Professional UK American Football League Sets Out to Grow the British Game

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SPORTS league start-up UKFL is uniting fans, players and coaches to launch an elite American Football league in the UK - one of the few countries in Europe without a professional league.

Based out of headquarters in the North East of England, UKFL was created by a senior team made up of UK American Football coaches, players and fans.

UKFL's first season is set to launch in May 2023, with 8 fully professional teams based in cities across the UK and the goal of delivering an authentic American gameday experience to UK fans, from exciting gameplay featuring home-grown and import players to traditional American food and drink and authentic gameday entertainment like cheerleading and tailgating.

After a soft launch in February, the UKFL has generated high levels of interest amongst UK American Football fans, with thousands signing up for social media and newsletter updates.

Now, UKFL's senior team is in discussion with investors and corporate sponsors to secure funding for the project and is also calling on fans to offer their support via a crowdfunding campaign set to launch in September.

UKFL CEO Mick Tyler explains that fan experience is core to the league's vision. "Right from the start we've committed to building the UKFL with fans at its heart. We're committed to building something that gives our fan base real ownership and control."

The popularity of American Football has grown rapidly in the UK in recent years, with over 4 million UK fans tuning in to the 2020 Super Bowl. In spite of this, the UK remains one of the only European countries without a professional league.

UKFL's Director of Football Operations Jonathan Rooney believes that the lack of an elite professional option in the UK is severely limiting the sport's potential in the UK:

"For UK players, the only opportunity to play and train at a professional level is in Europe. This forces our best players to look for opportunities abroad because there are none at home. Many do achieve success in Europe, but others choose to leave the game entirely.

The lack of a professional league also limits the quality of the game at a lower level. We want to create something for young players to aspire to, and to work with schools, colleges and universities to develop a new generation of athletes, some of whom could even go on to play in the NFL."

American Football in the UK: Key facts and figures

- NFL has over 13 million fans in the UK, and is watched by more than 20 million unique television viewers per season.
- Since 2007, the UK has hosted sold-out NFL International Series games at Wembley, Twickenham and more recently at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in London.
- Most major European countries have established professional leagues. Games in Germany's GFL and Austria's AFL leagues regularly draw crowds of over 10,000 fans.
- The UK is one of the few European countries without a professional American Football league, leaving UK players with no option but to relocate if they wish to play professionally.
- There are currently two major non-professional American Football leagues in the UK: the British Universities American Football League, made up of university teams, and the BAFA National League, which does not permit players to receive a wage.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

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ABOUT UKFL:

UKFL is launching a new platform for exceptional American Football in the UK by introducing a fully professional elite league.

Set to launch in May 2023, the UKFL will bring the authentic American gameday experience to fans and players in the UK, recruiting the best of British talents alongside experienced coaches and import players to become the top league in Europe.

Based in North East England, the UKFL senior team brings together extensive experience from a range of different business areas, united around a shared passion for the sport.

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