



Hope College to host NCAA women's basketball, volleyball finals in 2012-13

'Gracious' workers cited in decision

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Holland, MI — A “ton of work” will be needed to put together two NCAA championship events in a calendar year as Hope College will soon discover.

The NCAA announced Friday it would host Division III women’s basketball and volleyball finals at DeVos Fieldhouse in 2012 and 2013.

It is rare the NCAA lets one school handle two of its elite Division III events in the same year. Tournament director Eva Dean Folkert points to a high-class facility and well-oiled machine of workers for allowing the college to shoulder the opportunity.

“It is truly a collaborative effort with so many different people handling so many different responsibilities of hosting,” Folkert said. “People rave about Southern hospitality. I think Holland hospitality has that beat.”

From members of the tournament committee to community volunteers, credit deserves to be spread around, Folkert said.

“They’re gracious, gracious folks,” she said.

Salem, Va., hosts the Division III football and men’s basketball championships each year, but its local organization is handled not by a single school, rather by city officials and the Old Dominion Athletic Conference.

The University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh also has run multiple NCAA championships a single year in the past. It is a state-run school with a 10,000-plus enrollment, three times that of Hope.

The tournaments in 2012 will be March 16-17 for basketball and Nov. 15-17 for volleyball. The 2013 dates are to be announced.

The basketball finals will consist of four teams, while the volleyball championship will be comprised of eight teams.

Both events will have a significant impact on the local economy over their two-year run, said Sally Laukitis, Executive Director of the Holland Visitors Bureau.

“We anticipate the direct economic impact on the Holland community will exceed \$1 million for each of these weekend events,” Laukitis said in a statement, referring to use of hotels, restaurants and retail businesses. “The fact that these premier NCAA championships occur in March and November, as opposed to our prime tourist season, is an added benefit to the Holland area.”

Women’s basketball returns after playing Final Fours there in 2008 and 2009.

This will be the first time Hope has handled volleyball’s championship. It hosted a regional last year.

Hope also is in charge of a regional qualifier for the NCAA cross country championship this fall.

The one-day event will run Nov. 13 at West Ottawa Golf Course. It is expected to attract nearly 500 runners and an estimated 2,000 spectators.

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