



UNPRECEDENTED NCAA RULE CHANGE AND NEWLY CERTIFIED NATIVE BASKETBALL SUMMER TOURNAMENT COULD PERMANENTLY ALTER THE FACE OF FUTURE COLLEGIATE BASKETBALL

Division I and II Coaches now permitted to recruit players at NABI Tournament, possibly leading to more Native players at elite collegiate programs

PHOENIX, ARIZ. (March 28, 2007) – Organizers and sponsors of the Native American Basketball Invitational (NABI), the only national basketball tournament featuring Native American athletes, today announced that the NCAA has formally implemented an interpretation change in its “Same State” rule. The rule change respects tribal sovereignty, facilitating Native athletes who wish to compete on teams from their home communities and clarifies athlete residency requirements.

In a significant related development, the NCAA also notified NABI that the tournament would become the first Native basketball event to achieve certification for the annual summer competition. Tournament sanction and certification will also allow elite basketball coaches and scouts to attend the tournament to recruit NABI athletes for Division I and II level regular season competition and eventually future NCAA Tournament and Final Fours. The 2007 NABI tournament will be held July 8 to 14 in Phoenix, Ariz., in various local venues with the championship rounds at the US Airways Center.

“This NCAA rule change and new sanction is arguably one of the most significant developments to ever occur in Native and college basketball,” said GinaMarie Scarpa-Mabry, NABI’s co-founder and tournament director. “In addition to March already being renowned for great college basketball, future NCAA tournaments will feature standout Native alums from NABI tournaments who compete at the college level and also receive a quality education,” added Mark West, NABI’s co-founder and vice president of player programs for the Phoenix Suns.

As an example of the talent pool available to coaches and scouts, NABI alum and University of Oklahoma freshman standout Jenna Plumley led the Sooners to a 74-60 victory over Southeast Missouri State during the 2007 NCAA Women’s Tournament on March 17. Plumley scored 20 points, including six three-pointers during the game. During the 2006 NABI tournament, Plumley

represented Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribe of Oklahoma and has been nominated to for the 2007 NABI Leadership Award at this summer's games.

While speaking with a group of NABI sponsors and supporters shortly after the NCAA certification was announced, former Louisiana State University (LSU) basketball coaching legend Dale Brown described tournament certification as a "monumental step toward propelling the dreams of Native athletes forward." He added, "I applaud the NCAA and others who have shown vision and been involved in this effort." Brown is the only Southeastern Conference coach to appear in 15 consecutive NCAA Tournaments and has led LSU teams to two Final Fours.

Increased demand for teams represented from throughout Indian country in the U.S. and Canada led NABI to expand the field from 24 teams in its 2003 inaugural year to 80 (40 men's/40 women's) for this year's tournament. Team registration closes May 1, 2007. WNBA All-Star and Phoenix Mercury guard Diana Taurasi has joined NABI's mission by becoming the Honorary Commissioner of NABI 2007.

The NABI tournament continues to attract sponsors such as Nike, Salt River Pima – Maricopa Indian Community, Ak - Chin Indian Community, Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation, University of Phoenix and many others.

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