

## Nassau and the Bahamas – Congress hosts for the first time



This year's Congress in Nassau marks the first time the event has ever been held in the Caribbean. The Bahamas is only the fourth country in the CONCACAF confederation, after Mexico (Guadalajara 1968, Mexico City 1970 and 1986), Canada (Montreal 1976) and the USA (Chicago 1994, Los Angeles 1999), to host this event, a red-letter day on FIFA's calendar.

### Country facts

Country (official name):	Commonwealth of The Bahamas
Capital:	Nassau
Government type:	Constitutional parliamentary democracy; Commonwealth realm
Surface area:	13,940 sq. km
Population:	307,451 (2008 est.)
GDP per capita:	USD 29,900 (2008 est.)
GDP total:	USD 9,189.0 million (2008 est.)
Life expectancy at birth:	65.72 years
Official language(s):	English (official), Creole (among Haitian immigrants)
Currency:	Bahamian Dollar (BSD)

### Background

The Commonwealth of The Bahamas is a North American, English-speaking country consisting of two thousand cays and seven hundred islands that form an archipelago.

Lucayan Indians inhabited the islands when Christopher Columbus first set foot in the New World on San Salvador in 1492. British settlement of the islands began in 1647; the islands became a colony in 1783. Since attaining independence from the UK in 1973, the Bahamas has been one of the wealthiest Caribbean countries, with an economy heavily dependent on tourism and offshore banking. Tourism together with tourism-driven construction and manufacturing accounts for approximately 60% of GDP and directly or indirectly employs half of the archipelago's labour force. Financial services constitute the second most important sector of the Bahamian economy and, when combined with business services, account for about 36% of GDP.





## History of football in the Bahamas

Football was first introduced in the Bahamas just after the First World War, when returning veterans continued to practice, kick around and play friendly games with each other in the new sport they came to know and love while serving in Europe. During the 1920s and 30s, clubs and teams from the three main districts in New Providence developed football as one of its sports, and matches were arranged from time to time. Games were also being played against visiting naval ships and other recreation vessels, which stopped in Nassau. Football increased in popularity during the 40s and more teams and players became involved.

The popularity of the sport continued into the 50s and in 1954, the first attempt was made to organise teams into a league or association.

In 1957, the first all-star team representing the Bahamas, travelled to Miami, Florida to play against the Coral Gables Soccer Club for a trophy donated by the Bahamas Development Board, the forerunners of the ministry of tourism headed by the late Sir Stafford Sands.

As other international games at home and abroad became more frequent, the need for proper international affiliation and representation arose. Therefore, in 1967, the two leagues amalgamated to form the Bahamas Football Association, bringing football under one body in accordance with international standards. The following year, the Bahamas Football Association's application for full membership of the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) was approved. Membership with the Confederation of North, Central America and Caribbean Association Football (CONCACAF) came in 1981. The Bahamas Football Association, as the national body responsible for football in the Bahamas, provides for the organisation of leagues in the many islands of the Bahamas. Outside of New Providence, only Grand Bahama has organised football under the umbrella of the BFA. Additionally, as a member of the Bahamas Olympic Association, the BFA has provided national football teams to participate in regional games, Pan Am Games, CAC Games and pre-Olympic competition. Teams attended the CAC Games in Panama in 1970, the Dominican Republic in 1974 and 1986, Cuba 1982 and the Pan Am Games in Cali, Columbia in 1971.

At present, there are two men's divisions with 12 teams competing in the New Providence Football League, with matches played at the Thomas A. Robinson Stadium. The league also comprises a five-team division for women and these matches are also played at the Thomas A. Robinson Stadium. Moreover, there is an "I" league for school-age players at U-18 and U-15 level, with a total of 24 male and 17 female teams, and a "Y" league with another 34 teams competing in U-8, U-10 and U-12 divisions. The Grand Bahama Football League has one men's and one women's division of five and three teams respectively, with matches played at the YMCA field and the Freeport Rugby Football Club. There is also a league organised by the YMCA with 16 teams competing in U-15 and U-10 divisions.



Football in the Bahamas has seen considerable growth in the past few years, and with a committed and concentrated effort to the task, this growth will continue in the foreseeable future and will eventually make football in the Bahamas as recognisable as the sun, sand and sea that we so readily market to the world.

(Source: Bahamas Football Association)



### Association information

Bahamas Football Association (BFA)

- Founded in 1967
- Affiliated since 1968

<i>President</i>	Mr SEALEY Anton D.J.
<i>Vice-President</i>	Mr LUNN Frederick
<i>General Secretary</i>	Mr HAVEN Lionel E.
<i>Media/Communications</i>	Mr HAVEN Lionel E.
<i>Referee Coordinator</i>	DARVILLE Stanley
<i>Futsal Coordinator</i>	Mr HAVEN Lionel E.

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Shirts: Yellow. Shorts: Black. Socks: Yellow.

### Big Count 2006

Total players <sup>1)</sup>	4,872	
Total players by gender <sup>1)</sup>	male: 3,464	female: 1,408
Registered players <sup>2)</sup>	male: 564	female: 256
Unregistered players <sup>2)</sup>	male: 2,000	female: 400
Youth players	male: 900	female: 752

<sup>1)</sup> excluding children and occasional players. <sup>2)</sup> excluding youth players.

