



Kentucky High School Athletic Association

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RUSSELL ATHLETIC TO SPONSOR COMMONWEALTH GRIDIRON BOWL, WKU EXTENDS AS HOST

Russell Athletic has agreed to a four-year arrangement to serve as title sponsor of the Commonwealth Gridiron Bowl, KHSAA Commissioner Julian Tackett announced during a press conference held at Houchens Industries-L.T. Smith Stadium on Friday.

In addition, Tackett announced that Western Kentucky University and Houchens-Smith Stadium will continue to serve as host site of the event through 2014.

"Again, the corporate community in the Bowling Green area, along with the great folks at Western Kentucky University, have openly showed their appreciation and understanding of the value of the young people in the Commonwealth," said KHSAA Commissioner Julian Tackett. "It continues to amaze me the great community spirit and welcoming attitude that is displayed here in Bowling Green. From the fantastic folks at WKU, to the outstanding cooperation from Amy Cardwell, Vicki Fitch and the rest of the Bowling Green CVB office, to the generosity and support of the corporate community including our new partners at Russell Athletic, this town "gets it", as it relates to high school sports in this state. This move gives one of our marquee championships stability and allows for continued growth in the coming years."

Russell Athletic, whose official name is Russell Brands, LLC, is a Fruit of the Loom company with corporate offices located in Bowling Green. The company has been in existence for more than 100 years and is the leading supplier of team uniforms at the high school, college and professional level.

In addition to its collegiate licensed product line, Russell Athletics' Active Wear® is widely distributed through retail and department stores, as well as sports specialty markets.

“Russell Athletic is excited to partner with the KHSAA (Kentucky High School Athletic Association) as the title sponsor of the state football championships,” said Gary Barfield, Executive Vice President of Russell Brands, LLC. “With Russell being a part of Fruit of the Loom, Inc., this partnership allows us to tie in Kentucky high school athletics, Western Kentucky University and the city of Bowling Green to help create a memorable experience for Kentucky high school football for many years to come.”

Western Kentucky University and Houchens-L.T. Smith Stadium have been the site of the Commonwealth Gridiron Bowl since 2009. The past two years increased crowds have flocked to the remodeled 23,500 seat facility, the home of the Western Kentucky Hilltoppers of the Sun Belt Conference. Last year a total of 47,759 fans attended the event, the most since the event was expanded to six classes in 2007.

“We are pleased and excited with the partnership KHSAA is creating with Russell Athletic to keep the KHSAA Football Championships at WKU for the next four years. Most in the WKU family know about our great apparel partnership with Russell Athletic. Long before its WKU ties, however, Russell has been the national brand for high school athletes,” said Western Kentucky University President Gary Ransdell. “Now they are combining their corporate priorities to further connect their products with the Kentucky High School Athletic Association, WKU and our community, by sponsoring the KHSAA Football Championships in Houchens-Smith Stadium. We are delighted! This is great news for Kentucky, for our region and for WKU. Three cheers for Russell Athletics and the KHSAA!”

Since its move to Bowling Green in 2009, the Commonwealth Gridiron Bowl has become one of the busiest weekends of the year for the city’s hotel, restaurant and tourism industry.

“This is a tremendous day for Bowling Green and Warren County as we share this exciting news with the community,” said Amy Cardwell, Sports Director, Bowling Green Area Convention and Visitors Bureau. “The city is privileged to now host multiple KHSAA events from which our local economy greatly benefits. We are fortunate to have community partners such as Russell Athletic and Western Kentucky University who are committed to bringing positive exposure and growth to the city.”

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