



Team handball's best coming to Del.

UD Field House, Carpenter Center to host nationals

By ANDY JASNER, Special to The News Journal
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Five cities were considered to be serious candidates to host the 2007 U.S. Team Handball Open National Championships.

But the proposal by the Delaware Economic Development Office (DEDO) gave Newark the edge over Las Vegas; Reno, Nev.; Atlanta and Richmond, Va.

DEDO bid for the event in partnership with the University of Delaware Sports Management program, the University of Delaware Hotel Conference Services and the Greater Wilmington Convention & Visitors Bureau.

"I admired [Delaware's] professionalism from the start," said Mike Cavanaugh, the United States Olympic Committee's Manager of High Performance for Team Handball. "From our initial contact with them, we were very pleased and confident that they would host a great event. They even told us that they wanted to lay the groundwork for next year as well. That impressed us."

The tournament will be held Friday through Sunday at the Delaware Field House and the Bob Carpenter Center. It's the first time the University of Delaware has hosted this event, which was held in Houston for the past three years.

The event is also part of DEDO's initiative to recruit major sports and special events to the state.

"U.S. team handball is an Olympic sport, and it's played internationally," said Tim Morgan, director of the Delaware Tourism Office. "It's an exciting sport and the game has been around for a long time. It's one of the world's most popular sports. Anytime you can get an Olympic sport to your area, it's very beneficial."

More than 350 athletes will participate in the tournament, which will include Olympians from around the U.S. competing in three divisions -- Men's Elite, Men's Open and Women's Open. The finals will take place on Sunday afternoon, and fans will be admitted free for the entire event.

"I think people will really enjoy this sport," Cavanaugh said. "It's an underdeveloped, emerging sport."

While team handball traces its origins back to ancient Greece, the modern version was developed in Denmark in 1897. About 31 million people in 183 countries are involved in the sport as players, trainers, team officials and referees.

Team handball features two teams of seven players, including a goalie.

Players get points by throwing a ball past the goalie for one point. Games consist of two 30-minute halves, with scores often running into the low to mid-20s.

"It's a fast-paced game which people will enjoy watching," Cavanaugh said. "It's a game of skill."

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