

# ABOUTGREATERCINNATI.COM

*Inform ... Inspire ... Impact*

Volume 4, Article 11

April 2011

## THE ROAD TO THE FINAL FOUR GOES THROUGH SOUTHWEST OHIO

BY BRENDA C. MCCASKILL(BRENDA@ABOUTGREATERCINNATI.COM)

PHOTOS PROVIDED

Southwest Ohio, a hotbed for sports, has its share of sports fans. And, it's no secret that sports fans from all across the country don't mind traveling to this area to see their favorite teams play. NCAA March Madness, alive and well in Southwest Ohio and around the country, had many sports fans traveling, talking college basketball around the water cooler, filling out brackets, watching the games on television, and talking smack...lots of it!

For some fans, the NCAA March Madness experience was at its pinnacle when they were lucky enough to score tickets to attend a game or two. The emotion, great play, team bands groovin', mascots dancin', cheerleaders flippin', and the hope of a favorite team fulfilling dreams were in full view as the 2011 On the Road to the Final Four tournament play stopped in Dayton and Cincinnati for both the Division 1 NCAA Men's and Women's Basketball Tournaments.

Whether travelling by air, bus, car, or whatever mode of transportation chosen, thousands of sports fans flocked to the Dayton and Cincinnati area with tickets in hand to be a part of the action. "It was great!", a common sentiment shared by fans.

This year, there were some big changes to the Men's NCAA Basketball Tournament. Changes included expanding the field to 68 teams partici-



*VCU's Road to the Final Four tipped off in Dayton, Ohio at the inaugural First Four - the start of the 2011 NCAA Men's Tournament. VCU won their first round game against USC and kept winning to be among the last 4 standing at the Final Four in Houston.*

Photo credit: Mickey Shuey Photography

pating in the dance and broadcasting every tournament game in its entirety on 4 networks (CBS, tbs, TNT, truTV). The expansion of teams launched the start of the First Four, the first round for the 2011 Men's tournament. And, the University of Dayton (UD) was awarded the honor of being the host of the inaugural games. "The 2011 NCAA First Four provides our community quite an opportunity," said University of Dayton Vice-President and Director of Athletics Tim Wabler when the First Four organizing committee was announced early in 2011. "By awarding this tournament to Day-

ton, the NCAA has placed UD Arena in the center of the college basketball universe on March 15 and 16."

Overall consensus, the First Four, the starting point of the tournament, lived up to its billing. The First Four, featured 8 men's collegiate basketball teams battling for an opportunity to move on to the second round and continue their travels On the Road to the Final Four destination Houston. The tournament play was exciting. Not only that, the economic impact on the Dayton/Miami Valley area was an estimated \$3 to \$5 million. The television and social media exposure as the eyes of sports fans

Continued on Page 2

*Got a story idea or comment about this story? Send an email to [editor@aboutgreatercincinnati.com](mailto:editor@aboutgreatercincinnati.com).*

## THE ROAD TO THE FINAL FOUR GOES THROUGH SOUTHWEST OHIO (CONT'D)



*Fans flocked to Southwest Ohio to be a part of the NCAA Men's and Women's 2011 basketball tournaments opening rounds. Games were played in Dayton and Cincinnati.*

Photo credit:  
AboutGreaterCincinnati.com

across the country were on UD Arena and the area was priceless.

"Great venue...great seats...great experience!" said a fan among the 20,000 on site including basketball legend Kareem Abdul Jabar, former center for the LA Lakers, witnessing the beginning of the 2011 men's tournament play. Fans over two nights poured into UD Arena to see the action advancing the University of Texas San Antonio, Clemson, Virginia Commonwealth University (who made it to the Men's Final Four!), and the University of North Carolina Asheville on to the second round of the men's tournament. "I'm glad I came." said a fan. "Hope the First Four returns here next year!"

But that wasn't all. For the women's play, 64 women's basketball teams played it out to be among the last 4 standing at the NCAA 2011 Women's Basketball Tournament finals in Indianapolis. This year, one of the first stops On the Road to the Final Four for the women was in Cincinnati with

Xavier University hosting the Division 1 NCAA 2011 Women's Basketball first and second rounds. What made this extra special was the Lady Musketeers, seeded #2 in the Spokane Region, were among the 4 women's teams playing the opening rounds at the Cintas Center on Xavier's campus. "I think the Cintas Center is one of the best basketball arenas in the country--from street to seat." said Jackie Reau, CEO of Game Day Communications. "It's easy to park, there's not a bad seat in the house and the new scoreboard is a high-tech marvel."

NCAA March Madness continued On the Road to the Final Four Women's Basketball Championship with the University of Dayton serving as one of 4 host sites for the women's 2011 Regionals. At UD Arena, The Ohio State women's team showed their moves but in the end loss to University of Tennessee.

Without a doubt, Southwest

Ohio is an avid sports area. Is there more tournament action in the years ahead?

If you missed out on attending tournament play in 2011, begin making plans now for a staycation/vacation during March 2012 and 2013 in Southwest Ohio. It's been reported that UD has been awarded second- and third-round games in 2013 for the men's tournament. As for 2012, UD is hoping to retain being the host for the NCAA Men's First Four.

But it can't stop there. If Southwest Ohio wants to continue to enjoy all that comes with high profile events, then the region can't rest on its laurels and must continue (some even have said step up) efforts to bring even more events to the area.

More can be done to leverage area sports facilities, activities and participation to promote Southwest Ohio as a sports capital. "Our region needs to better support amateur sports with civic and corporate funding." said Jackie Reau. Strong civic and corporate funding and support will play a key role in the ability to attract and retain high profile sporting events like the NCAA Men's and Women's tournaments and more across the region. And of course the fans and sports enthusiasts attending the games in droves speaks volumes.

So, stay tuned as Southwest Ohio continues its journey to be a stop On the Road to the Final Four... a sports capital...and more! GO...GO...GO!

*Got a story idea or comment about this story? Send an email to [editor@aboutgreatercincinnati.com](mailto:editor@aboutgreatercincinnati.com).*