

Sports Success

Are you ready to play ball?

Corpus Christi certainly was when the Gulf Coast Football Classic came through the Coastal Bend helping to make youth and amateur sports events a success for Corpus Christi Convention and Visitors Bureau in the summer season.

But that's not all. The Football Classic combined with Spikefest, an amateur outdoor grass and sand Volleyball tournament, the University of Texas Women's Soccer Training Camp and the Pan American Golf Association's convention took the summer's sports events to a whole new level.

The Texas High School Football Fraternity, Inc. brought one of the most competitive Texas football events, the Gulf Coast Football Classic, to the Coastal Bend Thursday, August 27 and Friday, August 28, 2009 in stadiums in Alice, Corpus Christi and Flour Bluff independent school districts. In Corpus Christi, the teams played at Cabaniss Field and Buccaneer Stadium. The 2009 line-ups matched some of the best football teams from across Texas against each other, said John Weaver with the Texas High School Football Fraternity.

"They have good football," Weaver said. "This is the first year in Corpus Christi, but we plan do it here every year."

The Coastal Bend area football programs participating included Alice, Carroll, Flour Bluff, H.M. King, Ingleside, Miller and Moody high schools. Also, playing were Alexander High School in Laredo, Clear Brook High School in Friendswood and Lamar High School in Houston.

Spikefest served it up at the Texas State Aquarium and the Radisson Hotel Corpus Christi Beach Saturday, August 22 and Sunday, August 23, 2009. Spikefest, which had 54 teams participate, is the largest 3-on-3 and 5-on-5 amateur outdoor grass volleyball event series in the United States. The Spikefest Finals in Corpus Christi will feature a sand doubles tournament, in addition to the grass events.

The 2009 season took Spikefest to markets across the nation during the summer months culminating at the Tour Finals in Corpus Christi. Spikefest combines exciting fast-paced volleyball action with a festival-style atmosphere, including great food, music, contests and more. On average, Spikefest attracts more than 1,500 players and draws more than 6,000 fans per event and will see 20,000 players across the tour and 75,000 spectators. The event draws top amateur talent regionally and nationally, in addition to your everyday Volleyball Joes and Janes.

"This is just an example of all the sporting opportunities in Corpus Christi and using our unique venue sites like Texas State Aquarium for volleyball and Cabaniss for the UT Women's Soccer Camp," said the CVB's Vice President of Sales and Sports Marketing Ed Persall. "These people come from all over and after they come down for an event, they will come back."

Another sport event this summer included the University of Texas' Women's Soccer team coming for their pre-training camp. The 24-member team and its seven staff members used Cabaniss Field during their weeklong stay from Wednesday, August 5 to Wednesday, August 12, 2009. The UT Women's Soccer team's stay in Corpus Christi had a nearly \$13,000 economic impact on the city. The team also scheduled an inter-squad match that was open to the public and hosted a Youth Soccer Clinic during their stay.

University of Texas Assistant Soccer Coach Matt Mott said Corpus Christi was the perfect fit for his team.

"We were trying to find a good area away from campus to stay on the beach to train in the sand and that has great soccer facilities," Mott said. "We found that all in Corpus Christi."

The Pan American Golf Association's (PAGA) Annual Summer National Convention chose Corpus Christi as its host this summer from July 27 to July 31, 2009 adding yet another spoke to the wheel of sport events, this one on the green. The PAGA brought about 2,000 attendees to the city and made an economic impact of some \$725,000.

The five-day convention featured a National Junior Golf Tournament, a Junior Golf Clinic, a Senior Tournament and a National PAGA Men and Women's Tournament at golf courses throughout the Coastal Bend, including Newport Dunes, Rockport Country Club, Northshore Country Club, Padre Isles Country Club, River Hills Country Club, the Gabe Lozano Golf Center and the Oso Beach Municipal Golf Course. Professional golfer and Corpus Christi native Phil Blackmar hosted the "Warm-Up with Phil Junior Golf Clinic" at the Gabe Lozano Golf Center. Blackmar is from Corpus Christi and toured with the PGA or Professional Golf Association. He now plays on the Champion's Tour.

"We're continuing to go after all sporting event possibilities and all types of sports," Persall said. "I think it's been a successful summer. Golf with the PAGA, soccer with UT, volleyball with Spikefest and football. They are all unique. Corpus Christi offers it all, a sports experience and activities year round."