



### **Miami's Oseas De Leon Named to USA Blind Soccer Men's National Team**

*Miami Lighthouse instructor among seven athletes with visual impairments selected*

**(April 5, 2024) – Oseas De Leon**, a Miami resident and Senior Technology Specialist at the Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired, has been selected for the **2024 USA Blind Soccer Men's National Team** and is a Paralympic hopeful for the LA28 Paralympic Games. De Leon is one of two new athletes selected for this year's USA Blind Soccer Men's National Team.

The U.S. Association of Blind Athletes (USABA) announced nine athletes chosen for the 2024 USA Blind Soccer Men's National Team following a selection camp in Chula Vista, Calif., in February. The roster features seven athletes with visual impairments along with two sighted goalkeepers.

"We're elated to hear the news from USABA that our Senior Technology Specialist, Oseas De Leon, has officially made the 2024 USA Blind Soccer Men's National Team and is a Paralympic hopeful for the LA28 Paralympic Games," said **Virginia Jacko**, President & CEO of Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired. "His hard work, perseverance, and dedication to the sport he loves so much is an inspiring story for other blind and visually impaired athletes to chase their dreams. From everyone at Miami Lighthouse, Oseas, we're so proud of you!"

The sport of blind soccer has been part of the Paralympic Games since 2004, but the U.S. has never fielded a team. That will all change in 2028 when Los Angeles plays host to the Olympic and Paralympic Games and the U.S. will receive an automatic entry into the blind soccer competition as the host country. The first USA Blind Soccer National Team was named in November 2022 and competed in two international friendlies against Canada in March 2023, winning by scores of 1-0 and 3-0.

"We are so glad to have Oseas part of the National Team for 2024," said USA Blind Soccer Head Coach **Katie Smith**. "He has attended the last two national team camps in October 2023 and February 2024. He is a skilled player and a team player on and off the pitch. Oseas is always speaking positively with the team and is constantly motivating everyone around him. His positivity is contagious, and we are excited to see what he brings to the 2024 USA Blind Soccer Men's National Team."

Despite their lack of vision, blind soccer players exemplify speed, strength, stamina, agility, and excellent spatial awareness. Blind soccer is a fast-paced and exciting game, played in more than 60 countries, and is the world's fastest-growing Paralympic sport. With grassroots efforts to introduce the sport to

children, teens, and adults across the U.S., USABA is committed to bringing play equity and accessibility to the largest global sport in the world.

### **About Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired**

For nearly a century, Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired has been working to build a more inclusive society for the blind and visually impaired. Through education, training, research and vision enhancement, Miami Lighthouse for the Blind provides hope, confidence, and independence to people of all ages. Miami Lighthouse serves over 25,000 blind and visually impaired program participants of all ages, from blind babies to seniors, each year. For more information, please visit [www.miamilighthouse.org/](http://www.miamilighthouse.org/).

### **About U.S. Association of Blind Athletes**

The mission of USABA is to empower Americans who are blind or visually impaired to experience life-changing opportunities in sports, recreation, and physical activities, thereby educating and inspiring the nation. A member organization of both the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOPC) and U.S. Soccer, USABA is certified by the USOPC as the national governing body for the Paralympic team sports of goalball and blind soccer. The U.S. will make its Paralympic debut in blind soccer at the Los Angeles 2028 Paralympic Games. Since its founding in 1976, USABA has reached more than 100,000 individuals through its multi-sport programming. The organization has emerged as more than just a world-class trainer of blind athletes, it has become a champion of the abilities of Americans who are legally blind. Learn more at [www.usaba.org/](http://www.usaba.org/).