



**2022 USL ACADEMY LEAGUE FINALS**

# **EVENT GUIDE**

**NOVEMBER 17-20, 2022**

**TOURNAMENT SPORTSPLEX OF TAMPA BAY  
TAMPA, FL**

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# WELCOME



Welcome to the 2022 USL Academy League Finals! All of us at USL couldn't be more excited to invite you all to Tampa, Florida for the weekend, and we look forward to celebrating an exciting conclusion to our second season of the USL Academy League.

Looking back at this past year, it's hard not to feel like there is already reason to celebrate! USL continues to establish itself as one of the most influential organizations in American soccer, as we're now directly operating leagues involving men's, women's, and youth soccer – both at the amateur and professional levels. Every one of those platforms is expanding at a tremendous rate, with more and more cities and clubs across the US investing in growing the game within their own local community. This growth will continue to provide more opportunities for players, coaches, administrators, referees, and all other stakeholders to further their careers and pursue new heights in the sport we all love.

Speaking to providing opportunities for talented young players in the US, it's especially apparent that a new youth movement is officially underway within USL's Senior Teams. Over 100+ teenage boys stepped into men's professional soccer with USL Championship or USL League One teams, with over 20 of them signing their first professional contracts. Within USL League Two, we saw over 250+ boys get the opportunity to accelerate their development at the men's amateur level, getting the opportunity to compete with and against collegiate players due to excelling at the USL Academy level. And despite USL W League having just launched this summer, after including a girl's division within USL Academy Cup, we already saw almost 30 girls get promoted into our new amateur Women's Senior Team platform, 10 of which are already involved in the US Women's National Team pathway!

As we continue to push that youth movement forward and as our clubs continue to provide more opportunities for top young players to further their development, we're also excited to continue providing pathways beyond USL. In the past year, numerous players have made the jump to Europe – be it Jose Gallegos moving from San Antonio to Denmark, Jonathan Gomez transferring from Louisville to Spain, or Kobi Henry transitioning from Orange County to France – and it's clear that that trend will only continue. There will inevitably be a player competing at USL Academy League Finals who will be making a similar move to one of Europe's top leagues next, and we can't wait to see who that is!

Speaking of this weekend's schedule, we will have eight total teams competing for the USL Academy League Championship in our Playoff Bracket. These teams finished the regular season at the top of their regional divisions, and



will be hoping they make it to the Championship match, set to be broadcast live on USL Academy's YouTube on Sunday, November 20th at 2 PM EST. Additionally, 22 USL Academy League Teams will be competing in our Showcase Bracket. Each and every match will be streamed live via MuscoVision, with on-demand video of each match available through them, as well as our partner Veo. We hope that providing these services will help collegiate and professional scouts evaluate talent at our event and will provide players even more opportunity to promote themselves as they pursue the next step in their playing careers.

As you finalize your schedule for the weekend, we'll have tournament game play each morning, various special events for select participants hosted each day, a Player Village to occupy players and fans in between games, as well as ample time to explore the greater Tampa Bay area. As you plan your trip, we encourage you to take a few moments to browse the following event guide, being sure to share your experience throughout the weekend on social media using the hashtag #USLAcademy.

We truly can't wait to see you all in Tampa competing and representing your Senior Teams in this year's USL Academy League Finals, and wish all of our teams, players, and coaches the best of luck!

**Liam O'Connell**  
*USL Technical Director*

# ABOUT



## USL ACADEMY

USL Academy is a player development program designed to advance all players, coaches, administrators, and other stakeholders towards their maximum potential by emphasizing the promotion of top young talents into Senior Team environments. Through participation in USL Academy League and USL Academy Cup, clubs can offer top youth prospects a pathway to reach their local senior teams in USL W League, League Two, League One, and Championship. USL Academy strives to build player pathways, integrate youth networks with senior teams, and create a national footprint to allow for growth among all participants.

## USL ACADEMY LEAGUE

The 2022 USL Academy League Finals will feature 36 teams, participating in one of two brackets: the Playoff Bracket or Showcase Bracket. The top team from each USL Academy League full-time division, based on points-per-game, are invited to compete in the Playoff Bracket, competing for the USL Academy Championship. All other full-time USL Academy League clubs, playing at least 12 games across two seasons in 2022, are invited to participate in the Showcase Bracket.

The Showcase Bracket features four games for each club, scheduled based on regular season standings and stressing cross-divisional match-ups to allow for new opponents. The Playoff Bracket features two groups of four teams, playing three round-robin games each. On Sunday, each team will compete against the team in the opposing group that holds the same position in the standings, culminating in the USL Academy League Championship match between the top teams from each group.

Outside of the actual gameplay, there will be multiple initiatives set up to make the weekend a more holistic development experience. Coaches and directors will be invited to participate in a Technical Development Workshop, where best practices will be shared with a specific focus on New Mexico United as a case study. Regarding Talent Identification, college and professional coaches from all levels across the country have registered to attend games throughout the weekend. In partnership with Kwik Goal, USL Academy League Finals will host a Scouting Lounge for all registered scouts in attendance, complete

with scouting notebooks with team rosters and Kwik Goal notebooks to record high-performing players. Referee development will also be a key component of the event. USL has partnered with Florida Soccer Referees to create a professionalized referee academy set-up, featuring a National Referee Coach mentor for every field, formal video review sessions every evening, and current and former FIFA referees evaluating hand-selected Florida referees for their potential to officiate in higher competitions.





## USL ACADEMY PLAYER DEVELOPMENT MODEL: 2022 & BEYOND

The USL Academy player development model has allowed more communities than ever to offer a clear path to senior-team soccer. Traditionally, most academy programs field three or more teams between the U15 and U19 age levels, which often limits exposure for top talents. The USL Academy platform allows these top prospects to move into a focused, pre-professional development environment with a direct and immediate connection to their local USL senior team.

While the USL Academy team competes in a U20 age group, clubs are required to maintain a minimum number of U17 players on their roster. Clubs may also drop up to 5 over-age players from their senior team to their Academy team on gameday. By combining senior team players and under-17 players on the same roster, trainings and gamedays become a fully integrated pathway that emphasizes long-term development.

Clubs compete in regional divisions across a Spring, Summer, and Fall season. Regional play throughout the season emphasizes low travel costs and encourages teams to join their senior teams for double-header weekends. Clubs that participate in USL Academy League for at least two of the three seasons are invited to the USL Academy League Finals, with division winners playing in a Playoff bracket and all other clubs participating in a Showcase bracket. By providing communities a chance to build a viable youth-to-pro pathway, USL can cast a wider network than ever, and provide even more players the chance to chase their dream of playing professional soccer.





CHRISTIAN PULISIC

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# COMPLEX MAP



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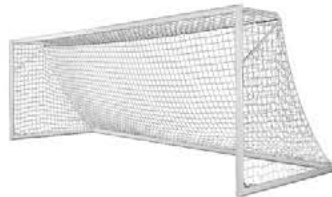
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# SPECIAL EXPERIENCES GUIDE

## PLAYER VILLAGE

The Player Village is a unique experience for players, fans, and families to spend time before and after games. The Player Village is located in the center of the complex on the concrete plaza. It contains the Tournament Headquarters, the Academy League Finals merchandise store presented by PUMA, and various partner activations and special experiences.

The Player Village also includes a 10-foot soccer dart board inflatable, soccer tennis courts, two Subsoccer decks, and a variety of other exciting engagements from companies such as CURREX, SELECT, and Turf Tank.

## SCOUTING LOUNGE

*Presented by Kwik Goal*

USL Academy, in partnership with Kwik Goal, have created a comprehensive Scouting Lounge for scouts in attendance at the 2022 USL Academy League Finals. Kwik Goal has provided their "Coach's Notebook" for each scout to record information on top-performing players along with providing refreshments, lunch, and hospitality items. USL Academy will provide scouting booklets complete with rosters and schedules for each club competing at the event. Scouts will check-in each morning at the Scouting Lounge before heading to the fields to begin their scouting process. In-between matches, they may return to the Scouting Lounge to analyze, collaborate, and discuss player performances with other scouts in attendance.

## REFEREE SOCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SESSION

*In person event for invited referees at USL HQ, held on Thursday, 11/17*

USL is happy to welcome the top referees from around Florida to Tampa for the weekend. As part of the continued referee development initiatives put on by USL Academy (see page 11), USL is excited to welcome the referees to USL Headquarters for an evening of video analysis and networking with National Referee Coaches and PRO referees. event. Scouts will check-in each morning at the Scouting Lounge before heading to the fields to begin their scouting process. In-between matches, they may return to the Scouting Lounge to analyze, collaborate, and discuss player performances with other scouts in attendance.

## TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP

*In person event at USL HQ, held on Friday, 11/18 from 6:00PM - 8:00PM*

USL Technical Director Liam O'Connell will be leading the conversation around Building a Complete Player Pathway within the USL ecosystem via the USL Academy platform. The session will include an interactive element with a breakout session, giving our clubs the opportunity to share best practices to enhance the strategic planning efforts of their fellow USL Academy clubs. Our featured club will be New Mexico United, who are in their second year as a fully funded USL Academy program. The club has achieved great success in a relatively short time and will share their key performance indicators as well as processes behind their model. The session is sponsored by KwikGoal, who will be present at the event.

## PLAYER PATHWAY PANEL

*In person event at USL HQ, held on Friday, 11/18 at 3:00 PM*

All event participants are invited to attend the Player Pathway Panel on 11/19 at the Tournament Sportsplex of Tampa Bay. USL Technical Director Liam O'Connell will host a panel of USL Academy stars Tate Johnson (Tampa Bay United), Josh Wynder (Louisville City FC), and Alann Torres (Indy Eleven), who will discuss their journeys from playing in USL Academy to joining the professional teams in their respective markets.



# SPECIAL EXPERIENCES GUIDE (CONT.)

## TOURNAMENT AWARDS

The 2022 USL Academy League Finals has several trophies and individual awards up for grabs among participants.

- The USL Academy League Champions will receive a USL Academy Cup Trophy.
- The Champion and runner-up will receive USL Academy League Finals medals.
- Players competing in the Playoff bracket are eligible for the following player awards:
  - Golden Boot
  - Golden Glove
  - Golden Ball

Each award winner will receive a trophy, PUMA prize pack, and Cleer Audio headphones or speakers.

- One coach from the Playoff bracket will be awarded "USL Academy Coach of the Tournament" with a custom certificate, PUMA prize pack, and Cleer Audio headphones or speakers.
- Four referees will be awarded "Referee of the Tournament" with prizes that include a custom certificate, PUMA prize pack, and Cleer Audio headphones or speakers. Referees will be selected based on the following roles: one Center Referee, two Assistant Referees, and one Fourth Official.



## LOCAL ENTERTAINMENT & DISCOUNTS

Working with the City of Tampa, we are happy to provide USL Academy League Finals participants with discount codes to a list of entertainment options. Those entertainment options, a schedule of local events, and discount links can be found here:

<https://www.tampabay.com/explorer/2022/2022-usl-academy-cup>

VISIT  
TAMPA BAY



TAMPA BAY  
VISITOR'S GUIDE



TAMPA, FL  
DOWNTOWN MAP



TAMPA, FL  
VIRTUAL MAP



TAMPA, FL  
WATER STREET



TAMPA, FL  
RIVERWALK



# HISENSE MINI PITCH UNVEILING

The USL and Hisense USA announced a new mini pitch, built in collaboration with the U.S. Soccer Foundation and the Tampa Bay Rowdies, will be unveiled Nov. 17th at 4:30 p.m. EST at a grand opening ceremony. The ribbon-cutting will take place at the Rowdies' new training facility near Veterans Expressway at 8108 Benjamin Road, Tampa and is set to include appearances by Rowdies players, USL executives and local officials – with a free youth clinic and giveaways for attendees.

The mini pitch is the first in the Hisense Community Pitch Program established earlier this year when the organizations entered a multi-year partnership, making Hisense USA the Official Television of the USL. The mini pitch will be available for open play and local youth organizations. Constructed by Musco Lighting, the mini pitch will have the dimensions of an international futsal court, built-in goals, a high-performance acrylic playing surface and factory-aimed TLC for LED luminaires.

Hisense is the second largest manufacturer of LCD TVs in the world\* and is in its third consecutive year of growth in the TV market – continuing to prove its leadership in the industry. Hisense USA is focused on making great products and putting those products, technologies, and features within people's reach. Today, Hisense USA offers a range of technology products including televisions, laser TVs, refrigerators, air conditioners, dehumidifiers, beverage coolers, and freezers.

\*According to a July 2022 report from TrendForce



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# REFEREE INITIATIVES



## REFEREE DEVELOPMENT

**Sessions held at the conclusion of each match day (Thursday, Friday, and Saturday)**

With USL Academy's vision of advancing all stakeholders within the USL ecosystem to their highest potential, USL Academy League Finals will feature the most comprehensive referee development programming of any USL pre-professional event to date. USL Academy has partnered with Florida Soccer Referees ("FSR") and the US Soccer Referee Program to assemble a group of Florida's highest-performing referees for high-level games, expert mentoring, field trainings, and video analysis.

Referees are hand-selected from across Florida to officiate the 2022 USL Academy League Finals with the goal of identifying officials to invite to PRO2, the Professional Referee Organization's training and development program. These referees have been identified as being the closest to earn assignments within professional leagues such as USL League One and USL Championship.

Each field will be assigned a mentor, allowing every referee to receive feedback from National Referee Coaches, who will be provided by USL, FSR, and US Soccer. By shortening each game's length and adding additional time between games, referees are able to reflect on their performances before beginning their next matches.

"Invited referees understand that this event is an enormous opportunity to not only develop their skills, but leave an impression on mentors and potentially earn invitations to stronger competitions, such as USL's professional leagues," says Drayden Farci, USL Operations and Compliance Coordinator.

Mentors will also note key match incidents throughout the day to discuss in daily video sessions. Each evening, referees and mentors will regroup to review law interpretations, receive additional field and classroom trainings, and watch clips from the day's games for targeted instruction and reflection.

Additionally, USL Academy and FSR will be hosting a referee certification class during the event to provide access for brand new referees to receive valuable instruction and experience a top-level environment and meet professionals in the industry.

As resources are funneled into player and coaching development, it is imperative that referees receive the same opportunities to enhance their skills. USL Academy is excited to welcome Florida's top officials to Tampa for the 2022 USL Academy League Finals and will work closely with the mentors to identify referees who are ready for assignments in other leagues within USL's pathway.



## MEET THE REFEREE MENTORS

- FSR SRA and former FIFA referee Christina Unkel
- FSR ARI Director and former FIFA referee Ted Unkel
- Manager of Referee Development with US Soccer Pedro Trejo Jr., PhD
- Ohio-North State Director of Instruction and Assessment Jeff Mellen
- National Referee Coach and former FIFA referee Nami Imaizumi
- National Referee Coach and former FIFA referee Berk Gumus
- Manager of Senior Referees at PRO Alan Kelly
- FIFA Referee Rubiel Vazquez
- Elvis Osmanovic, center referee from the League One Final

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# VENDOR OUTLINES



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## Kittrich Canopy

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## Kwik Goal

Kwik Goal is the Official Goal, Shelter, and Training Equipment Supplier of the USL. Kwik Goal was founded on the revolutionary concept of providing transportable goals for coaches at all levels. As the largest, dedicated soccer goal and field equipment manufacturer in the Western hemisphere, Kwik Goal has been supplying high-quality soccer goals, field equipment, training equipment, and fully customizable seating for over forty years to the domestic and international market. Kwik Goal is the presenting partner of USL Academy Scouting Hospitality and provides great benefits for all players, teams, and coaches.



## SELECT

SELECT is the Official Match Ball Supplier of the USL and USL Academy. Founded in 1947, SELECT has been an innovator on the pitch since its early days. SELECT enhances each USL club's merchandise offering of licensed and official replica match balls, while supporting its partnership through additional marketing and advertising. Visit SELECT at the USL Academy League Finals Player Village for a chance to raffle on prizes and purchase new SELECT balls.



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## Turf Tank

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## OFFICIAL SPORTS INTERNATIONAL

Since 1984 OFFICIAL SPORTS has worked closely with professional referees to develop the uniforms and equipment used by U.S. Soccer's game officials from the grassroots levels to international events, professional leagues and U.S. Women's National Team matches. The uniforms we have developed with NISOA are worn in college and high school soccer game all across the country.

# VENDOR OUTLINES (CONT.)



## **CORA PT**

CORA Physical Therapy is a company that lives by their slogan, "Treating Everyone Right." CORA will be hands-on at the event, providing the USL Academy League Finals athletic trainers to ensure the players and referees receive the best treatment for any injuries. CORA PT is also proud to present the Recovery Center - more information can be found on page 18.



## **Marka**

Marka Sports is the Official In-Stadium Signage Supplier of the USL and USL Academy. A leader in stadium signage across North America, Marka Sports' signage has featured in FIFA World Cup Qualifying, the CONCACAF Champions League, and Liga MX, in addition to numerous other events and properties. The signage surrounding the USL Academy League Finals fields, player village and award ceremony is presented by Marka Sports.



## **PUMA**

PUMA is the presenting partner of the USL Academy League Finals. PUMA is one of the world's leading Sports Brands, designing, developing, selling, and marketing footwear, apparel, and accessories. For 70+ years, PUMA has relentlessly pushed sport and culture forward by creating fast products for the world's fastest athletes. Golden Boot, Golden Glove, Golden Ball, Coach and Ref of the Tournament will be outfitted with PUMA gear at the conclusion of the USL Academy League Finals.



## **Veo**

Vevo will be live streaming all games on site through the USL Academy Clubhouse for players, coaches, parents, scouts, and referees to watch. If anyone cannot watch in person or on the live stream, they can access the game footage indefinitely. All individuals looking to view footage can gain access by completing a typeform at [veo.co/game](http://veo.co/game). Vevo is the Preferred Video Provider of USL.



## **Wilson Trophies**

Wilson is the Official Awards and Trophy Supplier of the USL. Wilson is providing individual awards for the Playoff Bracket, including Golden Ball (MVP), Golden Boot (Top Scorer), and Golden Glove (Best Goalkeeper). In addition, Wilson is providing the trophy for the USL Academy League Championship match.



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The United Soccer League (“USL”) is committed to ensuring that minors and adults who participate and engage in USL hosted or sponsored events are safeguarded from abuse, harassment, and/or misconduct.

If you have any concerns or questions concerning the safety and wellbeing of any players, club staff or officials during this event please contact our **Event Safeguarding Lead** onsite:

ACADEMY SAFEGUARDING LEAD

**CHRIS MADDEN**

 (813) 514-1759

You can also report safeguarding concerns to the

**USL SAFEGUARDING TEAM**



**SAFEGUARDING HOTLINE**

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For more information about the **USL's Safeguarding Policies** please visit:

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# TEAMS | PLAYOFF DIVISION

## GROUP A

|   |                   |   |
|---|-------------------|---|
|  | AC CONNECTICUT    | 2 |
|  | TAMPA BAY UNITED  | 2 |
|  | NEW MEXICO UNITED | ★ |
|  | INDY ELEVEN       | ★ |





## GROUP B

|   |                           |   |
|---|---------------------------|---|
|  | CHATTANOOGA RED WOLVES SC | 1 |
|  | NORTH CAROLINA FC         | 1 |
|  | QUEENSBORO FC             | ★ |
|  | SAN ANTONIO FC            | ★ |



# TEAMS | SHOWCASE DIVISION




## GROUP 1

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  AHFC ROYALS        | 2 |
|  LOUISVILLE CITY FC | ★ |
|  ORANGE COUNTY SC   | ★ |
|  WESTON FC          | 2 |

## GROUP 3

|   |   |
|---|---|
|  CHARLOTTE INDEPENDENCE   | 1 |
|  PARK CITY RED WOLVES SC | 2 |
|  FC MIAMI CITY           | 2 |
|  SOUTHERN SOCCER ACADEMY | 2 |

## GROUP 5

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  TAMPA BAY UNITED 2 | 2 |
|  HOUSTON FC         | 2 |
|  LEXINGTON SC       | 1 |




## GROUP 2

|   |   |
|---|---|
|  CLEVELAND FORCE           | 2 |
|  IRONBOUND SC              | 2 |
|  SOUTH GEORGIA TORMENTA FC | 1 |
|  WAKE FC                   | 2 |

## GROUP 4

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  CHARLOTTE EAGLES      | 2 |
|  CHICAGO CITY SC      | 2 |
|  FA EURO NEW YORK     | 2 |
|  RIO GRANDE VALLEY FC | ★ |

## GROUP 6

|   |   |
|---|---|
|  MIAMI ATHLETIC CLUB | 2 |
|  PEACHTREE CITY MOBA | 2 |
|  VBR STAR            | 2 |



# GAME SCHEDULE & FACILITY DETAILS

## GAME SCHEDULE

The game schedule can be viewed via the USL app which can be downloaded from the App Store. Follow along in the app to see the tournament standings updated in real time.

The game schedule can also be viewed directly using the QR code.



## RECOVERY CENTER

In partnership with CORA Physical Therapy, USL Academy has created a Recovery Center, located in the north end of the Player Village. The Recovery Center features foam rollers, stretching pads, Normatec Boots, massage guns, electrolyte packets, and clinicians to assist in muscle recovery for players and referees. The Recovery Center is open from 10:45am to 3:15pm every day.

## EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

Emergency medical services will be available to all event guests. Medical personnel will be stationed on the north side of the Player Village. Please ask Field Marshals or USL staff to radio for assistance if you require attention on a field or sideline.

## INCLEMENT WEATHER PROCEDURE

Should weather arrive that threatens the safety of attendees, USL HQ will make the final determination of game terminations. Staff will radio to Field Marshals, who will instruct the referees to stop the game. Additional airhorns will be sounded throughout the complex. Attendees should return to their cars immediately and follow @USL\_Academy on Twitter for updates.

## EVENT PARKING FEE - \$5 CASH ONLY

The parking fee for the Tournament Sportsplex of Tampa Bay is \$5 per car, per day and is cash only. There are three lots - the Main Lot, the West Lot, and the Overflow Lot. Tampa Sports Authority staff will direct traffic and a uniformed officer will manage the intersection. Buses may pull up in the right-turn lane of the main entrance of the Complex on Columbus Drive for drop-off. Buses may then park across the street at the Overflow Lot. It is recommended that buses approach the complex from the east, heading westbound on Columbus Drive.

## CONCESSIONS

The Tournament Sportsplex of Tampa Bay will operate a concessions stand located in the Player Village. In addition, food trucks are available in the Player Village that will include a variety of snacks, meals, and desserts.

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## Broadcast and Viewing Options

Multiple broadcast options will be available for USL Academy League Finals matches. Each game will be livestreamed via MuscoVision for a subscription fee of \$9.99 per day, which you can purchase here [www.muscovision.com/](http://www.muscovision.com/). Veo cameras will also record games to be uploaded following the day's matches.

**Tune into** the USL YouTube page [www.youtube.com/usl](http://www.youtube.com/usl) on Sunday at 9am EST for a broadcast of the 3rd Place match-up in the Playoff Bracket. Stay tuned at 2pm EST for the USL Academy League Final Championship!



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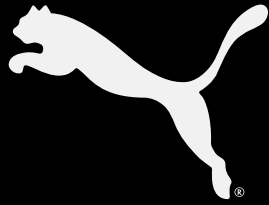
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