



PRESS RELEASE

COLUMBUS AWARDED 2018 NCAA WOMEN'S FINAL FOUR

*The Ohio State University, Greater Columbus Sports Commission and Nationwide Arena
Land Right to Host America's Marquee Women's Sporting Event*

(Columbus – November 17, 2014) The NCAA has awarded Columbus, The Ohio State University and the Greater Columbus Sports Commission, its 2018 Women's Final Four, slated to be held at Nationwide Arena over the weekend of March 30-April 1. Columbus was a finalist along with Dallas, Houston, Nashville, New Orleans, Pittsburgh and Tampa. Dallas (2017), Tampa (2019) and New Orleans (2020) join Columbus as hosts following an 18-month bidding process.



"The past 15 months of the selection process resulted in four deserving cities being chosen to host the marquee event of our sport, the Women's Final Four," said **Dru Hancock, chair of the Division I Women's Basketball Committee and senior associate commissioner at the Big 12 Conference**. "We appreciate all of the cities and local organizing committees that participated in the process. Dallas, Columbus, Tampa Bay and New Orleans each demonstrated that they will continue to raise the bar on the event while enhancing the experience for our student-athletes, coaches and fans. We look forward to our work together as we continue to build this important event."

"We'd like to thank the NCAA Division I Women's Basketball Committee for their trust in Columbus to host the Women's Final Four in 2018," said **Ohio State Athletics Deputy Director of Athletics Miechelle Willis**. "It is one of the most sought after events in the sports marketplace because it is much more than three basketball games."

The NCAA Women's Final Four is the centerpiece of a weekend celebration that features the national semifinals and championship game of the NCAA Division I women's basketball championship; the **Women's Basketball Coaches Association (WBCA) Annual Convention** held at the Greater Columbus Convention Center, an **NCAA Official Fan Festival** and numerous community events.

The Women's Final Four will generate an estimated **\$18-\$20M in visitor spending** for Central Ohio with the semifinals and championship game attracting more than **40,000 fans** to Nationwide Arena over two nights, utilizing close to **14,000 hotel room nights**, with all three games **broadcast nationally on ESPN**.

"Hosting the Women's Final Four is a dream come true for Columbus," said **Greater Columbus Sports Commission Executive Director Linda Logan**. "This monumental event demonstrates just how far our city has come and we will work tirelessly to make 2018 one of the most memorable experiences for the NCAA and its student-athletes."

"Nationwide Arena has been honored to host a variety of major sporting events, world class concerts and various Presidential visits, and has demonstrated the ability to handle large events with a high level of service," said **Vicki Chorman, General Manager of Nationwide Arena**. "Hosting the NCAA Women's Final Four tournament is a great opportunity to grow the fan base of women's basketball in Columbus and we are extremely proud to be a part of the team bringing this signature event to the city."

Columbus, The Ohio State University and our community's major sports venues have hosted many major national sporting events in recent years with close to **60 NCAA championships, including NCAA men and women's preliminary rounds, NCAA Frozen Four; NHL Entry Draft & All-Star Weekend (in 2015); MLS Cup & All-Star Game; FIFA Women's World Cup and Men's World Cup qualifiers; The Presidents Cup, Ryder Cup and Solheim Cup** in golf along with many others.

Columbus' long-desired aspiration to be a leading sports destination for women's athletics continues to be realized with the addition of the NCAA Women's Final Four. Last fall, the city was awarded the **2016 NCAA Division I Women's Volleyball National Championship** and the **2017 NCAA Division II Women's Basketball Elite Eight and National Championship** with Ohio Dominican, both for the first time. In addition, Columbus and Ohio State will host the **NCAA Women's Gymnastics National Championship** in 2014-15 and 2017-18. In 2012, Columbus hosted one of the country's largest sporting events in the **USA Volleyball Girls' Junior National Championships**.

Additional Quotes

Michael V. Drake, MD | President - The Ohio State University

"On behalf of The Ohio State University, I am thrilled that the NCAA has selected Columbus as a host for the Women's Final Four. We would be delighted to continue our close partnership with the city to make this a memorable event for basketball fans."

Eugene Smith | Vice President and Athletics Director - The Ohio State University

"This will be tremendous for our great city of Columbus and The Ohio State University. We are excited and honored to host the premier event for NCAA Women's Basketball."

Mayor Michael B. Coleman | City of Columbus

"Congratulations to the Greater Columbus Sports Commission, The Ohio State University and everyone in our city who has worked hard to bring the NCAA Women's Final Four to Columbus. We look forward to welcoming the athletes and visitors to Columbus for what we will make sure is one of the best sporting events to date."

Marilyn Brown | President, Board of Commissioners - Franklin County

"The NCAA Women's Final Four will not only bring athletes and visitors, but it will leave behind a legacy of programs, mentoring, and experiences for Franklin County's young women. Nothing is more important than inspiring our next generation of women leaders, and the NCAA, coaches, athletes, and sponsors are committed to doing just that."

Zach Klein | Councilmember - City of Columbus

"Columbus is a major league city and the NCAA recognizes that our community is prepared to host an unforgettable Women's Final Four. We have a world class arena, easy access to hotel rooms, and high quality restaurants and entertainment options. As a longtime NCAA Women's College Basketball referee in the Mid-American, Atlantic Coast, Big East, Atlantic 10 and other major conferences I look forward to welcoming college basketball fans from around the world to Columbus."

Kevin McGuff | Women's Basketball Head Coach - The Ohio State University

"I am incredibly excited that the Women's Final Four is going to be played here in Columbus. This is an amazing city that will be an unbelievable host for the premier sporting event in women's collegiate athletics. People will be amazed by the energy and diversity of Columbus and this city will absolutely knock it out of the park that weekend."

Katie Smith | Ohio native, Women's Basketball Legend & Assistant Coach - WNBA New York Liberty

"I'm extremely excited for Columbus to host the Women's Final Four. I can attest that this is a women's basketball city and state, and we are excited to show how amazing Columbus is as a destination and how our community comes together to positively impact women and girls."

Brian Ross | CEO and President - Experience Columbus

"Columbus is a dynamic and growing destination, and today's NCAA announcement validates that. Our expanded hotel and convention package, dedicated hospitality community, urban vitality and walkability are just some of the reasons Columbus is the perfect destination for the NCAA Women's Final Four."

Alex Fischer | President & CEO – The Columbus Partnership

"The NCAA Women's Final Four coming to Columbus continues the momentum of our city in its renaissance. The Columbus Region is fast becoming one of the nation's leading sports destinations and our entire business community looks forward to supporting this marquee event."

Brian Ellis | President – Nationwide Realty Investors & Board Chair, Greater Columbus Sports Commission

"We are thrilled to host the NCAA Women's Final Four in Columbus. We look forward to welcoming 40,000 fans to Nationwide Arena and the Arena District."

Nationwide Arena

One of the world's most beautiful and unique sports and entertainment venues, Nationwide Arena is the centerpiece of the Arena District, one of the premier entertainment districts in the country, offering beautiful hotels, exceptional dining and live entertainment. The arena and surrounding entertainment district have served as a benchmark for cities seeking to emulate what has been created in Columbus. The \$150 million facility raises the bar of excellence for sports and entertainment facilities and is the home of the NHL Columbus Blue Jackets.

Greater Columbus Sports Commission

The Sports Commission is a catalyst, driving the collaborative efforts of the Central Ohio region, in attracting and hosting a wide variety of sporting events. We provide the experience and expertise in sports marketing and event management that has established our region as a premier sports destination, hosting more than **270 new sporting events** that have generated close to **\$345 million in visitor spending**, while retaining annual events that have generated an **additional \$225 million** to benefit our local economy. For more information, visit columbussports.org.

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