

USA Pickleball Names Accomplished Sports Executive Mike Nealy as CEO

Nealy's industry experience includes leading the Fiesta Bowl and the NHL's Phoenix Coyotes

PHOENIX, AZ, USA, May 26, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- USA Pickleball, the National Governing Body for the sport of pickleball, today named Mike Nealy as its new Chief Executive Officer. Nealy, a highly regarded longtime sports executive, will begin his new position at USA Pickleball in mid-June.

Nealy served for eight years as Executive Director of the Arizona Sports Foundation, which operates the Vrbo Fiesta Bowl, one of six college football bowl games that is part of the College Football Playoff. He is widely credited with restoring the Fiesta Bowl's status as one of the premier bowl games in the U.S.

Under his leadership, the Fiesta Bowl won the Phoenix Business Journal Corporate Philanthropy Award in 2018 for its notable community impact, donating more in charitable giving annually than any other college football bowl organization. Nealy was also recognized with the Jerry Colangelo Integrity Tiger Award, presented by the Arizona Commerce Authority, and was named to Phoenix Business Journal's Most Admired Leaders list in 2018.

"On behalf of our Board of Directors and over 74,000 members, I am thrilled to welcome a sports industry executive of Mike's caliber and pedigree to the USA Pickleball team," said USA Pickleball Board Chair Robert Quicksilver. "We have been impressed with Mike's accomplishments and leadership, which have earned him widespread recognition and respect in the NHL and college football. At this pivotal time in our sport, which continues to grow at exponential rates, we are extremely confident that Mike is the right person to guide us, as the National Governing Body of pickleball, to the next level."



Mike Nealy headshot with USA Pickleball logo

"I am honored to join USA Pickleball at such a period of growth for the sport—pickleball's explosion has been incredible to witness," said Nealy, a Minnesota native who has resided in Phoenix for the past 17 years. "The potential of pickleball's future cannot be understated. I am eager to dive into, and capitalize on, this tremendous opportunity. As a recreational pickleball player who is hooked on the sport like millions of others, I look forward to advancing USA Pickleball's mission and taking the organization to even greater heights. I would like to personally thank Robert Quicksilver and USA Pickleball's Board of Directors for entrusting me with this very important responsibility."

After leaving the Fiesta Bowl in March of 2022, Nealy has most recently served as a professional consultant for sports-related businesses, operating under Nealy Group, LLC.

Prior to heading the Arizona Sports Foundation and the Fiesta Bowl, Nealy spent eight years with the National Hockey League's Phoenix Coyotes (now the Arizona Coyotes), ultimately serving for four years as President, Chief Operating Officer and Alternate Governor. In this role, Nealy was responsible for overseeing all business operations for the Coyotes and Jobing.com Arena and, as Alternate Governor, represented the organization at NHL Board of Governors meetings.

In addition to restoring the stability of the franchise and elevating its standing in the league and Phoenix community, Nealy also achieved record-breaking sales and operating successes. His efforts earned the Coyotes national recognition, most notably in 2012 when ESPN The Magazine selected the Coyotes as the sixth-best professional sports franchise in North America as part of the publication's annual Ultimate Standings, which measured how much sports teams give back to their fans. Before joining the Coyotes in 2006, Nealy spent four seasons with the NHL's Minnesota Wild, where his responsibilities included strategic planning and finance.

Nealy, who becomes the second CEO in USA Pickleball's history, replaces current CEO Stu Upson, whose final day with the organization will be May 31.

Nealy earned a master's degree in business administration and a bachelor's degree in business from the University of Minnesota. He and his wife, Brenda, live in Phoenix and are the parents of a daughter, Regan, and a son, Simon.

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About USA Pickleball:

USA Pickleball is the National Governing Body (NGB) for the sport of pickleball in the United States. Its mission is to promote the development and growth of the sport while sanctioning events and providing annual members with premier tournaments, educational opportunities, player rankings, official rules and other exclusive benefits. USA Pickleball is a nonprofit 501(c)(3)

corporation that is governed and operated by a Board of Directors and a national office staff, who provide the guidance and infrastructure for the continued expansion of the sport.

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