

Buffalo fine tuning for '86 Empire games

BUFFALO (AP) — The nation's largest gathering of amateur athletes generated almost \$4 million for Buffalo and planners are already working to fine-tune the 1986 Empire State Games' production, officials said Monday.

With attendance for the 24-sport games put at 172,800 people during their eighth annual five-day run in August, the games' first Buffalo version tripled the best attendance figures the games had in Syracuse, officials said.

The games brought an estimated \$4 million into the Buffalo region's depressed economy, said Mike Shaw, publicity director for the games for the Buffalo Area Chamber of Commerce.

The money — exclusive of what New York state paid to fund the games — came from 6,000 athletes and nearly 30,000 people who came to Buffalo just for the games. The money was spent in hotels, restaurants, movie theaters and stores, Shaw said.

Before the 1985 games, civic organizers had projected attendance of nearly 200,000 people providing an economic impact of \$1 million a day.

Herbert Mols, one of the games' original organizers and a veteran amateur athletics official, said he is concerned that an emphasis on making money is intruding on the aim of the competition.

"The question is raised," about making money through adequate attendance. "Is this the criteria we're looking for? I say no, that's not the idea at all."

The games, which began in 1978 and before this year were held in Syracuse, attract athletes from all over the state — divided into six regional teams — who qualify from among 75,000 who try out.

"We really put on contests and if nobody shows up (to watch) that's fine, we do it for the athletes," said Mols, of Clarence.

Most observers credited Buffalo organizers with providing enthusiastic volunteers and adequate sites for competition.