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Bradley-Tulsa history gives CBI a lift

Sunday, March 30, 2008

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BY DAVE REYNOLDS
 OF THE JOURNAL STAR

On the eve of the College Basketball Invitational championship series between Bradley and Tulsa, founder Rick Giles is pleased how his brainchild has developed.

"We're excited, we think it'll be a great atmosphere," said Giles, who directs the tournament from his position with the Gazelle Group. "These two teams, with their history, will get their respective fan bases out. Based on the home environments last week with teams that weren't quite as familiar, I think we'll have a great, great playoff."

The best-of-3 series opens Monday at the Donald Reynolds Center in Tulsa. Game 2 - and the Carver Arena finale this season for the Braves - is Wednesday. If necessary, Game 3 will be in Tulsa on Friday.

All games start at 7 p.m. They will be broadcast on Fox College Sports (available to Comcast and DirecTV subscribers on premium digital sports tier or premium package, respectively) as well as on [cbistreaming.com](#).

Bradley and Tulsa began their 99-game all-time series in 1940 when the Braves posted a 38-34 win at the Peoria Armory.

In 1949, the series became a Missouri Valley Conference rivalry. As time went by, the rivalry between the Hurricane and Braves became

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one of the conference's strongest before Tulsa left the Valley in 1996.

Giles said re-seeding the four remaining teams prior to Wednesday semifinals was a thankless job. Top-seeded Virginia was upended by No. 4 Bradley, while No. 2 Tulsa edged No. 3 Houston. Tulsa, therefore, was rewarded with the homecourt advantage in the championship round.

"It was really difficult," he said. "We maybe misjudged it. But if you took our 16 teams and lined 'em up and 10 people seeded 'em, you'd have 10 different seedings. This window of teams were so evenly matched.

"When we got to the final four, we tried to analyze what had happened in the first two games and seeded, using that as a basis more than what happened previously (during the season)."

Giles already is talking about next year and how the event can be tweaked to make it better. In the opening round, instead of four games Tuesday and four Wednesday, he's leaning toward holding just two on Tuesday to give more teams more time to promote the games.

He's also considering a suggestion by BU athletics director Ken Kavanagh to change the title series to away-home-home for the top seed instead of home-away-home.

"Otherwise, I like the 16 teams and staying away from playing on NCAA tournament dates," he said. "We're pretty pleased with the way things have gone. The TV games have been great and we've had a lot of people sign up and watch games online, which is terrific. We've sold well over 2,000 total (Internet game packages)."

Giles said he expects the Bradley-Tulsa series will generate a better atmosphere than the National Invitation Tournament final four with Ohio State-Mississippi and Florida-Massachusetts on Tuesday at Madison Square Garden in New York.

"You'll see playoff basketball on the home court, which doesn't occur in college basketball tournaments," he said. "It's unique because you'll see that passion in the arena that makes college basketball special."

Braves briefs: WMBD's Braves Plus pregame show will begin at 6 p.m. Monday even if the St. Louis Cardinals' season opener is still in progress. If the Cardinals' game, which begins at 3:10 p.m., is not done by 6, its conclusion will be broadcast on WIRL. The Cardinals' Wednesday game will be broadcast in its entirety on WIRL rather than on WMBD, as usual. ... Tickets for Game 2 can be purchased online, at the Civic Center and the new BU ticket office at Shea Stadium.

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