

**CONTACT:** Cara Schneider  
(215) 599-0789, [cara@visitphilly.com](mailto:cara@visitphilly.com)  
**Tweet Us:** [@visitphillyPR](https://twitter.com/visitphillyPR)

**BACKGROUNDER**  
*Sports In Philadelphia*

**PHILADELPHIA, February 14, 2018** – Philadelphia is one of few U.S. cities with a professional franchise in six major league sports. Most of Philly’s pro teams play within a few miles of Center City, in South Philadelphia’s Lincoln Financial Field (Eagles football); Citizens Bank Park (Phillies baseball); Wells Fargo Center (76ers basketball, Flyers hockey and, beginning in December 2018, the National Lacrosse League Wings); and, a few miles south of the city line, Talen Energy Stadium (Union soccer). Philadelphia sports fans’ pride and spirit is legendary.

**FOOTBALL:**

**The Pros:**

The **Philadelphia Eagles** took to the football field for the first time in 1933. The Birds enjoyed early success in the franchise’s history, winning three championships in 1948, 1949 and 1960. In 1980 the Eagles defeated their rival Dallas Cowboys in the NFC Championship before falling to the Oakland Raiders in Super Bowl XV. In 2005, quarterback Donovan McNabb and coach Andy Reid led the team into Super Bowl XXXIX. There, they fell to the Tom Brady- and Bill Belichick-led New England Patriots. To Birds fans, the ultimate NFL prize remained very frustratingly elusive.

That was then. On February 4, 2018, the Eagles’ awful drought ended with a 41-33 victory over the same team that defeated them 13 years earlier. Coach Doug Pederson, a onetime Eagles quarterback who’d come up as a coach under Andy Reid, led the team of unlikely players. The season had ended early for five starters, including veterans Darren Sproles, Jason Peters and star quarterback Carson Wentz. Backup quarterback Nick Foles took the reins with three games left in the regular season. The Birds entered the Playoffs as the first seed in the NFC—and yet, as underdogs. They defied odds by besting the Atlanta Falcons then the Minnesota Vikings. In the NFL Championship, Foles became the first quarterback to both throw and receive a touchdown pass—and became Super Bowl LII’s MVP.

The Eagles have played in six locations since their inception. Baker Bowl, Franklin Field, JFK Stadium, Shibe Park and Veterans Stadium were previous homes of the Eagles. Since 2003, their LEED-certified stadium is Lincoln Financial Field, affectionately known as The Linc.

**Arena Football:**

In 2004, the region welcomed its first arena football team, the **Philadelphia Soul**. Established by a group led by rocker Jon Bon Jovi, the Soul played from 2004-2008, was inactive in 2009 and 2010 and returned in 2011 under the leadership of former Eagles quarterback Ron Jaworski. The Soul has appeared five times in the ArenaBowl, winning the title match in 2008, 2016 and 2017. The team plays home games at the Wells Fargo Center.

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**Army-Navy:**

One of the greatest rivalries in college football has called Philadelphia its home for the majority of its history. The fiercely competitive Army-Navy game has been played in Philadelphia for 87 of its 188 years. As a neutral site conveniently located between the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, New York and the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, Philadelphia was an easy choice for the Army-Navy game, which the city now enjoys as its unofficial bowl game.

In 2003, the game was played for the first time at Lincoln Financial Field, which has now hosted 11 Army-Navy games: 10 wins for Navy and one (2017) for Army. The Linc plans to host the game in 2018, 2019, 2020 and again in 2022.

**BASKETBALL**

**The Pros:**

The city's first professional basketball team was the **Philadelphia Warriors**, who won the NBA's first-ever championship in the 1946-47 season and took a second championship in 1956. In 1962, Wilt Chamberlain, the team's star center, set an NBA record by scoring 100 points in a single game. The Warriors moved to San Francisco following the 1961-62 season, where, in 1971, they became known as the Golden State Warriors.

Not wanting Philadelphia to be without a professional basketball franchise, entrepreneurs Irv Kosloff and Ike Richman joined forces to buy the Syracuse Nationals in 1963, moving the team to Philadelphia and renaming the franchise the **Philadelphia 76ers**.

By 1967, the 76ers held the league's best record and won the NBA championship with stars Wilt Chamberlain, Hal Greer and Billy Cunningham. In 1977, Cunningham returned as the team's coach, leading them to the NBA championship in 1983 with a 4-0 sweep over the Los Angeles Lakers. The stars that year: Maurice Cheeks, Moses Malone and Julius "Dr. J" Erving.

In between the titles, the 76ers went through ups and downs. The 1999 trip to the playoffs, sparked by Allen Iverson and coach Larry Brown, was the first post-season action since 1991, when Charles Barkley led the team to the Eastern Conference Finals. In 2001, the Sixers ignited that famous Philadelphia spirit by winning the NBA Eastern Conference before losing to the Lakers in the NBA Finals. In 2003, the Sixers made the playoffs for the fifth year in a row.

Since the early 2000s success, the Sixers have adopted general manager Sam Hinkie's motto, "Trust the process." The Sixers became a case study in "tanking," a term used for teams that find it better in the long run to lose games and rebuild by getting worse and adding to the roster through the NBA Draft. The team's stockpiling of first-round picks has recently begun to pay off. Joel Embiid, Ben Simmons and Markelle Fultz star now.

**The "Big 5":**

In addition to a rich professional basketball history, Philadelphia is home to what is affectionately and informally known as the "Big 5." Born in 1955, the "Big 5" is a battle for basketball bragging rights between five local universities: **Villanova, Penn, Temple, St. Joseph's and LaSalle**.

The "Big 5" has produced NCAA Champions Final Four men's teams in Villanova and Penn. The Villanova Wildcats brought the NCAA title home when they pulled off the biggest upset in tournament history, knocking off Georgetown in 1985.

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Villanova's men's team, led by coach Jay Wright, won its second championship in 2016 in a historic finish against the University of North Carolina. With the score tied in the final seconds, Villanova's Kris Jenkins beat the final buzzer with an unforgettable three-pointer.

The Wildcats have become a national power under Wright in recent years and have dominated Big 5 play, winning 16 straight over their city counterparts. The 2016-17 senior class became the first class of Big 5 players to go 16-0 in the Big 5.

Great players and coaches have come from Big 5 schools, including Wright, John Chaney, Tom Gola, Lionel Simmons, Kyle Lowry, Aaron McKie, Eddie Jones, Paul Arizin, David "Corky" Calhoun, Steve Bilsky, Dr. Jack Ramsay, John Baum, Guy Rodgers, John Celestand and more.

At the start of the 1979-80 season, the athletic directors of the five schools expanded the group to include the women's basketball programs. Helping to first put women's basketball on the map in Philadelphia were the "Mighty Macs" from **Immaculata College**. The Macs ruled women's basketball in the early 1970s by winning three consecutive championships from 1972-1974.

#### **Final Four:**

Women's basketball holds a special place in Philadelphia's history. In 2000, Philadelphia became the first northeastern city to host the NCAA Women's Final Four tournament.

### **BASEBALL**

The **Philadelphia Athletics**, one of the country's oldest pro teams, was founded in 1860. The A's won the 1913 World Series in Shibe Park, later re-named Connie Mack Stadium, after the team's longtime manager. The team left town in 1954 and moved to Kansas, where it became the Kansas City Athletics, and then to Oakland in 1968.

The **Philadelphia Phillies**, the oldest, continuous, one-name, one-city franchise in all of professional sports, was founded in 1883 and played in several parks, including famed, now gone, Baker Bowl.

When the Phillies went in search of a new home, Philadelphia stepped up to the plate. In 1971, the Phils moved to Veterans Stadium in South Philadelphia. The Vet was the Phils' home for 33 seasons, and hosted two All-Star games and three World Series. The Phillies won the Fall Classic at Veterans Stadium in 1980.

In 2004, the Phillies moved into a brand-new Citizens Bank Park and found quick success. With a young core of homegrown talent like MVPs Ryan Howard (2006) and Jimmy Rollins (2007), along with Pat Burrell, Chase Utley and more, the Phillies made five consecutive post-season appearances starting in 2007.

In 2008, led in part by the names above, the Phillies defeated the Los Angeles Dodgers in the National League Championship series before downing the Tampa Bay Rays in five games to win the city's first major professional championship in 25 years. The final out call of closer Brad Lidge's breaking ball, which was swung and missed by Eric Hinske, would be one of the last of Hall of Fame broadcaster Harry Kalas' career. Kalas, the team's voice for nearly 40 years, died the following April after collapsing in the press box in Nationals Park in Washington, DC.

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The team remained on a high through 2011, their last playoff appearance. The team is currently in the process of rebuilding.

## HOCKEY

The **Philadelphia Flyers** came into existence in 1967. Philadelphia businessperson Ed Snider, then the vice president of the Eagles, assembled the owners' group behind the National Hockey League expansion team.

On May 19, 1974, the Flyers became the first expansion team to win the Stanley Cup. The following year, they then won it again. The Flyers also advanced to the Finals in 1987 and 1997, when they fell to the Edmonton Oilers and Detroit Red Wings, respectively. The Flyers play at the Wells Fargo Center, the same location as the Sixers.

Despite plenty of regular season and post-season success since the 70s—the team made the postseason in 17 consecutive seasons from 1973-89 and again were dominant in the late 90s and early 2000s—the Flyers haven't won another Stanley Cup, much to the dismay of a rabid fan base.

The team's most recent chance at a championship came in 2010, when the Flyers made a historic comeback from down 3-0 in a series against Boston before storming back to win four straight in the second round matchup. The Flyers took that momentum all the way to the Stanley Cup finals and were defeated 4-2 by Chicago, falling on home ice in overtime in Game 6.

Longtime owner Snider passed away after a long cancer battle in April of 2016. The Flyers dedicated their 2016 playoff run to Snider, but lost in the first round to the Washington Capitals.

Led by general manager Ron Hextall (a former star goal tender for the club) and coach Dave Hakstol, the Flyers are trying to get back to their winning ways of the past.

## SOCCER

Major League Soccer (MLS) added the **Philadelphia Union** as its 16<sup>th</sup> team on February 28, 2008, after a long drive for expansion in the Philadelphia/South Jersey regions. Credit for showing MLS that the region had an established fan base went to a local supporters group called the "Sons of Ben."

The Union, which calls Chester, Pennsylvania (a suburb south of Philadelphia) home, plays at Talen Energy Stadium, formerly known as PPL Park. The club has appeared in the postseason in two of its first seven seasons and just kicked off its eighth year of action.

## ROWING

Philadelphia city planner William Penn (the gent atop City Hall) is considered Philly's original rower. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Penn rowed the Schuylkill River in order to determine its navigability. In the ensuing two centuries, rowing grew from practicality to a recreational pastime as popular as football is today. Philadelphia was the sport's unquestioned capital.

In 1821, the creation of the Fairmount Dam, now behind the Philadelphia Museum of Art, turned the river into a placid surface ideal for the sport. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the city approved the construction of Boathouse Row, still in use today by amateur and collegiate crew clubs. In 1874, the Schuylkill Navy, the country's oldest body overseeing an amateur sport, held what is now known as the Head of the Schuylkill Regatta, an October tradition that continues to this day.

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Other notable annual regattas include the Stotesbury Cup, Philadelphia Scholastic Rowing Championship and the Dad Vail (officially known as the Schuylkill Navy Regatta).

Philadelphia's most renowned oarsmen are John B. "Jack" Kelly, Sr. and John B. "Kell" Kelly, Jr. (the father and brother of Grace Kelly). The senior Kelly won three Olympic gold medals. Junior earned a bronze. A sculpture of the elder Kelly rowing resides near the grandstands on the west bank of the Schuylkill along Kelly Drive.

## TRACK AND FIELD

The University of Pennsylvania's historic Franklin Field, which hosted the Army-Navy game 18 times between 1899 and 1935, is the site of one of the nation's oldest, largest and most storied track meet, the **Penn Relays**. A late April tradition, the Penn Relays began in 1895. Today, the three-day event attracts top-notch track stars for intense competition among high school, college, professional and senior runners, along with classic collegiate activity.

## LACROSSE

In 2017, professional box lacrosse promised a December 2018 return to Philly's Wells Fargo Center. The National Lacrosse League Wings will, in their third iteration, take to the Flyers' turfed-over ice, rekindling a tradition borne at the Spectrum (1986-96) and the Center (1997-2014).

## RECREATION

In addition to the professional and collegiate sports scene, Philadelphia has plenty to offer the recreational athlete. Runners, joggers, walkers, bicyclists, in-line skaters, wheelchair racers and even rock climbers enjoy an eight-mile loop of track and greenery on the banks of the Schuylkill River and in some of the 8,700 acres of Fairmount Park, one of the world's largest urban park systems.

## 2018 SPORTING EVENTS

- **February 4, 2018**  
**Super Bowl LII** – The Philadelphia Eagles wallop the New England Patriots in the NFL Championship, 41-33. Backup quarterback Nick Foles becomes the first QB to both throw and catch a touchdown pass in a Super Bowl. He does the latter in a play the team affectionately named the "Philly Special." Parade ensues.
- **March 3, 2018**  
**Philadelphia Union home opener** – Coach Jim Curtin and all-stars Andre Blake and Keegan Rosenberry kick off the season. Talen Energy Stadium, Chester, [philadelphiaunion.com](http://philadelphiaunion.com)
- **March 10-11, 2017**  
**Ivy League Men's and Women's Basketball Tournaments** – The cathedral of college basketball hosts the tourney among the Ivies. Palestra at the University of Pennsylvania, [ivymadness.com](http://ivymadness.com)
- **April 5, 2018**  
**Phillies Home Opener** – A sign of spring itself, the Phils and the Phantatic take their home field with high hopes for Odubel Herrera, Aaron Nola, Maikel Franco and 2017 homerun marvel Rhys Hoskins. Citizens Bank Park, [mlb.com/phillies](http://mlb.com/phillies)
- **April 26-28, 2018**  
**Penn Relays** – The world's oldest, largest and arguably best track meet brings thousands of athletes to a historic field for an epic weekend that's 124 years in the making. Franklin Field, University of Pennsylvania, [thepennrelays.com](http://thepennrelays.com)

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- **May 6, 2017**  
**Broad Street Run** – The country’s largest 10-mile road race—with nearly 40,000 participants—is a straight, north-to-south shot along Broad Street. T.S. Park to the Navy Yard, [broadstreetrun.com](http://broadstreetrun.com)
- **May 11-12, 2018**  
**Dad Vail Regatta** – Another biggest, this collegiate crew competition began in 1934 and honors acclaimed University of Wisconsin coach Harry Emerson “Dad” Vail. Schuylkill River, [dadvail.org](http://dadvail.org)
- **June 1-3, 2018**  
**Penn Mutual Collegiate Rugby Championship** – The soccer field transforms into a proving ground for the country’s top men’s and women’s teams. Talen Energy Stadium, Chester, [usasevenscric.com](http://usasevenscric.com)
- **TBD September 2018**  
**Eagles Home Opener** – The Birds fly again in the NFL’s first game of the year, part of the spoils for winning Super Bowl LII (the team’s first). Lincoln Financial Field, [philadelphiaeagles.com](http://philadelphiaeagles.com)
- **October 27-28, 2019**  
**Head of the Schuylkill Regatta** – This massive celebration of crew includes newbie, professional, amateur and longtime rowers alike—10,000 of them. Schuylkill River, [hosr.org](http://hosr.org)
- **November 18, 2018**  
**Philadelphia Marathon** – More than just a 26.2-miler, this fast, flat street race is the culmination of a weekend that begins with a half marathon, 8K and kids’ fun run (November 17). Throughout Philadelphia, [philadelphiamarathon.com](http://philadelphiamarathon.com)
- **TBD November 2018**  
**76ers Home Opener** – Will this be the year GM Sam Hinkie’s long-term plan pans out? Sixers fans sure hope so. Wells Fargo Center, [nba.com/sixers](http://nba.com/sixers)
- **TBD November 2018**  
**Flyers Home Opener** – Wayne Simmonds, Claude Giroux and Shayne Gostisbehere lead these international marvels back to South Philly. Wells Fargo Center, [nhl.com/flyers](http://nhl.com/flyers)
- **December 8, 2018**  
**Army-Navy Game** – Fresh off their second Army-Navy victory in 14 years, Army’s Black Knights return to the site where Navy’s Midshipmen got lucky 10 out of the 11 times the rivals clashed there. Lincoln Financial Field, [armynavygame.com](http://armynavygame.com)

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On Greater Philadelphia’s official visitor website and blog, [visitphilly.com](http://visitphilly.com) and [uwishunu.com](http://uwishunu.com), visitors can explore things to do, upcoming events, themed itineraries and hotel packages. Compelling photography and videos, interactive maps and detailed visitor information make the sites effective trip-planning tools. Along with Visit Philly social media channels, the online platforms communicate directly with consumers. Travelers can also call and stop into the Independence Visitor Center for additional information and tickets.

*Note to Editors: For high-resolution photos of Greater Philadelphia, visit the photo gallery of [visitphilly.com/pressroom](http://visitphilly.com/pressroom).*