

Fort Wayne Scoring With Soccer !!

InsideIndianaBusiness.com Report

Fort Wayne, Ind. – Continuing to enhance Fort Wayne's appeal as a destination for first-rate amateur sporting events, Mayor Tom Henry joined officials from the Big Ten Conference, the National Soccer Festival and the Fort Wayne Sports Corp. to announce for the first time ever the conference's seven men's soccer teams will participate 2010 National Soccer Festival. The City of Fort Wayne gave the National Soccer Festival a \$10,000 sports business development grant to attract the Big Ten. Mayor Henry announced the grant program in May to encourage local organizations to host their amateur sports tournaments in Fort Wayne. "Fort Wayne has put itself on the map for being an outstanding destination in the Midwest for sports venues and sporting events of all kinds. Having the Big Ten Conference bring their men's soccer teams to our city for preseason play is significant and speaks highly to the National Soccer Festival and IPFW," said Mayor Henry. "Today's announcement is exactly the reason why I created the sports development grant program. I know Fort Wayne is a burgeoning market for events that provide family-friendly entertainment that attracts visitors. It makes economic sense for the City to be part of building this market." The more sporting events and tournaments Fort Wayne venues host, the more likely they are to host them in the future, which is why Mayor Henry wanted the grant money to hold, recruit or bring athletic events consisting of games, exhibitions, tournaments, and other sports-related events to Fort Wayne that will bring in significant out-of-town visitors.

"Sports tourism generates between \$13 and \$15 million annually in our community, so we appreciate Mayor Henry and the City of Fort Wayne recognizing the value of these outstanding sporting events and supporting efforts to bring more of them here through the sports development grant program," said Dan O'Connell, president and CEO Fort Wayne/Allen County Convention & Visitors Bureau. "Hosting a Big Ten Conference competition puts Fort Wayne in a position to host future Big Ten events. We should all be excited about expanding the National Soccer Festival to include the Big Ten Conference."

Festival organizers do not know how many attendees to expect for the 2010 festival since it will be the first time for Big Ten Conference play, but it has traditionally had more than 1,000 visitors. Fort Wayne is an attractive location geographically for the conference as it is centrally located to the universities and many of their alumni.

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The Big Ten Challenge, the working name for the preseason event, will be part of the festival that also features teams from IPFW, Indiana Tech and St. Francis as well as other Division I teams. The 2010 festival also includes a conference coaches meeting, player picnic, preseason media event and soccer clinics for youth players. The festival's title sponsor for 2010 is Shindigz.

"Every Big Ten coach who has taken a team to the National Soccer Festival has had great things to say about the experience, so the opportunity to showcase all seven of our men's teams at such a first-class event is very exciting," said Big Ten Assistant Commissioner Chad Hawley. "I continue to be impressed by the City of Fort Wayne's enthusiasm for this event — bringing the entire Conference together for first-rate competition in the heart of Big Ten country will be a great way to kick off the 2010 season."

Founded in 2000, the festival is held at Indiana University Purdue University Fort Wayne's Hefner Soccer Complex. The 2010 National Soccer Festival will be Aug. 26 to Aug. 29. This year's festival will be Aug. 21, 22 and Aug. 27 through Aug. 29.

Fort Wayne continues to move ahead with its initiative to link sports to local economic development. The city is providing a \$10,000 sports business development grant to the 2010 National Soccer Festival, which will feature the seven men's soccer teams from the Big Ten Conference. The grant is part of the city's effort to attract more sporting events. Fort Wayne/Allen County Convention & Visitors Bureau President and Chief Executive Officer Dan O'Connell says sports tourism generates between \$13 and \$15 million a year in the area.

