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Spirit of Competition in Greater Zion Personifies Utah: The State of Sport

Utah is known for its vast landscapes, exceptional year-round destinations and a spirit that has welcomed the world to play, compete and explore this diverse state. In 2000, the Utah Sports Commission was created with the intent of keeping Utah's sport and Olympic legacy alive after the Salt Lake City region hosted the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games in 2002. The Utah Sports Commission's mission is to help enhance Utah's economy, image and quality of life through the attraction, promotion and development of national and international sports and to be a catalyst in its Olympic legacy efforts. With world-class competitions such as the 2021 Intermountain Healthcare IRONMAN World Championship presented by Utah Sports Commission in May of 2022, the 2022 Intermountain Healthcare IRONMAN 70.3 World Championship presented by Utah Sports Commission in October of 2022, the 20th Anniversary of the Red Bull Rampage and so many other events that welcome the world to Greater Zion, southwest Utah is a major player in the "State of Sport."

"Our first IRONMAN St. George took place in 2010 and it forever changed the landscape of competitive sports in southwest Utah," said Kevin Lewis, director of the Greater Zion Convention & Tourism Office. "With a course that showcases our diverse region, the St. George area not only illustrated it was on par with premier destinations around the world, but our community rose to the occasion to welcome athletes from around the globe with open arms. More than a decade of preparation and experience put us in a position to bring IRONMAN's ultimate race to Greater Zion."

Lewis was originally part of the team that brought IRONMAN to Utah in 2010. According to Lewis, the negotiations started in 2008 and with the help of statewide partners such as the Utah Sports Commission, southwest Utah started its IRONMAN legacy. "The importance of the USC can't be understated," said Lewis. "The Sports Commission's experience with world-class events and its financial support are critical components in our success."

This year, the destination will host the crown jewel of IRONMAN competitions, the 2021 Intermountain Healthcare IRONMAN World Championship presented by Utah Sports Commission which will be held outside of Kona, Hawai'i for the first time since the race's inception. Together with back-to-back IRONMAN 70.3 World Championship Events in September 2021 and October 2022, southwest Utah will host three IRONMAN World Championship competitions in 13 months. After the October race, St. George will hold the title of hosting more IRONMAN World Championships Events than any other destination in the world.



"It's been fun to see this journey from the beginning to where it is now," said Jeff Robbins, president and CEO of the Utah Sports Commission, who also was a part of the team which originally brought IRONMAN to Utah. "This experience has been fulfilling for all of us. Bringing IRONMAN to Utah has forever changed the landscape of Greater Zion. It's become the premier destination in the United States and the world for triathlons and international competition." The Utah Sports Commission is, and has been, the presenting sponsor of all IRONMAN World Championship Events in Greater Zion.

IRONMAN is only one major part of southwest Utah's competitive legacy. The destination also hosts the iconic Red Bull Rampage, which showcases the best freeride mountain bikers in the world. The Huntsman World Senior Games has been held annually in Greater Zion since 1987 and is the largest annual, multi-sport senior competition in the world. And, the St. George Marathon has become a destination race since its inception in 1977.

"These are just a few examples of how southwest Utah really encapsulates the spirit of Utah's State of Sport," added Robbins. "The Sports Commission was chartered 20 years ago and we've been executing on that mission ever since. We are projected to hit approximately \$3 billion in economic impact to the state with the NBA All-Star Game in 2023."

Although Utah's Olympic legacy is tied to winter sports, the state's ability to host year-round world-class events supports the Sports Commissions' mission. "As we conduct more international competitions, it raises the level of exposure and image-building for the state. All of this comes back to help us with bids for the Olympics and other world-class competitions," said Robbins. Salt Lake City is among the candidates to host the 2030 or 2034 Winter Olympics and is in a dialogue phase with the International Olympic Committee, as are other cities such as Sapporo, Japan, and Vancouver, British Columbia.

"Something that's unique to Utah is the overwhelming community support and resources for hosting large sporting events," added Robbins. "We had more volunteers than we needed for the 2002 Winter Games. Events require significant local resources and St. George and the Greater Zion area has continually risen to the occasion to support and field volunteers to make these events a great success."

More than 4,000 volunteers are expected to support this May's 2021 Intermountain Healthcare IRONMAN World Championship presented by Utah Sports Commission. "Our community support is second to none," said Lewis. "It starts at the grass roots with thousands of enthusiastic volunteers and it continues through public safety, medical and emergency services, and all the way to the core community leaders who dig in to help facilitate the event. The May race traverses more than half a dozen communities in Greater Zion. Each community has done a tremendous job in rallying support to make this race and so many other competitions in the region a reality."



The community, cultural and physical landscape of Greater Zion truly embodies all the Utah Sports Commission is trying to achieve. The striking landscapes and optimistic attitudes combine to create an environment of success in an area once known for its harsh, rugged conditions. This has created a playground for people to live, work, play and explore, as well as establish a world-class destination for competition.

The State of Sport is alive and well in Utah as Greater Zion prepares to welcome the world to the Land of Endurance for this year's iconic IRONMAN races and so much more.

The Intermountain Healthcare IRONMAN World Championship presented by Utah Sports Commission comes to Greater Zion on May 7, marking the first time this iconic endurance race leaves its home in Hawaii. For more information, visit GreaterZion.com.

About Greater Zion

Located in the southwest corner of Utah, Greater Zion is a destination that offers more than 2,400 square miles of adventure and inspiration. Zion National Park, the fourth most visited National Park in the United States, is the premier attraction, but Zion is only the beginning. Four state parks and a multitude of year-round recreational lands set the stage for a burgeoning mountain biking scene, some of the best off-highway vehicle riding in the country, scenic and challenging play at 13 top-rated golf courses, world-class cultural performances at Tuacahn Center for the Arts and so much more. The vibrant communities of St. George, Springdale, Hurricane, Ivins and towns in between offer a wide range of lodging options, dining experiences and access to outdoor pursuits through local outfitters and tour companies. Home to the 2021 and 2022 IRONMAN 70.3 World Championship, and the 2021 IRONMAN World Championship, Greater Zion also is a world-class destination for sporting events, conferences and meetings. The Greater Zion Convention and Tourism Office is a transient-room-tax-funded entity of Washington County, Utah. For more information, please visit GreaterZion.com.