

America's Youth Athletes Enter All New "World" at ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex at Disney

Nation's leading multi-sport venue for amateur and professional events re-launched as ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex and features signature ESPN elements; one-of-a-kind initiative to take youth sports to the next level

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla.- The widely acclaimed sports facility at Walt Disney World Resort was re-launched in Feb. 2010 as ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex in an elaborate Hollywood-style "turf carpet" event that featured celebrities, Florida's governor, ESPN on-air commentators and sports stars from the NFL, MLB, LPGA, Olympics and more.

Shawn Johnson (Olympic gold medal gymnast), Chad Ochocinco (Cincinnati Bengals), Jennie Finch (Olympic softball gold medalist) and Annika Sorenstam (LPGA) were among the star athletes who joined popular ESPN on-air personalities on the red carpet that was painted green with yard lines to resemble a football field. Florida governor Charlie Crist and senior executives from Disney and ESPN officially re-launched the 230-acre sports complex as Super Bowl champion New Orleans Saints kicker Garrett Hartley booted a football over the re-designed complex entrance amid fireworks and a sea of confetti. Immediately afterwards, Mickey Mouse led a throng of youth and pro athletes – representing the 60-plus sports held at the complex – through a huge ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex banner draped over the entrance.

Afterwards, the celebrities, athletes and ESPN personalities attended a special reception at the complex's re-themed ESPN Wide World of Sports Grill, followed by a special performance by the Harlem Globetrotters that featured Hartley, Sorenstam, Maurice Jones-Drew, Brandi Chastain and ESPN radio personalities Mike Greenberg and Mike Golic, who served as honorary assistant coaches. The game, called by ESPN's *SportsNation* co-hosts Colin Cowherd and Michelle Beadle, airs Friday on ESPN2.

"At ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex, we are giving America's youth athletes a one-of-a-kind youth sports experience that leaves them feeling as if they have reached the big time and made it onto ESPN," said Ken Potrock, senior vice president of Disney Sports Enterprises. "Our goal is to ensure that the millions of athletes, coaches and fans who come through this sports complex at Walt Disney World Resort will walk in loving sports and walk out knowing that sports loves them back."

The re-imagined ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex is taking youth sports to the next level by providing an immersive sports experience for the more than 2 million athletes, coaches and fans who come to the complex each year, while also connecting them to their favorite ESPN programs, personalities and elements. It also provides advertisers a new platform to reach the youth sports market.

As part of the project, Disney and ESPN have added many technological and experiential enhancements designed to replicate the signature elements of ESPN throughout the complex, including 56 high-definition cameras (42 robotic, 10 handheld and four studio), 40 high-definition video screens at 17 locations (including 3 jumbo screens) and a 2,500-square-foot Production Center with links to ESPN facilities in Bristol, Conn., New York and Los Angeles. Also, there is a 20-zone audio system, a welcome center, a huge complex marquee and the Innovation Lab where the ESPN Emerging Technology group is testing and developing innovative new on-air applications.

"This complex embodies the ESPN and Disney commitment to excellence, ensuring that athletes and their families have the best possible experience," said George Bodenheimer, president, ESPN, Inc. and ABC Sports and co-

chairman, Disney Media Networks. "It is our hope that, win or lose, every athlete who competes at the complex will walk away with lifelong memories."

The re-imagining of ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex is the latest initiative in the growing sports business at Walt Disney World Resort. In late 2007, the sports complex added additional outdoor playing fields for football, soccer, lacrosse and field hockey competitions. And in 2008, the sports complex opened Jostens Center, a state-of-the-art fieldhouse that allows Disney to accommodate twice as many indoor sports events each year. Additional expansion plans are in development, including a planned 100-lane bowling facility.

Disney Sports annually stages more than 300 events and has accommodated approximately 60 different sports involving athletes from more than 70 countries. Among those events are Atlanta Braves spring training, Chelsea Football Club events, the Pop Warner Super Bowl, AAU National Championships, Varsity Cheer events, the World Cheerleading Championships, the ESPN RISE Games, USSSA events and the Walt Disney World Marathon, one of the top marathons in the nation. ESPN televises dozens of sporting events from the complex, and Walt Disney World Resort and ESPN also annually work together to host the popular ESPN The Weekend presented by Dick's Sporting Goods event at Disney's Hollywood Studios and the complex.