



**Office of Sports Marketing**  
**401 E. Pratt Street, 14th Floor**  
**Baltimore, Maryland 21202**  
**410.767.3373**  
**[www.MarylandSports.us](http://www.MarylandSports.us)**

**Governor O'Malley Announces Baltimore, Washington Included in US Bid for Future World Cup**

*FedEx Field, M&T Bank Stadium, additional Maryland facilities included in package*

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Contact: Terry Hasseltine, Director, Maryland Office of Sports Marketing

Phone: 410.207.8814

The USA Bid Committee, which has been evaluating facilities around the country for over a year, announced today that M&T Bank Stadium in Baltimore and FedEx Field in Landover will be included in their bid of stadium sites for a future FIFA World Cup™. Included in each stadium proposal were a number of Maryland soccer facilities available for the visiting national teams to use as training sites.

"We are doubly honored to have two entries representing our region as possible venues for World Cup matches in 2018 or 2022," said Gov. Martin O'Malley. "The success of the Baltimore group — using M&T Bank Stadium, and the Washington, D.C., group — using Fed Ex Field in Landover, shows that we are a world-class player in the international sports arena. It's also a tribute to the effective partnership forged by government agencies on city and state levels, local universities and area sports teams."

Baltimore garnered serious attention from the soccer community when a World Football Challenge match between Chelsea FC and AC Milan took place last July in a sold-out M&T Bank Stadium, according to Dick Cass, President of the Baltimore Ravens.

"We are very pleased that Baltimore has been selected as one of the 18 finalists," Cass said. "Baltimore's selection is a tribute to the City, State and to M&T Bank Stadium, as well as last summer's successful AC Milan-Chelsea match, which put Baltimore on the international soccer map. We look forward to working hard with our partners to bring the World Cup to the United States and Baltimore."

The enthusiasm for the event, plus the facility's downtown location, connection to the international airport via light rail, and thousands of hotel rooms within walking distance, were significant factors in decision making as the prospects narrowed from 70 venues to 48 and finally 27 in late August 2009.

"We are excited about reaching the next level as a potential host city, should the United States secure the games in 2018 or 2022," said Tom Noonan, President & CEO of Visit Baltimore. "The World Cup matches would help introduce our historic waterfront city to people around the world."

While commitments from the State and City governments were important, Baltimore also needed the support of the soccer community. Kevin Healey, President of Baltimore Blast and the national champion Baltimore Bays youth soccer program, helped secure training facility sites and provide connections within the state soccer network.

“To bring the World Cup to Baltimore is a dream for me and my family,” Healey said. “It would be exciting for our city to see the passion and skills of the greatest soccer players in the world playing in the World Cup. Fans from throughout the world would come to our city not only to watch the games, but also enjoy the many attractions that we have in Maryland. This is an exciting announcement not only for soccer fans but for all sports fans in our area.”

The final tier of 18 venues was determined after an exhaustive process in which prospective host cities were visited by the committee. Their proposals had to comply with FIFA’s stringent requirements. This was the most difficult and time consuming hurdle. However, the financial rewards of being selected, along with the prestige and the international recognition made it worth the effort.

“After the Chelsea FC - AC Milan match this summer, we realized the popularity of world class soccer in our region with its ability to sell out our stadium,” noted Michael Frenz, Executive Director of Maryland Stadium Authority.

“However, before deciding to pursue this major financial commitment, we exercised due diligence with a study to determine the return on our investment,” Frenz continued. “Crossroads, Inc. evaluated the potential economic impact of hosting the World Cup tournament and concluded it could generate as much as \$5 billion for the entire series and \$300 - \$500 million per host city.”

Terry Hasseltine, Director of the Maryland Office of Sports Marketing, coordinated Baltimore’s bid package and worked extensively with the DC team. He was elated with the news that both would be included in the USA bid to FIFA.

“The USA Bid Committee’s selections recognize the State of Maryland as a significant player in the international sports marketplace,” Hasseltine noted. “To have two stadiums, several colleges and private facilities in our state included in the 2018/2022 USA Bid for the FIFA World Cup™ is remarkable. It is a testament to the team effort put forth by all concerned, and the support soccer has on all levels in this state.”

“This is a tremendous day for all sports in Maryland, because this puts us in the top tier of locations to consider for any major event,” Hasseltine added. “Our selection validates that we have the assets necessary— including transportation, accommodations, facilities and fan base — to stage major events here now.”

John Morton, III, Chairman of the Maryland Stadium Authority, sees the Baltimore bid as an important step in making the Camden Yards facilities available for many kinds of events.

“The FIFA World Cup is the most popular sporting event in the world,” he observed. “To be a part of our nation’s bid puts our city and state on the international stage. It also advances our ongoing effort to generate more revenue by using our facilities for additional activities.”

“Making the USA Bid required a team effort,” Mr. Morton continued. “I’d like to thank Fred Puddester of MSA’s board for all the time and personal expertise he put into spearheading our case to the Committee.”

Mr. Morton remembered the 1998 event in Paris where a million people celebrated in the streets after the French victory. “The World Cup is unlike any other sports championship,” he added. “There is a national pride that transcends any particular region. It brings people of all affiliations together in a common interest. It is the combination of national pride with the highest level of athletic competition that raises the World Cup to a level of passion only the Olympics can duplicate.”

“As we now go forward as part of our country’s bid, we are fully committed to seeing the United States as both a host and contender in this international tournament,” Morton concluded.

For additional information on the 18 selected sites, visit the USA bid website at [www.gousabid.com](http://www.gousabid.com)