UTEP SHARES TIPS TO ENJOY 2011 C-USA BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

The University of Texas at El Paso welcomes 22 teams from 11 universities and their fans to its campus as it plays host to the 2011 Conference USA Men’s and Women’s Basketball Tournaments this week.

This is the first year that the two tournaments will be played on the same dates (March 9-12) and the same campus since the league formed in 1995.

All 11 games of the men’s bracket and the semifinals and championship games for the women’s side will be in the venerable Don Haskins Center, named after the Hall of Fame coach who led the Texas Western (now UTEP) Miners to the NCAA basketball championship in 1966. The women’s first-round and quarterfinal contests will be played across the street at historic Memorial Gym, which was home to that ’66 team.

There will be staggered starts for the first-round games on Wednesday, March 9, and quarterfinal contests on Thursday, March 10, with men’s contests tipping off at 11 a.m., 1:30, 5:30 and 8 p.m. and women’s games commencing at noon, 2:30, 5 and 7:30 p.m.

Semifinal matches on Friday, March 11, will mean a full day of basketball. The women take center stage with games at 9 and 11:30 a.m. at the Haskins Center. The men’s contests will be at 2 and 4:30 p.m.

The championship games will be played Saturday, March 12, at the Haskins Center. The men’s game, which tips off at 9:30 a.m., will be televised nationally on CBS. The women will start their game at 6 p.m. It will be shown nationally on CBS College Sports.

Public parking is available on a first-come, first-served basis at lots R-5 (former Rudolph Chevrolet location), P-12 (Robinson Avenue (UTEP SHARES, continued on page 2)
UTEP SHARES
continued from cover

and Oregon Street) and at the new Glory Road Transfer Center and Parking Garage. Parking will be limited during the school day because UTEP classes will be in session. University student or faculty/staff parking permits will be needed to park in other campus lots Wednesday through Friday.

For the latest information and news, visit the UTEP Conference USA Tournament website at C-USA.UTEP.EDU.

Fans coming to the games are encouraged to use the Sun Metro bus service. Patrons can park at one of the five terminals citywide and ride to the new Glory Road Transfer Center, located across the street from the Don Haskins Center.

Out-of-town guests who stay at area hotels can use their hotel’s shuttle service to go to and return from the Don Haskins Center. Hotel shuttles will have a designated drop-off and pick-up area on Mesa Street in front of the Don Haskins Center.

Tickets for the 2011 Conference USA Men’s and Women’s Basketball Tournaments are on sale at the University Ticket Center. Session passes sell for $80, $120, $170 and $250. An all-session pass provides admission to the men’s and women’s games. Individual ticket prices vary.

Sun Metro: 915-533-3333 or www.elpasotexas.gov/sunmetro
University Ticket Center: 2901 N. Mesa, 915-747-6150. Tickets also can be purchased online at www.ticketmaster.com.

GLORY ROAD BLOCK PARTY
Place to be for Fun, Local Flavor

The Glory Road Block Party, located across the street from the Don Haskins Center at Glory Road and Randolph Drive, will be a great spot for fans to enjoy the best that El Paso has to offer. The fiesta, March 9-12, will include live entertainment, food and retail booths, and activities for children. Local food vendors will offer gorditas, roasted corn, churros, papas locas and barbeque, among other treats. Area bands and other entertainment will take the stage all four days.

“It’s important to showcase El Paso with what makes us different from other parts of the country,” said Gina Roe-Davis, president of Rave Marketing & Events. “Visitors will leave here with a memorable experience that will make them want to come back.”

Glory Road Block Party hours are:
March 9-10: 4 to 8 p.m.
March 11: 4 to 10 p.m.
March 12: noon to 5 p.m.

For more information:
UTEP Special Events 915-747-5481
MEMORIAL GYM MAKEOVER DEBUTS FOR C-USA TOURNAMENT

The venerable Memorial Gym, home of the 1966 NCAA Basketball Champion Texas Western (now UTEP) Miners, got a facelift for this week’s Conference USA Women’s Basketball Tournament.

The gym, which opened in 1961, received a Cinderella makeover that includes a refurbished floor and two 16-by-9 video boards for the main arena; and carpeting, piping and drapes to dress up locker rooms and classrooms that will serve VIPs and the media.

Brian Wickstrom, senior associate athletics director for external relations, said crews started renovations Feb. 27 and have turned the gym at The University of Texas at El Paso into a true basketball tournament venue.

“When Conference USA officials visited campus last June to inspect our facilities, the general consensus was there was no way we could turn (Memorial Gym) around, but there were a few who shared the vision,” Wickstrom said. “They came by (the gym) the other day and said, ‘Wow, this is nice.’”

The floor was rented from Cincinnati-based Robbins Sports Surfaces, the nation’s premier basketball flooring company. Robbins refinished and repainted the floor that had been used until last year at Rutgers University. Their crews installed it in late February.

The University’s Facilities Services also played an important role in preparing Memorial Gym. Its crews removed several backboards from the main arena and prepped other rooms for different tournament uses.

Luis B. Morales, Jr., associate director of Facilities Services, said about 30 of his crew members – electricians, landscapers, HVAC techs, plumbers and building maintenance techs – answered requests by conference officials to convert classrooms, ball courts and workout areas into spaces for officials, the media, team prep rooms and dining areas.

Some of the workers, who helped set up the Don Haskins Center and the grounds for the Glory Road Block Party, also were available to erect signs and set up tables, chairs and ice freezers where needed, provide generators and maintain an uninterrupted supply of electricity, and oversee regular trash pickups.

Morales admitted that this has been a stressful time for his staffers, who continue to help the campus recover from the winter storm in early February. He said they have worked diligently to put the University’s best foot forward during the conference tournaments.

“Our teams know the importance of this opportunity,” said Morales, who added that his crews also had to prep the Sun Bowl Stadium for a monster truck show and conduct normal University duties.

But as in the Cinderella fairytale, the clock will strike midnight after the last women’s quarterfinal match ends Thursday, March 10. Workers will return to Memorial Gym to remove the carpets, drapes, piping, video boards and the floor and make it functional for classes. In all, the temporary renovation will cost more than $100,000.

The only real question for the tournament teams is which one will get the glass slipper.
EXPERTS: C-USA TOURNAMENTS TO BOOST EL PASO ECONOMY

Analyzers will issue predictions about who will win the 2011 Conference USA Basketball Championships being played this year at The University of Texas at El Paso, but financial analysts agree that this four-day hoops extravaganza will be an economic boon to the host city of El Paso.

Organizers said they expect a windfall of about $3.5 million from the thousands of teams, support personnel and fans who will descend on the city before, during and after the tournament March 9-12 that will put a national spotlight on the city and UTEP.

While visitors spend money at the city’s restaurants, clubs and shops, the University also hopes to benefit from positive exposure during 10 nationally televised games broadcast from the Don Haskins Center.

All four of the men’s quarterfinal contests, the men’s and women’s semifinal, and the women’s title game will be carried live by CBS College Sports. The men’s championship contest will be shown on CBS.

“This will be a great opportunity to showcase and promote the city,” said Steve Ortega, El Paso city representative. “Positive publicity, which will come from hosting the tournament, is critical. There is no doubt that this is a huge economic boon for the City of El Paso, not only because of the thousands of visitors that will be here, but because of the national media attention and nationally televised games that will take place in our community.”

Twenty-two tournament teams (men’s and women’s) were expected to arrive in the city Monday, March 7, to make their final preparations. Conference and team administrators, team personnel such as cheerleaders and bands, and enthusiastic fan bases will converge on El Paso and create a robust economic boost.

“We think the first dollar impact will be in about the $3.5 million range,” said Bill Blazieck, general manager of the El Paso Convention and Visitors Bureau. “This will rank among the major events coming to El Paso in 2011.”

There was a buzz in the air at many of the hotels in the city that will accommodate the swarms of people coming to town.

“It is exciting for us to be the host city for the tournament. It means a lot for the hotel community,” said Joe Frandina, president of the El Paso Hotel/Motel Association. “It will be a great event, and we are hoping that this will be a stepping stone for the future.”

While there will be a big impact in the immediate future, an event of this magnitude can carry over into the next two to five years.

“Once you have a tournament like this, it makes bringing other large sporting events into town easier,” said Brian Kennedy, CEO of the El Paso Sports Commission. “On the heels of the (United States Bowling Congress) Tournament, it tells everyone that we are players on the national level. It is another brick in the wall for us in saying to people that you really need to look at El Paso for events.”

C-USA GAME SCHEDULE

MEN

FIRST ROUND (Don Haskins Center):
Wednesday, March 9, 11 a.m., 1:30 p.m., 5:30 p.m., 8 p.m.
QUARTERFINALS (Don Haskins Center):
Thursday, March 10, 11 a.m., 1:30 p.m., 5:30 p.m., 8 p.m.
SEMI FINALS (Don Haskins Center):
Friday, March 11, 2 p.m., 4:30 p.m.
CHAMPIONSHIP (Don Haskins Center):
Saturday, March 12, 9:30 a.m.

WOMEN

FIRST ROUND (Memorial Gym):
Wednesday, March 9, 12 p.m., 2:30 p.m., 5 p.m., 7:30 p.m.
QUARTERFINALS (Memorial Gym):
Thursday, March 10, 12 p.m., 2:30 p.m., 5 p.m., 7:30 p.m.
SEMI FINALS (Don Haskins Center):
Friday, March 11, 9 a.m., 11:30 a.m.
CHAMPIONSHIP (Don Haskins Center):
Saturday, March 12, 6 p.m.