

# SPORTING IMPACT

## Events Continue to Boost Economy



**Ryan Vaughn**

In the early 1970s, sports propelled revitalization of the city of Indianapolis and state of Indiana. In 1970, two business leaders, Dr. Beurt SerVaas and Frank McKinney, successfully convinced the American Athletic Union to relocate from an office across the street from Central Park in New York City to Indianapolis.

The philosophy behind the relocation effort was not only to attract the jobs associated with the AAU, the nation's leading amateur sports organization at the time, but also to attract the organization's numerous tournaments and, of course, the athletes and fans who attended them.

Since then, this strategy has been successfully replicated many times, starting with events like the 1987 Pan Am Games, which moved Indiana's name recognition from domestic to international in one wonderfully executed event. From there, the impact of sports on tourism has grown considerably, and Indianapolis became a recognizable name associated with sporting events at all levels.

Some of the largest national governing bodies of Olympic sports, such as USA Track and Field, USA Gymnastics and USA Diving, are located in Indianapolis and each has hosted multiple events that attract athletes



The 1987 Pan American Games helped put Indianapolis' name on the international sports map.

and fans from around the world. In all, Indiana has played host to 17 Olympic Team Trials and six world championships as well as many national championships in a variety of Olympic sports.

The same is true at the collegiate level. The relocation of the NCAA brought with it not only hundreds of jobs but also the opportunity to host any number of its nearly 90 different championships. Whether it's the cross country championships in Terre Haute or the Division II Men's Basketball Championships in Evansville, the impact continues to be felt across the state.

In April, Indianapolis will host its third NCAA Women's Final Four, and in 2021, Indianapolis will surpass all other cities in the country when it hosts its eighth NCAA Men's Final Four. The NCAA Men's Final Four hosted in Indy this past April accounted for over \$70 million in direct visitor spending.

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Not every championship in Indiana comes as a result of the organization being headquartered here. Indiana continues to enjoy a strong relationship with the Big Ten Conference. In March, Indianapolis will host its 10th Big Ten Men's Basketball Tournament and its 19th Big Ten Women's Basketball Tournament. Now that all of the teams in the conference compete, fans and athletes from all over the country will travel to Indiana to experience Hoosier hospitality, spending hard-earned money in restaurants, bars, shopping and enjoying cultural attractions.

Indianapolis also hosts the Big Ten Football Championship every year through 2021. This year the game welcomed a new set of tourists to Indiana. The Iowa Hawkeyes traveled well to battle the Michigan State Spartans, and a fan group well acquainted with championships in Indy. The Big Ten Men's and Women's Basketball Tournaments and the Big Ten Football Championship account for \$16 million each in direct visitor spending.

Super Bowl XLVI brought with it not only an international media spotlight and decision-makers from top businesses from around the globe, but also \$176 million in direct visitor spending. While the direct visitor spend is significant, the ripple effect of the positive media has initiated a groundswell of tourism legacy that generated a 10% increase in convention bookings the following year, as well as continued growth in leisure travel.

It's not just collegiate athletes, Olympic Trials or Super Bowl championships that have a sizable impact in Indiana. Youth sports continue to be a growing source of tourism for communities throughout the state. There is no better example than Grand Park in Westfield. One of the largest and most well-planned parks of its kind in the country, Grand Park will host tens of thousands of youth throughout the year. While their events may not be broadcast internationally, there is no denying the number of hotel rooms rented and restaurants visited provides massive economic impact.

Corporate underwriting and participation to support these efforts has been key – in every step from bidding to execution of the events. Over the past 35 years, Indiana's community, corporate, government and volunteer investment in sports has resulted in more than 450 national and international championships, which have generated more than \$4 billion in direct visitor spending and showcased all that our great state has to offer to a countless number of national and global tourists.

As youth sports continue to proliferate and the popularity of amateur and professional sports continue to flourish, sports will continue to be a key driver of tourism and development in Indiana.