

FUN IN THE SUN
Beach 5 Sand Soccer to hit Jones Beach this month

By Charles Cuttone
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Long Island's Jones Beach has long been one of the most popular summer destinations in the New York City area. Later this month, it also becomes the destination for the world's most popular sport, when the Beach 5 Sand Soccer Series hits the 10-mile beach on June 30 and July 1.

The tournament, which is open to players from U-8 to adults in a co-ed adult bracket, features five-a-side games on a sand field that is 40 yards by 30 yards, with six-foot by eight-foot goals.

Games will kick off starting at 8 am on Saturday and run until about 8 pm Sunday night, with another set of brackets starting on Sunday, so it's an easy one-day affair at the beach. All teams entering are guaranteed at least three games, but could get as many as three more, depending on the brackets.

Because the tournament is an open event, unsanctioned by any governing body, there is no carding, allowing for pick-up teams, who just want to have a good time on the beach to enter. Rosters are a minimum of five players, and up to 10 per team. Games are 45 minutes long.

Bill Harte, one of Beach 5 Soccer's founders, says they are expecting 50 teams to register for the Jones Beach event, which is the first the group is holding in New York.

Founded in 2007, Beach 5 this year expanded to four events. Their flagship, in Ocean City, Maryland, now attracts upwards of 300 teams.

While beach soccer may never have been envisioned for the sands of Jones Beach by legendary park and urban developer Robert Moses, who spearheaded the development of the state part in the late 20s, it certainly seems like a good fit, given the popularity of the sport.

"It was a no-brainer to go to New York," said Harte. "There are so many players in the area, and you've got plenty of beaches. I think Long Island will be our number one venue eventually."

Harte says they expect teams to come in from outside the metropolitan area to participate in the event.

In addition to Jones Beach and Ocean City, this year's calendar also includes stops in Point Pleasant, NJ and Grand Haven, Michigan.

Even though there are trophies awarded to the winning teams, Harte says, unlike more serious competitions, the Beach 5 Sand Soccer series is all about having a good time on the beach.

"It’s less stressful than a competitive soccer tournament," Harte said. "Families can just come out to the beach, break out the sun screen and sit by the ocean watching the games."