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## OU to host NCAA Tournament games

By **Jeff Samoray**, *OU Web Writer*

Oakland University will gain national exposure for its athletics and academic programs when it serves as a host institution for first and second round games of the 2006 NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament.

The NCAA announced in December that OU will host games to be played at the Palace of Auburn Hills on March 17 and 19, 2006.

"We think this will provide significant national exposure for OU," said OU President Gary Russi. "It proves we are quickly becoming a much-sought-after campus not only for students and faculty but for organizations on a national level."

OU Sports Information Director Phil Hess said hosting the tournament games will be a lot of work, but the payoff for the university will be tremendous.

"All the business that goes into a normal game will have to be arranged, but at a more intense level," Hess said. "The Palace will provide a great deal of assistance with making arrangements, but we're still going to act as host. A number of things will have to be coordinated, such as taking care of tickets, security, setting up media rooms, making arrangements for phone lines and preparing for the needs of TV and radio crews.

"Having the opportunity to host is something we're very proud of. Obviously, this means that we're respected as a Division I school, and hosting a men's NCAA game gives legitimacy to our program at a national level. It's also going to be huge for the university. OU's name will be given exposure on national TV for four games, and that's a great way to get our name out there."

Staff in OU's Athletics Department put together a bid proposal to act as a host institution and sent it to the NCAA for consideration. The NCAA Tournament Committee selects hosts based on a variety of factors, one of which is proximity to a large, professional arena. The Palace also hosted NCAA regional finals in 2000.

"The professional arenas really are the only ones large enough to stage such a prominent event," Hess said. "The Palace is practically across the street from our campus, and they've hosted the tournament before. All of these things worked in our favor when the tournament committee considered potential host institutions."

A total of 64 teams compete at 14 sites in the men's tournament for a chance at the coveted national championship. Teams advance through single-elimination play through the first and second rounds to make it to the "sweet sixteen." From there, winners advance to the "elite eight" then on to the "final four" before going to the national championship game, which will be played in New Orleans this year.

The 2006 tournament will be the first time OU hosts an NCAA event since becoming a Division I institution in 1998.

Since Oakland moved to Division I competition, five different OU teams and three individual athletes have competed at post-season NCAA tournaments. In 1999-2000, one swimmer represented OU at the Women's NCAA Championships. One year later, three teams qualified for NCAA tournaments: women's soccer, women's basketball and softball. One male and one female swimmer also competed at the NCAA Championships in 2002. Thus far in the 2002-2003 season, the men's and women's soccer teams qualified for NCAA tournaments.

For more information on the six men's and eight women's athletic programs at Oakland University, visit the [OU Athletics Web site](#).

### SUMMARY

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