



ORLANDO LIGHTS THE WAY FOR SPORT DURING COVID YEAR

Accolades and awards for Orlando as the media reflect on 2020's outstanding sporting success stories

ORLANDO, Fla. (January 21, 2021) – As 2020 came to a close, sports journalists and publications reflected on the major storylines, as well as the many challenges the industry faced throughout the year. Though Greater Orlando faced its share of hardships, as all major tourism destinations have during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was also the region that many leagues and event owners turned to when they were ready to safely return to play. Four leading sports industry publications recently recognized Orlando's unique contributions to the reopening of lives sports during the difficult year.

The 2020 SportTechie Award for Outstanding Venue went to the Orlando Disney Bubble. As it pointed out, "In 12 weeks of residency at the Disney campus, zero players had tested positive inside the Bubble as the league and its players staged a perfect conclusion to the interrupted season.

"While SportTechie's award for Outstanding Venue typically goes to a gleaming new edifice, rather than retrofit resort ballrooms and field houses, the meticulous planning, nimble updates and COVID-free execution made the NBA Bubble this year's winner."

The prestigious SportsPro magazine – in its [2020 Year in Review: 25 stories that shaped the sporting year](#) – picked out the Orlando Disney bubble as one of the major narratives that defined 2020. Alex Conrad wrote: "With the Covid-19 pandemic wreaking havoc throughout the world, the prospect of two of North America's major sporting leagues descending on one location to continue their respective seasons might seem ludicrous."

Asking "Why Orlando?" he went on to say that "It is the sheer scale of the expansive facilities on offer at the ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex, coupled with large-scale hotels in close distance, that made Orlando a logical choice for MLS and the NBA."

Sports Business Journal also highlighted on the Orlando Bubble in its "Best Pivot: Sports in a Bubble" year-end round up. It featured both the NBA and MLS experiences.

London-based Sports Business International – defining top themes from a challenging year – also applauded the NBA's Orlando Disney Bubble. It said "After weeks of intense negotiations, those involved settled on a fully-quarantined plan in which 22 of the league's 30 teams resumed play at the ESPN Wide World of Sports in Orlando.

"The NBA bubble required significant lifestyle adjustments for all those involved, as well as nearly \$200m in financial investment by the league to complete. And without any attending fans, the league

and its technology and media partners were also forced to fundamentally rethink game presentation and fan engagement.”

Concacaf’s decision to host the final matches of the 2020 Scotiabank Concacaf Champions League (SCCL) in Orlando was a vote of confidence in the city’s reputation as a “safe pair of hands”. The confederation’s flagship club competition was played in Orlando’s Exploria Stadium from December 15-22.

Later, Concacaf posted its thanks to the city: “We are very grateful to Orlando City SC, the Greater Orlando Sports Commission and the Mayor’s Office for supporting Concacaf to deliver the final matches of our 2020 Scotiabank Concacaf Champions League,” said Concacaf General Secretary Philippe Moggio.

“The facilities at Exploria Stadium are first class and all the city’s stakeholders have assisted us in organizing this competition safely, and in a manner that has allowed the teams to showcase some great football to fans across the region. We have seen what a great city this is and on behalf of everyone at Concacaf and the participating clubs, thank you, Orlando.”

About the Greater Orlando 2026 (GO26) Bid Committee:

The Greater Orlando Sports Commission, City of Orlando, Orange County and Orlando City Soccer Club have assembled a team of 450+ community leaders from public and private sectors working hand-in-hand with the goal of bringing the 2026 FIFA World Cup™ to Orlando.

Greater Orlando takes a regional approach to executing high-profile events and forms host committees for each of the city’s marquee events, dating back to the 1994 FIFA World Cup. The organization determines how best to use the city’s collective resources and creates a strategic plan to deliver epic athlete and fan experiences.

The GO26 Bid Committee is broken into 11 topic-specific sub committees including events/operations, special events, marketing/public relations, finance/administration, legal, youth/grassroots, accommodations, human rights, public safety/security, sustainability, and fan fests.

For more information, visit www.Orlando2026.com.

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