

Another international soccer match coming to M&T Stadium

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Chelsea fans cheer on their team before the start of last summer's game at M&T Bank Stadium against AC Milan.

ANNAPOLIS — Baltimore's M&T Bank Stadium has landed another multimillion dollar revenue-generating soccer match to be played this July between two high-profile European teams.

The announcement is expected shortly by the Baltimore Ravens, according to the Maryland Stadium Authority, the state agency that leases the stadium to the team.

The event will come one year after Baltimore raised its status in the soccer community by hosting a sold-out exhibition match between England's Chelsea Football Club and Italy's AC Milan. That game generated roughly \$20 million in economic impact and caught the attention of FIFA, the governing body of international soccer.

"The vibe from the game last year was this is the place to play a match," said Terry Hasseltine, the state's director of sports marketing.

While he said he could not reveal the teams that will play here in Baltimore on July 25, Hasseltine said the teams will be of the same caliber as last year.

"The teams involved, it'll be a no-brainer ticket purchase," he said.

A spokesman for the Ravens said the team is in the end stages of negotiating for the game but was not ready to reveal who would be playing.

Michael Frenz, executive director of the stadium authority, said both teams would be staying for about a week in the Baltimore area and would use the Ravens' facility in Owings Mills for their practice.

The match would be an exhibition game and the players' first match after many of them return from the FIFA World Cup in South Africa this June.

The event is the latest coup for M&T Bank Stadium, which recently secured the Navy-Ohio State football season opener in 2014 and is hosting Maryland vs. Navy this Labor Day weekend. Not only do games like that generate millions in spending, but the city and state also benefit from ticket sales tax revenue.

The stadium is also hosting the "Day of Rivals" lacrosse doubleheader featuring the Johns Hopkins University against the University of Maryland and Army vs. Navy this April, and the NCAA Men's Lacrosse Final Four this May.

The last time Baltimore hosted the lacrosse final four was in 2007, when it set a single-day tournament attendance record of 51,719 for the semifinals match and generated an estimated \$15 million in economic impact over the three days.

Frenz said he expects Baltimore to draw more than 59,000 for the event this year.

