



Henrico Sports & Events Center to host A-10 Women's Basketball Championship

May 23, 2023.

NCAA Division I conference tournament becomes 1st event for facility's arena

The Henrico Sports & Events Center will host the Atlantic 10 Women's Basketball Championship in March 2024 and 2025, bringing thousands of visitors and millions of dollars of economic impact to Henrico County and the region for the five-day, nationally televised tournament.

The Division I conference championship represents the first marquee event for the arena-side of the 185,000-square-foot Sports & Events Center, which is under construction and scheduled to open this fall at Virginia Center Commons, just off Interstate 95 in northcentral Henrico.

"The Henrico Sports & Events Center is a perfect fit for the Atlantic 10 Women's Basketball Championship. It's a new, state-of-the-art arena with all of the amenities to provide our student-athletes, coaches, administrators and fans with a first-class championship experience," A-10 Commissioner Bernadette V. McGlade said. "It allows us to continue to host one of our premier events at a neutral venue, which is important to our membership. Additionally, the Richmond region community and media have provided extensive support for A-10 championships, making this a win-win for the league and Henrico County."

Dennis Bickmeier, executive director of the Henrico Sports & Entertainment Authority, which manages the Sports & Events Center, attended the A-10's recent annual meeting and gave officials, coaches and others a preview of what to expect from the \$50 million facility.

"We are absolutely ecstatic to partner with the Atlantic 10 to bring all the excitement and fun of March Madness to Henrico County and our region," he said. "The Women's Basketball Championship is precisely the kind of prestigious, high-impact event that the Henrico Sports & Events Center is designed to attract. It will deliver a strong economic impact, particularly for local hotels, restaurants and other businesses, and it will give local hoops fans an opportunity to watch outstanding, high-stakes college basketball in a beautiful, intimate setting. We cannot wait to show the Atlantic 10 and its universities, coaches, players and fans what we mean when we say we offer 'Showtime. All the time.'"

The Sports & Entertainment Authority partnered with Richmond Region Tourism to submit a bid for the women's basketball tournament after the A-10 expressed interest in the Sports & Events Center last November. The conference's members include the University of Richmond and Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). The A-10 Women's Basketball Championship was held at the Richmond Coliseum from 2014-2018 and at VCU's Siegel Center in 2021.

“We’re thrilled to host some of the best women basketball athletes from one of the most esteemed conferences in our country in the Richmond region over the next few years,” said Jerrine Lee, vice president of sales at Richmond Region Tourism. “Our team is proud to work alongside our incredible partners at the Henrico Sports & Entertainment Authority to bring the A-10 Women’s Basketball Championship back to our community.”

The Sports & Events Center will feature a flexible design, allowing it to accommodate up to 3,500 fans in retractable seating. Amenities will include modern meeting and locker rooms, laundry facilities, lounge and dining areas, broadcast-quality audio and video systems and a hardwood floor that was used in March at the KFC Yum! Center! for the South Regional games of the NCAA Division I Men’s Basketball Championship.

The 2022 and 2023 A-10 Women’s Basketball Championships were played at Chase Fieldhouse – home of the G-League Delaware Blue Coats basketball team – in Wilmington, Del. The 2022 A-10 women’s championship attracted more than 13,000 people and 1,000 hotel room bookings, according to media reports.

The A-10, based in Newport News, has 15 member universities from nine states and the District of Columbia. In addition to Richmond and VCU, conference members are Davidson, Dayton, Duquesne, Fordham, George Mason, George Washington, La Salle, Loyola Chicago, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, St. Bonaventure, Saint Joseph’s and Saint Louis.

As its champion in 2023, Saint Louis received the A-10’s automatic bid to the NCAA Division I women’s tournament. The conference championship’s initial rounds were broadcast on ESPN+ and CBS Sports Network; the title game was featured on ESPNU.

The Sports & Events Center is being developed through a partnership between Henrico and Rebkee Co., which is redeveloping the former Virginia Center Commons mall property with hotels, housing, retail and other uses. The indoor facility will add a dimension to Henrico’s sports tourism program, which generates an estimated economic impact of about \$60 million annually through tournaments and other events held at county field complexes and sites. Officials have estimated that Henrico will be able to contend for an additional \$30 million in annual economic impact by having an indoor facility capable of hosting such events as basketball and volleyball tournaments as well as concerts and other large gatherings.