venue will also be incorporated into the numerous new sports and entertainment offerings at the complex.

Construction is slated to begin in February 2016, and is expected to be complete by mid-2017.

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About ESPN Wide World of Sports:

ESPN Wide World of Sports (ESPN Complex), located at the Walt Disney World Resort in Florida is the premier site for amateur sports in the nation. The complex hosts more than 100 events a year and has accommodated more than 70 different sports and athletes from around the world. Designed to provide youth athletes with an experience synonymous with the names Disney and ESPN, the 225-acre facility features multiple competition venues, including 16 baseball/softball fields, plus the 10,000 seat Champion Stadium, 18 multi-purpose outdoor fields for soccer, football and lacrosse, two field houses for basketball, volleyball, and other indoor sports, the New Balance Track & Field facility and cross country course, and a tennis court complex with 10 courts. In addition, ESPN production teams are on site, capturing game footage and event highlights which guests can view in Disney Resort rooms, on the ESPN Wide World of Sports on-site digital board network and online at www.ESPNWWOS.com. ESPN Wide World of Sports also provides coaches and teams with a variety of Disney Sports Solutions, such as fundraising programs, discounted travel packages, special dining options, photography services, customized event merchandise, and post-game celebrations in the Disney Parks. For more information, visit www.DisneySportsNews.com for news releases, photos and videos. Follow us on Twitter at @DisneySports and on Facebook/ESPNWWOS.

About Varsity Spirit

Memphis-based Varsity Spirit has been a driving force behind cheerleading's dynamic transformation into the high-energy, athletic activity it is today, and the leading global source for all things cheerleading and dance. A division of Varsity Brands, Varsity Spirit is a leader in uniform innovation and educational camps, clinics and competitions, impacting nearly a million athletes each year. Focused on safety, entertainment and traditional school leadership, Varsity Spirit's 1,200 employees have been helping raise cheerleading's influence and profile since 1974. For more information about Varsity Spirit or Varsity Brands, please visit www.varsity.com or www.varsitybrands.com

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