



NEWS RELEASE

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WORLD'S TOP NATIONAL FOOTBALL TEAMS OF HIGH SCHOOL-AGED PLAYERS COMING TO AMERICA

Canton, Ohio, to Host Historic Eight-Nation Football Tournament in Summer of 2009

CANTON, OHIO – The world's best high school-aged football players will compete for the first IFAF Junior World Championship in Canton, Ohio, next summer.

The International Federation of American Football (IFAF), USA Football, and the City of Canton, announced today from the Pro Football Hall of Fame that Canton will host the inaugural event in the summer of 2009 – a tournament consisting of the world's eight best high school-aged (19 and under) national teams.

All Junior World Championship games will be played in Canton's historic Fawcett Stadium, home of the NFL's annual Pro Football Hall of Fame Game, adjacent to the Hall of Fame.

"On behalf of IFAF and the more than 40 countries on five continents that love and play organized football, we are ecstatic to have the world's best compete in the world's greatest football setting," said IFAF President **TOMMY WIKING**. "It is known throughout the world that Canton, Ohio, is the crib of the game. It is most fitting that football's first international competition of high school-aged players will be held in Fawcett Stadium next summer."

With national football federations in existence worldwide for several decades, IFAF, the sport's international federation, was created in 1998 to organize and further develop the game through global cooperation and competition.

The criteria for international qualification for the Junior World Championship and tournament game dates will be determined during the IFAF Executive Committee Conference in Stockholm, Sweden, from June 6-8. The tournament's seven open seats will be claimed by February 2009 by junior national teams competing in the Americas, Asia, Europe, and Oceania.

As the host country, the United States automatically qualifies for the final field of eight. USA Football, the sport's national governing body on youth and amateur levels, will oversee and manage America's first high school-aged national team for football, composed of the country's best high school student-athletes.

"USA Football shares in the excitement and great anticipation for this historic world championship played in the shadow of the Pro Football Hall of Fame," said USA Football Executive Director **SCOTT HALLENBECK**. "People here know their football. The year 'round passion for and knowledge of the sport throughout Northeast Ohio makes it the ideal home for next summer's games. For every Team USA member, playing in this atmosphere against the world's best competition will be an incredible experience."

All 50 State High School Athletic Associations and the District of Columbia are invited to nominate at least 10 players to compose a talent pool from which Team USA's coaching staff will select its roster in spring 2009. The head coach of Team USA will be selected by USA Football prior to the 2008 high school football season.

"We are pleased that the NFHS membership is cooperating with USA Football in this exciting endeavor," said National Federation of State High School Associations Executive Director **ROBERT KANABY**. "High school football is woven into the fabric of our cities and towns and the game's popularity continues to grow. The 2009 IFAF Junior World Championship will further strengthen the sport in all corners of the world."

“Stark County, the City of Canton, and the Pro Football Hall of Fame are extremely proud to host IFAF and the world’s best high school-aged football players next summer,” said **STEPHEN PERRY**, president and executive director of the Pro Football Hall of Fame. “Hosting IFAF and the global football community further defines the Hall of Fame as the premiere site for knowledge and celebration of the world’s greatest sport.”

In support of the multi-national football tournament, to be held every four years in an IFAF-member country, the City of Canton is assembling an IFAF Junior World Championship Host Committee. **ROBERT BELDEN**, president of the Belden Brick Company – based in Canton since 1885 – will serve as chairman.

Canton is associated with football’s roots for three primary reasons: (1) the American Professional Football Association, later renamed the National Football League, was founded in Canton on September 17, 1920; (2) the Canton Bulldogs were an early-day pro football power, even prior to the NFL. The great **JIM THORPE**, the first big-name athlete to play professional football, played his first pro football with the Bulldogs, starting in 1915; (3) in the early 1960s, Canton citizens launched a determined and well-organized campaign to bring the Pro Football Hall of Fame to their city.

About IFAF

The International Federation of American Football (IFAF) unites more than 40 countries on five continents through a burgeoning international sport. With national football federations in existence for more than 70 years, IFAF was created in 1998 to organize and further develop the game through international cooperation and global competition. Having conducted Senior World Championships (players aged 20 and older) since 1999 in Europe and Asia, Summer 2009 in Canton, Ohio, represents the first IFAF Junior World Championship (19 years and younger). The IFAF office is located near Paris, France. For more, visit www.ifaf.info.

About USA Football

USA Football is the national governing body of America’s favorite sport on youth and amateur levels. The independent non-profit hosts nearly 100 football training events per year which offer education for coaches and game officials, skill development for players and resources for youth league administrators. USA Football oversees and manages U.S. national teams and is the United States’ delegate to IFAF. USA Football was endowed by the NFL and NFLPA in 2002 and is chaired by former U.S. Congressman and professional quarterback **JACK KEMP**. For more, visit usafootball.com.

Editor’s note

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Photos / Creative

Photographs from the IFAF Junior World Championship press conference and a high-resolution event logo are available upon request.

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