



Annual Update

Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission



ASHEVILLE SPORTS

ASHEVILLE BUNCOMBE REGIONAL SPORTS COMMISSION

Mission Statement

Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission (ABRSC) will identify and attract sports events and related meetings to enhance the health, wellness and quality of life for area residents and sports enthusiasts and will generate a positive economic impact by promoting our region as a recognized sporting destination.

Vision Statement:

To host memorable sports events that will enrich the lives of the athletes and spectators.



Organization Description:

The Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission is a 501(C)3 organization established through a partnership between Buncombe County, the City of Asheville, and the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority. In keeping with the above Mission Statement, ABRSC aggressively works to recruit sporting events to all areas of Buncombe County that attract visitors and enhance the wellness and quality of life for local residents.

Community Outreach Through Sports Events

Fed Cup:

In 2018 and 2019, the Fed Cup incorporated youth sports clinics and outreach programs into the Asheville Fed Cup. Both years during the Fed Cup, students from all of the fourth-grade classes in Buncombe County participated in an essay contest for the opportunity to attend free tennis clinics at the Harrah's Cherokee Center Asheville. Over 250 students from the two winning schools were selected to attend clinics that included the opportunity to meet athletes and participate in various skill sessions. In 2019, all of the Asheville City School fourth grade classes attended similar clinics and also did art projects that were displayed at the Harrah's Cherokee Center Asheville during the event. In addition, there were two USTA Net Generation clinics held at the Harrah's Cherokee Center Asheville on Saturday and Sunday with a focus on exposing children from our underserved communities to the sport of tennis and they were provided with a ticket for the matches that day.



Southern Conference Basketball Championships:

Education Days - During the Southern Conference Basketball Championship, over 5,500 students from Buncombe County Schools and Asheville City Schools will attend the Thursday and Friday morning sessions. School Days has grown each year and includes the opportunities for charter and private schools to also attend. This is a great opportunity for students to not only attend the tournament but to be exposed to great role models.

Downtown Dribble - On Saturday of the 2019 Southern Conference, close to 800 children attended the Downtown Dribble. This event is free, open to the public and each child participating receives a basketball, t-shirt and a ticket to the Saturday game at the Harrah's Cherokee Center Asheville. Participation in the Downtown Dribble was a little down in 2019 because of the weather forecast for severe storms but preregistrations for 2020 surpassed 850. ABRSC works with the Asheville Police Department, Boys and Girls Club, the Salvation Army, the YMCA and many other organizations to promote the event and also bring children to the event. Most of the children who participate in this event are from Buncombe County.



Halftime and National Anthems - Several of the halftime performances are from elementary schools (Fairview Flyers and North Buncombe Bouncing Blackhawks) and community youth organizations. All of the national anthem performances feature music performance groups and individuals from Buncombe County including the Asheville Youth Choir for the Championship Game.

WNC Children's Fund Adidas Outreach - For the 2020 tournament, the Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission and the Southern Conference partnered with the WNC Children's Fund, adidas, the Asheville Police Department and the Buncombe County Sheriff's Department for a new outreach program. The Asheville Police Department and the Buncombe County Sheriff's Department were asked to identify 30 students each for a special program. Each of these children will attend the Downtown Dribble and then attend a special program at the Harrah's Cherokee Center Asheville. Manteo Mitchell, an Olympic Gold Medalist in the 2012 Olympics and former Western Carolina University track star, will speak to the students and then they will be treated to lunch and a special bag of adidas gear.

Hometown Heroes - The Local Organizing Committee solicited sponsorships from Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina, Duke Energy, Hedrick Industries and MB Haynes to create a block of 1,200 tickets for the Championship Game of the Southern Conference Basketball Tournament. Each year, police, fire, EMS, City of Asheville and Buncombe County Employees and their families are invited to attend the Championship Game as we recognize those individuals whose service have made Buncombe County and the surrounding areas a safer and better place to live.



Spartan Race:

The Spartan Race has been held at the Grove Sand and Stone Quarry in Black Mountain for the past six years. This event has become one of the largest attended Spartan Races in the country and is a great use of our natural resources in Buncombe County. While this event is a huge boost to the economy of eastern Buncombe County, the most important impact occurs with Hedrick Industries donating the rent received for the quarry to the Black Mountain Children's Home and the Asheville Museum of Science. Hedrick also produces the Rock the Quarry 5K each year in September. For 2019, Hedrick donated a total of \$30,000 back to those charities.

Great Smoky Mountain Grapple:

In 2017, the ABRSC, in a partnership with the Harrah's Cherokee Center Asheville and Buncombe County Schools, created the Great Smoky Mountain Grapple wrestling tournament held at the Harrah's Cherokee Center Asheville. This event is held on the weekend before Christmas and allows the varsity and JV teams from Buncombe County to stay at home for the holidays instead of traveling to Chapel Hill, Raleigh, or Pigeon Forge. All of the high schools in Buncombe County participated in the event except Owen and Erwin and are joined by teams from North Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, Virginia, and South Carolina. This event has grown from 12 teams in the first year to 22 and this year 31 teams. In addition, 62 girl wrestlers participated in the new Girls Division. Girls wrestling is a new emerging sport for high school sports and also at the NCAA level. Youth wrestlers from western North Carolina participated in an additional youth tournament held on Sunday. The event has partnered with Eblen Charities and the teams competed for a championship belt based on the amount of food collected from their communities prior to the tournament.



Impact of Major Sports Events on Buncombe County

Event	Total Attendees	Direct Spend to the Economy	Jobs	Local Taxes Generated	Total Business
Gala Gymnastics	5,362	\$1,275,817	955	\$55,128	\$2,109,221
International Tennis Federation Fed Cup	6,560	\$3,002,920	2,185	\$148,008	\$4,937,392
SoCon Basketball Championship	31,488	\$3,752,694	1,555	\$169,390	\$6,210,056
Haute Route Asheville	560	\$884,379	395	\$45,913	\$1,449,585
Asheville Spartan Race	12,535	\$3,490,895	2,905	\$215,254	\$5,663,603
NC Mixed Doubles Tennis Championships	3,000	\$1,615,879	678	\$90,625	\$2,634,191
Great Smoky Mountain Grapple	2,429	\$445,193	209	\$19,150	\$735,568
Totals	61,934	\$14,467,777	8,882	\$743,438	\$23,739,616

*Note - these numbers do not currently include any events hosted by ABYSA or at the Bob Lewis Ballpark



2020-21 Goals and Objectives for the Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission

Promote Buncombe County as Sports Destination and recruit additional sporting events to the county:

- Continue to create a national awareness of the Bob Lewis Ballpark in Enka, Buncombe County Sports Park and other facilities in the communities
- Purchase advertising space in national publications that showcase sports facilities in Buncombe County
- Attend baseball and softball specific trade shows and conventions
- Prepare bid packages for national events in collaboration with the Bob Lewis Ballpark staff and board.
- Work with the Bob Lewis Ballpark to look at additional and alternative uses of the complex.
- Attend additional national trade shows to promote all sports facilities and Buncombe County as a sports destination.
- Begin to create a relationship with paddleboard and water sports events to bring events to Lake Julian and the future Woodfin Wave.
- Aggressively recruit one international or national event like Fed Cup each year or recruit a national event for a multiple year contract.

Continue collaborative efforts with Buncombe County Parks and Recreation:

- Continue to work with Buncombe County Parks and Recreation to expand the scope and usage of the Buncombe County Sports Park for sports such as cross country, disc golf, lacrosse, and soccer once the new artificial turf facilities are completed.
- Work to develop a certified cross-country course incorporating the Buncombe County Sports Park and Bob Lewis Ballpark.
- Look for opportunities to expand water sports events on Lake Julian.

Facility Development:

- Continue to assist with the potential development of the Indoor Track Facility in Weaverville and the Sports Complex in Swannanoa.
- Work with UNC Asheville on their comprehensive facilities plan to develop and renovate facilities that would enhance event recruitment to those facilities.
- Explore the opportunities for an Aquatic Center in Buncombe County, cross country course and other facilities outlined in the 2016 Facilities Needs Analysis.

Event Hosting:

- Host the Southern Conference Basketball Championships, Great Smoky Mountain Grapple and Spartan Race while working to recruit international and national profile events such as Fed Cup.
- Continue to include youth and community engagement components in sports events hosted such as the Downtown Dribble, School Days, and Hometown Heroes. Explore opportunities to increase the minority and underserved populations in these events.

Successful Outcomes for 2020-2021

1. The success of events hosted in Buncombe County will be measured by the attendance and the economic impact of those events. In 2019, over 55,000 individuals attended or participated in major sporting events in Buncombe County. The direct spend to the local economy was over \$14.1 million with a total business spend of over \$23.1 million. There were over \$700,000 generated in local taxes from those events.
2. Continue to provide access to the youth of Buncombe County to inspirational sporting events such as Fed Cup and the Southern Conference and the positive opportunities that participation in sports provides.
3. Extend the contract of the Southern Conference in Asheville which expires with the 2021 tournament for an additional three or five years.
4. Successfully secure at least one NCAA bid from the five submitted.
5. Work to successfully see the start of at least one major sports facility in Buncombe County.



Evaluating the 2019-2020 Goals and Objectives for the Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission with restored operational funding from Buncombe County

Promoted Buncombe County as Sports Destination and recruited additional sporting events to the county:

1. Completed a Sports Facility Guide for Buncombe County
2. Create a national awareness of the Bob Lewis Ballpark in Enka.
 - i.) Ads were created for the following publications:
 - Sports Events 2020 Planners Guide to CVBS, Sports Commissions, and Venues ([Addendum 1](#))
 - 2020 Sports Planning Guide North Carolina ([Addendum 2](#))
 - Sports Destination Management - May/June 2019 ([Addendum 3](#))
 - ii.) Assisted with the bid preparation and presentation to Top Gun Baseball at their meeting in Charlotte.
 - iii.) Attended the Connect Trade Show and recruited Atlantic Coast Baseball to have their first tournament in North Carolina at the Bob Lewis Ballpark on May 23-25, 2020.
 - iv.) The President of the ABRSC serves on the Bob Lewis Park Advisory Committee Digital Advertising with Sports Planning Guide to feature Bob Lewis Park, Buncombe County Sports Park, Harrah's Cherokee Center Asheville, Sherrill Center, John B. Lewis Soccer Complex, McCormick Field, and the Aston Park Tennis Center.
3. Attended the TEAMS Conference and the SportsETA Tradeshow to recruit events to Buncombe County.
4. Developed a set of three marketing trade show pop-up banners specific to Buncombe County and with the ability to focus on specific sports.

Continue collaborative efforts with Buncombe County Parks and Recreation:

1. In a collaborative effort, established the Stonewall Sports League which featured 9 kickball teams in the fall at the Buncombe County Sports Park and dodgeball at the Stephens Lee Center. The league will continue with dodgeball in the spring and volleyball in the summer of 2020.
2. Researched additional events to promote a renovated Buncombe County Sports Park and have met with rugby and lacrosse to expand their events in the area.
3. Facilitated a meeting with the track coaching staff of UNC Asheville and Buncombe County Parks and Recreation to begin the planning for a cross country course at the Buncombe County Sports Park.

Evaluating the 2019-2020 Goals and Objectives for the Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission with restored operational funding from Buncombe County

Facility Development:

1. Continued to assist with the potential development of the Indoor Track Facility in Weaverville.
2. Worked with UNC Asheville on their comprehensive facilities plan to develop and renovate facilities that would enhance event recruitment to those facilities.
 - Met with the architectural firm to discuss how which facilities would enhance recruitment of events to Buncombe County
 - Extensively met with two different companies to develop designs for the renovation of the track and field complex
 - Attended and spoke at a fundraising social for track and field facilities at UNC Asheville
3. Discussed options for event recruitment for the Warren Wilson Pool and potential growth of competitive diving at that facility.
4. Facilitated discussions between the Town of Black Mountain and USA BMX for a potential mountain bike facility in Black Mountain.

Event Hosting/Solicitation of Events:

1. Successfully hosted the Southern Conference Basketball Championships, Great Smoky Mountain Grapple and Spartan Race while working to recruit international and national profile events such as Fed Cup.
2. Host of the 2020 Gran Fondo National Series National Championships.
3. Submitted bids for 3 NCAA Division III Wrestling Championships and 2 NCAA Division II Basketball Championships for 2023-2026 which will be announced in October 2020.
4. Continued to include youth and community engagement components in sports events hosted such as the Downtown Dribble, School Days, and Hometown Heroes.

ASHEVILLE, NC

EMBOLDENED BY ITS NATURAL BEAUTY, THE ASHEVILLE AREA UTILIZES ITS GREAT NATURAL RESOURCES TO PRODUCE SPLENDID SPORTS EVENTS SUCH AS SPARTAN RACE AND CYCLING EVENTS



If you're driving, Asheville is easily accessible from all directions, with Interstate 26 running north and south and I-40 running east and west. If you're flying in, Asheville Regional Airport carries flights through Allegiant, American Airlines, Delta, Elite Airways, Spirit and United.

POPULAR ACTIVITIES

- ▶ Visit America's largest home at the **Biltmore Estate**, which combines a majestic house built in 1895 with a winery, breathtaking gardens and fascinating history.
- ▶ Follow the winding road of the **Blue Ridge Parkway** for 469 miles through a pastoral landscape to the Appalachian Mountains.

FACILITY SPOTLIGHT

Harrah's Cherokee Center Asheville Arena & Auditorium

As the largest event venue in Western North Carolina, the Harrah's Cherokee Center Asheville is a multipurpose complex containing a 7,000-seat arena and 3,200 auditorium. The Exploreasheville.com Arena annually hosts the Southern Conference Basketball Championships, the Great Smoky Mountain Grapple, the Harlem Globetrotters and Gala Gymnastics. The arena has hosted two Fed Cup first round ties along with exhibition games for the Atlanta Hawks and Charlotte Hornets. The Thomas Wolfe Auditorium hosts cheerleading competitions and is a great auxiliary function area for sports events.

Buncombe County Sports Park Soccer, lacrosse, disc golf, volleyball, bocce

With eight soccer fields, the Buncombe County Sports Park is a haven for tournament

PLANNER PERSPECTIVE

"Asheville, NC proved to be the ideal destination for our event, so much that we decided to go back the next year as well. Their sports commission team is second to none and their southern hospitality also sets them apart from other destinations we consider."

— Jeff Ryan, USTA Senior Director, Team Events



planners. This complex additionally features an 18-hole disc golf course, a sand volleyball court, bocce ball courts, a walking trail, picnic tables, restrooms, a playground and more. As part of a new master plan, three of the fields will be converted to artificial turf and will have lights in 2020.

Bob Lewis Ballpark Baseball, softball

Asheville's newest sports facility, the Bob Lewis Ballpark, has seven fully lit baseball/softball fields with artificial turf infields. This complex is designed to provide the best experience for both the player and the fan.



ASHEVILLE BUNCOMBE REGIONAL SPORTS COMMISSION

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Asheville - North Carolina's Grand Slam

A goal rattling slam dunk or a bases loaded homerun, the team from Asheville is here to make your sporting event a grand slam!

PLAY

With various indoor and outdoor facilities, Asheville is ready to accommodate your event. The Harrah's Cherokee Center is a 7,000-seat arena which annually hosts the Southern Conference Basketball Championships and has hosted the 2018 and 2019 first round ties of the Fed Cup. This great arena and adjoining auditorium annually host wrestling, gymnastics, cheerleading and a wide array of sports events. In addition, Kimmel Arena on the campus of UNC Asheville is another incredible indoor sports venue. Surrounded by the beauty of the Blue Ridge Mountains, the Buncombe County Sports Park, the Bob Lewis Ball Park, and the John B. Lewis Soccer complex offer a wide range of facilities to host soccer,

lacrosse, baseball, softball and any other outdoor sport.

HOTELS

With over 8,000 hotel rooms, Asheville and the Buncombe County area have a wide range of accommodations to meet the needs of any sports traveler and family.

Asheville Accolades

- The 25 Best U.S. Cities to Spend A Weekend
Publication: *Thrillist* – May 7, 2019



2019 Southern Conference Basketball Championships – Harrah's Cherokee Center Asheville.

- 7 Top Destinations for Adventure Seekers
Publication: *Luxury Travel Magazine* – April 10, 2019
- 20 Of the Top Places to Visit in The US In 2019
Publication: *TripAdvisor* – January 28, 2019

Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission

Demp Bradford, President

"Whether it is basketball, soccer, lacrosse, volleyball, cycling or wrestling, the team at the Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission is your one-stop shop for your event's needs. Nestled in the valley of the Blue Ridge Parkway, the moderate climate allows for events year-round. Come EXPLORE ASHEVILLE!"



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ASHEVILLE

THE SOUTH'S NEWEST GRAND SLAM



BOB LEWIS BALLPARK

Located outside beautiful Asheville, North Carolina, the Bob Lewis Park offers first-class playing facilities with incredible mountain views.

Opened in 2018, this facility offers 7 fully lit fields with turf infields to enable play under most adverse weather conditions.

Beautifully designed to enhance the experience for both the player and the spectator. Conveniently located near the intersection of Interstates 40 and 26, the facility is easily accessible to most of the Southeastern United States.



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