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College Basketball Invitational: OSU vs. UTEP

UTEP goes for championship title

Game 3 of CBI title series sells out fast

By Victor R. Martinez / El Paso Times Posted: 04/03/2009 12:00:00 AM MDT



UTEP defeated Oregon State 70-63 in Game 2 of the CBI Championship Series Wednesday at the Don Haskins Center in front of a sold out crowd. This tied up the series and forced a third game to be played today at the Don Haskins Center. (Brian Kanof / Special to the Times)

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EL PASO -- With 45 seconds remaining and the UTEP men's basketball



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team leading by six points in Wednesday night's best-of-3 College Basketball Invitational championship series, Fred Harper and his three friends made a mad dash for the ticket center.

They did not want to be left out of Friday's deciding Game 3 against the Oregon State Beavers.

"We had a good time on Wednesday night, so we thought we would go again on Friday. We went out there before they sold out or the line got too long," said Harper, an Eastwood High School junior. He bought six tickets.

Luckily for Harper and his buddies, they will be among the 12,000 fans who got their hands on tickets

CBI Championship

Where will you be watching Friday's CBI championship game between UTEP and Oregon State? Read story

- I'll be in attendance at the Don, watching UTEP bring home another title
 - I'm headed to a UTEP watch party
 - I'm going to find the nearest sports bar and take it in
 - I won't be watching since I'm not a basketball fan
 - I haven't been following this particular basketball tournament
-


to Friday night's sold-out championship game.

The UTEP Ticket Office at the Don Haskins Center stayed open late Wednesday and sold more than 6,600

tickets. A sellout was declared by 11:30 a.m. Thursday.

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Those who missed out can see the game at 8 p.m. Friday on HDNeT (Dish Network Channel 9422, DirecTV Channel 79 and 306, and Time Warner Digital Cable Channel 899).

As for Harper and company, they plan to be in the arena long before tipoff, so they do not end up in the nosebleed seats.

"We're going to show up around 5 o'clock because we had to sit about two rows from the top," Harper said. "We want to get as close to the floor as possible."

March Madness has spilled into April as the Miners attempt to be among the men's teams to win four post-season national tournaments: the NCAA champion, to be decided Monday; NIT



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UTEP a suddenly hot ticket

Who would have thought getting a ticket to watch UTEP basketball would suddenly become so difficult: Friday's CBI finale...

champion Penn State, which defeated Baylor 69-63 on Thursday; and CollegenInsider.com tournament champ Old Dominion, which on Tuesday defeated Bradley 66-62; and the CBI championship game between UTEP and Oregon State.

"El Pasoans are passionate about their Miners, especially when they are winning," said Orlando Garcia, who bought his tickets early Thursday.

"I wish those fair-weather fans would come out and support the team all year long."

The last time UTEP had back-to-back sellouts was in 2006, against Houston and Tulsa. UTEP made the second



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round of the NIT that year.
"It's pretty exciting to win any type of championship," UTEP fan Juileta Horn said. "When the Miners didn't make it to the NCAA or the NIT, people started talking down about the CBI, but when you get right down to it, basketball is basketball and a championship is a championship."

to Yale and Howard. But the Beavers also won seven games in the Pac-10 Conference, defeating NCAA Tournament teams Southern Cal and Arizona.

"Listen, we packed the Haskins Center with 24,000 people the past two games; that has to mean something," said Joe Davila, a season ticket holder. "I don't even mind that I had to give up my seat to someone who is going to pay a \$10 general admission ticket. As long as the house is packed and the Miners win a post-season championship, that is all that matters."

The Miners' run in the CBI has made believers of new fans such as Harper.

"I've always supported the Miners because I'm from El Paso," Harper said. "The UTEP games that I've gone to, they usually win for some reason. They are undefeated when I'm in the stands, so I better show up on Friday."

Victor R. Martinez may be reached at vmartinez@elpasotimes.com; 546-6128.

Make plans

- What: UTEP(23-13) from Conference USA vs. Oregon State (17-18) from the Pac-10 in the third and final game of the CBI Championship Series.
- When, where: 8 p.m. Friday, Don Haskins Center.
- Radio: KOFX-FM (92.3).
- On TV: "HDNeT -- Dish Network Channel 9422; DirecTV Channel 79 and 306 and Time Warner Digital Cable Channel 899.
- Tickets: Sold out.

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Series tied up

- Game 1: Oregon State 75, UTEP 69, in Corvallis, Ore.
- Game 2: UTEP 70, Oregon State 63, in El Paso.

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