

The Rise of Tampa Hockey

The University of Tampa Hockey team was founded in 2010 as a club ice hockey team. Originally started by Leif Benner, a 2012 graduate, the team was introduced to the American College Hockey Association as a Division III club team.

In an interview from the inaugural season 13 years ago, Benner stated “I know a lot of guys who wanted to play, so I thought I’d start a team.” After completing all the paperwork and securing a coach, he did just that.

Starting with just a few games per season in the early years, The University of Tampa club hockey quickly made a name for themselves. In 2016, the Spartans finished 2nd in the southern region led by head coach Stephen Kucera. This gave them an automatic bid to the national championship where they competed at the national level for the first time in program history.

The following season in 2017, the Spartans became Southern Collegiate Hockey Conference champions making history for the program. They went on to play on the national level for the second time.

2020 proved to be a promising season for Tampas ice hockey program, dominating their division 23-7 by March of that season. COVID-19 quickly ended chances of season continuation, but their program's progress doesn't go unrecognized.

Fast forward to the 2021-2022 season, interest to join the ice hockey team was on the rise. Because of this, the Spartans were able to form not only their original Division III team, but create a more elite Division II team.

The 2022 season was a promising one for the DII University of Tampa Ice Hockey team going into nationals as the number one seed. Not only clinching their second SCHC championship, but attending the National Federation Cup championship for the first time.

2022 wasn't a light season for the DIII team either. Winning 2 of 3 games at nationals, they proved their reputation wrong of being the team no one wanted to play (due to their DIII status). Bringing both the Division II and Division III teams to the national stage put Tampa on the map as a hockey school.

The current 2023-2024 University of Tampa Ice Hockey team, led by Lance Tackett (D1) and Jack Walsh (DII), is now playing at the Division I level taking on opponents like Alabama and Georgia. Each current team will move up by one division, getting rid of the Spartans DIII status while introducing the Women's division.

Although still a club sport for The University of Tampa, the future of Spartans Ice Hockey is promising.

Their next home game at the Clearwater Ice Arena is October 6th, 10pm EST. against The University of South Carolina Gamecocks where the Spartans hope to add to their season wins.