



Photo Courtesy: AFSF 2015 Randolph

## **You Already Know Our Fans Have a Penchant for Fun. Now Get to Know the Rest of the Wisconsin Sports Story.**

The Wisconsin take on amateur sports isn't that different from our pro league perspective.

In other words, reverence for legendary facilities, appreciation of four distinct seasons, love of the great outdoors, fierce yet friendly competition, and a propensity for ingeniously fun events.

Perhaps most importantly, though, is our "never say never" attitude in creating new venues and new tournaments, and putting Wisconsin in the running for events you'd never think would consider our humble state.

The final piece that puts Wisconsin over the top in the minds of tournament organizers, sanctioning bodies, coaches and managers is our tourism industry. Yes, hospitality, with every i dotted and t crossed. Said another way, when you're having fun, we're having fun.

The quick-read documents that follow go beyond Lambeau Field and Miller Park in bringing you what's new and what's trending in the Badger State.

If you're looking for a Midwest perspective for your 2016 editorial calendar line-up, we think you've just found it.

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## Big News from the Badger State

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Super facility news from seven destinations around the state proves Wisconsin is serious about investing in sports.

1. **La Crosse's Copeland Park** is getting an \$800,000 enhancement, including a new pro shop and ticket office. This facility is home to the La Crosse Loggers of the Northwoods League, the largest organized baseball league in the world with 18 teams, and UW-La Crosse Baseball teams.
2. **Green Bay's Colburn Park** will become an outdoor swim meet venue when the \$4.5 million Olympic-size pool renovations are complete, with work commencing in 2016.
3. **Kenosha's Velodrome**, the country's oldest operating velodrome (where admission is always free), will receive nearly \$700,000 worth of improvements, including a new concrete track and increasing banked turns from 24 to 28 degrees to meet national race standards, all in an effort to bring it back to national prominence, as it once hosted national bike championships from 1928 to 1992.
4. **Wausau's Granite Peak at Rib Mountain State Park** is adding ski runs and new ski-in and ski-out lodging.
5. **Eau Claire's Jeffers Park** baseball/softball complex is increasing in size to five fields, with covered dugouts and bleachers at each field.
6. **Appleton's Fox Cities Exhibition Center** was just approved and construction is set to begin in summer 2016 on this \$27.5 million facility that will host select sporting events like wrestling, gymnastics, table tennis and archery.
7. **Milwaukee** is getting a new \$500 million downtown sports and entertainment complex that will serve as the new home for the Milwaukee Bucks NBA team. The complex is expected to be completed by 2017.



Photo Courtesy: Velodrome Racing Kenosha



Photo Courtesy: Travel Wisconsin



Photo Courtesy: La Crosse Loggers

## What's Trending Now in Wisconsin: Amateur and Collegiate Sports

While trends often start on the coasts and take their time migrating to the Midwest, Wisconsin is ahead of the game when it comes to certain sports trends, like lacrosse and rugby. Also, leave it up to the Badger State to turn a tailgate game into a real sports thing, and to have the unabashed optimism for outdoor swim competitions.

A December 2015 survey of sports directors at convention and visitor bureaus around the state turned up this list of the **Top 10 What's Trending Now** in Wisconsin amateur and collegiate sports.

1. **Lacrosse:** Centuries older than football or basketball, this sport has historic ties to the Native American culture of Wisconsin. Stevens Point started a youth lacrosse organization in 2015. Multi-use fields in Wisconsin Dells are being booked for lacrosse. Beloit College in Beloit was an early adopter of the sport with field markings for both men's and women's competitions. Milwaukee is seeing an upswing in lacrosse too.
2. **Kubb:** This old Nordic lawn game is perhaps best described as a mix of bowling and horseshoes, and "The Kubb Capital of North America" is none other than Eau Claire. It's here that the national championship is played with more than 100 teams participating, making it the largest tournament of its kind outside of Europe.
3. **Pickleball:** The Chippewa Valley hosted Pickleball Palooza in 2015, maxing out on participants, some who came from Florida, Washington and Nevada to participate.
4. **Snowshoeing:** Eau Claire hosted the 2015 Dion Snowshoes U.S. National Snowshoe Championships, with junior, senior and team events. Madison has its annual Winterfest (it's February 13, 2016) with a 3k snowshoe individual and relay (three laps around the capitol square).



Photo Courtesy: Beloit College Sports Information



Photo Courtesy: Visit Eau Claire



Photo Courtesy: Visit Eau Claire

5. **Cornhole:** In Marshfield, this tailgate game has turned competitive, with the city having hosted the 2015 state American Cornhole Organization championship.

6. **Rugby:** While Wisconsin loves its football, rugby is making strides in Wisconsin Dells and Madison.

7. **Disc Golf:** Some of the best disc golf courses in the Midwest can be found along the Lake Michigan coast in the Manitowoc area. Stevens Point has been hosting the Professional Disc Golf Association's Standing Rock Open for 18 years and counting.

8. **Outdoor Swimming:** Wisconsinites are known for their can-do attitude, and outdoor aquatic centers are prime example. In Green Bay, two Olympic-size pools are in the works for 2016, adding to several outdoor pools built by local school districts. Near Kenosha, the Village of Pleasant Prairie RecPlex, the largest municipal recreation facility in America, has a feel of outdoors, given its location on the shores of Lake Andrea, a 110-acre spring-fed lake.

9. **Curling:** Wisconsin has more curling clubs than any other state, and the Wausau Curling Club is the largest facility of its kind in the U.S.

10. **Fat Tire Biking:** This will be the third year for the Badger State Games Fat Tire Bike race in Wausau, where participation has doubled each year since inception. There's also the Fat Bike Birkie, set for March in Hayward and staged on the professionally groomed trails of the famous Birkebener cross country ski competition. It's the largest fat bike race in the world. La Crosse, located in the state's Driftless Region, was untouched by the Ice Age glaciers, so it's a veritable playground of bluffs, ravines, coulees and lowlands on both sides of the Mississippi River for biking events of all kinds.



Photo Courtesy: Lyn Anderson



Photo Courtesy: Discover Eastern Wisconsin Disc Golf



Photo Courtesy: Wausau Curling Center



Photo Courtesy: AFSF 2015 Randolph

**Psst:** Also watch for youth futsal, a modified form of soccer played with five players and usually on a smaller indoor field, to pick up steam in the Fox Cities region of Wisconsin. And in Racine County, keep an eye on the growth of Australian Rules Football (USAFL) – they hosted the **2015 Central Regional Tournament** with more than 350 athletes from across the country competing. Finally, foot golf, a cross between soccer and golf, is going strong on courses in Milwaukee County with accreditation by the American FootGolf League.



Photo Courtesy: Milwaukee County Parks

**Off-Beat:** No Wisconsin list is complete without an off-beat or quirky entry and we have one from Stevens Point: Canoeing meets Comic-Con with a side of conservation in **PaddleQuest**, a fantasy paddling event where participants choose the adventures they want to participate in (August 20-21, 2016).



Photo Courtesy: PaddleQuest

## Mix of Events – Some Expected, Some Not So – Defines Wisconsin Sports

Four distinct seasons. Check. Spirit of competition. Check. Eco-friendly. And check. These events stand out as reminders of what Wisconsin stands for in the world of amateur sports.



Photo Courtesy: Madison Area Sports Commission



Photo Courtesy: Aperture by Steve Davis



Photo Courtesy: VISIT Milwaukee

### **USA Climbing American Bouldering Series National Championship**

Madison | January 29-February 7, 2016

This competition is staged at the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Monona Terrace on Lake Monona. The event features USA Climbing's world-class bouldering wall and an international webcast to bring the action to fans across the country.

### **Nagy Memorial U19 Ski Qualifier**

La Crosse | January 29, 30, & 31, 2016

The Nagy Memorial Scholarship ski race gets a major boost in prestige in 2016 as it becomes one of three U19 qualifiers for Junior Nationals. Mount La Crosse joins Vail and Aspen as hosts for the qualifiers, with some 300 racers from the Rocky and Midwest Regions converging in Wisconsin.

### **American Birkebeiner**

Cable/Hayward | February 20, 2016

The largest cross-country ski marathon in North America. More than 10,000 athletes compete each year, and nearly 45,000 spectators gather for the Nordic sports festivities. Stretching approximately 50k from Cable to Hayward, the event challenges the best of the best.

### **Team World Horseshoe Tournament**

Beloit | May 13-15, 2016

The annual Team World Horseshoe Tournament will be held in Beloit at Telfer Park for the 27th consecutive year. The competition attracts some of the nation's best pitchers – they throw ringers 70 percent of the time or better. The Beloit facility has 13 outdoor courts over three acres, plus a clubhouse and six-court indoor pitching facility.

## **2nd Annual ACO Cornhole State Championships**

Marshfield | June 3-4, 2016

Following the first-ever Wisconsin cornhole tournament, this year's event will once again be a highlight of Marshfield's Dairyfest. Enter in the singles category and you'll get a chance to compete in doubles, too. The competition is timed to Marshfield Dairyfest which attracts some 20,000 dairy lovers.

## **Annual United States National Kubb Championship**

Eau Claire | July 8-10, 2016

Eau Claire, the "Kubb Capital of North America," hosts the largest kubb tournament outside of Europe. Over the past 10 years, kubb has had significant growth in Europe and the U.S., and the tournament has generated interest among athletes of all skill levels.

## **40th Bellin Run**

Green Bay | June 11, 2016

The third largest 10k in the country, last year's race attracted 16,539 participants. The event also attracts nationally renowned athletes such as Joan Benoit Samuelson and Frank Shorter. Another run of note is the Cellcom Green Bay Marathon (May 20-22, 2016), with runners finishing with a lap inside storied Lambeau Field.

## **ASA Men's Major Fastpitch National Championship**

Kimberly | August 4-7, 2016

The top 16 teams in the world will compete in a double-elimination tournament for the championship title at Kimberly's Sunset Park.

## **Wisconsin Iron Man**

Madison | September 11, 2016

More than 75,000 enthusiastic fans come out to support some of the world's most impressive athletes as they compete in the grueling Iron Man challenge. Athletes swim Lake Monona and bike and run throughout Dane County's glacier-formed landscapes.

## **The Milwaukee River Challenge**

Milwaukee | September 17, 2016

Now in its 16th year, this racing event along the Menomonee and Milwaukee Rivers attracts nearly 1,000 participants. Spectators move from one bridge to another along the three-mile route to cheer on the collegiate crew teams.



## Top of the Top-Notch Sports Facilities in Wisconsin

### Wausau Curling Center | Wausau

This curling facility, the largest in North America, hosts league play and men's and women's bonspiels.



Photo Courtesy: Wausau Curling Club

### Resch Center | Green Bay

This is Titledown's largest entertainment destination at 10,500 seats and hosting 150 events annually to the tune of 650,000 attendees. Home to Green Bay Phoenix Men's Basketball (Division 1), the Blizzard Professional Indoor Football, and Gamblers Tier 1 Junior Hockey.



Photo Courtesy: Greater Green Bay CVB

### Woodside Sports Complex | Wisconsin Dells Area

Actually three facilities spread out across the Dells' landscape, including the original complex with eight all-turf baseball/softball fields; a dome with room for 10 basketball courts and 16 volleyball courts plus a full soccer field outside; and the newest with six all-turf soccer/multipurpose fields and four all-turf baseball/softball fields. When you add it up, Woodside is the Midwest's largest all-turf sports complex.



Photo Courtesy: Wisconsin Dells VCB

### Sunset Park | Kimberly

A popular venue for men's fastpitch softball, it will host the 2016 ASA Men's Major Fastpitch National Championship.



Photo Courtesy: Kimberly Softball

### North Beach Park | Racine

Wisconsin's first beach to be designated as a Certified Blue Wave clean beach by the National Clean Beaches Council, it's a popular destination for major triathlons, beach volleyball tournaments, sailing competitions and fishing. The Ironman 70.3 Racine triathlon is held at North Beach each year.



Photo Courtesy: Real Racine Scott D. Olsen

### **Alliant Energy Center | Madison**

A multi-use facility with 10,000 seat coliseum, an arena for equine events, and a 29-acre natural outdoor space with two ponds.

### **Carson Park Historic Baseball Stadium | Eau Claire**

Baseball legends like Hank Aaron and Joe Torre played at this 3,800-seat facility.

### **McPhee Physical Education Center | Eau Claire**

Host to the 2015 National Collegiate Table Tennis Championship, this facility is home to the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire's volleyball, wrestling, swimming, and gymnastics teams.

### **Portage County Youth Soccer Complex | Stevens Point**

Billed as the largest self-owned outdoor complex in the state with 30 acres of irrigated grass, this complex is fully funded and operated by the Portage County Youth Soccer organization with no municipal governance, a rarity for outdoor fields. It is used by youth, high school and collegiate teams.

### **Neuroscience Group Field at Fox Cities Stadium | Appleton**

Home of the minor league baseball team and Class A affiliate of the Milwaukee Brewers, the Timber Rattlers, this 5,800-seat stadium underwent \$6.5 million in renovations in 2013.

### **UW-Milwaukee Panther Arena | Milwaukee**

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Panthers call this 12,700-seat arena home court. Interesting fact: The Panther Arena was one of the first TV-friendly venues in the nation.

### **The Ponds of Brookfield | Brookfield**

With an NHL-sized rink, 1,000 person seating capacity, and a large outdoor area for off-ice training, The Ponds is always hopping with youth, high school and Marquette University hockey.

### **Village of Pleasant Prairie RecPlex | Kenosha Area**

This is the largest recreational facility owned and operated by a municipality, with an aquatics center, ice arena, gymnasium for everything from fencing to basketball, and outdoor fields for lacrosse and archery.

### **Veterans Memorial Field Sports Complex | La Crosse**

This \$16.6 million stadium was completed in 2009 and is home to all football, track and field, soccer, tennis, and intramurals of the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. It will be the site of the 2018 NCAA Division III Track & Field National Championships.