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**Special Olympics Unified Flag Football Exhibition Game Messaging Points**

**Primary Game Message:**

The game will promote the inclusiveness of sports to build interest and awareness in participating in Special Olympics Unified Flag Football.

**Primary Overall Message:**

The partnership between the NFL and Special Olympics promotes awareness, respect and inclusion of Special Olympics athletes. With the help of NFL players, clubs, supporters, and partners we’ll look to increase new participation, coaches, and fans needed to grow the sport of flag football within the Special Olympics North America movement.

**Talking Points:**

* The NFL and Special Olympics share the values of improving the lives of all people through sport, health, education and community programming.
* The NFL is committed to helping athletes of all abilities ‘PLAY 60’ and have fun. PLAY 60 is the league's youth health and wellness platform to get kids across the country active for 60 minutes a day.
* With contributions from the NFL Foundation, Special Olympics will provide grants to local Special Olympics Programs, including Programs in Massachusetts, New Jersey, North Carolina, Colorado, Northern California, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Kansas, Texas, Washington and Virginia. NFL teams will look to support local Special Olympics Programs implement Unified flag football in their local markets.
* The grants will be used to enhance Unified Sports programming; increase participation of athletes, partners and coaches; and support Special Olympics Unified Sports’ online education and training course. NFL teams will work with local Special Olympics Programs to help grow and expand opportunities for Special Olympics Unified flag football.
* Special Olympics is working to create a world where people with intellectual disabilities lead healthy, vibrant lives grounded in ongoing sports and physical activities, and a deeply held commitment to improve, compete, achieve and demonstrate their personal bests to themselves and their communities.
* The NFL and its teams have a longstanding relationship with Special Olympics. NFL teams have supported Special Olympics in a variety of ways, including hosting youth football clinics and competitions.
* Support from the NFL community will help raise awareness about the opportunities available to athletes with intellectual disabilities, increasing the number of participants, coaches, and fans needed to grow the sport of flag football within Special Olympics North America programs.
* Currently, nearly 5,000 Special Olympics athletes, Unified partners and coaches participate in Unified flag football in the United States. But Special Olympics wants to grow that number, and partnerships and events like this can help make that a reality.
* Special Olympics is offered at no cost to the athlete or their family, so that no one is left on the sidelines due to financial barriers. Support from partners such as the NFL is critical to Special Olympics’ success.
* With 220 Accredited Programs in 169 countries, Special Olympics provides opportunities for more than 5.3 million athletes and Unified partners, who are supported by more than one million volunteers and millions more family members, supporters and fans.
* Special Olympics Unified Sports brings together people with and without intellectual disabilities as teammates, creating quick paths to friendship and greater understanding.

**Partnership Terminology Guide**

* The partnership is with the NFL with funds provided by the NFL Foundation. Anytime the partnership is communicated, it should reference NFL. If referencing funds, and how the Special Olympics Program is receiving funds, NFL Foundation should be credited.
* Special Olympics - should not be written as “the Special Olympics” and the “s” should never be omitted
* Local Special Olympics Programs are always presented as “Special Olympics” followed by the state/province name, such as “Special Olympics Colorado” or “Special Olympics Washington”
* Special Olympics Unified Sports flag football teams (Unified flag football teams on second reference)
* Special Olympics athlete
* Players without intellectual disabilities on Unified Sports teams are referred to as “Special Olympics Unified partners” or “Unified partners” or “partners.” The term “teammates” is also acceptable.
* Refer to participants in Special Olympics as “Special Olympics athletes” rather than “Special Olympians” (not allowed by the IOC) or “Special Olympic athletes.”
* Do not use the blanket label "kids" when referring to Special Olympics athletes. Adult athletes are an integral part of Special Olympics.
* Use people first language. Refer to individuals, persons or people with intellectual disabilities, rather than “intellectually disabled people”
* Do not use the word "the" in front of Special Olympics unless describing a specific Special Olympics event. Correct example: “We are proud to support Special Olympics.” Correct example: “We are proud to support the Special Olympics Unified Flag Football exhibition game.”