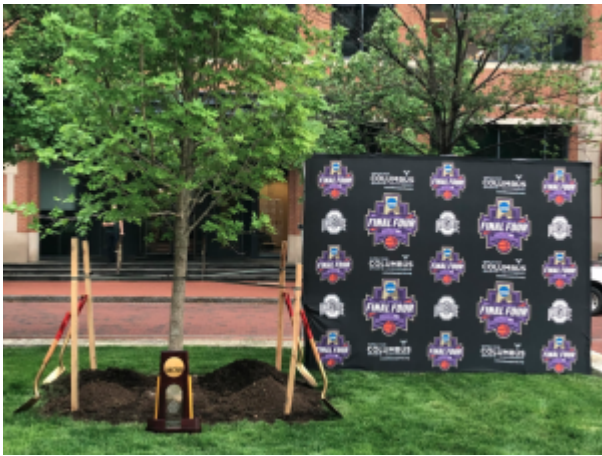


NCAA Recognizes Columbus, Ohio State For Final Four Success



While the Ohio State women’s basketball team came up short of the Final Four at Nationwide Arena on March 30 and April 1, Columbus certainly delivered as the host site for the NCAA tournament.

A month and a half after Ohio’s capital capped a wild finish to the 64-team field, culminated by consecutive buzzer-beater shots from Notre Dame guard Arike Ogunbowale on the way to lifting the Fighting Irish past UConn and Mississippi State for the national title, the committee came back Monday to the city.

Symbolized by a ceremonial tree planted at McFerson Commons Park in the Arena District, the NCAA honored Columbus as the first Final Four city to gain the “Evergreen” status, which is the highest level of sustainability given by the Council for Responsible Sport.

“This is no small feat,” said LeanPath global director Christy Cook. “In fact, with over 150 certified events in eight countries, only 11 other events have reached this highest-possible level of sustainability certification.”



Credit: Garrett Stepien/BSB

Nationwide Arena, which holds a capacity of 19,500 for basketball, sold out each of its three Final Four games.

“The city of Columbus did a tremendous job,” said NCAA vice president of women’s basketball Lynn Holzman. “Even before the tournament field was announced ... they did a tremendous job getting ready for it and getting prepared for fans to come out to the games, and all the games and events.

“That continued through, even though Columbus didn’t make it to the Final Four — the team itself — but the fans came out of the woodwork to support this premier event and also to support women’s basketball.”

The third-seeded Buckeyes suffered an early exit in the second round March 19 when No. 11 seed Central Michigan ran them out of St. John Arena on a 95-78 rout, but hometown fans still flocked downtown for the Final Four. OSU’s athletic department assisted both the NCAA and Greater Columbus Sports Commission in allowing the Final Four to run smoothly.

As the tournament heads to Tampa Bay in 2019 and New Orleans in 2020, Columbus set the standard.

“On behalf of the committee — and I would even say, personally, as an NCAA representative — we would highly encourage Columbus to, if it wants to, continue looking at bidding for NCAA championships and in particular the women’s Final Four,” Holz said. “The city, as we’ve talked about today, did a tremendous job. They’ve set the foundation and they are continuing to earn the reputation of being a great sport-city destination.”
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