

UNIFIED SOCCER SERIES



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | CONTACT: JUSTINR@UNIONOMAHA.COM

UNION OMAHA AND FORWARD MADISON PARTNER WITH SPECIAL OLYMPICS NEBRASKA AND SPECIAL OLYMPICS WISCONSIN TO CREATE THE UNIFIED SOCCER SERIES

PAPILLION, Neb. (February 21, 2022) - Union Omaha and Forward Madison FC, in conjunction with Special Olympics Nebraska and Special Olympics Wisconsin, announced today the establishment of the Unified Soccer Series. The Unified Soccer Series is the first of its kind within the United Soccer League (USL) and will consist of two matches, one in Omaha, Neb. and one in Madison, Wis. featuring Special Olympics Unified teams from both states. The matches, scheduled for July 26 in Madison and August 31 in Omaha, will be played surrounding 2022 USL League One match-ups between Union Omaha and Forward Madison and will provide an opportunity for the Unified players (with and without intellectual disabilities) to play on the same pitch as their partner teams.

The Special Olympics Unified Sports program focuses on promoting social inclusion through shared sports training and competition experiences and joins people with and without intellectual disabilities on the same team. Teams will be established through each state's Special Olympics program in the coming months.

"The Unified Soccer Series is an initiative that means a lot to me," said Union Omaha General Manager Peter Marlette. "To be able to expand our rivalry with Forward Madison with the Unified Soccer Series is special. I can't think of a better club or fan base with which to bring this project to the USL. The collaboration between Union Omaha, Forward Madison, and the state Special Olympics teams has been great so far and I'm excited to see how our fans embrace this."

"We're thrilled to partner with Union Omaha and Special Olympics on this new series," said Forward Madison Chief Operating Officer Conor Caloia. "It's important to give these athletes a platform to enjoy and advance the sport they love. It also gives us a chance to beat Omaha twice in one night."

"We are incredibly excited to kick off the first Unified Soccer Series," said Special Olympics Nebraska Vice President of Program Nate Parks. "This is an amazing opportunity to highlight the abilities and sportsmanship of our athletes and unified partners on a grander stage. This partnership is a huge win for us, and we hope to make the USL League One Champs, Union Omaha, proud."

"What an awesome opportunity for our respective Unified programs to continue spreading a culture of inclusion," said Don Wigington, interim president & CEO of Special Olympics Wisconsin. "We are excited to be a featured component of this rivalry series and look 'Forward' to developing even stronger relationships with our professional sports organizations."

For more information or to reach media contacts for each respective organization, please utilize the list below:

- **Union Omaha:** Justin Rolfes, Director of Marketing and Communications; justinr@unionomaha.com
- **Forward Madison:** Evan Warwick, Director of Digital Content; warwick@forwardmadisonfc.com

- **Special Olympics Nebraska:** Amanda Mancuso, Development & Media Manager;
amancuso@sone.org
- **Special Olympics Wisconsin:** Jennifer Wagner, VP of Marketing & Communications;
jwagner@specialolympicswisconsin.org

About Union Omaha

Union Omaha, the 2021 USL League One Champion, is the only professional soccer team in the state of Nebraska. USL League One is a United States Soccer Federation-sanctioned professional men's soccer league that occupies the third tier of the American soccer landscape, below USL Championship (tier two) and Major League Soccer (tier one). The 2022 League One Championship defending campaign is set to begin on April 9 with a visit to Forward Madison FC. The home opener at Werner Park is set for April 23 vs. USL1 newcomer Central Valley Fuego FC. Union Omaha plays its home matches at Werner Park in Sarpy County, also home to the Omaha Storm Chasers of Minor League Baseball. The team is led by General Manager Peter Marlette in the front office and by Head Coach Jay Mims on the field.

About Forward Madison

Forward Madison FC is a charter member of USL League One, launched in the spring of 2019. The Flamingos finished fourth in their inaugural USL League One season, drawing a league-best 4,292 fans per match to Breese Stevens Field. More information and registration for the team's weekly newsletter is available at www.forwardmadisonfc.com. Follow the team on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

About Special Olympics Nebraska

Special Olympics Nebraska is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization, which was founded in 1972. The mission of Special Olympics Nebraska mission is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy, and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills, and friendships with their families, and other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

About Special Olympics Wisconsin

Special Olympics Wisconsin is a statewide organization of the Special Olympics movement that unleashes the transformative power and joy of sports everyday around the world. Through work in sports, health, education and community building, Special Olympics has been empowering people with intellectual disabilities for more than 50 years, leading to a more welcoming and inclusive society. With the support of donors, coaches and volunteers, Special Olympics Wisconsin provides year-round sports training and nearly 150 yearly athletic events featuring 19 Olympic-type sports to nearly 9,000 individuals with intellectual disabilities. Join our online community by following us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram! For more information, visit SpecialOlympicsWisconsin.org or call (608) 222-1324.

###