

# Invitational costs add to Athletic Department's budget deficit

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The Ohio men's basketball program lost \$55,000 in the inaugural College Basketball Invitational, whose organizers now face questions about the integrity of the tournament's selection.

Ohio was one of eight schools that paid \$60,000 to host a first-round game in the College Basketball Invitational (CBI), which was organized by the Gazelle Group. The Bobcats triumphed over Brown University, 80-74, but in front of a crowd of 1,169 – the smallest crowd in The Convo all season by almost 1,000.

It was also the lowest turnout in the first round of the CBI. Other schools (Virginia, Old Dominion, Bradley, Texas-El Paso, Tulsa, Washington and Nevada) averaged an audience of 4,189 in the first round.

When asked about the financial issues the tournament raised, Ohio coach Tim O'Shea pointed to the tournament's champion, Tulsa. Golden Hurricane coach Dave Wojcik stated that the university earned a profit after hosting five tournament games but declined to comment on specific figures.

"If we would have advanced in the tournament and had students around, I think we would have made money, too," O'Shea said.

The CBI's costs added to the Athletics Department's \$700,000 budget deficit. In addition to the \$60,000 home game guarantee, Ohio paid \$1,000 to host the game. After about \$6,100 in "gate fees" were collected at the game, Ohio was left to figure out how it'd pay the remaining \$55,000 it owed the Gazelle Group.

The Ohio athletic department's budget for this fiscal year is about \$13.5 million.

To recoup its losses, Ohio will play two extra money games next season. The Bobcats will face off against Louisville and Xavier to bring in a total of \$140,000. This season, OU played two money games that brought in \$135,000.

"I've played money games for two reasons," said O'Shea, who added that The Convo would not adorn a CBI banner anytime soon. "A chance to play against the main teams in the country, and I've also worked out an arrangement (with the athletic administration) to use some of that money for what you might call "special projects."

O'Shea stated that some of those projects included the Rainbow Classic tournament that Ohio participated in this season and the CBI. On hosting a tournament game and the Gazelle Group's operation of the tournament, O'Shea said he was pleased with the company's professional manner.

"I think it's a tournament that will become a staple in March," he said.

As the Gazelle Group and college basketball begin to evaluate the success of this new tournament, two distinct opinions have emerged. Schools that participated – along with the Gazelle Group – feel that the CBI was a success. Teams left out of the competition have voiced concerns about the integrity of the selection process.

Dan Loney, director of communications for the Gazelle Group, said the company was pleased with the CBI's initial run and intends to continue the tournament.

"It seems like there's a market for it," Loney said, See CBI, Page 3

## CBI

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noting that the final two games of the championship series were sold out. "When you try and do something new against the status quo, there tends to be a few people who throw their hands up."

Most of the concerns were from coaches who felt the selection process might not have been fair. Loney admitted he did not know how the Gazelle Group selected teams – only that Rick Giles, the president of the Gazelle Group, was heavily involved. Giles could not be reached for comment.

Tournament, lowered that field from 40 to 32.

"My hopes for the CBI being based on merit were dashed a little bit," he said.

Wright State coach Brad Brownell said that money might have been a factor for the Gazelle Group in determining which teams to invite. He told the Gazelle Group that Wright State was interested in the tournament, but could not host a game – and the Raiders were not selected.

"We knew that the people who (put up the \$60,000) had a much better chance of getting in," said Brownell, whose team had a better RPI than a majority of participating schools, including Tulsa.

"I understand that they're putting on a tournament to make money. Somewhat of a level playing field is what you would hope for, but it's their tournament."

When asked if money was a factor in selecting teams for the tournament,

FIRST ROUND ATTENDANCE		
HOMESITE FILLED	ATTENDANCE	CAPACITY
TULSA	5,365	64.2 (8,355)
BRADLEY	5,114	46.2 (11,060)
UTEP	5,313	44.3 (12,000)
NEVADA	4,252	36.1 (11,784)
WASHINGTON	3,227	32.3 (10,000)
VIRGINIA	4,022	27.6 (14,593)
OLD DOMINION	2,036	24.2 (8,424)
OHIO	1,169	8.9 (13,080)
First Round Attendance Average: 3,812		
First Round % Capacity Average: 35.4		
<i>*Capacity figures based upon official members from the university's Web sites</i>		

The CBI Web site is decidedly vague, stating that "Teams will be invited based upon their performance during their conference and non-conference schedule, as well as how well the team is playing at the end of the regular season."

Western Michigan coach Steve Hawkins said he thought CBI selections would be based on the Ratings Percentage Index (RPI), a complex formula designed to objectively rank Division I teams. Hawkins said he was surprised that Old Dominion and Virginia – schools with worse RPIs – and 13-18 Cincinnati, were selected instead of Western Michigan, which finished 20-12 and won the MAC West regular season title.

"I had high hopes for this tournament because I felt like the atmosphere and the landscape were right for a tournament like this," said Hawkins, who also expressed his disappointment that the NCAA, after taking control of the National Invitational

Loney responded with a definite "No." He added that the Gazelle Group was forced to find a balance between teams that would host and those that couldn't.

"We wanted exciting basketball," Loney said.

Loney would not say how much the Gazelle Group earned from the tournament and would not say if the group cut deals with schools that hosted multiple games. Wojcik, whose team hosted five games and won the tournament, said Tulsa did not receive such a deal.

Virginia, which hosted three games, would not return calls for comment. Both Coach Dave Leitao and Virginia's business administration department did not return multiple calls for comment.

O'Shea said that some complaints might have been "sour grapes" from coaches who missed out on the tournament.

"When they didn't get in, they started complaining," O'Shea said. "It was ridiculous."

### OHIO'S CBI FINANCES

- Guarantee to the Gazelle Group for hosting a first round game: \$60,000
- Revenue from the gate: \$6,110
- Additional expenditures to host Brown University: Approx. \$60,000
- Guarantee still owed to the Gazelle Group: Approx. \$55,000