

TAMPA, FLORIDA **TUESDAY** LIFE. PRINTED DAILY.

# THE TAMPA TRIBUNE

and The Tampa Times

## Tampa's Final Four Games Are Big Draw For Lesbians



Kelvin Ma / Tampa Tribune

Lisa Moody, left, Monica Pettiette, center, and Kristina Martin check on their banners check on their banners for the FanAtic Four party on the balcony of The Rare Olive on Seventh Avenue in Ybor City on Thursday. The party is a Women's Final Four-themed party geared toward the lesbian community.

Related Links

- [Photo Gallery](#)

By [BAIRD HELGESON](#) | The Tampa Tribune

Published: April 4, 2008

TAMPA - For Kelly Costa, the NCAA Women's Final Four Tournament in Tampa is about parties and socializing.

"I don't care about sports," said Costa, who lives in St. Petersburg. "I can't wait to check

out all the parties and the great lesbian scene and being around a lot of great girls."

The Final Four games Sunday and Tuesday will showcase the nation's best women's basketball match-ups. But the tournament will also usher in what is widely believed to be the largest lesbian gathering in the history of the Tampa Bay area. Other than the Dinah Shore golf weekend in Palm Springs, Calif., the women's tournament is seen as the next biggest lesbian gathering in the nation.

The tournament is expected to bring thousands of women to the Bay area, with events and parties planned from Ybor City to Gulfport.

For many lesbians coming for the games, the event is an annual pilgrimage — regardless of the final teams — that is as much about camaraderie and unity as it is about cheering for the nation's finest college athletes.

Hosting the women's Final Four, jokingly referred to as the lesbian Super Bowl, stirs mixed feelings among those in the local lesbian community. Some would rather de-emphasize the tournament's historically strong ties to the lesbian community. Others wonder whether Tampa is worthy of hosting the event, and reaping the financial windfall, after the Hillsborough County Commission voted in 2005 to ban the acknowledgement of gay pride events in county buildings.

"We are trying to rebuild Tampa's reputation," said Lynn Hallmark, who runs a local social and sports club for lesbians and who helped organize the FanAtic Four party tonight at the Rare Olive bar in Ybor City. "We don't want to be seen as a backwater, homophobic, hillbilly little town."

For party information, go to: [funwomenatplay.com](http://funwomenatplay.com).

Reporter Baird Helgeson can be reached at (813) 259-7668 or [bhelgeson@tampatrib.com](mailto:bhelgeson@tampatrib.com).

---