

9/11 MEMORIAL & MUSEUM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 20, 2018

**SPECIAL EXHIBITION “COMEBACK SEASON: SPORTS AFTER 9/11” IS OPENING AT
9/11 MEMORIAL & MUSEUM**

*New Exhibition Will Immerse Visitors in Unforgettable Sports Moments Through
Stories Involving Famous Athletes and Displays of Artifacts and Cherished
Memorabilia*

(New York) April 20, 2018 – The National September 11 Memorial & Museum and Hockey Hall of Famer Mark Messier announced today a new special exhibition, “Comeback Season: Sports After 9/11,” which explores how sports and athletes helped to unite the country, console a grieving nation and give us a reason to cheer again following the 2001 attacks.

“Comeback Season” opens June 27 and will require a free ticket with museum admission because of limited capacity in the special exhibition gallery. Reserving tickets in advance is highly recommended as walk-up tickets will be limited. Go to www.911memorial.org/ComebackSeason for more information.

This unique period in history reflected a seismic shift in American life on many fronts but perhaps overlooked - and documented for the first time definitively in this exhibition - was the powerful link between sports and commemoration. Sports provided a meaningful connection to those who had been killed. Stories of the bonds between famous athletes and first responders and the families of 9/11 victims are detailed in an emotional story arc in the exhibition.

“For so many in the weeks and months following 9/11, sports offered a welcome distraction from the weight of grief, an uplifting experience to share with others and something to cheer about,” 9/11 Memorial & Museum President Alice M. Greenwald said. “Some victims’ family members chose to honor loved ones by celebrating the sports they had loved, as leagues, teams, athletes and fans came together to affirm that what we have in common is far greater than what divides us.”

Mark Messier, the former New York Rangers captain said, “For us as a Rangers team we really felt the responsibility to represent the city, to represent the first responders, to represent the people who had lost their lives, and to represent the Downey family. It was an honor and we quickly realized we’re standing shoulder to shoulder with the first responders who had been so brave.”

Messier’s jersey from an October 2001 game will be on display accompanied by imagery of him sporting an FDNY helmet before the cheering crowd. The helmet he wore honored FDNY Deputy Chief Raymond Matthew Downey Sr., a life-long

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hockey fan and first responder, who was then missing at the World Trade Center site and whose remains were later recovered.

The exhibition pays closest attention to those sports in season on Sept. 11, 2001, but spans many sports and events including baseball, football, hockey, NASCAR, soccer, the New York City Marathon and the 2002 Winter Olympics.

[Click here](#) to view renderings of “Comeback Season.” The exhibition has been made possible in part through the support of the Anheuser-Busch Foundation, Major League Baseball and the New York Mets/Jeff Wilpon.

Signature Exhibition Moments

- **Mike Piazza’s home run:** In the first professional baseball game in New York City after 9/11, with the New York Mets trailing the Atlanta Braves 2-1 in the bottom of the 8th inning, Mets catcher Mike Piazza hit a dramatic, two-run home run that won the game for the hometown team and lifted the spirits of many New Yorkers and Americans.
- **President Bush’s first pitch:** In the fall of 2001, with sports fans nationwide watching, the New York Yankees made a thrilling playoff run that returned the World Series to New York City. Before Game 3 on Oct. 30, the first World Series game at Yankee Stadium, U.S. President George W. Bush threw out the ceremonial first pitch—a strike over home plate.
- **Dale Earnhardt Jr.’s victory lap:** Dale Earnhardt Jr., won the first NASCAR race after 9/11 on Sept. 23, 2001, in Dover, Delaware. Still in his car after winning, he asked his pit crew to hand him an American flag. Holding it outside the driver’s side window, Earnhardt took a spontaneous victory lap backward around the racetrack.
- **The Andruzzis as honorary captains:** On Sept. 23, 2001, Jimmy, Billy and Marc Andruzzi, three firefighters and the brothers of New England Patriots player Joe Andruzzi, served as honorary captains at the New York Jets-Patriots game in Foxborough, Massachusetts. All three wore their FDNY helmets and turnout coats. Their father, Bill, a retired New York City police officer, also attended as an honorary captain.
- **The New York City Marathon:** Demonstrating the city’s resilience, 30,000 runners passed in front of millions of spectators on Nov. 4, 2001. Crossing the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge, runners saw that the city’s skyline was forever changed. Despite the new reality still unfolding which included exceptional security measures being put in place, the marathon offered New Yorkers a moment when energy and effort could be devoted to a celebratory purpose.

Sports Commissioners Serve as Honorary Exhibition Chairs

The 9/11 Memorial & Museum is joined in sharing this uplifting story of resilience by Allan H. “Bud” Selig, Major League Baseball Commissioner Emeritus; Paul Tagliabue, former National Football League Commissioner; David J. Stern, National Basketball Association Commissioner Emeritus; Gary Bettman, National Hockey League Commissioner; Don Garber, Major League Soccer Commissioner; Mike Helton, NASCAR Vice Chairman; and Val Ackerman, former President of the Women’s National Basketball Association and current Big East Conference Commissioner, who will serve as Honorary Exhibition Chairs.

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9/11 Memorial & Museum 5K Run/Walk and Community Day

The exhibition announcement coincides with the annual 9/11 Memorial & Museum 5K Run/Walk and Community Day, an annual event that brings people from all over the country together in service and support, much like sports did in the immediate aftermath of the attacks. Some of the 5,000 race participants are first responders and 9/11 family members who are running or walking in remembrance of a loved one. The event supports the nonprofit Memorial and Museum.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL SEPTEMBER 11 MEMORIAL & MUSEUM

The National September 11 Memorial & Museum is the nonprofit organization that oversees operations for the 9/11 Memorial and 9/11 Memorial Museum. Located on eight of the 16 acres of the World Trade Center site, the Memorial and Museum remember and honor the 2,983 people who were killed in the horrific attacks of September 11, 2001 and February 26, 1993. The Memorial plaza design consists of two reflecting pools formed in the footprints of the original Twin Towers surrounded by swamp white oak trees. The Museum displays more than 900 personal and monumental objects while its collection includes more than 60,000 items that present intimate stories of loss, compassion, reckoning and recovery linked to the events of 9/11 and the aftermath. The Museum also explores the global impact of 9/11 and its continuing significance through education programs, public programs, live talks and film features that cover contemporary topics designed for diverse audiences. For more information or to reserve a ticket to the 9/11 Memorial Museum, please visit 911memorial.org.

MEDIA INQUIRIES

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