

2-21-2013

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Recommended Citation

"Madness Starts Here (Again)" (2013). *News Releases*. 484.
https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls/484

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Madness Starts Here (Again)

02.21.2013 | Hot Topics, Campus and Community, Students

The madness tips off in Dayton again.

Community organizers are planning a four-mile run and other special events surrounding the First Four, second and third rounds of the NCAA men's Division I basketball tournament March 19-24 at the University of Dayton Arena. Ten games will be nationally televised.

The arena has played host to 91 NCAA men's Division I basketball tournament games — more than any other venue. This year's action will push Dayton past the century mark. The First Four games are sold out, and only about 1,000 tickets remain for the other rounds. In all, more than 60,000 are expected to attend the games.

The First Four will be held in Dayton until at least 2015, but University officials have proposed the NCAA consider a long-term commitment. Dan Gavitt, NCAA vice president of men's basketball championships, recently visited Dayton to discuss Dayton's long-term bid, attend a Dayton Flyers game and gain a greater understanding of what college basketball means to the Dayton community.

While the proposal is under consideration, NCAA representatives asked the First Four Local Organizing Committee to put the First Four Festival on hiatus this year. Last year, the inaugural festival drew 15,000 to the Oregon District. Organizers are optimistic the street festival will return next year.

"The local organizing committee is very interested in securing the games long term for the community, and we wanted to be as accommodating as possible to the desires of the NCAA," said JP Nauseef, chairman of the committee. "There are many exciting events associated with the games this year and we believe we will be in a good position to get the games long term — which is the goal and would be transformative to the Dayton region."

The committee will host several receptions throughout the week for national media, NCAA tournament officials, sponsors, community partners and regional leaders in an attempt to build support for future First Four events. The "First 4-4 Miler" is slated for 10 a.m. Sunday, March 17, at the University of Dayton Arena. Registration fee is \$20. Deadline to register is March 15.

"It's hard to put into words how much we all appreciate the efforts of the First Four local organizing committee," said Tim O'Connell, assistant vice president for athletics and executive director of University of Dayton Arena. "All of us here in Dayton are focused on a great week of basketball. We are all working closely with the NCAA to bring the best event that we can to Dayton."

To buy or register to win First Four tickets, participate in the four-mile run or learn about events, visit the related links. Tickets also are available by calling 877-NCAA-TIX.

For more information, contact Shawn Robinson, associate director of media relations, at 937-229-3391 or srobinson@udayton.edu.