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Shooting for Success

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University of Dayton, regional business and government representatives have formed a local organizing committee to work to insure the NCAA Division I Men's Basketball First Four at University of Dayton Arena March 15-16 is wildly successful and stays in Dayton.

"This opportunity is a lot more than the economic impact. This really is a chance to tell the country about the Dayton region. The NCAA First Four is going to be watched by a lot of folks. It's an opportunity here. It's our challenge, but it's our opportunity," said Jim Leftwich, president and CEO of the Dayton Development Coalition.

Leftwich will chair the First Four LOC. University Vice President and Director of Athletics Tim Wabler joined Leftwich at a Tuesday, Jan. 4, press conference to outline the goals of the marketing effort.

"The 2011 NCAA First Four provides our community quite an opportunity," Wabler said. "It gives us the opportunity to show the world that this is a basketball town and what winners we are as a community.

"We know that the NCAA and Turner Broadcasting wants this initial First Four to be wildly successful. By awarding this tournament to UD Arena, the NCAA has provided us a chance to garner significant national exposure for the community on March 15 and 16 of this year. But we also have a challenge in front of us, and that challenge is to do such a great job that it does not make sense for the NCAA to take the First Four and award it to any other location in the future."

When the NCAA decided last year to expand the tournament to 68 teams, it chose the University to host the inaugural event. Unlike the two-team Opening Round, which the University has hosted since 2001, the First Four will bring eight teams to Dayton to play four games. Two games will involve automatic tournament qualifiers, while the other two will bring the last four at-large teams together. The four teams that win will advance to compete in the round of 64.

This is also the first year of a new tournament television deal. Every game of the tournament will be broadcast as part of a partnership between CBS and Turner Broadcasting, and all four First Four games will air on Turner Broadcasting's Tru TV.

Said Leftwich: "This opportunity is a lot more than the economic impact. This really is a chance to tell the country about the Dayton region. The NCAA First Four is going to be watched by a lot of folks. It's an opportunity here. It's our challenge, but it's our opportunity."

Wabler expects "stiff competition" to take place with other cities for future First Fours and said the First Four LOC will focus on three goals to keep the University competitive.

One is close to completion, he said. University of Dayton Arena is installing four corner video boards that will be operational by the time of the tournament.

The other goals are to create a welcoming environment for participating teams and fans throughout the Dayton community and to sell out UD Arena.

"Sales to date have been sluggish," Wabler said. "We have another 6,000 seats to sell."

All-session tickets for the NCAA First Four games can be purchased through the related link for $97.

University of Dayton Arena has hosted 83 NCAA men's basketball tournament games and will host second- and third-round games in 2013.

For more information, contact Doug Hauschild, University of Dayton sports information director, at 937-229-4390 or Sharon Howard, director of marketing and communications for the Dayton Development Coalition, at 937-222-2242.