

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY ADAPTIVE SPORTS HOSTS USA WHEELCHAIR FOOTBALL LEAGUE TOURNAMENT IN TAMPA, AUGUST 26-28, 2022

Wheelchair football athletes from across the country, including the hometown Tampa Bay Buccaneers Wheelchair Football Team, will compete this weekend at a USA Wheelchair Football League tournament hosted by Hillsborough County Adaptive Sports. This first-ever home tournament is scheduled for August 26-28 in the West Hall of the Tampa Convention Center in Tampa, FL. The USAWFL is a program of Move United that is made possible by support from the National Football League (NFL) and Bob Woodruff Foundation (BWF) partnership, which is part of the League's Salute to Service initiative as well as local team support by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

The tournament competition will kick off Friday afternoon, August 26 at 2:30 PM. Saturday, games are scheduled to run from 9:00 AM-5:00 PM and from 8:00 AM-3:00 PM on Sunday. Tampa Bay Buccaneers alumnus, Dexter Jackson, and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers Cheerleaders will welcome the teams on Friday night at the welcome dinner at 7:00 PM, and a champion will be crowned Sunday afternoon during the final matchup at 1:30 PM.

The Tampa Bay Buccaneers Wheelchair Football Team is coached by Rick Riessle, Wayne Bozeman, and Greg Lewis-Seals. Team captains are Shelton Mobley and Matt Gardner. Gardner joined the practice squad of the Buccaneers Wheelchair Football Team last year. "From that moment, I was hungry to compete in this league," Gardner said. "I have always loved the game of football, but never had an outlet to compete competitively in a league, due to being born paralyzed with no mobility in my legs. I

grew up in Pittsburgh, watching the Steelers play like it was my religion. During my time in high school, I was always going to the games supporting my friends. As I watched on Friday nights, I wanted nothing more than an opportunity to put a helmet on and play the game. This league gives me that opportunity that I do not take for granted.”

This is the second tournament of the 2022 season, which is the second full season of the USA Wheelchair Football League. Eight teams will be competing, including the Arizona Cardinals, Birmingham Hammers, Chicago Bears, Cleveland Browns, Dallas Cowboys, Kansas City Chiefs, New Orleans Saints, and the hometown Tampa Bay Buccaneers Wheelchair Football Team. Two weeks ago, the Green Bay Packers Wheelchair Football Team defeated the L.A. Rams Wheelchair Football Team in a tournament hosted in Chicago.

“I’m absolutely looking forward to a second season in the USAWFL! Playing for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers for its second year in existence is an honor and incredibly exciting! Looking forward to the competition being elevated in the second year and making even more new lifelong friendships along the way,” said Retired U.S. Navy Veteran Ryan “Bully” Lindstrom.

In addition to supporting the USAWFL’s competitive teams, the grant from the NFL and BWF partnership as part of the League’s Salute to Service initiative and Move United provides opportunities for grassroots growth of the sport through coaching education and learn-to-play clinics.

As a signature program of Hillsborough County Parks & Recreation, the mission of Hillsborough County Adaptive Sports program is to promote health, independence and personal growth through sports for people with physical and intellectual disabilities. HC Adaptive Sports provides year-round sports and recreation programs that promote physical activity, healthy lifestyles, and recreational and competitive sports opportunities for children and adults with physical disabilities.