



# TAMPA BAY – CITY OF CHAMPIONS

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In 2009, Tampa Bay will welcome fans and spectators alike as they host the Super Bowl for the fourth time. Although the Super Bowl isn't the only major sporting event that Tampa Bay has played host to. Every year, Tampa kicks off the first collegiate bowl game of the year with the Outback Bowl. In 1999, both the NCAA Final Four Men's Basketball Championship and National Hockey League's All-Star Game called Tampa Bay home. And in 2003 Tampa hosted the NCAA Men's Basketball First and Second Rounds and the AFL's Arena Bowl. Continuing the effort to host major sporting events, Tampa Bay will host the ACC Men's Basketball Tournament in 2007, the NCAA Men's Basketball First and Second Rounds in 2008, the NCAA Women's Final Four in 2008 and the SEC Men's Basketball Tournament in 2009.

Possibly Tampa Bay's best-known home team is the Buccaneers, who became Super Bowl Champions for the first time in 2003. After Tampa was awarded the National Football League's 27<sup>th</sup> franchise in 1974, the Bucs played in Tampa Stadium until 1998 when



they received a new logo and color scheme and moved into state-of-the-art Raymond James Stadium. The \$168.5 million stadium features "Buccaneer Cove," a 20,000-square-foot replica of an early 1800s seaport village, complete with a 103-foot-long pirate ship that blasts its cannons every time the Bucs score.

Tampa's football spirit is so strong that in 2000 the area experienced a European invasion. NFL Europe's six teams – Amsterdam Admirals, Barcelona Dragons, Berlin Thunder, Frankfurt Galaxy, Rhein Fire and Scottish Claymores – began holding their annual training camp in Tampa Bay.

A host of other professional sports teams call the Bay area home. The Tampa Bay Lightning began play in Tampa in 1992 and broke the ice at the new \$153 million St. Pete Times Forum in 1996. Still relatively new hockey team, and being from a warm weather state, the Lightning surprised many skeptics with their 2004 Stanley Cup victory. The Tampa Bay Storm arena football team also plays at the Forum, and is in a league of its own with the record for the most Arena Bowl victories. In addition, Major League Baseball's Tampa Bay Devil Rays load the bases at Tropicana Field in St. Petersburg. Still new to the game, the Devil Rays played their first season in 1998.

Grapefruit League baseball spring training is a tradition that continues in the Bay area. Even the Devil Rays hold their spring training here, making them the only team to train in the same city as they play the regular season. In addition, the Toronto Blue Jays and the Philadelphia Phillies spring train in Dunedin and Clearwater, respectively. The



most successful American sports franchise in history – the New York Yankees – have been holding their spring training games in Tampa since 1988. Legends Field, modeled after the original Yankee Stadium in the Bronx, was built in 1996. Spring training first came to the Bay area in 1914 with the St. Louis Browns. The St. Louis Cardinals, New York Giants, New York Mets, Los Angeles Dodgers and the Cleveland Indians have also spent the spring season in Tampa Bay over the years.

Those who like combine their love of sports and dining can tackle a meal at one of Tampa's many sports influenced restaurants. Diners can order of hand-painted, official NFL Game Football signed



former Miami Dolphins Coach Don Shula at Shula's Steak House. The four-diamond restaurant is a tribute to the Miami Dolphins' perfect 17-0 season in 1972. Former Buccaneer Lee Roy Selmon was inducted into the NFL Hall of Fame in 1995 and in 2000 he opened a Tampa restaurant bearing his name. Lee Roy Selmon's menu features Southern Comfort favorites while the Trophy Room showcases his collection of photographs and memorabilia.

## SPORTS TEAMS

### NEW YORK YANKEES

Since 1988 the [New York Yankees](#) have based their minor league operation, spring training and year-round headquarters for player development in Tampa,



calling Legends Field home since 1996. The multi-million dollar baseball complex is a world class facility that houses a 10,000-seat stadium, a community-use field

and a major league practice field. Spring training takes place in February and March and the minor league plays each year from April through September. The games are open to the public.

### UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA BULLS

The state Board of Regents approved a Division I-AA football program for the University of South Florida in 1995. One year later, the [University of South Florida Bulls](#) began intercollegiate play. The Bulls began their first season in Division I-A in 2001 and moved to the Big East Conference during the fall of 2005.

### TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS

Super Bowl XXXVII Champions, the [Tampa Bay Buccaneers](#) have brought hard-hitting football action to Tampa for over 25 years. The red and pewter pirates play 16 regular season games from September to December in the 65,000-seat Raymond James Stadium.

### TAMPA BAY DEVIL RAYS

In 1998, Tropicana Field in downtown St. Petersburg welcomed its long awaited residents... Tampa Bay's Major League Baseball team, the [Tampa Bay Devil Rays](#). Training each March at Florida Power Park's Al Lang Stadium in St. Petersburg, the Devil Rays

are the only Major League Baseball team to train in the same city as its regular-season stadium.

### TAMPA BAY LIGHTNING

The Tampa Bay Lightning is Tampa's professional hockey team, and became Stanley Cup champions in 2004. The Lightning began play in Tampa in 1992 and broke the ice at the St. Pete Times Forum in 1996. The 21,000-seat arena is located on the Tampa's downtown waterfront, a 17-acre site in the Channel District. The Lightning's game season runs from October through April.



### TAMPA BAY STORM

The [Tampa Bay Storm](#) holds the record for most Arena Bowl victories, having won the Arena Football League championship in 1991, 1993, 1995, 1996 and 2003. The Tampa Bay Storm keeps the football excitement going during the summer months of May through July at the St. Pete Times Forum.

## SPORTING EVENTS

### BANK OF AMERICA GASPARILLA DISTANCE CLASSIC

The Bank of America Gasparilla Distance Classic Race Weekend attracts runners who compete in a marathon and half-marathon. A 5K and 15K event are held for runners and a 15K race for wheelchairs is also an option. The Marathon and Half-Marathon are held the following day. The Bank of America Gasparilla Distance Classic has become one of the largest running events in Florida and is internationally recognized as one of the top 25 races in the world. In addition to the races, which takes place along scenic Bayshore Boulevard, there is a "Not for Runners Only - Health and Fitness Expo."

### OUTBACK BOWL

Tampa Bay kicks off the New Year right with a college bowl game grudge match – the [Outback Bowl](#). The NCAA post-season football game, featuring teams from the Southeastern Conference and Big Ten Conference, is held within the first few days of the New Year at Raymond James Stadium. Prior to the game, a variety of events are held from pep rallies and races to golf tournaments and

fireworks. Outback Steakhouse, Inc. became the title sponsor of the bowl game in 1995.

### **OUTBACK STEAKHOUSE PRO-AM**

Formerly the Verizon Golf Classic, the Outback Steakhouse Pro-Am has a new celebrity pro-amateur format. Its inaugural event took place in 2004 and drew celebrities such as Chris O'Donnell and Kevin Sorbo. The event takes place at the 6,638-yard, par-71 Tournament Player's Club of Tampa Bay.

## **SPORTS ORGANIZATIONS**

### **FLORIDA BICYCLE ASSOCIATION**

The state's cycling season rides from September through May with organized rides winding down during the spring and ending in the hot summer months. Tampa has a variety of cycling clubs that provide local riders with lots of competitions, group trips and training tips.

### **INTERNATIONAL SOFTBALL FEDERATION**

In 2000, the International Softball Federation relocated its international headquarters from Oklahoma City to Plant City. The only international Olympic federation headquartered in the U.S., the ISF occupies the Plant City Stadium Complex, the former spring training home of the Cincinnati Reds. The international training and competition center includes a modern 6,700-seat stadium, training complex with five fields. All administrative operations, major international events, training of athletes, coaches and umpires and International Olympic Committee programs, which include pre-Olympic training, sports medicine and drug testing, take place at the Plant City complex. The International Softball Hall of Fame opened at the complex in 2005 and held interactive exhibits, videos, historic photos and much more.

### **TAMPA BAY POLO CLUB**

The Tampa Bay Polo Club draws members from Hillsborough, Pinellas, Pasco and Polk counties. The season opens in January and runs to the first week in May. Members compete at the Walden Lake Polo Field, which opened in 1987. The field is the sole facility used for polo on the West Coast of Florida.

### **TAMPA ROWING CLUB**

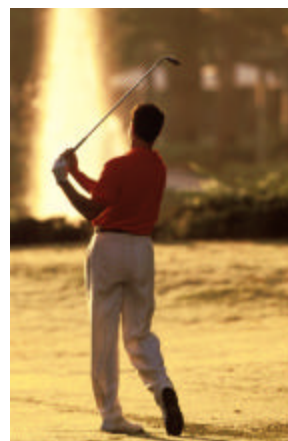
Tampa's Rowing Club is one the area's best. Established in 1973, the club is based out of the

University of Tampa's boathouse. The group specializes in sculling, rowing with two oars instead of one, which is one of the most physically demanding sports of its kind.

## **GOLF AND TENNIS:**

When it comes to golf, there's no shortage of courses in the Bay area. Tampa has dozens of public, semi-private and private golf courses. The temperate climate enables golfers to challenge a variety of courses year round. Of the 107 popular vacation destinations rated by Rand McNally, the Tampa/Hillsborough County area outranked such cities as Orlando, Philadelphia, Minneapolis, Boston, Catskill Mountains, Finger Lakes and Seattle for golf facilities.

Tampa is also home to two golf schools: the Ben Sutton Golf School at the Sun City Center Inn and the World Headquarters of the Arnold Palmer Golf Academy at the [Saddlebrook Resort](#). Established in 1968 as the first school devoted to golf instruction, the Ben Sutton Golf School is an institution. The school uses repetition under real situations for an unmatched learning experience and stop action video analysis to examine a golfer's swing and identify and



address problem areas. The Arnold Palmer Golf Academy at the Saddlebrook Resort teaches golfers of all skill levels through Palmer's four basic areas of a well-rounded game: Swing Fundamentals, The Scoring Zone, Practice like a Pro, Course Strategy I and Course Strategy II – and combines classroom and practice time with actual

course play. The Saddlebrook's golf facilities include a three-and-a-half acre driving range, a short game area with different terrains and surfaces called the Scoring Zone and two 18-hole championship courses, both designed by Arnold Palmer.

The Saddlebrook is also home of the Hopman Tennis Program. Noted as "the greatest coach ever" by *Tennis* magazine, Hopman was the captain of 16 Australian Davis Cup Champion teams. Hopman's program pushes each player to their individual limits without changing their personal style and uses drills and video analysis to improve skills. The

Saddlebrook's tennis complex features 45 tennis courts in all four Grand Slam surfaces and has been the practice facility for Andy Roddick, Pete Sampras, Martina Hingis and Jennifer Capriati.

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*This information is provided by the Tampa Bay Convention & Visitors Bureau. For more information, contact Brooke Maynard at 813/342-4053. Updated March 2006.*