

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

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. – The widely acclaimed sports facility at Walt Disney World Resort was officially re-launched as ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex in February 2010, in an elaborate Hollywood-style “turf carpet” event that featured celebrities, former Florida governor Charlie Crist, 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. Former Florida governor Crist and senior executives from Disney and ESPN officially re-launched the 225-acre sports complex as Super Bowl XLIV 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 70-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” Michelle Beadle and former co-host Colin Cowherd, aired Feb. 26, 2010 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, then-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 has taken 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 high-definition cameras (robotic, handheld and studio), high-definition video screens (including three 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.

Disney Sports annually stages more than 100 events and has accommodated approximately 70 different

sports involving athletes from more than 70 countries. Among those events are Atlanta Braves spring training, Disney Soccer Showcase, the Pop Warner Super Bowl, AAU National Championships, Varsity Cheer events, Disney International Salute to Baseball and the *runDisney* race series, one of the largest race organizers in the nation. Additionally, ESPN televises dozens of sporting events from the complex.