

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Asheville Championship Announced as Newest Early Season Men's College Basketball Tournament

Inaugural tournament airing on ESPN prepared to crown the first champion of the season in the Blue Ridge Mountains

(Asheville, NC) August 4, 2021 – It all starts in Asheville. The Asheville Championship is the newest test for top college basketball programs looking to set the tone for the season and be crowned the first official champion of 2021-22. The four-team tournament will take place at [Harrah's Cherokee Center-Asheville](#), featuring [South Carolina](#), [Minnesota](#), [Western Kentucky](#), and [Princeton](#) as the inaugural field. The event is created by [KemperLesnik](#), who operates the [Maui Jim Maui Invitational](#) and manages the event portion of the [McDonald's All American Basketball Games](#).

The Asheville Championship will air on the ESPN family of networks on Friday, November 12 and Sunday, November 14. Friday's match ups include Western Kentucky vs. Minnesota and Princeton vs. South Carolina.

"There could not be a better city than Asheville to have the honor of tipping off the season," said Tom Valdiserri, executive vice president of KemperLesnik. "There is big demand from college programs, fans and networks to kick off the season with a new, neutral site championship, and we are honored to help make that happen in North Carolina, the heart of college basketball in the region. It is a great way to test early season conditioning and talent, as well as excite a fan base with quality competition and end-to-end action when fans are craving the start of a new college basketball season the most."

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, KemperLesnik was forced to relocate the 2020 Camping World Maui Invitational from its home on the island of Maui to the mainland in Asheville. The 2020 event ended as the only early season men's multi-team tournament to successfully take place in a secured bubble with its original field. Asheville became the first-ever non-Hawaiian site for the event, and its success spawned interest from college basketball programs and sponsors to establish the first annual tip-off tournament in the Blue Ridge Mountains. As a result, the Asheville Championship was formed and will now serve as a premier event celebrating the start of the college basketball season as well as the first-class music, food and outdoor activities Asheville has to offer.

"Asheville has a strong basketball fan base, and the city already serves as host for the annual Southern Conference tournament and other world-class events," said Tournament Chairman David Odom. "Early season tournaments are known for excited fans and even more exciting play, often setting the tone for the season to come. Our hope is that the Asheville Championship will be the start of a new tradition in

college basketball, serving as a cornerstone for some of the best programs and fans to rally together in the Blue Ridge Mountains and celebrate the beginning of another highly anticipated college basketball season.”

Supporting partners for the tournament include [Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission](#), [Cambria Downtown Asheville](#), [Explore Asheville](#), [Harrah’s Cherokee Casino Resort](#), [Ingles Markets](#), [Liquidlogic Kayaks](#), and [Wicked Weed](#).

Tickets are available now exclusively through participating schools' ticket offices. Tickets for the general public go on sale September 14 at 10:00 am ET.

For more information, or to follow along as *it all starts in Asheville*, follow us on social media ([Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#)).

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About KemperLesnik

[KemperLesnik](#) is a sports marketing, events and public relations agency. Ranked by Crain's Chicago Business among Chicago's top PR agencies, KemperLesnik produces integrated communications programs and manages major national events, including the [Maui Jim Maui Invitational](#), the [McDonald’s All American Games](#), [the POWERADE Jam Fest](#) and activation for [KitchenAid and its PGA of America partnership](#). KemperLesnik has operated the Maui Jim Maui Invitational since 1990. For more information, visit www.kemperlesnik.com.

About Harrah’s Cherokee Center – Asheville (HCCA)

Harrah’s Cherokee Center – Asheville (HCCA), which features the ExploreAsheville.com Arena and Thomas Wolfe Auditorium, has hosted a diverse variety of events that reflect the creativity, uniqueness, and artistry that Asheville, N.C., and Western North Carolina is known for primarily. In recent years, the facility has hosted world-class sporting events such as NBA Preseason Games, two Fed Cup by BNP Paribas ties, the annual Ingles Southern Conference Basketball Championships presented by General Shale, and the Camping World Maui Invitational as well as music and performances by Bob Dylan, The Lumineers, Dave Chappelle, John Prine, Old Dominion, Sturgill Simpson, Kacey Musgraves, Widespread Panic, Billy Strings, Warren Haynes’ Christmas Jam, and more.

Media Contact

Taryn Parker, KemperLesnik
847-380-0375

Taryn.parker@kemperlesnik.com