



PINEHURST, N.C. (Jan. 17, 2024) – The United States Golf Association (USGA) today announced the creation of a state team pilot program that will expand the pipeline for elite junior golfers into the recently created U.S. National Development Program (USNDP). Seven states will participate in the initial phase with the goal of all states having a team by 2033.

The first seven participants are California (Southern), Colorado, Georgia, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Ohio and Tennessee. The program will come to fruition through close collaboration between the USGA, its allied golf associations, the PGA of America and relevant state junior programs.

“This first of its kind state team program will serve as a critical part of the talent identification pathway for the USNDP and provide more opportunities for a diverse population of athletes to receive resources and guidance to compete at the highest levels of the game,” said Heather Daly-Donofrio, USGA managing director, Player Relations and Development. “Additionally, the opportunity to represent their home state will incentivize each region’s best junior golfers to play more in-state competitions, ultimately strengthening the junior golf programming across the country.”

The seven selected states participating in this initial pilot program will each establish a committee consisting of representatives from major golf organizations within the state, including any AGAs and PGA of America Sections. The state committees will oversee team selection criteria and the operation of the state program based on guidelines provided by the USGA. Team selection criteria will vary by state and may consist of a points structure, ranking or combination of other competitive factors. Selection criteria from all seven states will be published prior to the entry deadline of the first counting event of their 2024 championship season.

State team roster sizes will be calculated by elite junior participation in the state, ranging from a maximum of two boys/two girls to 20 boys/20 girls.

To be eligible to compete on a state team in 2024, a player must be a U.S. citizen. Each eligible player must be 13 years old by Jan. 1, 2025, have not reached their 19th birthday by July 19, 2025, and cannot be enrolled in college for the 2024-2025 school year. A Handicap Index® is also required.

State-specific team information can be found at usga.org/USNDP.

Announced in February of 2023, the USNDP is designed to ensure that American golf is the global leader in the game by focusing on six key pillars: talent identification, access to competition, national teams, athlete resources, player development, and relations and athlete financial support. The state team program will focus on creating a developmentally appropriate, aspirational pathway for athletes within each state to compete at higher levels of the game, including an opportunity to represent the United States as a member of the USNDP’s National Team led by former Pepperdine associate head coach Chris Zambri.

“The goal of the USNDP is to strengthen American golf by ensuring that the nation’s vast pool of junior golf talent has the resources necessary to progress in their development and a clear path to the highest levels of competition,” said Zambri, who became head coach of the U.S. National Development Program in November. “The state team program will allow us

to leverage the expertise and local knowledge of the regional and state junior golf programs to ensure that all golfers with the appropriate skill have an equitable opportunity to pursue their dreams.”

In his role, Zambri, a former standout at the University of Southern California who qualified for a pair of U.S. Opens, oversees and leads the day-to-day coaching operation, including playing a key role in developing a network of qualified coaches at the regional and state levels to support the USNDP’s mission of identifying and developing American golf talent. Zambri works closely with Senior Player Development Advisor Dr. Beth Brown to create an elite golf program designed to expose athletes to the physical, technical and mental loads required to compete successfully at national and international levels.

The U.S. National Development Program is supported by philanthropic giving and secured resources to fulfill the USGA’s commitment to providing pathways to elite levels of the game, regardless of financial situations. For more, visit usga.org/give_usndp.

About the USGA

The USGA is a mission-based golf organization whose purpose is to unify the golf community through handicapping and grassroots programs; to showcase the game’s best talent through the U.S. Open, U.S. Women’s Open and 13 other national championships and our museum; to provide unbiased global governance with The R&A through the playing, equipment and Amateur Status rules; and to advance issues important to golf’s future, with a focus on driving sustainability, accessibility and inclusion. As a nonprofit association, our work and our team are driven to act for the good of the game. For more, visit usga.org.

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