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USA to Play Jamaica in Jacksonville

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The Jacksonville Axemen in partnership with the American National Rugby League (AMNLR) and the Jamaican Rugby League Association (JRLA), are excited and proud to announce that a full international game between the two nations will take place at the University of North Florida on Saturday November 14th. The USA Tomahawks will square off against the Jamaicans in this historic event.

The game will be the first in what is hoped to become an annual “Atlantic Cup” that will see additional nations added in future years. Jacksonville was given approval to host the game after the Axemen submitted a proposal to both teams and the world governing body for the sport, who all agreed to give full sanctioning to the event as an international game.

Event coordinator Spinner Howland commented on the importance of the game, “It is important that everyone in Jacksonville understands the full meaning of this game. It is real international competition that will see the best athletes from each country take the field to do battle under their nation’s flag. The game will affect the international rankings of each country and could well have effect on future world cup qualification plans. Representing for your country is the biggest honor anyone can be asked and the adrenalin that flows on game day always means that meetings like this are played with incredible intensity that proves to be an amazing spectacle for the fans. There is no feeling in the world like running onto the field dressed in your nation’s colors and having thousands of screaming fans supporting you. We know that Jacksonville will show up in force for the USA team.”

The Axemen offered a list of reasons why Jacksonville is the ideal city to host and event such as this

- There is strong patriotism in the region that is strengthened by the number of military personal that reside in the Jacksonville area. This is the full USA Team that is made up of the best Rugby League players from across the entire country and they will be representing the United States the same way Olympic or World Cup athletes do. We know Jacksonville will support them.
- Jacksonville has a strong following of Rugby League supporters after similar events between international teams in recent years
- The Axemen have grown a large dedicated and local fan base during their four year existence in the domestic AMNRL competition and with some of the Axemen players representing the USA, those fans are going to be able to connect with the national team on a home team level
- The University of North Florida (UNF) has been a great partner for the sport as a host venue and they provide some of the best facilities in the world for the sport of Rugby League.
- The geographical distance to Jamaica also makes it an attractive venue for the visiting team

Support is also coming from the various world governing bodies for the sport of Rugby League and they will watch closely as Jacksonville continues to become a known city for hosting such international games

in the future.

Kevin Rudd, who is representing the European and International Federations for Rugby League commented, "This is a fantastic and exciting inaugural event and we look forward to the Atlantic Cup developing further in the future. Thanks must go to both teams and the Jacksonville Axemen to bringing the event to fruition. A number of other Rugby League Nations will be watching it for possible inclusion in the future."

The President of the AMNRL, David Niu commented on the event, "The American National Rugby League is committed to the development of the sport of Rugby League in the USA. The opportunity to present our national team, the USA Tomahawks in an International Fixture with Jamaica will be an ideal chance to measure the development and rising standard of our domestic competition through the performance of our elite players in this game. With the match being hosted at Hodges Stadium at UNF all fans of rugby league throughout the world, in America and the Florida region can once again experience the city of Jacksonville and the first class event presentation developed by Spinner Howland and the Jacksonville Axemen. We look forward to an exciting game before a large dedicated fan base that have been huge supporters of rugby league for a number of years now cheering on our friends from Jamaica, the Tomahawks and local favorites from the Axemen squad who will be representing the USA."

The Axemen hosted a preliminary version of the Jamaican team in 2007 and scraped by with a narrow win. Since then however the island national has become one of the best known emerging nations in the sport and with quite a few of their players now under professional contracts in the United Kingdom, the Jamaicans will be a tough assignment for the Tomahawks.

Jamaican Development Officer Romeo Montieth is excited about the upcoming event, "This test match against the USA will be a tough assignment, however I am confident that our boys will give the Tomahawks more than enough opposition and the fans a great game. We are appealing to all Jamaicans in Florida to turn out in numbers to cheer our boys on and witness a truly great game of Rugby League."

Teams members will begin arriving into Jacksonville on Wednesday November 11 to prepare for the Saturday game.

There are also a number of sponsorship options available for the event – e-mail spinner@jaxaxe.com

American National Rugby League at www.amnrl.com

Jamaican Rugby League Association at www.jamaicarugbyleague.com

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