

SPORTS

CIAA expected to pour in dollars

By Amber Hassell
Copy Editor

Raleigh officials expect the CIAA basketball tournament to pump about \$8.3 million into Wake County's economy later this month.

That ambitious figure assumes that many visitors may spend as much time shopping, dining, and partying as they do watching the basketball games at the Entertainment and Sports Arena.

In comparison, the Charlotte Convention and Visitors Bureau estimates that fans will spend an estimated \$5.4 million on hotels and restaurants during the Atlantic Coast Conference tournament next month.

Unlike the ACC tournament, which lasts four days, the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association bills its tournament as a weeklong celebration that's part basketball, part alumni reunion.

"From what we've heard, about 40 percent of the people who come don't even go to a basketball game," said David Heintz, president of the Greater Raleigh Convention and Visitors Bureau.

After spending the past five years in Winston-Salem, the tournament has moved to Raleigh for a three-year stay. Local officials outbid Winston-Salem, Fayetteville, and Richmond, Va., for the tournament.

Elizabeth City State University's sports information Director, Randy Jones said, "Having the CIAA tournament in Raleigh is a dynamic move by the conference. There are three schools in the area as opposed to one CIAA school in Winston-Salem." "This could possibly be the best tournament ever."

Of the 12 historically black colleges in the athletic conference, three are in the Triangle: St. Augustine's College and Shaw University in Raleigh and N.C. Central University in Durham.

That may have helped persuade conference officials to move the tournament to Raleigh, and it also should affect the number of tourist dollars spent there.

As host city, Winston-Salem was home to only one CIAA school: Winston-Salem State University. That left many tournament-goers scrambling for hotel rooms throughout the Triad.

But local officials expect a larger home base of fans in the Triangle for this year's tournament, which could mean not as many will look for hotel rooms.

The convention and visitors bureau has contracted with 52 Wake County hotels to block off 5,000 hotel rooms for the tournament between Feb. 27 and March 5.

The bureau expects the tournament to draw about 20,000 fans into the area, each of them spending an

average of four days in the Triangle. The rest, according to bureau estimates, will be daytrippers, students and alumni who already live in the Triangle.

Even those local fans and daytrippers are expected to spend an estimated \$77 dollars a day in Wake County. Hotel guests will spend between \$176 and \$108 a day, the bureau said.

Michael Walden, an economist at N.C. State University, said those spending estimates are not outlandish. Where the numbers can vary, Walden said, is in the estimated benefit of money spent by local fans.

Money spent by a Raleigh resident at a CIAA tournament event may be money that would otherwise have been spent on a movie or a restaurant, Walden said. Because of that, it's difficult to calculate whether that's extra money being pumped into the economy or dollars that were going to be spent on entertainment anyway.

"That's why economists tend to focus on people coming from outside the economy, under the assumption they wouldn't be coming here otherwise," Walden said. "You're going to get a bigger impact the more people you're drawing from outside."

Retail reports from the CIAA's stay in Winston-Salem have local officials optimistic, however.

Hanes Mall in Winston-Salem served as corporate sponsor for the tournament and even hosted fashion shows during the tournament.

"We noticed a substantial increase in traffic during the tournament period," said Dennis Cerny, a general manager of Hanes Mall.

According to North Carolina Central University sport's information director, Kyle Serba, "This year the tournament features a central location for all the CIAA schools." "It's a brand new building, and our tickets at NCCU have been sold out for months." "The affair will generate a lot of revenue, not only because the CIAA is faithful, but there are ACC schools in the area also."

"The CIAA already has sold out 88 vendor spaces inside the arena, and ticket sales have been strong", said CIAA commissioner Leon Kerry.

Seats in the new Raleigh arena's 45 luxury boxes have sold out, Kerry said, and about 12,800 tickets for seats in the arena's lower and club levels are being sold for each basketball session. Estimates on hotel reservations were not available, but Heintz said he expects that most of the bookings will come in the remaining weeks before the tournament.

"Most of the people will come at the last minute," he said.



Photo courtesy of Eric Abernathy, The Daily Advance

ECSU welcomes new football coach

By Miron Reynolds
Staff Writer

coach here at Elizabeth City at the end of the season.

Coach Wright is an undergraduate of Virginia Union University, where he played offensive line for the Panthers.

When asked of his opinion of Elizabeth City so far, Wright spoke of the warm friendly atmosphere and how there aren't many distractions.

"I am looking forward to this season," says Wright. "We have a whole lot of talented guys, but I think they were misdirected. They've been working hard, and I am proud of them," were the powerful words that Coach Wright spoke of this year's football team.

Following last year's disappointing Viking football season, Elizabeth City State University brought to campus the man who has the job of turning the football program into a winner.

He is John Wright, who brings us twenty-eight years of experience. Wright comes to ECSU from Hampton University, where he held the position of Assistant Head Football Coach. During Wright's eight year stay at Hampton, he was in charge of the offensive line, the running game and special talents. Wright is replacing George Moody, who retired as head