

Final Four Preparation Underway at US Bank Stadium

BY ZACK MOELLER

THE BEGINNING OF FEBRUARY marks the end of football season and yet another Patriot Super Bowl victory has come and gone. This means the sporting world will now turn its attention to the coming of March Madness and the NCAA Men's and Women's basketball tournament. This year the Final Four will be taking place on Minnesota soil at US Bank Stadium, just over a year since the stadium hosted Super Bowl LIII. The event will require major alterations to the young stadium.

A "practice run" occurred at the end of November when the stadium first had a basketball court built in for a University of Minnesota men's basketball game against Oklahoma State. The event was a four-game showcase that also featured St. Thomas, the University of Wisconsin – River Falls, North Dakota State, South Dakota State University, Drake, and the University of Northern Iowa. The goal of the showcase was to see how the stadium handled the sounds and lights of a basketball game which can differ drastically from those of a football game.

Many alterations need to be made to the stadium in order for it to be Final Four ready, and they aren't cheap changes, by any means. The cost of the event will be millions of dollars more expensive to the public than the Super Bowl. After some reimbursements, the expenses of the Final Four will cost the Minnesota Sports Facilities Authority an estimated ten million dollars, compared to 627,000 dollars for the Super Bowl. The main costs come from blackout curtains that need to be installed to insure lighting stay consistent, those will cost around five million dollars. The NCAA also requires 10,000 seats to be placed near the court which will cost another two million dollars. Other transformations include hanging the giant NCAA scoreboard, transforming the tunnels, and adding work areas, interview rooms, and locker rooms for each team.

The cost will be somewhat mitigated by an estimated two million dollars in revenue from merchandise, food, and beverage sales, which will include beer and wine for the first time at a Final Four which has not previously been allowed. The initial expense for big events such as this is viewed more as an investment. MSFA Chairman Michael Vekich stated, "The cost is not the result anybody thought it would be, but we've got it covered. The Super Bowl and Final Four nicely position U.S. Bank Stadium to book other big events. You take a look at two huge sports events that will be watched by millions of people, the major message is that we can make this happen."

The Final Four games take place on April 6th and the championship game will take place on April 8th. †



Photography provided by the Minnesota Vikings

Pictured above is a digital rendering of a Final Four game in US Bank Stadium

Men's Basketball Looks to End the Season on a Strong Note

BY TYLER DUNN

THE GOLDEN BEAR MEN'S BASKETBALL is getting into the home stretch of their 2018-2019 campaign. The Golden Bears have shown signs of brilliance throughout the year. However, inconsistency throughout the season has led to Concordia's current record of 8-15. Two extended losing streaks throughout the season have certainly not helped Concordia with seeding going into the postseason.

The first of these winless droughts came at the beginning of conference play as the Golden Bears played three straight road games in which they battled in close games but ultimately faltered down the stretch. The second string of losses began after the holiday break as Concordia struggled to win games, losing six in a row. During this stretch of games, the Golden Bears struggled to score points against some of the conference's top competition.

The Golden Bears will look to jump start their season in the home stretch and gather some momentum going into the NSIC Conference tournament. In the past, the Bears have played the role of spoiler in the tournament upsetting Minnesota State Moorhead two years ago in the first round.

Concordia will play their final two home games of the season at the Gangelhoff Center against Wayne State and Augustana on February 15th and 16th. The Golden Bears will conclude their regular season on the road against Winona State and Upper Iowa. If the season ended today, the Golden Bears would be the 15th seed in the conference tournament. The top seeded teams in the conference are likely to be Northern State, Wayne State and St. Cloud State. Concordia's biggest win so far this season was a 107 to 91 victory against St. Cloud State. The win certainly shows that the Golden Bears have the ability to compete against the conference's best teams.

The Golden Bears have been led by senior Bryndan Matthews, who is currently second in the conference in field goal percentage. Matthews has also moved into the top twenty all time scoring leaders in NSIC history. Matthews, who has over 1,200 career points, has been a force on the offensive side of the ball for the majority of the year and if the Golden Bears are going to make a run in the postseason, it will most likely be behind him.

As the regular season draws to a close, the Golden Bears will be looking to put it all together and make a run to the Pentagon in Sioux Falls. This team has shown it has the ability to play with the best teams in the conference and in the region, so a deep postseason run is not impossible. It won't be easy with the depth of talent in the NSIC as well as the overall high quality of teams in the Central Region, however, this team is loaded with guys who can score the basketball and defend. †



Photography provided by CSP Bears

Pictured above is Senior Bryndan Matthews laying one on the glass against MSU Moorhead