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Soccer tourney brings \$4M to Fairfield area

By Eric Robinette

Staff Writer

FAIRFIELD — Thousands of people with brightly colored uniforms, water bottles, cameras, backpacks and sling chairs packed Joyce Park and the surrounding area as the Mid-American Soccer Classic kicked off this past weekend.

It was an international event, as at least one of the teams made the trip from Canada. The Windsor East Sidekickers came from the province of Ontario, taking a four-hour drive, said coach Sal Chisesi. It was their first trip to the MASC.

“We enjoy it. There’s a lot of teams we’ve never seen from Ohio and we’re enjoying the nice weather. Coming from Canada, it’s nice to see some warm temperatures,” he said.

He and many other participants noted the sheer size of the tournament, which brought in 234 girls teams.

“This complex — we’ve never seen so many fields in one area. And we like the quality of the competition, too,” said Chisesi.

Karen Phillips, the organizer of the tournament, estimates the annual event brings in about 17,000 people to Fairfield and the surrounding area, with an economic impact of \$4 million.

Pat Hauser of Hamilton has been to the MASC six times and coached it three times.

“It’s an experience for the girls and the parents just to see different talents,” he said, adding that noting that the MASC stands out among area tournaments “just the way it’s been advertised. They’ve got a lot of sponsors, and scouts see the potential of these players and taking them for a full-ride scholarship. That’s what everybody’s hoping for.”

Ken and Carol Lavins came from Lawrenceburg, Ind., said the size of the tournament becomes especially apparent when trying to find a place to park.

“This one’s a big one. We’ve seen that just by evidence of trying to get in and out of here to find a place to park when the games go on,” said Ken Lavins.

Kettle corn vendor Joseph Perkins of Brownsburg, Ind., estimates he sells 50 pounds of corn a day at the tournament.

“It’s actually really fun. I have a little bit of downtime and a little bit of work, so I can relax and watch the games. I play soccer, so I like this.”

Next weekend it gets to happen all over again when 250 boys teams play April 12-14.

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