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Final Four Festivities

Southfield (WWJ) -- The next major sporting event in Detroit will include a number of activities for fans.

The NCAA, University of Detroit Mercy, Ford Field and the Detroit Local Organizing Committee for the Final Four Monday are announcing plans for fans with and without tickets.

A three day festival, called Big Dance, will take place on the Detroit Riverfront April 3-5 and include outdoor concerts from nationally known stars as well as local acts. Friday's event is called the A T & T Block Party. Saturday is called Big Dance Saturday. Sunday has been labeled My Coke Fest.

A second event is Hoop City which includes interactive basketball and other family-themed events at Cobo Center April 3-6.

Final Four Friday, April 3rd, will offer fans an opportunity to see the Final Four teams practice at Ford Field.

Additionally, the Road to the Final Four 5K run/walk is scheduled to take place on the streets of downtown Detroit on April 5.

"The NCAA's Men's Final Four is a celebration for student-athletes spanning several days and ending with the basketball championship," said Greg Shaheen, the NCAA's senior vice president for basketball and business strategies, in a statement. "The entire Detroit metro community will be able to participate in the Final Four, regardless if they have tickets to the games."

Included in the events is the Final Four Dribble Detroit that will have more than 4,000 local youth dribbling basketballs from Ford Field to Hoop City to Final Four-themed classroom discussion that will include sport and life skill clinics.

There also will be a food recovery program to support the homeless.

"As host NCAA institution for the 2009 NCAA Men's Final Four, the University of Detroit Mercy has been working closely with the Detroit Local Organizing Committee and the local business and civic community

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for more than 18 months to make this the best Final Four in NCAA history and to provide an exciting array of fun for locals and visitors and to also leave a positive Final Four legacy for Detroit,” said Keri Gaither, UDM athletic director and organizing committee chair, in a statement.

“We expect that the 2009 NCAA Men’s Final Four will create a new economic model for the NCAA when we set an attendance record of more than 70,000 fans in the fantastic setting of Ford Field in downtown Detroit,” said Bill Ryan, organizing committee executive director.

The NCAA Final Four runs from April 4-6. The event is expected to create an economic impact of \$30-50 million and attract more than 30,000 visitors to Detroit.

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