



USA Blind Soccer Holds *Kickoff for Inclusion* Event in Miami

February 24 event in collaboration with Miami Lighthouse for the Blind



(February 7, 2024) – The U.S. Association of Blind Athletes (USABA) and USA Blind Soccer will hold a special event in Miami on Saturday, February 24. The ***USA Blind Soccer – Kickoff for Inclusion*** event embodies the spirit of inclusion, offering a unique opportunity to witness the inaugural USA Blind Soccer Men's National Team as they redefine the boundaries of sports in South Florida. In collaboration with Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired, the occasion is part of the nationwide **Building Blind Soccer** initiative funded through U.S. Soccer's *Innovate to Grow* grant to expand the sport at the grassroots level. Building Blind Soccer sites have already been established in Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, Dallas, Columbus, Charlotte and Baltimore.

"Introducing a new sport in the United States is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," added USABA CEO **Molly Quinn**. "With the FIFA World Cup happening in 2026 and the USA Blind Soccer Team making its historic debut at the LA28 Paralympic Games two years later, the energy level is high with soccer in the U.S. We see Miami as one of the most important anchor cities in the U.S. as we build our roadmap to 2028."

This exciting day will allow attendees the opportunity to meet seven athletes from the first-ever USA Blind Soccer Men's National Team plus a developmental athlete from Miami, view a blind soccer demonstration and try the sport themselves. Soccer is for all, and the USA Blind Soccer Team showcases that, regardless of ability, anyone can thrive while playing the sport.

"Leading the charge, the Anthony R. Abraham Foundation, in strategic partnership with the U.S. Association of Blind Athletes and Miami Lighthouse, is proudly launching Miami's inaugural blind soccer program, establishing it as the eighth site for the sport within our country," said **Thomas A. Abraham**, the foundation's chairman and Team USA's ambassador for blind soccer. "This pioneering effort highlights our belief in the transformative power of sports to create opportunities, dismantle barriers, and nurture inclusivity for the visually impaired."

“With nearly 100,000 blind and visually impaired residents in Miami-Dade County, we’re grateful to USABA and USA Blind Soccer for their local partnership to help us create empowerment through sports and provide freedom to visually impaired athletes,” said **Virginia A. Jacko**, President & CEO of Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired. “We’re equally proud that one of our own Miami Lighthouse instructors, Oseas De Leon, is striving to make the 2024 USA Blind Soccer Men’s National Team and is a Paralympic hopeful for the LA28 Paralympic Games.”

USA Blind Soccer Kickoff for Inclusion Event Details

Date: Saturday, February 24

Arrival Time: 8:45 am EST

Event Time: 9:00 am – 1:30 pm EST

- *Program #1: 9 am–10:15 am: For blind and visually impaired youth (18 & under) and adults*
- *Program #2: 10:30 – 11:30 am: Blind soccer experience for stakeholders and potential coaches*
- *Demonstration 11:45 am–1:00 pm: Blind soccer demonstration & meet-n-greet lunch with members of the first-ever USA Blind Soccer Men’s National Team*

Venue: [Soctainer](#), in Little Havana at 820 SW 20th Ave., Miami, FL 33135. Valet parking will be provided.

Please RSVP by Feb. 16 at [Blind Soccer Kickoff for Inclusion Event Experience Registration Link](#)

USA Blind Soccer athletes in attendance

Noah Beckman (Columbus, Ohio)

Ricardo Castaneda (Fort Worth, Texas)

Charles Catherine (Brooklyn, N.Y.)

Cody Kirchner (Columbia, S.C.)

Alvaro Mora Arellano (Phoenix, Ariz.) TBD

Ahmed Shareef (Staten Island, N.Y.)

Oseas De Leon (Miami, Fla.) *developmental athlete

Brandt Herron (Jacksonville, Fla.) *sighted goalkeeper

About Blind Soccer

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. The U.S. will field its first blind soccer team at the Paralympics when the Games come to Los Angeles in 2028. A member organization of the U.S. Soccer Federation, USABA named the first-ever USA Blind Soccer Men’s National Team in November 2022 and hosted a pair of international friendlies in March 2023, defeating Canada in both matches by scores of 1-0 and 3-0. Watch the exciting [live stream of the first friendly](#) and experience the thrills of this historic day.

SEE HOW BLIND SOCCER IS PLAYED

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/.

About Miami Lighthouse for the Blind

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/.