

# 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.