Countdown to Tipoff
University of Dayton, Ohio (url: http://www.udayton.edu/index.php)

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When people think of Dayton, Ohio, they might mention the Wright brothers, those innovative bicycle repairmen who invented flight in the nation's heartland.

Some remember the Dayton Peace Accords that ended the civil war in Bosnia and Herzegovina were brokered at nearby Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.

Others proudly point to the passion of the city's basketball fans. The University of Dayton Arena has hosted more NCAA® Division I men's basketball tournament games than any venue in the country.

That's why President Barack Obama is bringing British Prime Minister David Cameron to the First Four game between Mississippi Valley State University and Western Kentucky University at 6:40 p.m. Tuesday, March 13, at the University of Dayton Arena. Brigham Young University and Iona College will tangle in the nightcap.

"The University of Dayton Arena is steeped in basketball history, serving as the stage for many great tournament moments and as host to more Division I men's games than any other arena in the country," a White House spokesperson said. "This official visit, the visit to Dayton and the state dinner at the White House on Wednesday evening underscore the special relationship that the United States and the United Kingdom share."

This is the first time a president, while in office, has visited the University of Dayton. "This is a great honor and a history-making moment for the University of Dayton Arena and the Dayton community," said Tim O'Connell, the University's senior associate athletics director. "The presence of the president and the prime minister along with the competitive tradition of this great American sports event guarantee an unprecedented level of excitement and a night to be remembered."

The First Four continues through Wednesday, March 14, when Lamar University faces the University of Vermont at 6:40 p.m., and the University of California takes on the University of South Florida after the first game.

A local organizing committee — a coalition of community, business, Air Force and higher education leaders — is branding Dayton as the place where March Madness starts. In concert with the NCAA and with the help of 300 volunteers, they staged a huge street party along several blocks in the city's cobblestoned Oregon Historic District on Selection Sunday.

The all-day, family-friendly festival drew more than 15,000 people, according to regional leaders. They're envisioning an annual First Four Festival in Dayton that will rival the spirited festivities in cities that host the Final Four, Super Bowl and the College World Series.

In all, the First Four Festival and March 13-14 games are expected to pump at least $4 million into the local economy, according to the Dayton-Montgomery County Convention and Visitors Bureau.

The road to the Final Four traditionally starts in Dayton. Beginning in 2001, the University of Dayton has played host for the opening round between two Cinderella men's teams hoping for a shot at tournament glory. Last year, the University of Dayton Arena attracted 20,217 fans over two days for the inaugural First Four. It then won the opportunity to host the First Four this month and again next March, when the second- and third-round games will also be played here. This year, University of Dayton and community leaders are shooting for a sell-out. Thanks to the generosity of local businesses, organizations and an anonymous donor, hundreds of tickets have been donated to the families of deployed airmen from Wright Patterson-Air Force Base.

"We want to show the country that Dayton means basketball," said Tim Wabler, vice president and director of athletics at the University of Dayton.

“We are excited to be working with the NCAA, and we expect the events to garner much more positive, national attention for our community," said Dayton City Commissioner Nan Whaley, a 1998 University of Dayton graduate.

Local fans have helped the University of Dayton regularly rank among the top 30 nationally in Division I men's basketball.
In fact, *The Sporting News* calls Dayton fans the best in the nation. This year, the University of Dayton Arena won the "Best Under-the-Radar College Basketball Atmosphere" in a two-week Facebook competition. The University of Dayton's rowdy student fans, called the Red Scare, will be featured during a CBS Sports special at 1 p.m. on March 25.

To purchase tickets or for more information about the NCAA First Four Festival and games, visit [www.NCAA.com/firstfourdayton](http://www.NCAA.com/firstfourdayton).

The University of Dayton, founded in 1850 by the Society of Mary, is a top-tier national Catholic research university and the largest private university in Ohio. Enrollment is about 11,000 students, with 7,300 undergraduates and 3,700 graduate students.

*For assistance in scheduling interviews about the University of Dayton hosting the First Four games, contact Shawn Robinson, associate director of media relations, at 937-229-3391 or 937-232-2907. Any questions relating to the details of the visit need to be directed to the White House Press Office at 202-456-6238. For media interviews about the First Four Festival, contact Cathy Petersen at 937-224-3831 or 937-430-1708.*