



NEWS RELEASE

Wednesday, Feb. 21, 2024

National Lacrosse League announces the launch of the Ottawa Black Bears franchise

New York Riptide to relocate to Ottawa and begin play at Canadian Tire Centre for the 2024-25 season

GF Sports and Entertainment to partner commercially with Senators Sports & Entertainment

OTTAWA – The National Lacrosse League (NLL) in partnership with GF Sports and Entertainment and Senators Sports & Entertainment, today announced the launch of Ottawa-Gatineau’s newest professional sports franchise, the Ottawa Black Bears. The Black Bears will begin play at the start of the 2024-25 NLL season, with all home games to be played at Canadian Tire Centre, the home of the National Hockey League’s Ottawa Senators.

“Ottawa is an incredible market, with an established fan base, and a major-league arena,” said NLL Commissioner, Brett Froot. “This is an immense opportunity for our League to fortify our roots in the National Capital Region and to partner with a sophisticated front office in the Senators. We feel this relationship will be a terrific success and are excited and confident in the short- and long-term positioning of the Ottawa Black Bears.”

GF Sports and Entertainment will maintain ownership and operation of the franchise, who will play all nine regular season home games of the NLL season at Canadian Tire Centre. The franchise will maintain a strong working relationship with Senators Sports & Entertainment to help drive the team’s success in the Ottawa-Gatineau market.

The Ottawa Black Bears will continue to operate as the New York Riptide through the conclusion of the 2023-24 NLL season, both on the turf and in the community. The franchise’s inaugural regular season home game at Canadian Tire Centre is anticipated to take place in December 2024.

“After a very competitive and extensive screening process, we are thrilled to bring our franchise, the Ottawa Black Bears, to the Nation’s Capital,” said Erik Baker of GF Sports and Entertainment. “We chose Ottawa for many reasons, including the strength of the Senators Sports & Entertainment brand, the demand and rapid growth of box lacrosse in the region, and the fantastic arena.”

“Today, we look to the future as the Ottawa Black Bears, a name that reflects not only the attributes of the region, but also the values of this community and our franchise. We will be a community-dedicated team that will be relentless, proud, passionate and gritty. Ottawa fans will be proud to wear the Black Bears logo.”

The Black Bears are a young and talented team headlined by league scoring leader and 2020 NLL first overall pick Jeff Teat. The team runs under the impressive leadership of head coach Dan Ladouceur, a five-time NLL champion.

“Senators Sports & Entertainment continues to look for ways to grow and strengthen our relationship with the Ottawa-Gatineau community,” said Erin Crowe, COO and CFO of Senators Sports & Entertainment. “Box Lacrosse is a fast, physical and fan-friendly game. With the NLL’s strength and rapid growth, a strong ownership group and the collective relationships with TSN, we believe the Ottawa Black Bears will be another great addition to the Ottawa sports landscape. This will be an entertaining and exciting product that our fans will love and embrace. We can’t wait for the Black Bears to hit the field and take their place in our community.”

Starting play in Ottawa in December of 2024, the Black Bears will become the NLL’s sixth Canadian franchise, joining the Calgary Roughnecks, Halifax Thunderbirds, Saskatchewan Rush, Toronto Rock and Vancouver Warriors.

For fans interested in signing up for tickets and learning more about both the Black Bears and the NLL, they are asked to visit www.ottawablackbears.ca.

About GF Sports and Entertainment

GF Sports & Entertainment is a global events and operations company that elevates the experience of live sports, entertainment and interactive events. The company owns the New York Riptide, shortly becoming the Ottawa Black Bears, which was founded in 2018 and has since operated out of the Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum in Uniondale, N.Y. They also own and operate two of the ATP Tour’s longest running American tennis tournaments, the Dallas Open and the Atlanta Open. GF Sports & Entertainment incubates new and emerging sport concepts and in December 2022 completed the purchase of World Long Drive, an international long drive tour.

GF Sports & Entertainment was founded in July 2015 by New York-based private equity firm GF Capital. For additional information, please visit www.gfsportsandentertainment.com.

About National Lacrosse League

The National Lacrosse League, North America’s largest professional lacrosse league, welcomed a record 1,165,528 fans to its games in 2022-23. Founded in 1986, the NLL is comprised of 15 franchises across the United States and Canada, and recently unveiled its largest brand campaign ever, “[Welcome to The Next Major League™](#)” and introduced its comprehensive grassroots initiative, [NLL UnBOXed™](#), which will expand the League’s footprint to more than 60 communities across North America by 2027.

For the latest scores and developments in the National Lacrosse League, please visit: NLL.com and find the NLL on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) and [TikTok](#).

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