

VSIN PRO

MARCH MANIA

BETTING GUIDE

PRO EDITION

BRACKETS & BEST BETS

FOR THE COLLEGE BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

OUR PRO GUIDE INCLUDES

- FIRST-ROUND GAME PREVIEWS
- BRACKETS FROM VSIN HOSTS AND EXPERTS
- NCAA TOURNAMENT BETTING TRENDS

VSIN

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Steve Makinen's Strength Ratings Explained

Throughout this publication you will find references to four sets of Strength Ratings. Here is an explanation of each.

- The Power Ratings (PR) are my own manually adjusted ratings updated after every game based upon analysis of live action and box scores.
- The Effective Strength Ratings (EffStr) are purely statistical ratings, using the teams' key stats against schedule strength and their previous opponents' averages. These are also adjusted for any key injuries the team had endured or faced against.
- The Bettor's Ratings (BtrRtg) are a quantified interpretation of how bettors perceive teams based upon how lines of recent games have moved and closed. The smaller number reflects a better rating.
- The Momentum Rating takes into account specifically a team's performance over its most recent games.

ABBREVIATIONS USED WITHIN THE GUIDE

APG or AST – Assists Per Game ... Asst/TO Ratio – Assit-to-Turnover Ratio ... ATS – Against the Spread ... Defensive FG% – Defensive Field Goal Percentage
Defensive TO% – Offensive Turnover Percentage ... Eff Def PPP – Efficiency Defense Points Per Possession ... Eff Off PPP – Efficiency Offense Points Per Possession
FG% – Field Goal Percentage ... FT% – Free Throw Percentage ... G – Games ... HT – Height ... MPG – Minutes Per Game
Offensive FG% – Offensive Field Goal Percentage ... Offensive 3PT% – Offensive Three-Point Shot Percentage ... Offensive TO% – Offensive Turnover Percentage
OV – Over ... Pos – Position ... PPG or PTS – Points Per Game ... RPG or REB – Rebounds Per Game ... SU – Straight Up ... UN – Under ... WT – Weight
2P% – Two-Point Shot Percentage ... 2s – Two-Point Shots ... 3P% – Three-Point Shot Percentage ... 3s – Three-Point Shots

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ODDS WITHIN GUIDE ARE AS OF MARCH 18, 2024
AND ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.
FIRST-ROUND MATCHUPS WRITTEN BY
ADAM BURKE

Welcome to the 2024 VSiN Pro March Mania Betting Guide. This is the most exciting time of the year and also one of the best times of the year to be a VSiN Pro subscriber. The Guide is going to be an excellent resource for you this week, but stay tuned at VSiN.com, where we will have previews and analysis for every single NCAA Tournament game, plus bets on the March Madness action, NIT and CBI.

Here's what you can expect as you read through this Guide:

- First-round previews and analysis from Adam Burke
- Betting trends, Power Ratings brackets, and traits of championship teams from Steve Makinen
- Bracket tips from Josh Appelbaum
- Best bets and Final Four predictions from VSiN hosts and experts
- NCAA Tournament brackets from Matt Youmans, Wes Reynolds, Tim Murray, Jonathan Von Tobel, Mitch Moss, Pauly Howard, Brent Musburger, Steve Makinen, and, of course, resident college basketball expert Greg "Hoops" Peterson

A special shout-out goes out to Zachary Cohen, my right-hand man and Senior Editor at VSiN.com, for helping to construct all of the game previews for the first round and a preemptive thanks for helping me with all the game previews we'll have going forward.

The March Mania Betting Guide is a major focal point for us, but just the beginning of the coverage that we'll have throughout the NCAA Tournament. Thank you for being with us as a VSiN Pro subscriber and good luck with all your bets. As Uncle Brent always says, "Cashin' tickets is what it's all about!"

Adam Burke
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VSIN EXPERT FINAL FOUR

BEST BETS

GREG PETERSON

Auburn
Houston
Purdue
North Carolina

CHAMPION: HOUSTON

TIM MURRAY

Auburn
Houston
Purdue
Baylor

CHAMPION: HOUSTON

STEVE MAKINEN

UConn
Marquette
Purdue
Arizona

CHAMPION: UCONN

MATT YOUMANS

UConn
Kentucky
Creighton
North Carolina

CHAMPION: NORTH CAROLINA

JONATHAN VON TOBEL

Iowa State
Houston
New Mexico
Tennessee

CHAMPION: IOWA STATE

MATT BROWN

UConn
Kentucky
Arizona
Tennessee

CHAMPION: ARIZONA

ADAM BURKE

UConn
Houston
Gonzaga
Arizona

CHAMPION: ARIZONA

KELLEY BYDLON

UConn
Kentucky
Tennessee
North Carolina

CHAMPION: NORTH CAROLINA

JARED SMITH

UConn
Kentucky
Purdue
Baylor

CHAMPION: UCONN

AARON MOORE

Illinois
Houston
Creighton
North Carolina

CHAMPION: NORTH CAROLINA

ZACHARY COHEN

Auburn
Kentucky
Purdue
Arizona

CHAMPION: ARIZONA

DUSTIN SWEDELSON

Auburn
Houston
Creighton
Baylor

CHAMPION: CREIGHTON

VSIN EXPERT MARCH MANIA

BEST BETS

MATT YOUMANS

MOREHEAD STATE +12 OVER ILLINOIS

Winning the Big Ten tournament has led to a serious NCAA hangover for the past three champions — Illinois lost to No. 8 seed Loyola-Chicago 71-58 in the second round in 2021, Iowa fell to No. 12 Richmond in the 2022 first round, and Purdue suffered a knockout blow from 16-seeded Fairleigh Dickinson last year. This time, the Illini will get a fight from 14th-seeded Morehead State. Senior guard Riley Minix averages 20.8 points and 9.8 rebounds for the Eagles, who have won six straight and rolled through the Ohio Valley Conference tournament.

DRAKE -1 OVER WASHINGTON STATE

Tucker DeVries, a 6-7 guard and the coach's son, averages 21.8 points and is an outstanding all-around player who can rise into a tournament star for 10th-seeded Drake. DeVries scored 25 when the Bulldogs blasted Nevada 72-53 in December, and he averaged 28 points in two victories over Indiana State. While the Missouri Valley is an underrated conference, the Pac-12 was relatively weak this season. Aside from a pair of upsets of Arizona, Washington State does not boast many quality wins, and the Cougars do not have great shooters. It's an advantage for Drake that this game will be played in Omaha, Nebraska.

MCNEESE STATE +6 OVER GONZAGA

Two years after Will Wade was fired at LSU, he will coach McNeese State (out of Lake Charles, Louisiana) in the tournament. The Cowboys (30-3) are a legit team boosted by transfers, and the best of them is senior shooting guard Shahada Wells, who transferred from TCU. Wells scored 36 points in a victory over UAB and 30 in a win at Michigan. McNeese is a good 3-point shooting team (38.8%). The Zags were hot until getting cooled off in a loss to Saint Mary's in the West Coast Conference tournament. Gonzaga's lack of depth and shooters are concerns for coach Mark Few.

CLEMSON +2.5 OVER NEW MEXICO

A popular team after winning the Mountain West tournament as the No. 6 seed, New Mexico is being overvalued as the 11th-seeded favorite in this game. The Lobos are volatile, and they are capable of extreme highs and lows due to their reliance on shooting guards Jaelen House and Jamal Mashburn Jr. Clemson's stock is low after its poor showing in the ACC tournament. Still, the Tigers are more physical and should win this game behind big man PJ Hall and guards Joe Girard and Chase Hunter.

UAB +7 OVER SAN DIEGO STATE

Don't expect another Cinderella run for the Aztecs, who will get whipped by UConn again if they can get past this first-round game. In the Mountain West title game, San Diego State was outscored 11-2 in the final 5½ minutes and lost to New Mexico. Jaedon LeDee is a stud, but the Aztecs have no consistent scorers or shooters around him. The Blazers, who bring a five-game win streak into this matchup, get superior guard play from Eric Gaines, Efre Johnson and Alejandro Vasquez.

GREG PETERSON

JAMES MADISON +4.5 VS WISCONSIN

The Wisconsin offense takes a dip away from the Kohl Center, scoring 9.7 points fewer per 100 possessions when away from home compared to playing in Madison. They have to try to bust through a James Madison team that is in the top 20 nationally in both points scored and points allowed on a per possession basis. The only other schools that can say that are Connecticut, Arizona, and Auburn.

AKRON +12.5 VS CREIGHTON

Akron has the nation's leader in rebounds, Enrique Freeman, who will cause issues for a Creighton team that has experienced offensive volatility this season. Creighton has scored 67 points or fewer in regulation in six of their last 12 games in a road or neutral-court environment. They are averaging 18.9 fewer points per 100 possessions in games away from home than at home and have to face a Zips team that is 14th in the nation in opponent 3-point shooting percentage.

OREGON VS. SOUTH CAROLINA PK

Oregon has had difficulty guarding the 3-point arc, ranking 284th in opponent 3-point shooting percentage in games played away from home at 36.3%. While South Carolina does not have one category in which they excel at, they are in the top 100 nationally in rebound rate along with points scored and points allowed on a per possession basis, all categories where Oregon ranks outside of the top 100.

WESTERN KENTUCKY +14 VS MARQUETTE

While Marquette point guard Tyler Kolek should be ready to play after missing each of the Golden Eagles last six games, it is unclear how close to 100 percent he is. Additionally, Marquette is not as good of a rebounding team as Western Kentucky, as Marquette is 283rd in the country in rebound rate while Western Kentucky is 81st in this category. Western Kentucky is also 37th in opponents' 3-point percentage shooting in games played away from home at 31%, while Marquette is 155th in opponent 3-point shooting percentage at 33.6%.

SOUTH DAKOTA STATE VS IOWA STATE OVER 132.5

While the buzz around Iowa State focuses on their defense, which is second in the nation in points allowed per possession, the team is 56th in the country in points scored per possession. South Dakota State is 13th nationally in points scored on a per possession basis away from home. The problem for South Dakota State is that they are 258th in America in points allowed per possession, but should get lots of second chances opportunities on offense, as Iowa State allows teams to rebound 33.8% of their misses in games played away from home, which ranks 344th in road defensive rebound rates.

LONGWOOD +23.5 VS HOUSTON

By sheer amount of possessions, this will be a difficult number for Houston to cover, as they rank 348th out of 362 Division I teams in total possessions per game, while Longwood ranks 271st. Longwood also is one of the few lower seeds in the tournament that can cause concern for Houston on the glass. Longwood is ninth in the nation in percentage of missed shots in games played away from home that result in an offensive rebound at 34.9%. Houston also allows opponents plenty of free throw opportunities as they commit a foul on 26.9% of possessions, which ranks 326th in the nation.

JONATHAN VON TOBEL

OAKLAND +13.5 OVER KENTUCKY

The Golden Grizzlies are a slow, efficient team and I think that is perfect to match up with the Wildcats. Oakland averages 66.7 possessions per game but takes over 40% of their attempts from deep and shoots 35.1% on those shots (36.3% in Horizon League play). It can cut down the possessions of this game with its pace while taking advantage of a suspect defense.

NORTHWESTERN ML +120 OVER FLORIDA ATLANTIC

It's time to push back on the market. Florida Atlantic opened catching points and it is now a 2.5-point favorite, but this is nothing to fear. The market has been too high on the Owls all season long, and it has led to a 16-17 ATS record for the season. Boo Buie is capable of taking over this game for the Wildcats and sending the Foul Owls on the prowl for a bus back home.

MARQUETTE -14 OVER WESTERN KENTUCKY

Does the market not think Tyler Kolek is playing? Every indication is that the Golden Eagles' second-leading scorer is going to play, but this number is steadily heading in the Hilltoppers' direction. I'll take my chances and lay a number that opened 16.5 on Selection Sunday. Marquette is brilliant at forcing turnovers (21.1%, 21st) and gets a Western Kentucky squad which ranks 266th in the country in offensive turnover rate (18.3%).

UAB +6.5 OVER SAN DIEGO STATE

This is likely going to be one of the most popular plays, but I do not care. The Aztecs are one of the most overrated teams in the field. SDSU is 13-19 ATS on the season, a combined 5-14 ATS away from home in both away and neutral settings and has no offense. The Aztecs were sixth in offensive efficiency in Mountain West play (108.1 offensive rating) and 11th in 3-point shooting (30.4%). SDSU was a team I had circled to play against when the NCAA Tournament began, and I am doing just that.

JARED SMITH

HOUSTON -23 VS. LONGWOOD

I love backing good teams off a bad loss. Houston enters the tourney after getting blasted by 28 in the Big 12 final against Iowa State. That's bad news for Longwood, who might be in for a long night. Historically speaking, teams coming off a 20+ point loss are 23-10 ATS in their NCAA Tournament opener, and I expect this number to keep climbing before tip-off Friday night in Memphis. Longwood is a nice story out of the Big South, but they played their best game of the season upsetting UNC Asheville in the final and I don't think they have the chops to run with the Cougars. I feel strongly about playing Houston in the 1st half as well.

CLEMSON +2.5 VS. NEW MEXICO

All I've heard since the bracket dropped is how the Mountain West is under-seeded. My counter to that argument is the conference's track record in the tourney, a putrid 23-46-2 ATS over the last two decades, which includes San Diego State's 4-2 ATS (5-1 SU) run last year. Clemson is well-rested after getting bounced in their ACC Tourney opener by 21 to lowly Boston College, however teams entering off a blowout loss of 20+ are 23-10 ATS in their opening tournament game. Matchup-wise, I don't think Clemson will have an issue running with the Lobos. They won a 73-possession game earlier this season over UNC in Chapel Hill.

TEXAS TECH -5 VS NC STATE

What a run by the Wolfpack winning five games in five days to steal a bid in the ACC, but it's fair to doubt how much they have left in the tank. Texas Tech is coming off a hellacious blowout at the hands of Houston, and teams entering off a loss of 20+ are 23-10 ATS in their opening tournament game. I'm fairly certain NC State will be a trendy underdog pick this week considering the narrative, which makes them an even easier team to fade, especially when you consider their horrific defensive numbers down the stretch. On the other hand, Tech boasts a top-25 defense since Feb. 10th according to Bart Torvik and I trust head coach Grant McCasland, who won the NIT with North Texas last year.

MATT BROWN

DRAKE -1.5 VS. WASHINGTON STATE

Drake opened as a short dog and the betting market quickly flipped the line to Washington State as a short dog. Good job everyone, I think this is the right move.

When tournament time rolls around, if it's not a team full of superstars, I like older teams. Teams with guys that have been around the block. Of the five guys averaging the most minutes per game for the Bulldogs, four of them include a redshirt sophomore, two juniors, and a grad student. Two of the key bench contributors include a redshirt junior and a senior. Lots of 'old guys' contributing here.

But make no mistake, the team isn't all role players. Tucker DeVries is a fantastic player that averages 22/7/4 on the season and hasn't scored fewer than 17 points in a game since mid-January.

We're not getting points anymore, but I'll still lay the short number with Drake to advance.

ADAM BURKE

SOUTH DAKOTA STATE/IOWA STATE UNDER 134

South Dakota State and Iowa State play in Omaha in first round action on Thursday in a game with some serious blowout potential. The Cyclones bring one of the best defenses in the nation into the NCAA Tournament and South Dakota State is likely to have a tough time keeping up.

But, my interest here is in the Under. It is risky because these two teams force opponents into a lot of 3-point shots, but we've got an unfamiliar shooting backdrop and two defenses that keep the opposition away from the rim. Iowa State's shot share against on Close Twos of 23.8% was the lowest in the nation by far. South Dakota State's was the fourth-lowest at 27.7%.

That means I don't see a whole lot of bunnies in this one. Iowa State ranked in the top 50 in both 2P% and 3P% and no teams in the Summit League play defense remotely close to that, so I don't anticipate a whole lot of offense from the Jackrabbits.

The other thing here is that Iowa State is on the road. Over their 18 home games, they won them all and shot 38.1% from 3 and 52.8% on 2s. Against Big 12 foes, they shot 33.1% from 3 and 47.6% on 2s at home, but still went 9-0. In road/neutral games, they shot 31.1% from 3 and 50.5% on 2s. Obviously SDSU is not a Big 12-caliber team, but the Cyclones played a weak non-conference slate at home and padded their offensive numbers. As a result, I'm looking Under here.

TCU -3.5 VS. UTAH STATE

There are a lot of things working in TCU's favor in this game. While I greatly respect Utah State and head coach Danny Sprinkle, who is going places in a hurry, the Aggies just got a bad matchup in this one. The Horned Frogs play a fast, long, in-your-face defense, as they had a 20.8% TO% during the season. The difference between conferences is huge to me in this one as well.

The Big 12 is a much more physical league than the Mountain West and that's the type of game that TCU wants to play. They were a top-20 offensive rebounding team per Bart Torvik. They also posted a shot share on Close Twos of 42.3%, which was the second-highest in the Big 12, trailing only Oklahoma. New Mexico was the highest-rated team in shot share on Close Twos in the Mountain West and had 1.259 and 1.158 points per possession against the Aggies in two games.

Utah State was actually second in the MWC in shot share on Close Twos, so I could see this being a high-scoring game as well, but I think their presence in the conference had a lot to do with that. I also feel like Utah State's rebounding stats are skewed. The Mountain West was 24th in ORB% per Torvik, while the Big 12 was third. Lastly, Utah State allowed opponents to shoot over 53% on 2s. TCU can shoot 3s and shot 35.6% on them, but over 70% of their shot attempts were 2s. Jamie Dixon's crew just matches up well here.

AKRON +12.5 VS. CREIGHTON

The Bluejays went on a nice NCAA Tournament run last season, but it has been a struggle in past years. I'm always concerned about teams that take a lot of jumpers going out to play in neutral settings and that's the case again here for Creighton. While I will grant that this year's team is one of Greg McDermott's best on the defensive end, the Zips are a formidable team in their own right.

The battle between Enrique Freeman and Ryan Kalkbrenner is a really fun one down low and should steal the show. But, these two teams both like to take a lot of 3s. Akron's shot selection in the MAC Tournament was honestly a little concerning, but that was a rivalry game with a trip to the NCAA Tournament on the line. They're playing with some house money in this one.

Creighton likes to funnel teams into the mid-range, which I generally don't like, but that has been a good shot choice for the Zips this season. I also like that their occasional carelessness with the basketball shouldn't be as much of an issue here, as the Bluejays have the lowest TO% in the nation on defense.

If Creighton shoots the lights out in a game that will likely be played to 65 or 66 possessions, they're going to win running away. However, they shot over 36% from 3 for the season and only shot 33.7% from deep in road and neutral settings, where they went 9-7.

I think it's tough to run and hide in a game played at the expected tempo here with a Creighton team that takes a lot of long jumpers. I also expect Akron and the AK Rowdies to show up well in Pittsburgh to give the team a bit of a boost.

ZACHARY COHEN

MOREHEAD STATE +12 VS. ILLINOIS

Illinois just won the Big Ten tournament, so this is a team that a lot of people will be high on. But the Fighting Illini struggled defensively for most of the season. Illinois barely cracked the top 100 in adjusted defensive efficiency for both KenPom and Bart Torvik. And while the Illini are a top-10 team offensively, you never know when shooters will go cold. Illinois also happens to be playing a tough team in the first round.

This season, Morehead State is the ninth-ranked team in the nation in EFGD%. And the Eagles are 32nd in the nation when it comes to 3PT%D. With that in mind, they should be able to keep the Illini from busting the game open. Illinois will have a hard time winning by double digits if relying on 2s.

The Eagles also happen to be the type of team that can give the Illini's mediocre defense issues. Riley Minix is an explosive scorer that had 19 points against Alabama and 18 points against Purdue earlier in the year. He's capable of balling out against high-major competition, and the Eagles have several other players that can score the basketball.

Look for Morehead State to hang around for most of this game, and don't be shocked if this team has a chance to win it late.

SAMFORD +8 VS. KANSAS

Kansas is really limping heading into the tournament. Both Kevin McCullar and Hunter Dickinson were dealing with injuries late in the year. It's likely that both of them will be out there for the Jayhawks, but will they be 100%? I have my doubts. On top of that, Samford is one of the most dangerous mid-majors in the tournament.

The Bulldogs were a top-10 team in college basketball in both EFG% and 3PT%. They also really like the run-and-gun offensive approach, as they were 12th in the nation in adjusted tempo. This just feels like the type of tournament team you want to be on, as they have legitimate firepower and will feel like they belong on this stage. Combining that with a Kansas team that enters the tournament with no momentum makes for a recipe for success.

Keep an eye on Achor Achor in this game, as the Samford forward might be the most impactful player on the court. Also, your eyes aren't deceiving you if you see Rylan Jones out there for the Bulldogs. The former Utah and Utah State player is still kicking around in the college game, and he brings valuable experience, along with good shooting and playmaking, to this hungry Samford squad.

This is another game in which I'm happy to take the points, and I also think the 'dog is quite live.

CHARLESTON/ALABAMA OVER 172.5

I'm generally pretty worried about playing Overs early in the tournament. The neutral-court setting and new atmosphere can be difficult on players. But I have a hard time thinking this will be anything but a shootout.

Alabama played at the 13th-fastest pace in all of college basketball this year and the Tide were fourth in the nation in adjusted offensive efficiency, according to Bart Torvik. Meanwhile, they were something of a nightmare defensively, finishing outside the top 100 in defensive efficiency. Charleston's statistical profile is pretty similar. The Cougars were 53rd in the nation in adjusted offensive efficiency and 177th in defensive efficiency, according to Bart Torvik. They were also 53rd in adjusted tempo.

These are just two teams that want to get up and down the floor to try and out-gun opponents. And both of them absolutely launch 3s, with Alabama being 18th in the nation in 3-point rate and Charleston being 16th. That said, defense will be optional in this one. And if you're worried about how high the number is, don't be. The Over is 15-5 when Alabama has a total of 160 or higher this season. The average total points scored in such games is 179.1 points per game.

ARIZONA TO REACH ELITE EIGHT (-110)

I know everybody wants a future with a massive payout, but I don't see any that I like this year. However, I absolutely love Arizona's chances of winning three games. It seems like people are down on the Wildcats this season, as they suffered a shocking loss to Princeton in the first round of last year's tournament and were a little hot and cold throughout the course of this season. But Arizona is seventh in the nation in adjusted offensive efficiency and 12th in the nation in adjusted defensive efficiency. This is a very good basketball team and Tommy Lloyd has a little more lineup versatility this year.

Arizona also happens to have a very favorable draw. One would think last year's embarrassment would be enough to teach this team that it can't overlook Long Beach State in the opening round. From there, you're asking an elite Arizona squad to defeat Dayton or Nevada in the second round, and then it'll likely be Clemson, New Mexico or Baylor after that. And all of those contests will be played on the West Coast. So, which one of those games is supposed to scare me?

AARON MOORE

FIRST HALF UNDER 67.5 DUQUESNE/BYU

This has a number of the variables I am looking for in a first half Under. The opening game of the day is being played in an arena far from both campuses. In this case, it is in Omaha. It is also between two schools with vastly different styles. The Dukes come in as the weaker team and will certainly look to continue their slow pace of play which helped them win the Atlantic 10 tournament. They have the physicality and length to limit BYU's preferred method of launching 3-pointers in bunches. The Cougars, who will go an entire week between games, might need some time to figure out the Duquesne defense before they get into a rhythm.

NEVADA -1 OVER DAYTON

The slow pace Dayton relies on is going to create less room for error against Nevada, who has a healthy Kenan Blackshear and Jarod Lucas to speed up the tempo. Dayton relies on long possessions, getting the ball to big man DaRon Holmes II, and scoring from behind the arc. Nevada can answer that with Nick Davidson's similar length to Holmes and a 3-point defense that keeps opponents to just a 31.2 shooting percentage from deep. Dayton is also flying out west for the first time this season to play in the altitude of Salt Lake City against a team that calls Reno home.

MCNEESE STATE (+125) RACE TO 10 WINNER AGAINST GONZAGA

One of the most exciting bets to make when watching the game in public. Since it is done more for recreational purposes, keep the units low and on the team with a plus next to its name. The Cowboys are going to be a trendy pick so here is another way to take them against the Zags. Will Wade's team relies extensively on the 3-pointer (7th in the KenPom ranking). Shooting it early and often from that range is the best chance it has to pull off the upset.

SOUTH DAKOTA STATE (+210) RACE TO 10 WINNER AGAINST IOWA STATE

Zeke Mayo for the Jackrabbits will be one of the best players on the court. He went 5-of-7 from behind the arc in the Summit League final and will need similar results to keep his team competitive against the Cyclones. This is a good number to use on a team that shoots well above average from behind the arc (36.2%) against a slow methodical offense.

WESTERN KENTUCKY (+185) RACE TO 10 WINNER AGAINST MARQUETTE

This is a bet on the fastest-paced team in the country landing the first few punches. If Marquette's Tyler Kolek does indeed make his return after missing time with an abdominal injury, the Golden Eagles offense may need a handful of possessions to get back into place.

TIM MURRAY

BAYLOR -13.5 VS COLGATE

Colgate has been a regular in the NCAA Tournament for the past five years thanks to their dominance of the Patriot League. However, this year's Raiders squad is quite different. The past four teams to reach the NCAA Tournament ranked 43rd (2023), 78th (2022), 53rd (2021), and 60th (2019) in adjusted offensive efficiency. This year's team ranks 211th. It is hard to envision how Colgate will be able to keep up with Baylor. The Bears enter the NCAA Tournament rated sixth in adjusted offensive efficiency. The two toughest teams Colgate faced this year were Illinois and Arizona. The Raiders lost by 17 and 27, respectively, and I expect a similar outcome against the Bears.

UAB +7 VS SAN DIEGO STATE

After a magical run to the NCAA Championship last year, San Diego State has been a bit overvalued this year. The Aztecs are 13-19 ATS this year and finished with seven losses in the Mountain West Conference and lost to New Mexico in the Mountain West Championship. Since January 13, the Aztecs rate as the 89th nationally in adjusted offensive efficiency per Bart Torvik. UAB ran through the American Athletic Conference Tournament and over their last five games ranks as a top-10 offense in the country. The Blazers will attack the offensive glass all game long and it will be interesting to see if the Aztecs can take advantage of a Blazers' defense that rated 202nd in adjusted defensive efficiency.

DRAKE ML (-130) VS WASHINGTON STATE

Last year, Drake closed as a 2.5-point underdog against fifth-seeded Miami in the first round of the NCAA Tournament. The Bulldogs led by 8 with 5:40 to play but were outscored 17-1 down the stretch and were eliminated by the Hurricanes. Drake's Tucker DeVries was held to a career-low three points and shot just 1-13 from the field in the loss. DeVries won Missouri Valley Conference Player of the Year last season and earned the honor again this year. He's the only player in NCAA Division I to average 20.0 points and 6.5 rebounds with 100 assists, 50 steals and 50 or more 3-point makes. The Bulldogs knocked off Indiana State in a thrilling Missouri Valley Conference Championship game and I do not expect another offensive dud in the first half. Washington State knocked off Arizona twice this season, but seemed to slow down going just 3-3 over its final six games of the year.

MITCH MOSS

HOUSTON 1H -14.5 VS. LONGWOOD

The Cougars pummel really good teams, and now they get to bottle up frustration for a few days after getting smoked in the B12 title game to face a 16 seed. This game could get ugly from the jump.

ALABAMA/CHARLESTON OVER 173.5

Bama has been one of the best Over teams the entire season. They're top 10 in pace and No. 2 on offense, and get to play a Charleston team that is top 60 in both categories. This should be up and down the court.

STEVE MAKINEN

ARIZONA TO WIN WEST REGION +190

I am actually of the belief that losing early in a conference tournament is not a horrible thing for aspiring NCAA tourney title hopefuls. Arizona has the top metric in four of the five strength ratings I have posted for this year's West Region. The Wildcats have speed, athleticism, and size, plus a player capable of garnering tournament MOP honors in Caleb Love if things go well.

GONZAGA TO REACH SWEET 16 +135

This price on No. 5 Gonzaga would seem to have a lot of value with No. 4 Kansas facing both injury and/or rust concerns heading into the opening weekend of the Midwest bracket. Even if the Jayhawks are healthy, I have the Zags with a better power rating, effective strength rating, and a momentum rating of 8.4 points. Kansas has the big name, but Gonzaga is playing better basketball now.

SAINT MARY'S TO MAKE SWEET 16 +180

I am showing the two West Coast teams a lot of love here but I like the spot for both of them. #5 Saint Mary's closed the season on a surge and plays the type of sound disciplined basketball that will transfer even with a week and a half off. The Gaels are the top teams in the West Region in my new Game Grade Forecast rating. Alabama, the No. 4 seed in the region, is trending the opposite direction.

MARQUETTE TO MAKE SWEET 16 -135

This price seems like a steal to me. Marquette has been one of the top teams in the country all season long and plays the type of defensive pressure that could frustrate a high scoring team like Florida in round 2. The Golden Eagles are essentially a year older team than the one that lost last year in round 2, but I don't see that happening here, especially since it sounds like PG Tyler Kolek will be ready to go.

DUSTIN SWEDELSON

MCNEESE STATE +6 VS GONZAGA

This isn't the normal star-studded Gonzaga team we are used to seeing. Will Wade has McNeese State with the best offensive-defensive efficiency ratio in this year's tournament. This time of year, great guards take over and Shahada Wells is the real deal shooting 40.2% from three.

STEVE MAKINEN'S POWER RATINGS BRACKET

EAST REGION

1st Round March 21 & 22		2nd Round March 23 & 23		Sweet 16 March 28 & 29		Elite Eight March 30 & 31	
1	CONNECTICUT 93.7	CONNECTICUT 93.7	CONNECTICUT 93.7	CONNECTICUT 93.7	CONNECTICUT 93.7		
16	STETSON 68.2	FLA ATLANTIC 82.6	FLA ATLANTIC 82.6	AUBURN 91.3	AUBURN 91.3		
8	FLA ATLANTIC 82.6	SAN DIEGO ST 84.2	SAN DIEGO ST 84.2	ILLINOIS 88.8	ILLINOIS 88.8		
9	NORTHWESTERN 81.9	AUBURN 91.3	AUBURN 91.3	IOWA ST 90.3	IOWA ST 90.3		
5	SAN DIEGO ST 84.2	BYU 86.1	BYU 86.1	IOWA ST 90.3	IOWA ST 90.3		
12	UAB 76.1	ILLINOIS 88.8	ILLINOIS 88.8				
4	AUBURN 91.3	WASHINGTON ST 82.4	WASHINGTON ST 82.4				
13	YALE 77.8	IOWA ST 90.3	IOWA ST 90.3				
6	BYU 86.1						
11	DUQUESNE 77.4						
3	ILLINOIS 88.8						
14	MOREHEAD ST 74.8						
7	WASHINGTON ST 82.4						
10	DRAKE 81.1						
2	IOWA ST 90.3						
15	S DAKOTA ST 73.7						



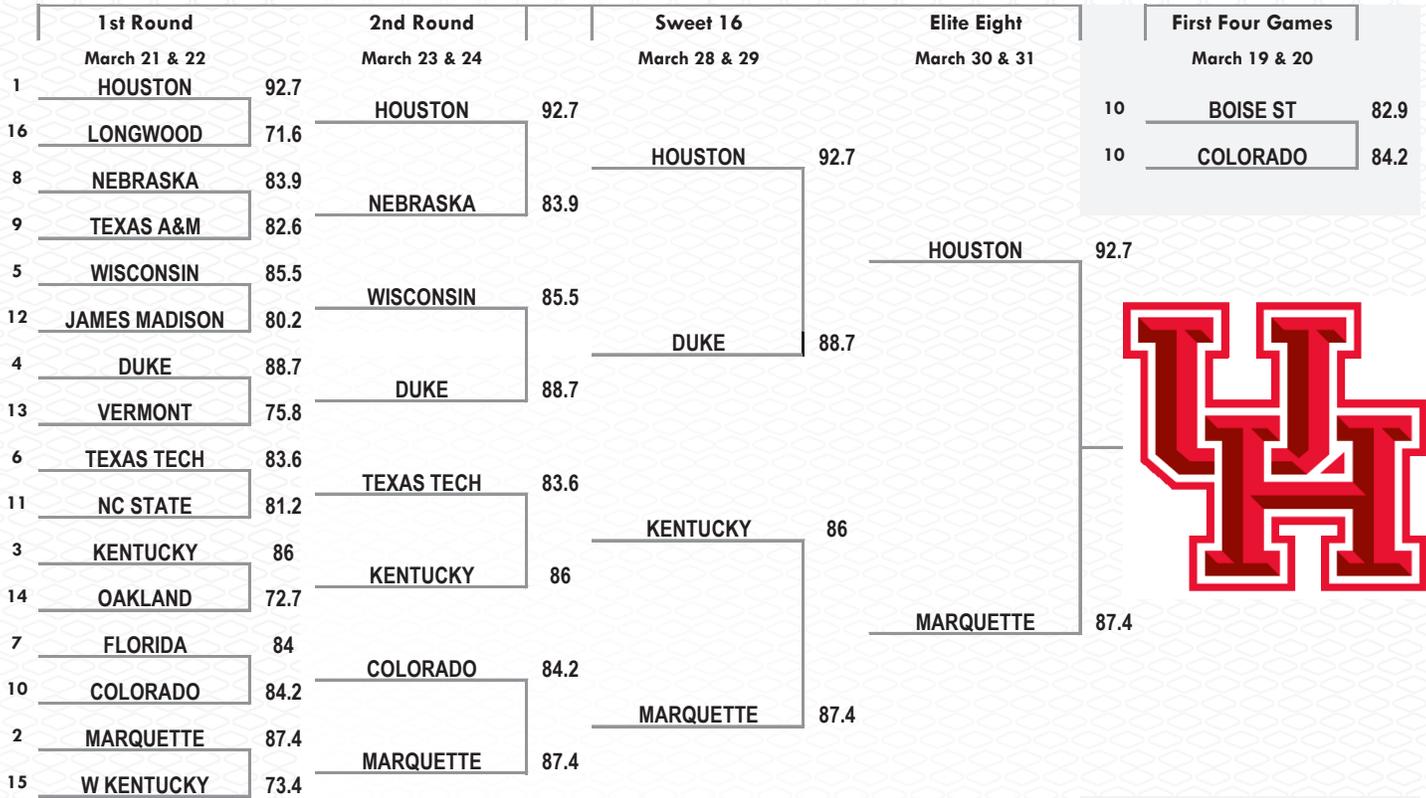
WEST REGION

1st Round March 21 & 22		2nd Round March 23 & 24		Sweet 16 March 28 & 29		Elite Eight March 30 & 31		First Four Games March 19 & 20	
1	N CAROLINA 89.1	N CAROLINA 89.1	N CAROLINA 89.1	N CAROLINA 89.1	N CAROLINA 89.1			16	HOWARD 65.7
16	HOWARD 65.7	MICHIGAN ST 84.1	MICHIGAN ST 84.1	ST MARYS-CA 86.5	ST MARYS-CA 86.5			16	WAGNER 64.5
8	MISSISSIPPI ST 83.1	ALABAMA 86.1	ALABAMA 86.1	ARIZONA 90.2	ARIZONA 90.2				
9	MICHIGAN ST 84.1	NEW MEXICO 85	NEW MEXICO 85	BAYLOR 86.1	BAYLOR 86.1				
5	ST MARYS-CA 86.5	BAYLOR 86.1	BAYLOR 86.1						
12	GRAND CANYON 80.8	NEVADA 82.6	NEVADA 82.6						
4	ALABAMA 86.1	ARIZONA 90.2	ARIZONA 90.2						
13	COLL CHARLESTON 77.5								
6	CLEMSON 82.5								
11	NEW MEXICO 85								
3	BAYLOR 86.1								
14	COLGATE 72.7								
7	DAYTON 81.9								
10	NEVADA 82.6								
2	ARIZONA 90.2								
15	LONG BEACH ST 71.5								

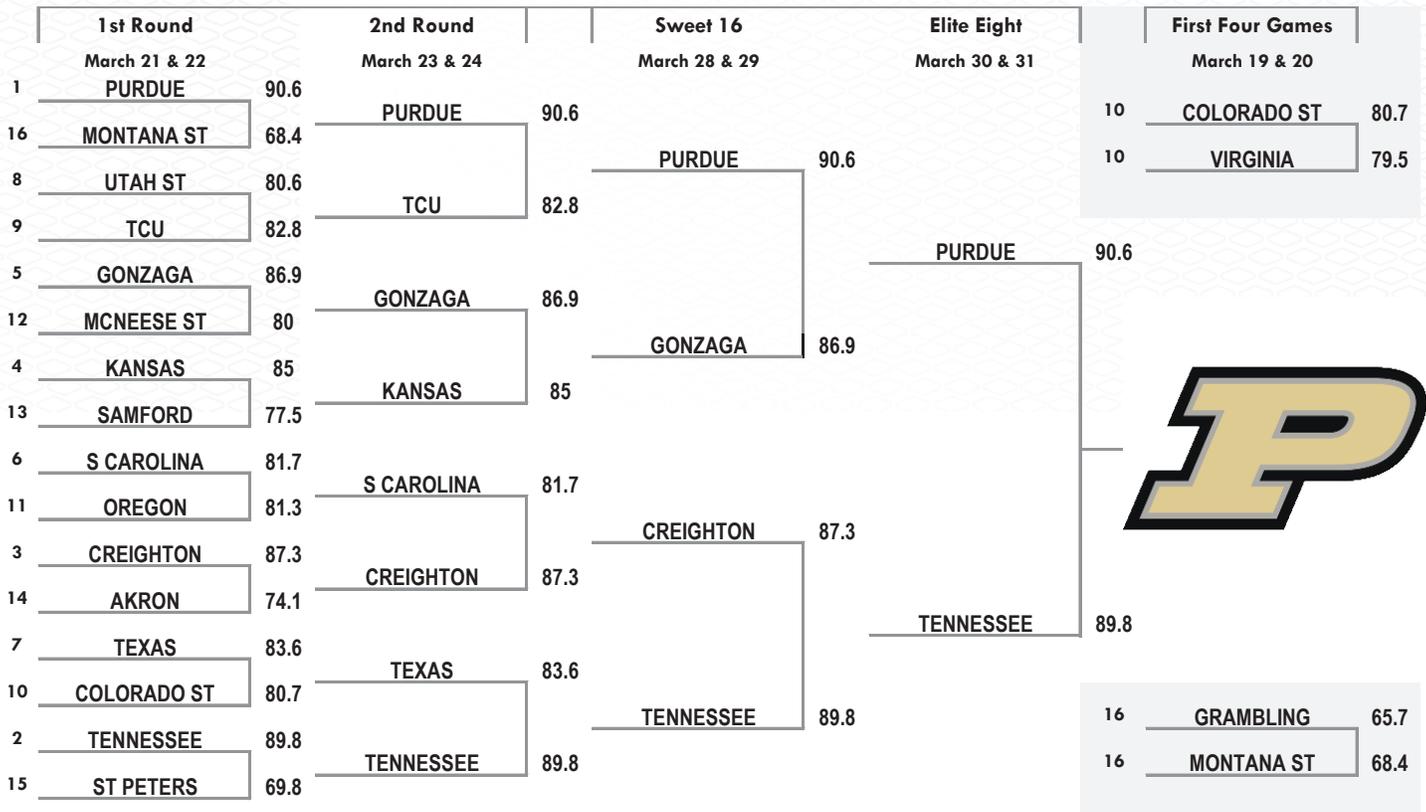


STEVE MAKINEN'S POWER RATINGS BRACKET

SOUTH REGION

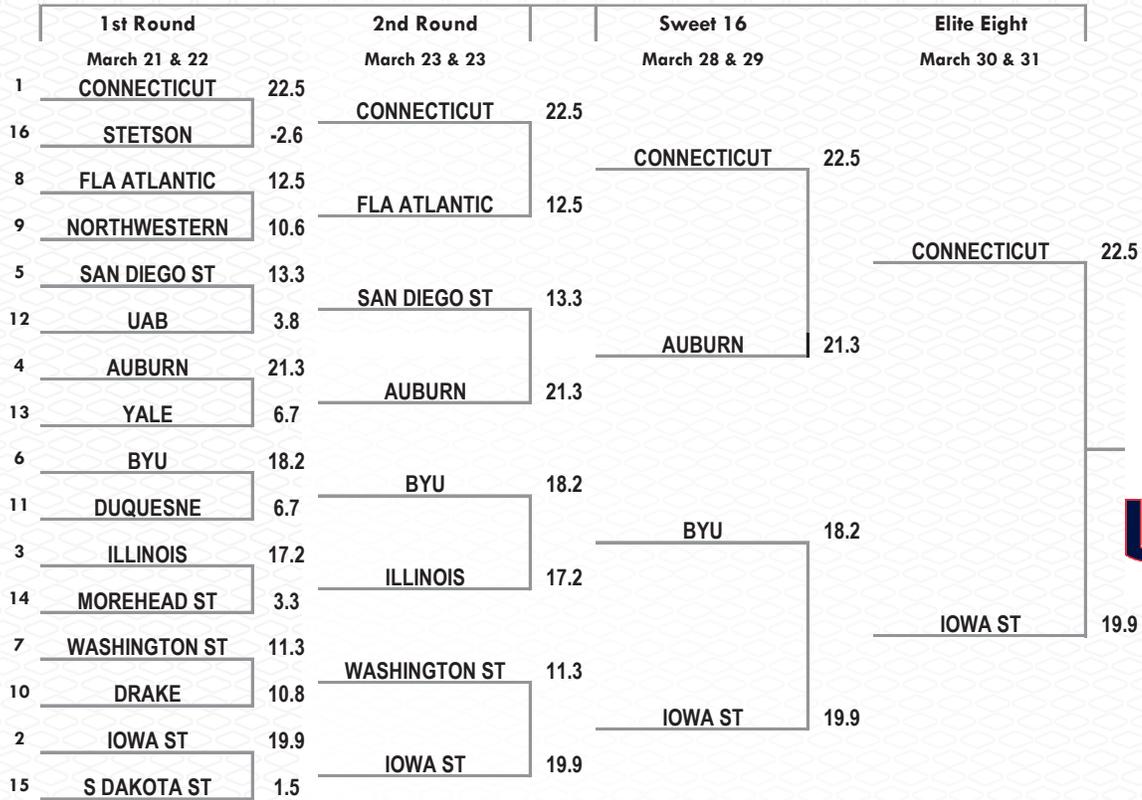


MIDWEST REGION

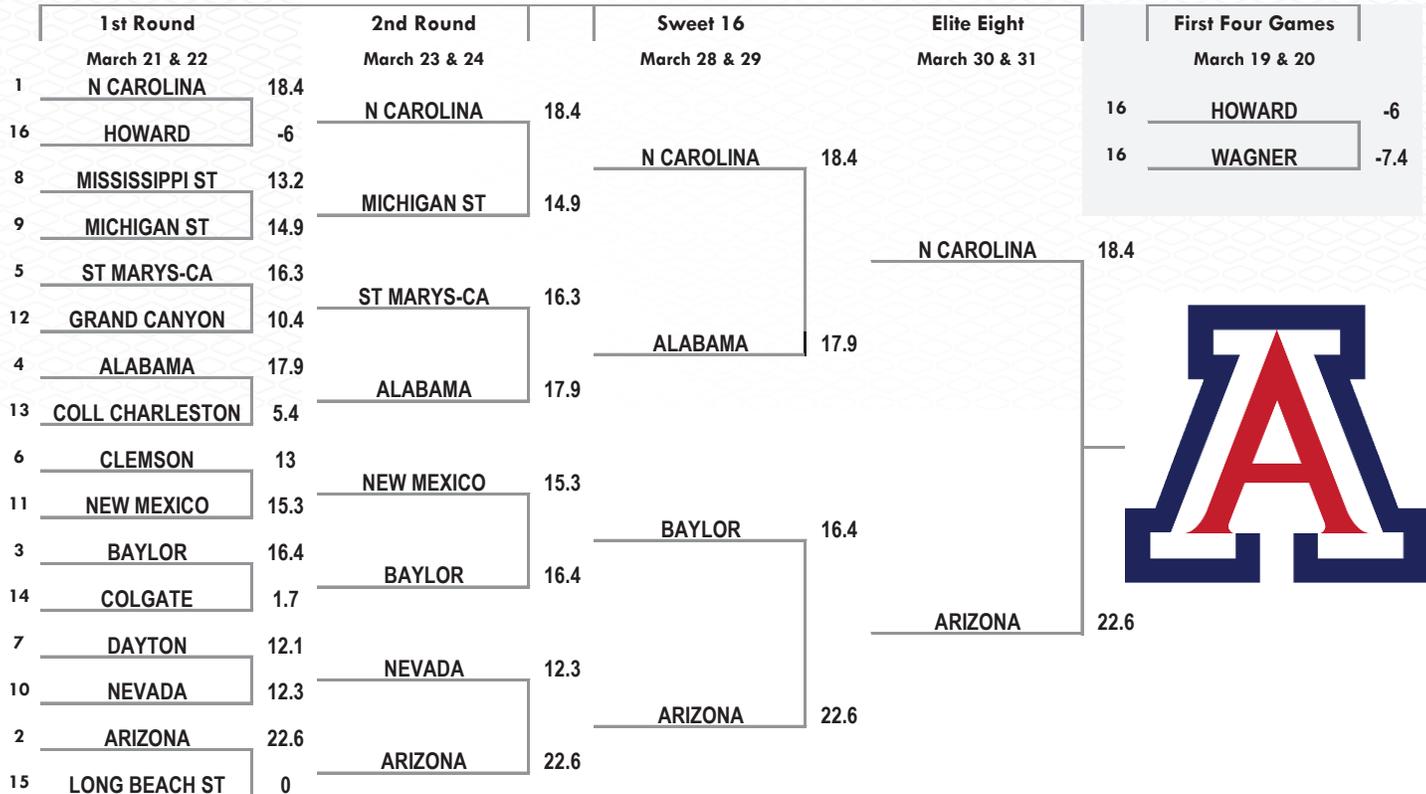


STEVE MAKINEN'S EFFECTIVE STRENGTH BRACKET

EAST REGION

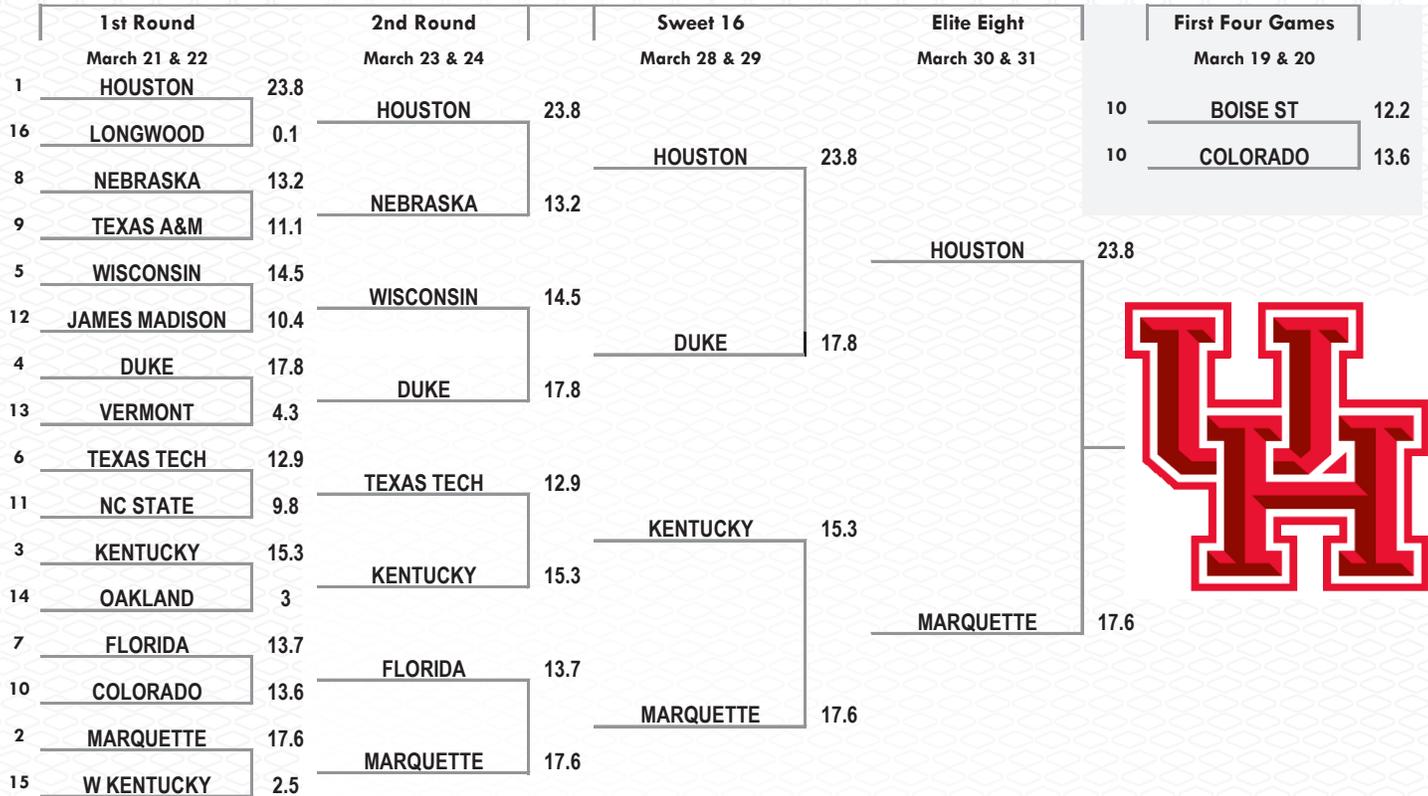


WEST REGION

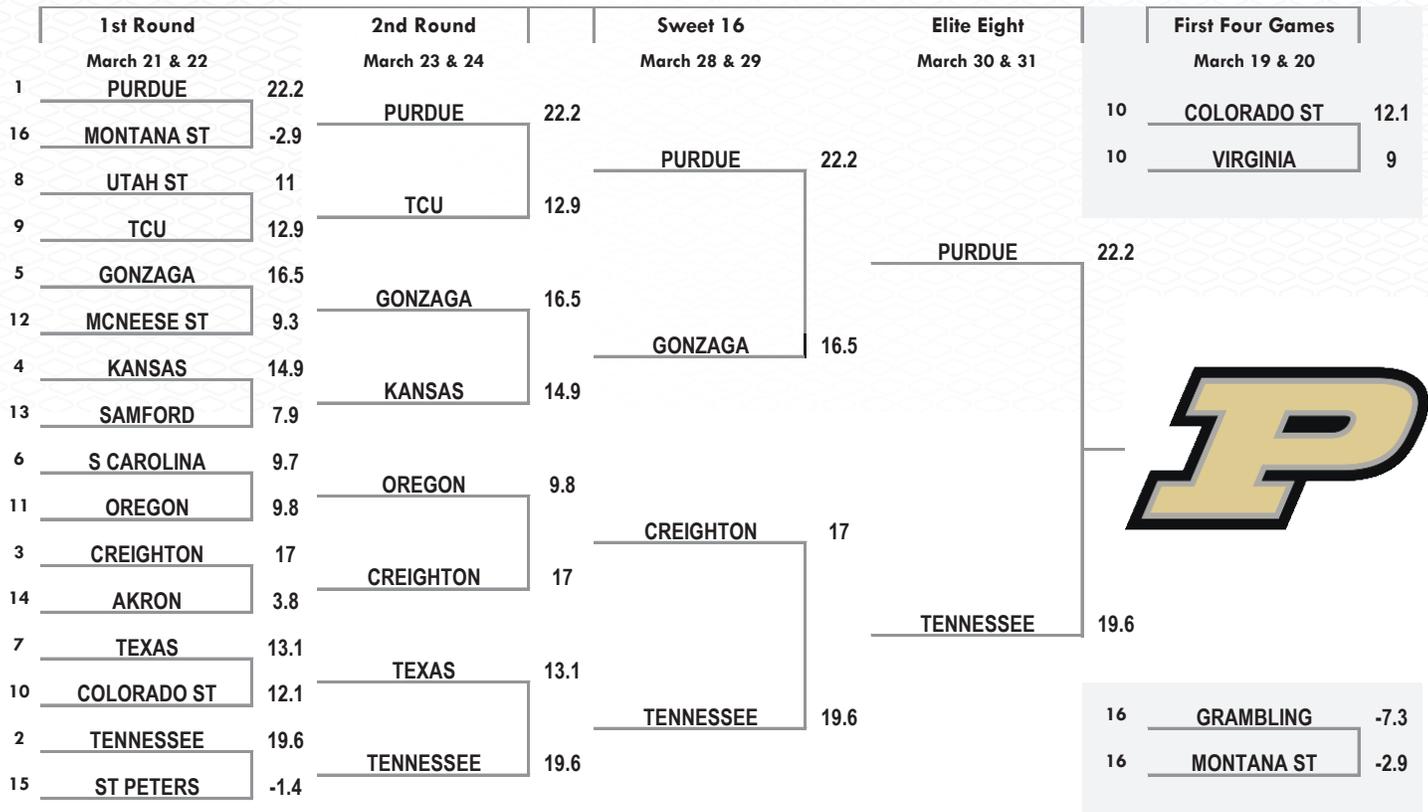


STEVE MAKINEN'S EFFECTIVE STRENGTH BRACKET

SOUTH REGION



MIDWEST REGION



STEVE MAKINEN'S BETTORS RATING BRACKET

EAST REGION

1st Round March 21 & 22		2nd Round March 23 & 23		Sweet 16 March 28 & 29		Elite Eight March 30 & 31	
1	CONNECTICUT -22.9	CONNECTICUT -22.9	CONNECTICUT -22.9	CONNECTICUT -22.9	CONNECTICUT -22.9		
16	STETSON -2.6						
8	FLA ATLANTIC -12.1	FLA ATLANTIC -12.1					
9	NORTHWESTERN -8.4						
5	SAN DIEGO ST -15.2	SAN DIEGO ST -15.2					
12	UAB -6.1						
4	AUBURN -19.1	AUBURN -19.1		AUBURN -19.1			
13	YALE -6.8						
6	BYU -15.9	BYU -15.9					
11	DUQUESNE -5.5						
3	ILLINOIS -15.9	ILLINOIS -15.9		ILLINOIS -15.9			
14	MOREHEAD ST -2.4						
7	WASHINGTON ST -10.4	WASHINGTON ST -10.4					
10	DRAKE -9.2						
2	IOWA ST -17.1	IOWA ST -17.1		IOWA ST -17.1			
15	S DAKOTA ST -9.2						



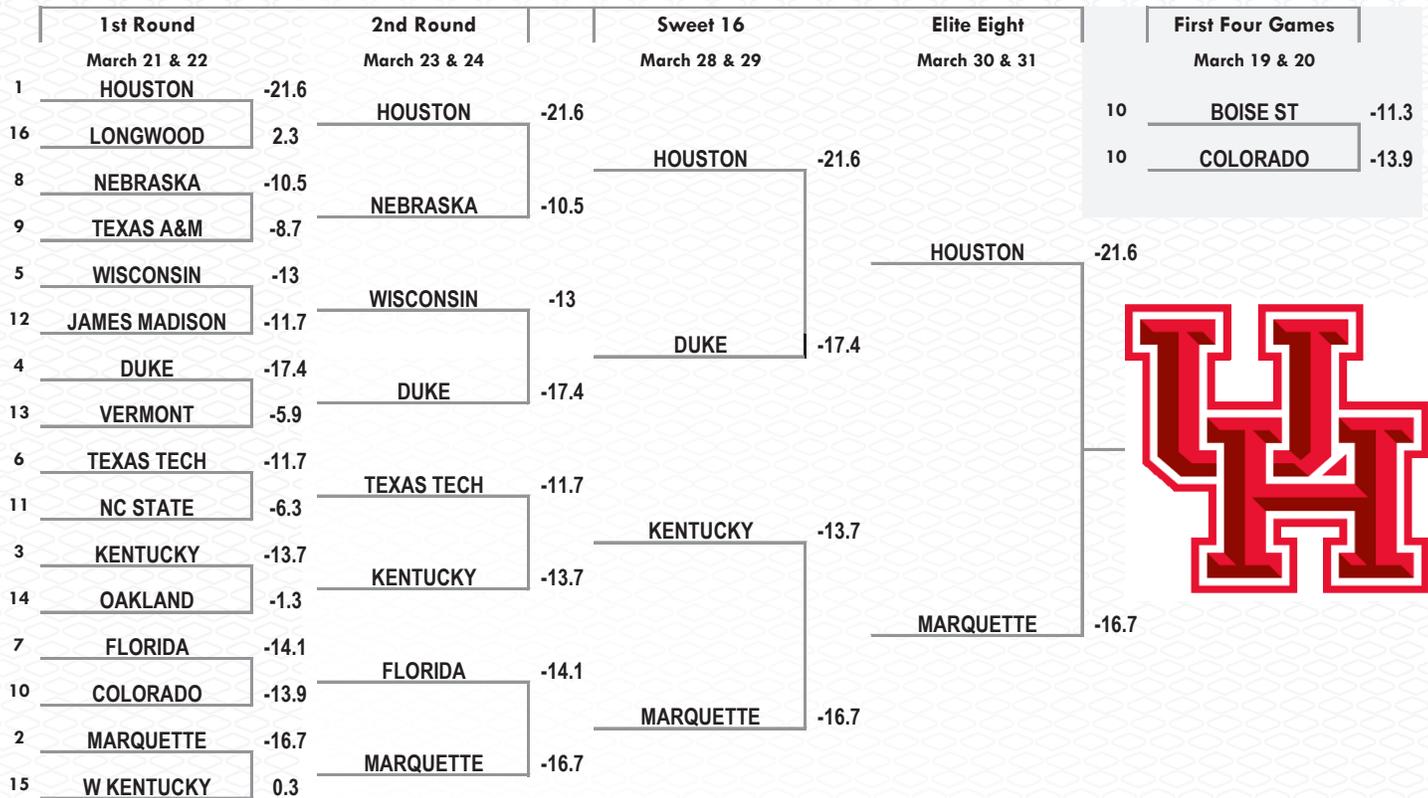
WEST REGION

1st Round March 21 & 22		2nd Round March 23 & 24		Sweet 16 March 28 & 29		Elite Eight March 30 & 31		First Four Games March 19 & 20	
1	N CAROLINA -17.4	N CAROLINA -17.4	N CAROLINA -17.4	N CAROLINA -17.4	N CAROLINA -17.4			16	HOWARD 5.7
16	HOWARD 5.7							16	WAGNER 9
8	MISSISSIPPI ST -11.5	MICHIGAN ST -13.8							
9	MICHIGAN ST -13.8								
5	ST MARYS-CA -13.8	ST MARYS-CA -13.8							
12	GRAND CANYON -8.5								
4	ALABAMA -16.8	ALABAMA -16.8		ALABAMA -16.8					
13	COLL CHARLESTON -6.2								
6	CLEMSON -13.2	CLEMSON -13.2							
11	NEW MEXICO -11.2								
3	BAYLOR -16.8	BAYLOR -16.8		BAYLOR -16.8					
14	COLGATE -0.6								
7	DAYTON -9.9	NEVADA -10							
10	NEVADA -10								
2	ARIZONA -19.7	ARIZONA -19.7		ARIZONA -19.7					
15	LONG BEACH ST 1.2								

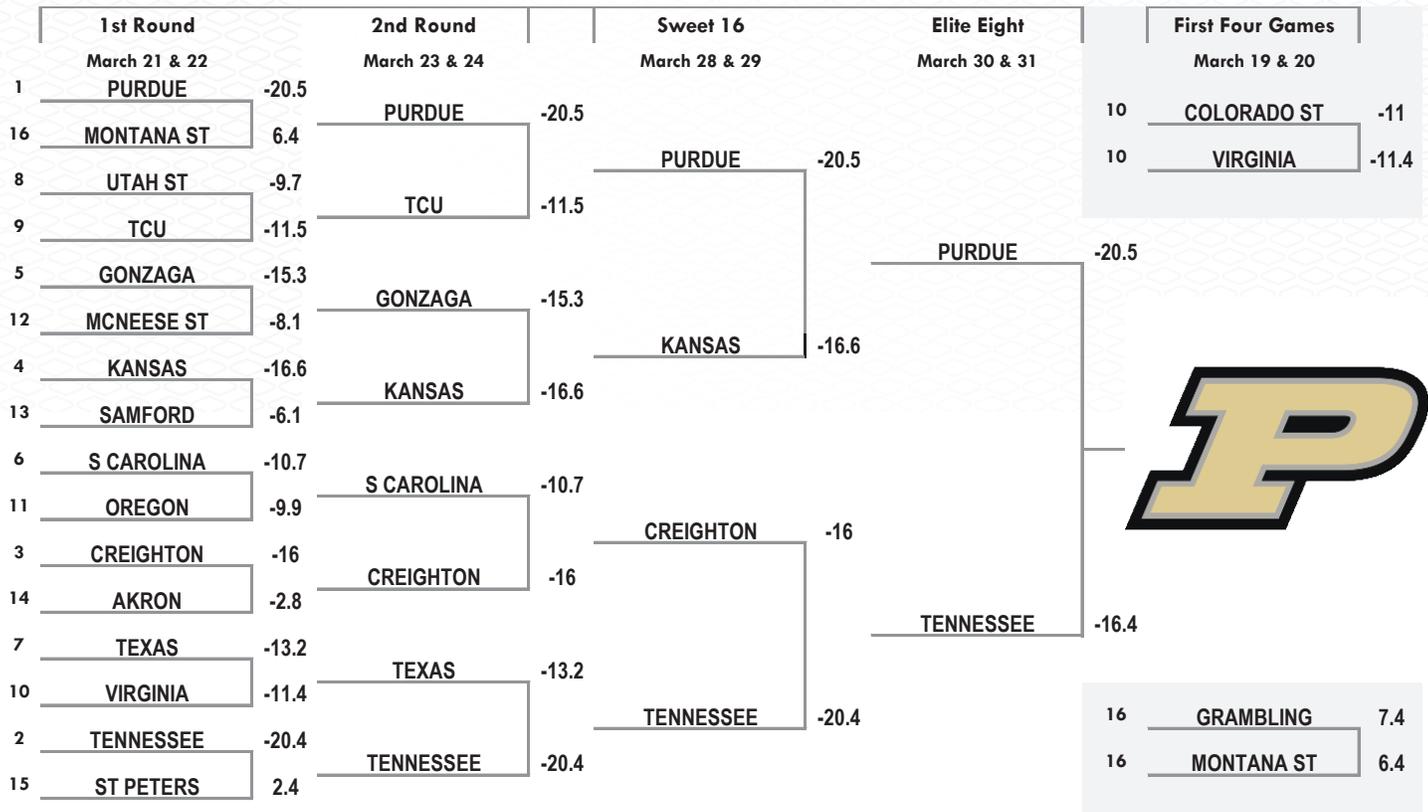


STEVE MAKINEN'S BETTORS RATING BRACKET

SOUTH REGION



MIDWEST REGION



STEVE MAKINEN'S MOMENTUM RATING BRACKET

EAST REGION

1st Round March 21 & 22		2nd Round March 23 & 23		Sweet 16 March 28 & 29		Elite Eight March 30 & 31	
1	CONNECTICUT 27.5	CONNECTICUT 27.5	CONNECTICUT 27.5	CONNECTICUT 27.5	CONNECTICUT 27.5	CONNECTICUT 27.5	
16	STETSON -2.9						
8	FLA ATLANTIC 8.9	NORTHWESTERN 13.8					
9	NORTHWESTERN 13.8						
5	SAN DIEGO ST 14.4	SAN DIEGO ST 14.4					
12	UAB 5.2						
4	AUBURN 22.4	AUBURN 22.4					
13	YALE 7.7						
6	BYU 12.9	BYU 12.9					
11	DUQUESNE 9.1						
3	ILLINOIS 17.8	ILLINOIS 17.8					
14	MOREHEAD ST 2.3						
7	WASHINGTON ST 12.2	WASHINGTON ST 12.2					
10	DRAKE 11.3						
2	IOWA ST 21	IOWA ST 21					
15	S DAKOTA ST 2.9						



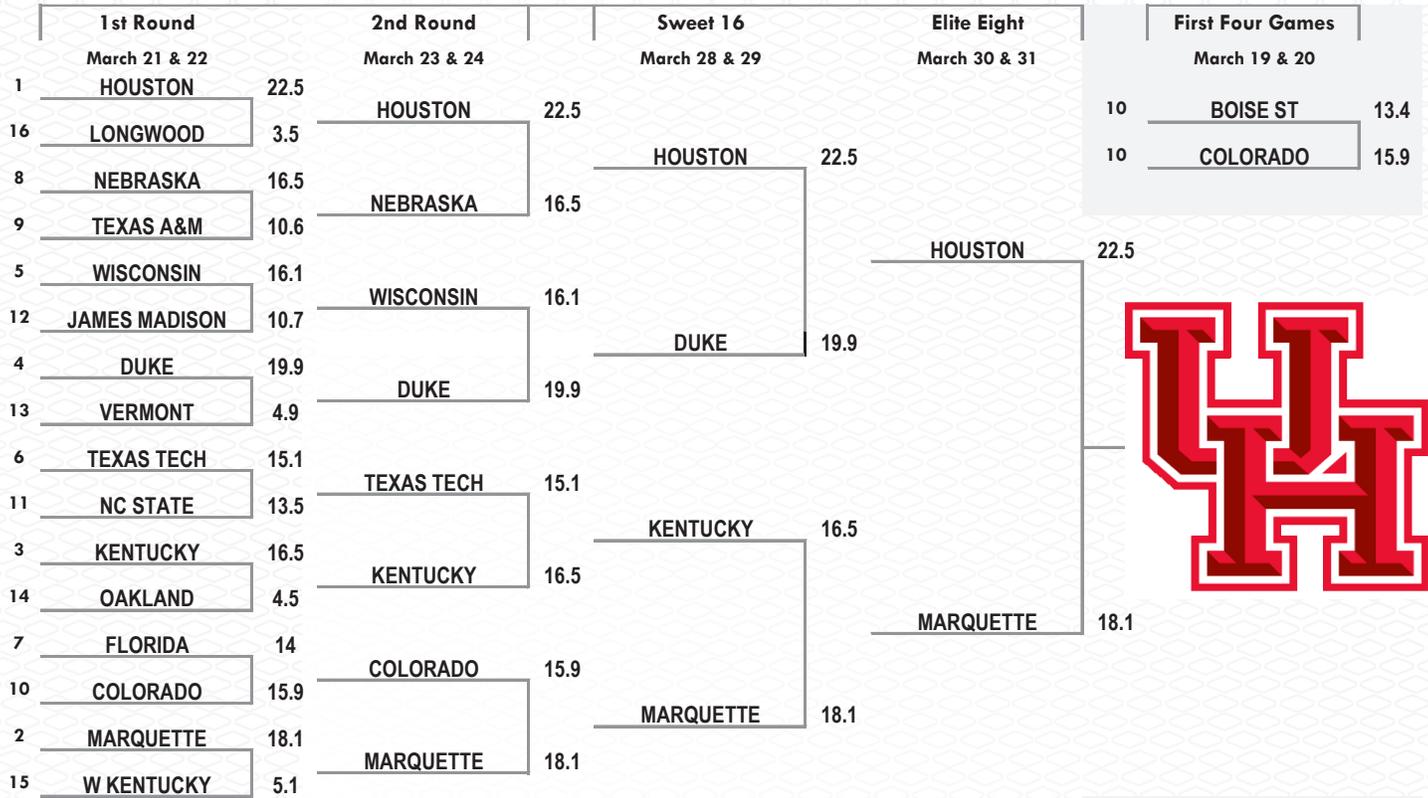
WEST REGION

1st Round March 21 & 22		2nd Round March 23 & 24		Sweet 16 March 28 & 29		Elite Eight March 30 & 31		First Four Games March 19 & 20	
1	N CAROLINA 18.1	N CAROLINA 18.1	N CAROLINA 18.1	N CAROLINA 18.1	N CAROLINA 18.1			16	HOWARD -6
16	HOWARD -6							16	WAGNER -6.7
8	MISSISSIPPI ST 14.3	MISSISSIPPI ST 14.3							
9	MICHIGAN ST 12.7								
5	ST MARYS-CA 20.5	ST MARYS-CA 20.5							
12	GRAND CANYON 10.1								
4	ALABAMA 10.7	ALABAMA 10.7							
13	COLL CHARLESTON 10.6								
6	CLEMSON 11.6								
11	NEW MEXICO 12.6	NEW MEXICO 12.6							
3	BAYLOR 16.1	BAYLOR 16.1							
14	COLGATE 2.2								
7	DAYTON 10.1								
10	NEVADA 13.9	NEVADA 13.9							
2	ARIZONA 21.9	ARIZONA 21.9							
15	LONG BEACH ST 0.6								

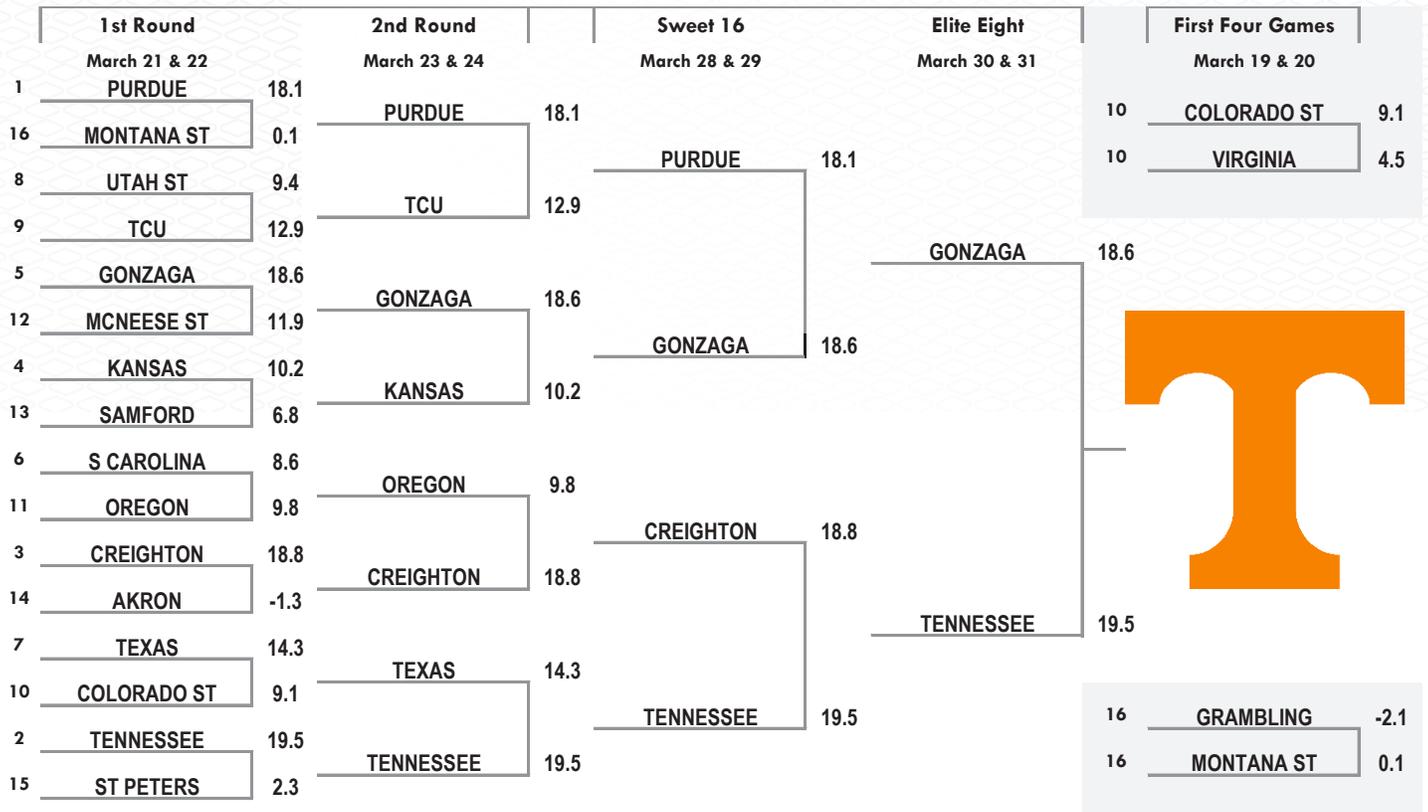


STEVE MAKINEN'S MOMENTUM RATING BRACKET

SOUTH REGION

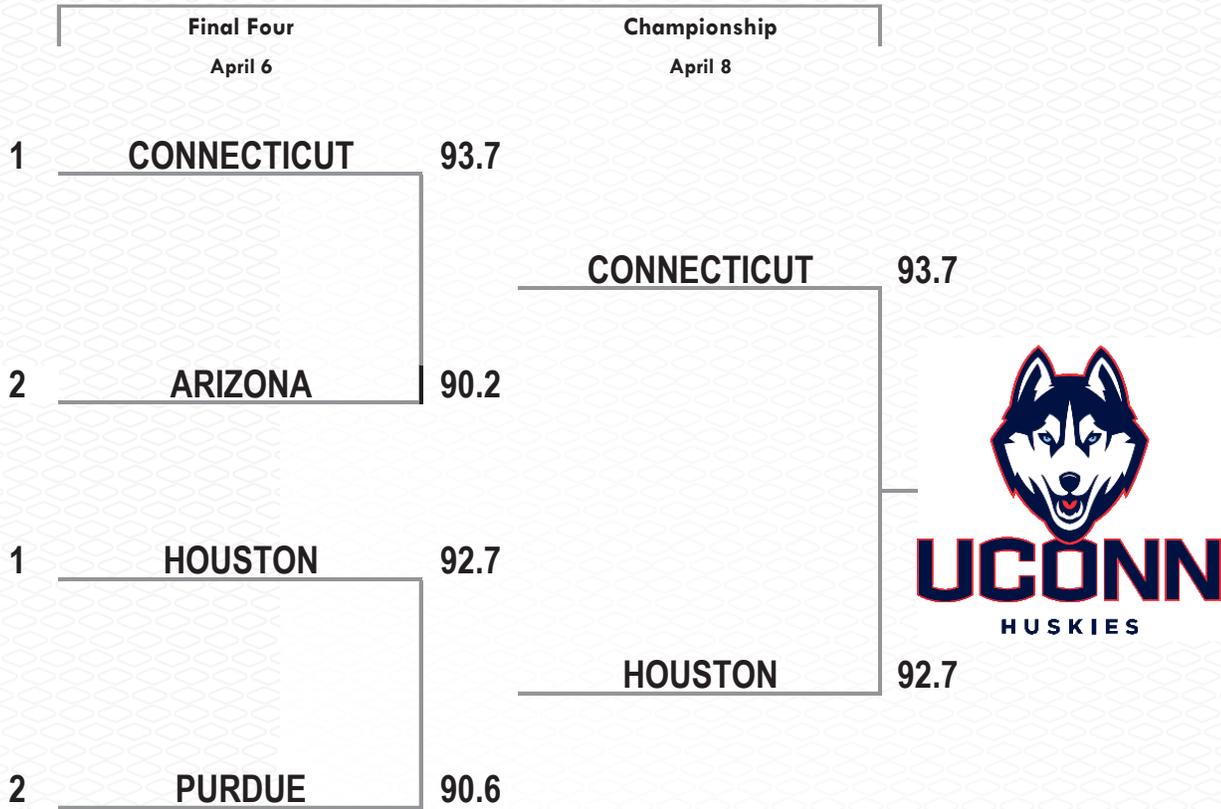


MIDWEST REGION

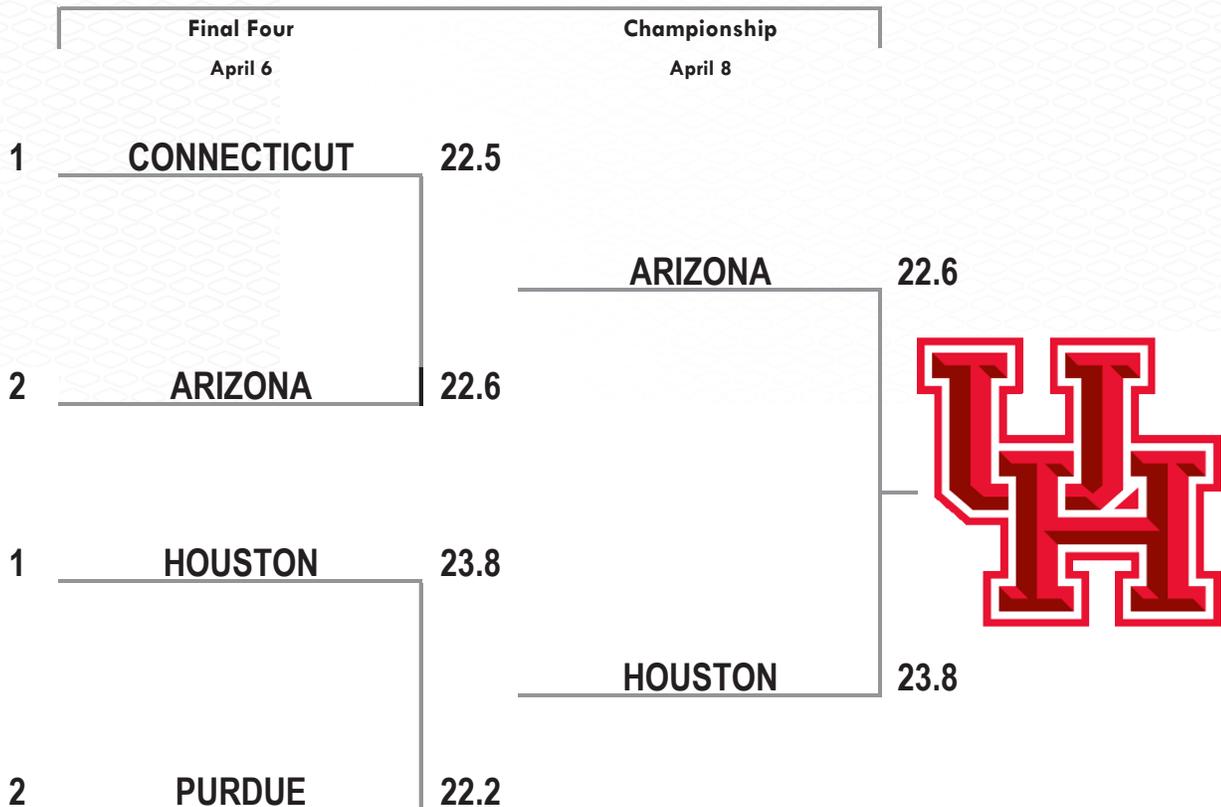


STEVE MAKINEN'S FINAL FOUR RATINGS BRACKET

POWER RATINGS

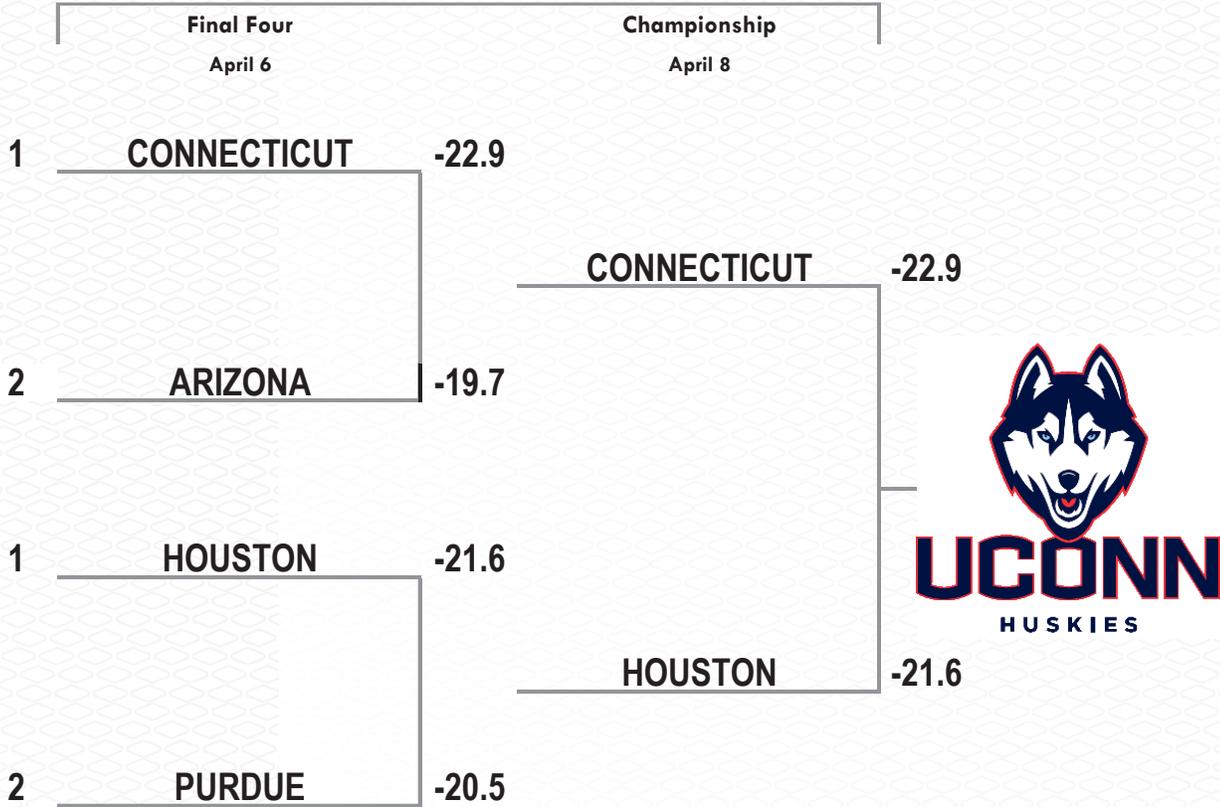


EFFECTIVE STRENGTH RATINGS

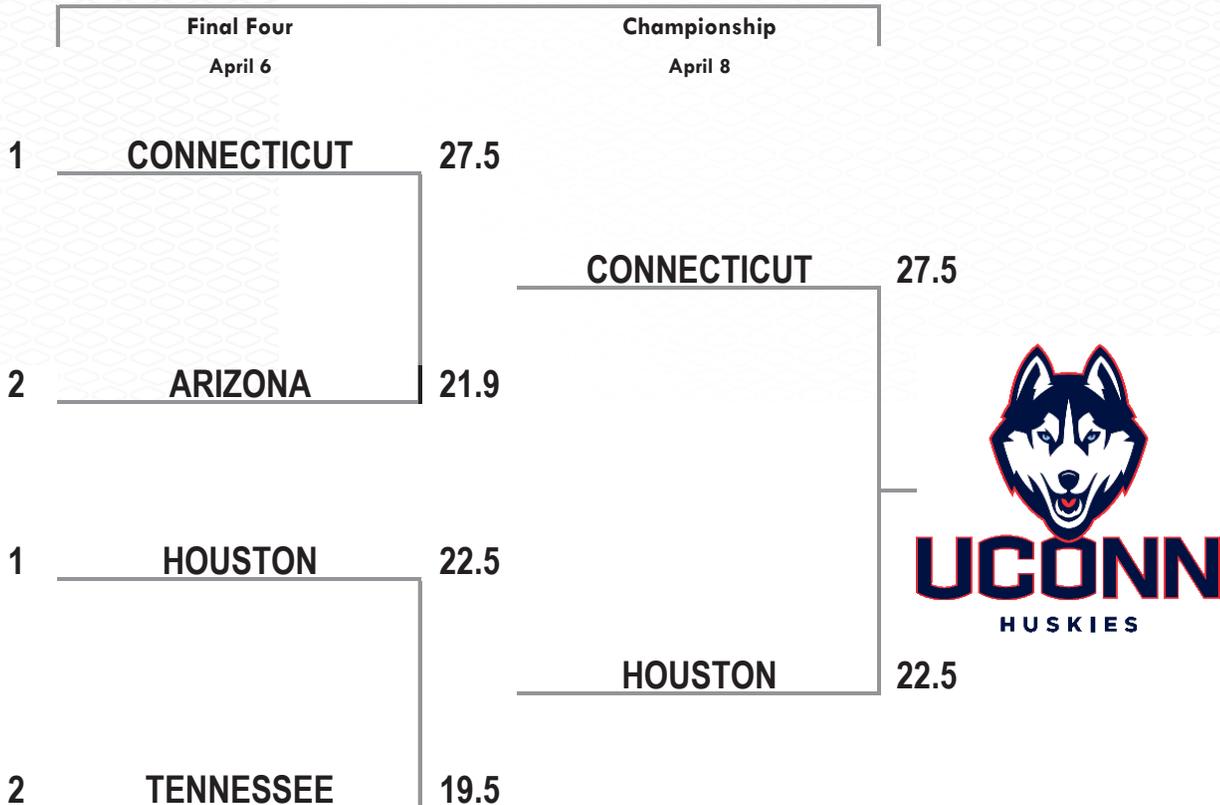


STEVE MAKINEN'S FINAL FOUR RATINGS

BETTORS RATINGS



MOMENTUM RATINGS



SHARED STATISTICAL TRAITS OF TOURNAMENT TEAMS

CHARACTERISTICS OF:

- **UPSET VICTIMS**
- **CINDERELLAS**
- **FINAL 4**
- **CHAMPIONSHIP TEAMS**

by Steve Makinen

Every year, Selection Sunday presents 68 deserving teams the opportunity to begin their quest for college basketball's most prestigious team honor, an NCAA tournament championship. For many teams, it is simply an honor to see their name called when the brackets are revealed, and winning a game or two would only be icing on the cake. For others, however, the goal is a national title or at least a Final Four berth, and nothing shy of that will do. Of course, there are a bunch of teams that will finish somewhere in between the extremes. What separates these teams? Which of this year's teams is best setup to make a title run, or alternatively, most vulnerable to getting eliminated early?

What I will be looking at are the shared statistical characteristics of Upset Victims, Cinderellas, Final Four, and Champion teams dating back to 2013 or the last 10 tournament seasons. To do this, I picked out 12 different key statistical categories and four of my own personal Strength Indicators, plus a Combined Average Ranking, and charted the recent qualifying teams by their performances in these categories. Here they are:

- Steve Makinen's Power Rating
- Opponent Power Rating (Schedule Strength)
- Offensive Points per Game
- Defensive Points per Game
- Steve Makinen's Effective Strength Indicator
- Steve Makinen's Bettors' Rating
- Steve Makinen's Momentum Ratings
- Effective Offensive Points per Possession
- Effective Defensive Points per Possession
- Offensive Field Goal %
- Offensive 3PT Field Goal %
- Rebounding Percentage
- Assist to Turnover Ratio
- Offensive Turnovers per Possession
- Defensive Turnovers per Possession
- Defensive Field Goal %
- Combined Average Ranking

After determining the national season ranks for all the Division 1 teams, I pulled the Upset Victims, Cinderellas, Final Four, and Champion teams from the nine tournaments for special analysis. For each stat category, I look for minimum performance, typical national ranking, and the percentile of teams that qualify within certain ranges. As a final exclamation point on the analysis, I take a Combined National Ranking of the 15 sortable categories to separate the more complete teams from the rest.

To summarize the findings, it was determined that the relationship between my Effective Strength Indicator was the most significant of all the categories analyzed. The average of the last 36 Final Four teams ranked 14.2 in the country in that rating. Among the hard-core statistical categories, Effective Offensive Points per Possession has become the most important, with an average Final Four team ranking of 20.0 over the last 10 tournaments, 2.6 spots higher than the same rating for defense. Interestingly, the least important factor was Defensive Turnovers per Possession, or the ability to force turnovers on defense.

First though, a quick reminder of what happened last season in terms of my analysis using the combined rankings. Despite what was an overall bizarre tournament, particularly beyond the first two rounds, the team atop my Champions Qualification Chart actually won the title, Connecticut. The Huskies had 14 out of a possible 17 marks. In terms of the Final Four qualifiers, of course, UConn was second on that chart, and Florida Atlantic was in the top 15 potential advancers.

However, again, it was as strange of a Final Four as we have ever witnessed. On my potential Cinderella teams chart, FAU and Michigan State, both tied for second with 15 marks, while Arkansas, another eventual Cinderella team, was just behind with 14. Finally, on the potential Upset Victims chart, Iowa State and Virginia were each in the upper half of the 24 teams I scored in this metric. The Purdue and Arizona losses were extraordinary. In summary, while it was a relatively crazy bracket in 2023, these metrics still fared relatively well. They are now fixed in the must-do list before completing any brackets or placing any wagers.

Let's look more closely at each of the qualifying charts I just described in terms of how the teams stack up for 2024.

SHARED TRAITS OF UPSET VICTIM TEAMS

The following is a list of the traits shared by teams that would be considered 'Upset Victims' or those that were seeded #6 or better and lost their first-round game. In general, I use an 80th-percentile cutoff to eliminate some of the more fluky teams from recent years. These stats include only those obtained as of Selection Sunday and contain no games beyond that point, so they should accurately reflect those you'll be using when picking this year's brackets. These were the Upset Victims considered:

2013

#2: GEORGETOWN
 #3: NEW MEXICO
 #4: KANSAS STATE
 #5: OKLAHOMA STATE, UNLV, WISCONSIN
 #6: UCLA

2014

#3: DUKE
 #5: CINCINNATI, OKLAHOMA, VA COMMONWEALTH
 #6: OHIO STATE, MASSACHUSETTS

2015

#3: IOWA STATE, BAYLOR
 #6: SMU, PROVIDENCE

2016

#2: MICHIGAN STATE
 #3: W VIRGINIA
 #4: CALIFORNIA
 #5: BAYLOR, PURDUE
 #6: SETON HALL, ARIZONA, TEXAS

2017

#5: MINNESOTA
 #6: MARYLAND, SMU, CREIGHTON

2018

#1: VIRGINIA
 #4: WICHITA STATE
 #5: ARIZONA
 #6: MIAMI, TCU

2019

#4: KANSAS STATE
 #5: MARQUETTE, MISSISSIPPI STATE, WISCONSIN
 #6: IOWA STATE

2021

#2: OHIO STATE
 #3: TEXAS
 #4: PURDUE, VIRGINIA
 #5: TENNESSEE
 #6: BYU, SAN DIEGO STATE

2022

#2: KENTUCKY
 #5: IOWA, CONNECTICUT
 #6: ALABAMA, LSU, COLORADO STATE

2023

#1: PURDUE
 #2: ARIZONA
 #4: VIRGINIA
 #6: IOWA ST

POTENTIAL UPSET VICTIM QUALIFIERS	SM Pwr Rtg <=87	Schedule Strg Not Top 12	Off PPG Not Top 25	Def PPG Not Top 15	SM Eff Str Rtg <=17.5	SM Bettors Rtg not top 12	SM Mom Rtg outside Top 55	Eff Off Pts/Poss Not Top 10	Eff Def Pts/Poss Not Top 7	Off FG% <= 48% not top 27	3PT FG% <= 38% Not Top 34	Reb % Rate Not Top 12	Asst/TO Ratio Not Top 12	Off Turnover % Not Top 22	Def Turnover % Not Top 45	Def FG% >=39% Not Top 16	Comb. Rank >=58	Total Marks
SOUTH CAROLINA	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	17
SAN DIEGO ST	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	16
CLEMSON	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	16
TEXAS TECH	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	16
WISCONSIN	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	15
ILLINOIS	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	13
KANSAS	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	13
SAINT MARY'S	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	13
BYU	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	13
CREIGHTON	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	12
BAYLOR	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	12
KENTUCKY	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	12
NORTH CAROLINA	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	11
TENNESSEE	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	10
DUKE	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	10
ALABAMA	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	10
GONZAGA	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	10
HOUSTON	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	9
MARQUETTE	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	9
AUBURN	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	9
IOWA ST	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	8
ARIZONA	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7
PURDUE	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	6
CONNECTICUT	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	4

Of these last 56 Upset Victims seeded #6 or better, approximately 80% of them:

- Went into the tournament with a Steve Makinen Power Rating of 87 or lower.
- Finished the regular season with a Schedule Strength ranked outside the top 12 nationally.
- Ranked outside the Top 25 in Offensive Points per Game.
- Ranked outside the Top 15 in Defensive Points per Game.
- Had a Steve Makinen Effective Strength Indicator Rating of +17.5 or less and/or ranked outside the Top 10 nationally.
- Had a Steve Makinen Bettors Rating of at most -15 and/or ranked outside the Top 12 nationally.
- Had a Steve Makinen Momentum Rating outside the Top 55 nationally.
- Scored less than 1.235 Effective Points per Possession on offense and/or ranked outside the Top 10 nationally.

- Allowed more than 0.900 Effective Points per Possession on defense and/or ranked outside the Top 7 nationally.
- Shot less than 48% from the field on the season, ranking outside the Top 27 nationally in FG%.
- Made less than 38% of their 3PT attempts on the season, placing them outside the Top 34 of all teams.
- Had a Rebounding Percentage Rate of less than 55.2% and ranked outside the Top 12 of the country.
- Had an Assist to Turnover Ratio of less than 1.45, ranking outside the Top 12 nationally.
- Ranked outside the country's 22 top teams in terms of Offensive Turnovers per Possession (approx. 15%).
- Ranked outside the country's 45 top teams in terms of Defensive Turnovers per Possession (approx. 22%).
- Allowed opponents higher than 39% on field goal attempts, a mark typically not good enough for the Top 16 in the country.
- Had a Combined Average Ranking of 58.0 or worse in all of the analyzed stats.

Using the logic of qualifying all of this year's 24 teams seeded #6 or better under our criteria above, the chart on the previous page shows the number of times each team qualified for the 17 categories. Based on our belief that the Upset Victims share characteristics, the teams at the top of the list are at the most risk of getting upset in their first-round game.

SHARED TRAITS OF CINDERELLA TEAMS

The following is a list of the traits shared by teams that could be considered 'Cinderella Teams,' or those that were seeded #7 or less and won at least two games to reach the Sweet 16. I use an 80th percentile cutoff again to eliminate some of the more fluky teams from recent years. These stats include only those obtained as of Selection Sunday and contain no games beyond that point, so they should accurately reflect those you'll be using when picking this year's brackets. These were the Cinderella Teams considered:

TEAM	SM Pwr Rtg <=87	Schedule Strg Not Top 12	Off PPG Not Top 25	Def PPG Not Top 15	SM Eff Str Rtg <=17.5	SM Bectors Rtg not top 12	SM Mom Rtg outside Top 55	Eff Off Pts/Poss Not Top 10	Eff Def Pts/Poss Not Top 7	Off FG% <= 48% not top 27	3PT FG% <= 38% Not Top 34	Reb % Rate Not Top 12	Asst/TO Ratio Not Top 12	Off Turnover % Not Top 22	Def Turnover % Not Top 45	Def FG% >=39% Not Top 16	Comb. Rank >=58	Total Marks
MICHIGAN ST	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	17
NEW MEXICO	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	16
NEVADA	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	16
FLORIDA ATLANTIC	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	16
NEBRASKA	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	16
OREGON	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x		x	15
TEXAS A&M	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x	15
DAYTON	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	15
TEXAS	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	15
DRAKE	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	14
COLORADO	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x			x	x	14
COLORADO ST	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x		x	x	x	x	x	14
UTAH ST	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x		x	x	x	x		x	14
WASHINGTON ST	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x		x		x	x	14
FLORIDA	x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	14
BOISE ST	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		x	x		x	x		x	13
NORTHWESTERN	x	x	x	x	x		x		x	x	x		x	x	x		x	13
TCU	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x		x		x	13
MISSISSIPPI ST	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x		x			x	x	x	13
YALE		x	x				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	12
JAMES MADISON		x	x	x			x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	12
GRAND CANYON	x		x	x	x		x	x		x	x				x	x	x	12
NC STATE	x	x	x				x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x		x	12

- 2013 OREGON (#12)
- 2013 LASALLE (#13)
- 2013 FLA GULF COAST (#15)
- 2013 WICHITA STATE (#9)
- 2014 CONNECTICUT (#7)
- 2014 KENTUCKY (#8)
- 2014 TENNESSEE (#11)
- 2014 DAYTON (#11)
- 2014 STANFORD (#10)
- 2015 MICHIGAN STATE (#7)
- 2015 WICHITA STATE (#7)
- 2015 NC STATE (#8)
- 2015 UCLA (#11)
- 2016 GONZAGA (#11)
- 2016 SYRACUSE (#10)
- 2017 S CAROLINA (#7)
- 2017 MICHIGAN (#7)
- 2017 WISCONSIN (#8)
- 2017 XAVIER (#11)
- 2018 FLORIDA STATE (#9)
- 2018 KANSAS STATE (#9)
- 2018 LOYOLA-IL (#11)
- 2018 NEVADA (#7)
- 2018 SYRACUSE (#11)
- 2018 TEXAS A&M (#7)
- 2019 OREGON (#12)
- 2021 OREGON (#7)
- 2021 LOYOLA-IL (#8)
- 2021 UCLA (#11)
- 2021 SYRACUSE (#11)
- 2021 OREGON STATE (#12)
- 2021 ORAL ROBERTS (#15)
- 2022 NORTH CAROLINA (#8)
- 2022 MIAMI (#10)
- 2022 IOWA STATE (#11)
- 2022 MICHIGAN (#11)
- 2022 SAINT PETER'S (#15)
- 2023 MICHIGAN STATE (#7)
- 2023 ARKANSAS (#8)
- 2023 FLORIDA ATLANTIC (#9)
- 2023 PRINCETON (#15)

Of the last 41 Cinderella teams seeded #7 or worse, approximately 80% of them:

- Went into the tournament with a Steve Makinen Power Rating of 80.5 or better.
- Finished the regular season with a Schedule Strength ranked in the top 102 nationally.
- Ranked in the Top 190 in Offensive Points per Game, scoring around 70+ PPG.
- Ranked in the Top 160 in Defensive Points per Game, allowing approximately less than 69 PPG.

- Had a Steve Makinen Effective Strength Indicator Rating of at least +10.0 and/or ranked in the Top 55 nationally.
- Had a Steve Makinen Bettors Rating of at least -7.5 and/or ranked in the Top 56 nationally.
- Had a Steve Makinen Momentum Rating in the Top 110 nationally
- Scored at least 1.120 Effective Points per Possession on offense and ranked in the Top 75 nationally.
- Allowed better than 1.0 Effective Points per Possession on defense and ranked in the Top 80 nationally.
- Shot at least 44.5% from the field on the season, ranking in the Top 135 nationally in FG%.
- Made about 34% of its 3PT attempts on the season, placing them in the Top 215 of all teams.
- Had a Rebounding Percentage Rate of at least 50% and ranked in the Top 160 of the country.
- Had an Assist to Turnover Ratio of at least 1.075, ranking in the Top 135 nationally.
- Ranked in the country's 200 top teams in terms of Offensive Turnovers per Possession (approx. 18.5%).
- Ranked in the country's 250 top teams in terms of Defensive Turnovers per Possession (approx. 17%).
- Allowed opponents 43.5% or less on field goal attempts, a mark typically good enough for the Top 160 in the country.
- Had a Combined Average Ranking of 105.0 or better in all of our analyzed stats.

Using the logic of qualifying all of this year's 44 teams seeded #7 or worse under our criteria above, here is a chart (this page and the previous page) showing the number of times each team qualified for the 17 categories. Based upon our belief that the Cinderella teams share quality characteristics, the teams at the top of the list are most prepared to make an exciting tournament run.

TEAM	POTENTIAL CINDERELLA QUALIFIERS																	Total Marks
	SM Pwr Rtg <=87	Schedule Strng Not Top 12	Off PPG Not Top 25	Def PPG Not Top 15	SM Eff Str Rtg <=17.5	SM Bettors Rtg not top 12	SM Mom Rtg outside Top 55	Eff Off Pts/Poss Not Top 10	Eff Def Pts/Poss Not Top 7	Off FG% <= 48% not top 27	3PT FG% <= 38% Not Top 34	Reb % Rate Not Top 12	Asst/TO Ratio Not Top 12	Off Turnover % Not Top 22	Def Turnover % Not Top 45	Def FG% >=39% Not Top 16	Comb. Rank >=58	
VIRGINIA		x		x		x	x	x		x		x	x	x	x	x	x	12
MCNEESE ST			x	x			x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	11
SOUTH DAKOTA ST			x	x			x			x	x	x		x	x	x		9
COLGATE				x				x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x		9
CHARLESTON			x			x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x			9
WAGNER				x				x	x				x	x	x	x		7
WESTERN KENTUCKY		x				x				x	x	x			x	x		7
SAINT PETER'S				x				x	x		x	x			x	x		7
AKRON			x	x						x		x		x	x	x		7
OAKLAND			x							x	x	x	x	x	x			7
SAMFORD			x			x				x	x		x		x	x		7
DUQUESNE		x		x		x					x			x	x	x		7
STETSON			x					x		x	x		x	x				6
MONTANA ST			x						x	x	x			x	x			6
LONG BEACH ST			x									x	x	x	x	x		6
MOREHEAD ST			x	x						x	x	x				x		6
VERMONT				x				x			x		x	x		x		6
UAB		x	x			x				x		x		x				6
LONGWOOD			x	x							x	x			x			5
GRAMBLING				x							x				x	x		4
HOWARD			x								x	x			x			4

SHARED TRAITS OF FINAL FOUR TEAMS

The following is a list of the traits shared by teams that eventually reached the Final Four. Again, considering an 80th percentile cutoff to eliminate unusual teams from recent years. These were the last 40 Final Four teams:

2013 SYRACUSE (#4)
 2013 LOUISVILLE (#1)
 2013 MICHIGAN (#4)
 2013 WICHITA STATE (#9)
 2014 WISCONSIN (#2)
 2014 FLORIDA (#1)
 2014 KENTUCKY (#8)
 2014 CONNECTICUT (#7)
 2015 KENTUCKY (#1)
 2015 DUKE (#1)
 2015 WISCONSIN (#1)
 2015 MICHIGAN STATE (#7)
 2016 OKLAHOMA (#2)
 2016 CAROLINA (#1)

2016 VILLANOVA (#2)
 2016 SYRACUSE (#10)
 2017 N CAROLINA (#1)
 2017 GONZAGA (#1)
 2017 OREGON (#3)
 2017 S CAROLINA (#7)
 2018 LOYOLA-IL (#11)
 2018 KANSAS (#1)
 2018 MICHIGAN (#3)
 2018 VILLANOVA (#1)
 2019 VIRGINIA (#1)
 2019 MICHIGAN STATE (#2)
 2019 TEXAS TECH (#3)
 2019 AUBURN (#5)

2021 GONZAGA (#1)
 2021 BAYLOR (#1)
 2021 HOUSTON (#2)
 2021 UCLA (#11)
 2022 KANSAS (#1)
 2022 DUKE (#2)
 2022 VILLANOVA (#2)
 2022 NORTH CAROLINA (#8)
 2023 CONNECTICUT (#4)
 2023 MIAMI (#5)
 2023 SAN DIEGO STATE (#5)
 2023 FLORIDA ATLANTIC (#9)

Of the last 40 Final Four teams, approximately 80% of them:

- Went into the tournament with a Steve Makinen Power Rating of 84.5 or higher.
- Finished the regular season with a Schedule Strength ranked in the top 73 nationally.
- Ranked in the Top 110 in Offensive Points Per Game, scoring about 72.5 PPG or more.
- Ranked in the Top 125 in Defensive Points Per Game, allowing about 69 PPG or less.
- Had a Steve Makinen Effective Strength Indicator Rating of at least +17.0 and ranked in the Top 18 nationally.
- Had a Steve Makinen Bettors Rating of at least -11.5 and ranked in the Top 27 nationally.
- Had a Steve Makinen Momentum Rating ranked in the Top 28 nationally.
- Scored at least 1.180 Effective Points per Possession on offense and ranked in the Top 26 nationally.
- Allowed better than 0.970 Effective Points per Possession on defense and ranked in the Top 32 nationally.
- Shot better than 44.5% from the field on the season, ranking in the Top 110 nationally in FG%.
- Made at least 34% of its 3PT attempts on the season, placing them in the Top 160 of all teams.
- Had a Rebounding Percentage Rate of at least 51.5% and ranked in the Top 110 of the country.
- Had an Assist to Turnover Ratio of at least 1.125, ranking in the Top 90 nationally.
- Ranked in the country's 140 top teams in terms of Offensive Turnovers per Possession.
- Ranked in the country's 235 top teams in terms of Defensive Turnovers per Possession.
- Allowed opponents about 43% or less on field goal attempts, a mark typically good enough for the Top 115 in the country.
- Had a Combined Average Ranking of 73.0 or better in all of our analyzed stats.

Using the logic of qualifying all of this year's 68 teams under our criteria above, here is a chart (on this and the previous page) showing the number of times each team qualified for the 17 categories. Based upon our belief that the Final Four teams share quality characteristics, the teams at the top of the list are most prepared to make a deep tournament run to New Orleans.

TEAM	POTENTIAL FINAL 4 QUALIFIERS																	Total Marks
	SM Pwr Rtg >=84.5	Schedule Strg Top 73	Off PPG Top 110	Def PPG Top 125	SM Eff Str Rtg Top 18	SM Bettors Rtg Top 27	SM MOM Rtg Top 28	Eff Off Pts/Poss Top 26	Eff Def Pts/Poss Top 32	Off FG% >= 44.5% Top 110	3PTFG% >=34% Top 160	Reb % Rate Top 110	Asst/TO Ratio Top 90	Off Turnover % Top 140	Def Turnover % Top 235	Def FG% <= 43% Top 115	Comb. Rank <=73	
CONNECTICUT	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	16	
AUBURN	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	16	
CREIGHTON	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	16	
ARIZONA	x	x	x		x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	15	
DUKE	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x		x	15	
GONZAGA	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	15	
PURDUE	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				x	15	
MARQUETTE	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x		x	x	x	x	15	
IOWA ST	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x		x	x	x	x	15	
TENNESSEE	x	x	x	x	x	x	x					x	x	x	x	x	13	
NORTH CAROLINA	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				x	x	x	x		x	13	
BYU	x	x	x	x	x	x				x	x	x	x	x		x	13	
BAYLOR	x	x	x		x	x	x	x		x	x	x			x		12	
SAINT MARY'S	x			x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x		12	
KENTUCKY	x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x		x	12	
ALABAMA	x	x	x		x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x			12	
HOUSTON	x	x		x	x	x	x				x	x	x	x	x	x	12	
MICHIGAN ST	x	x		x		x				x	x		x	x	x	x	11	
FLORIDA	x	x	x			x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x			11	
WISCONSIN	x	x		x		x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x		11	
NEVADA			x	x			x			x	x		x	x	x	x	10	
CLEMSON		x	x			x				x	x	x	x	x		x	10	
KANSAS	x	x	x	x		x				x		x	x		x	x	10	
SAN DIEGO ST	x	x		x		x	x		x			x		x	x	x	10	
ILLINOIS	x	x	x		x	x	x			x	x	x		x			10	
NEW MEXICO	x		x							x		x	x	x	x	x	9	
DRAKE			x	x						x	x	x	x	x	x		9	
COLORADO	x	x	x			x	x		x	x	x	x					9	
JAMES MADISON			x	x						x	x	x	x	x	x	x	9	
MCNEESE ST			x	x						x	x	x	x	x	x	x	9	
TEXAS		x	x	x		x	x			x	x		x		x		9	
TEXAS TECH		x	x	x			x			x	x		x		x	x	9	
NORTHWESTERN		x		x						x	x	x		x	x	x	8	
NEBRASKA			x	x			x				x		x	x	x	x	8	



POTENTIAL FINAL 4 QUALIFIERS

TEAM	SM Pwr Rtg >=84.5	Schedule Strg Top 73	Off PPG Top 110	Def PPG Top 125	SM Eff Str Rtg Top 18	SM Bettors Rtg Top 27	SM MOM Rtg Top 28	Eff Off Pts/Poss Top 26	Eff Def Pts/Poss Top 32	Off FG% >= 44.5% Top 110	3PTFG% >=34% Top 160	Reb % Rate Top 110	Asst/TO Ratio Top 90	Off Turnover % Top 140	Def Turnover % Top 235	Def FG% <= 43% Top 115	Comb. Rank <=73	Total Marks
YALE				x				x	x	x	x	x	x			x		8
MISSISSIPPI ST		x		x		x			x	x					x	x		8
TEXAS A&M		x		x				x	x				x		x	x	x	8
FLORIDA ATLANTIC			x							x	x	x	x	x	x			7
COLORADO ST		x	x	x						x				x	x	x		7
NC STATE		x	x					x			x			x	x	x		7
GRAND CANYON			x	x						x	x	x				x	x	7
COLGATE					x					x	x	x	x	x			x	7
DAYTON					x					x	x			x	x			6
VIRGINIA						x					x			x	x	x	x	6
TCU			x							x	x	x	x			x		6
UTAH ST				x						x			x	x	x	x		6
BOISE ST			x		x				x		x	x				x		6
OREGON			x	x						x				x	x	x		6
CHARLESTON				x							x	x	x	x	x			6
SOUTH DAKOTA ST				x						x	x			x	x	x		6
WESTERN KENTUCKY				x						x	x	x				x	x	6
WASHINGTON ST					x					x			x			x		5
SOUTH CAROLINA					x								x	x	x			5
AKRON					x					x					x	x		5
MOREHEAD ST					x					x	x	x					x	5
SAINT PETER'S					x				x						x	x		5
WAGNER					x			x							x	x	x	5
SAMFORD				x						x	x					x		4
VERMONT					x									x	x		x	4
DUQUESNE					x											x	x	3
OAKLAND					x						x					x		3
LONGWOOD					x									x		x		3
LONG BEACH ST					x									x		x		3
STETSON										x	x				x			3
MONTANA ST										x	x					x		3
HOWARD											x	x				x		3
UAB																x		2
GRAMBLING																	x	2

SHARED TRAITS OF TOURNAMENT CHAMPIONS

Recent years of tournament action have shown that there is a big difference between reaching the Final Four and winning the title. Typically, only the truly elite teams accomplish the latter. Here's a look at the minimum requirements for winning a tournament championship over the last 10 tournaments. Just to jog your memory, these are the champions during that time span:

- 2013 LOUISVILLE (#1)
- 2014 CONNECTICUT (#7)
- 2015 DUKE (#1)
- 2016 VILLANOVA (#2)
- 2017 N CAROLINA (#1)
- 2018 VILLANOVA (#1)
- 2019 VIRGINIA (#1)
- 2021 BAYLOR (#1)
- 2022 KANSAS (#1)
- 2023 CONNECTICUT (#4)

Looking for clear separations in the teams' stats/ranks of the last 10 NCAA Champions:

- Eight of them entered the tournament with a Steve Makinen Power Rating of 89.5 or higher.
- Eight of them finished the regular season with a Schedule Strength ranked in the top 45 nationally.
- Seven of them ranked in the Top 55 in Offensive Points per Game and scored at least 72 PPG.
- Eight of them ranked in the Top 135 in Defensive Points per Game or allowed less than 70 PPG.
- Nine of them had a Steve Makinen Effective Strength Indicator Rating of at least +18.5 and ranked in the Top 7 nationally.
- Eight of them had a Steve Makinen Bettors Rating of at least -15.5 and ranked in the Top 7 nationally.
- Eight of them had a Steve Makinen Momentum Rating ranked in the Top 8 nationally
- Eight of them scored at least 1.225 Effective Points per Possession on offense and ranked in the Top 15 nationally.
- Eight of them allowed better than 0.955 Effective Points per Possession on defense and ranked in the Top 15 nationally.
- Eight of them shot at least 46% or so from the field on the season, ranking in the Top 70 nationally in FG%.
- Eight of them made at least 35.5% of their 3PT attempts on the season, placing them in the Top 95 of all teams.
- Eight of them had a Rebounding Percentage Rate of at least 52% and ranked in the Top 65 of the country.
- Eight of them had an Assist to Turnover Ratio of at least 1.23,

TEAM	POTENTIAL CHAMPIONSHIP QUALIFIERS																Total Marks
	SM Pwr Rtg >=89.5	Schedule Strg Top 45	Off PPG Top 55	Def PPG Top 135	SM Eff Str Rtg Top 7	SM Bettors Rtg Top 7	SM L10 Rtg Top 8	Eff Off Pts/Poss Top 15	Eff Def Pts/Poss Top 15	Off FG% Top 70	Off 3PT FG% Top 95	Reb % Rate Top 65	Asst/TO Ratio Top 45	Off Turnover % Top 115	Def Turnover % Top 165	Def FG% <= 42% Top 75	
CONNECTICUT	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	15
ARIZONA	x	x	x		x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	15
AUBURN	x		x	x	x	x				x		x	x	x	x	x	13
PURDUE	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		x	x	x	x			x	13
TENNESSEE	x	x	x	x	x	x	x					x	x	x	x	x	12
HOUSTON	x	x		x	x	x	x					x	x	x	x	x	11
DUKE			x	x		x	x			x	x	x	x	x		x	10
GONZAGA			x	x				x		x	x	x	x	x		x	10
IOWA ST	x			x	x		x	x		x			x	x	x	x	10
MARQUETTE		x	x	x				x		x	x		x	x	x		9
CREIGHTON		x	x	x						x	x	x	x	x		x	9
JAMES MADISON			x	x						x	x	x	x	x	x	x	9
BAYLOR		x	x	x				x		x	x	x			x		8
SAINT MARY'S				x			x			x	x	x	x	x		x	8
ALABAMA		x	x					x	x	x	x	x		x			8
MCNEESE ST			x	x						x	x		x	x	x	x	8
MICHIGAN ST		x		x							x		x	x	x	x	7
NEVADA				x						x	x		x	x	x	x	7
DRAKE			x	x						x	x		x	x	x		7
SAN DIEGO ST		x		x					x			x		x	x	x	7
NORTH CAROLINA		x	x	x								x		x		x	6
NEW MEXICO			x	x								x	x	x	x		6
BYU			x	x						x		x	x	x			6
CLEMSON		x									x		x	x	x	x	6
DAYTON				x							x	x		x	x	x	6
NORTHWESTERN				x					x		x		x	x	x		6
YALE				x				x			x		x	x	x		6
VIRGINIA				x							x		x	x	x	x	6
TCU				x	x						x	x	x		x		6
MISSISSIPPI ST		x		x							x				x	x	6
TEXAS A&M		x		x					x	x			x		x		6
KENTUCKY				x							x	x		x	x		5
KANSAS		x		x							x			x		x	5
FLORIDA ATLANTIC				x							x	x	x		x		5

ranking in the Top 45 nationally.

- Eight of them ranked in the country's 115 top teams in terms of Offensive Turnovers per Possession.
- Seven of them ranked in the country's 165 top teams in terms of Defensive Turnovers per Possession.
- Eight of them allowed opponents 42.0% or less on field goal attempts, a mark typically good enough for the Top 75 in the country.
- Eight of them had a Combined Average Ranking of 50.0 or better in all of our analyzed stats.

Looking at each of these key categories and every team's standing as of Sunday (3/12), here is a chart (on this and the previous page) showing the teams most ready for a title run in 2024.

A reminder from recent years on the Potential Champions Chart: Virginia, the 2019 champion and a popular pick of many experts such as yours truly, ranked second of the 68 tournament teams with 15 qualifying marks on this chart. Baylor of 2021 ranked 3rd with 13 marks. Only Michigan and Gonzaga were better. In 2022, Kansas ranked behind six other teams in championship "worthiness" with 11 marks. No team above the Jayhawks reached the Final Four even. And last year, UConn topped the chart with 14 marks.

Each year, it seems to repeatedly prove that it's a safe bet to say that the eventual Upset Victims, Cinderellas, Final Four teams and Champion will be found at the top of these respective lists. I will be personally investing in this resource again in 2024.

TEAM	POTENTIAL CHAMPIONSHIP QUALIFIERS											Total Marks					
	SM Pwr Rtg >=89.5	Schedule Strg Top 45	Off PPG Top 55	Def PPG Top 135	SM Eff Str Rtg Top 7	SM Bettors Rtg Top 7	SM L10 Rtg Top 8	Eff Off Pts/Poss Top 15	Eff Def Pts/Poss Top 15	Off FG% Top 70	Off 3PT FG% Top 95		Reb % Rate Top 65	Asst/TO Ratio Top 45	Off Turnover % Top 115	Def Turnover % Top 165	Def FG% <= 42% Top 75
NEBRASKA		x	x							x			x		x		5
COLORADO			x	x						x	x	x					5
COLORADO ST		x		x						x			x	x			5
WASHINGTON ST				x						x	x		x		x		5
TEXAS		x		x						x	x				x		5
GRAND CANYON			x	x								x			x	x	5
WISCONSIN		x		x						x		x		x			5
UTAH ST			x							x			x	x			4
FLORIDA		x	x									x		x			4
ILLINOIS			x							x		x		x			4
CHARLESTON			x									x	x	x			4
SAMFORD			x							x	x				x		4
SOUTH CAROLINA				x								x	x	x			4
VERMONT				x									x	x		x	4
COLGATE				x						x	x					x	4
MOREHEAD ST				x						x		x				x	4
WESTERN KENTUCKY			x							x					x	x	4
SAINT PETER'S				x					x						x	x	4
WAGNER				x				x						x		x	4
TEXAS TECH		x		x								x					3
DUQUESNE				x											x	x	3
SOUTH DAKOTA ST										x	x					x	3
LONGWOOD				x								x			x		3
MONTANA ST										x	x				x		3
NC STATE														x	x		2
BOISE ST				x								x					2
OREGON														x	x		2
AKRON				x								x					2
STETSON												x		x			2
GRAMBLING				x											x		2
OAKLAND												x					1
LONG BEACH ST															x		1
HOWARD												x					1
UAB																	0

HOW TO BUILD A CONTRARIAN BRACKET

by Josh Appelbaum

The Madness is finally here! And whether you're a hardcore college basketball bettor, a novice fan, or know nothing about college hoops whatsoever, chances are you'll be filling out a bracket. After all, filling out a bracket is a right of passage in American pop culture. And usually, it's that person in your office pool who knows nothing about college hoops that typically wins it.

With the legalization of sports betting spreading like wildfire (we are up to nearly 40 states that have gone legal), this year's NCAA Tournament is likely to be the most heavily bet of all time. As a result, we are likely to break records in terms of the overall number of people who will fill out a bracket.

The key factor when it comes to winning your bracket is breaking from the herd and differentiating yourself from the masses. Why? Because more often than not, the public is wrong. Going all chalk, taking the better seed, and betting every bigger-name school is sure to bust your bracket. And even if everyone else ends up being right, you would all have the same bracket and split the proceeds, which leaves little reward to whoever wins.

If you want to stand out and win your bracket, you need to build a contrarian bracket.

The first step to building a contrarian bracket is starting in the middle and working your way out. This means doing the opposite of what everyone else does. Instead of starting at the edges, filling out the Round of 64 first, and then working your way inward, you want to pick your champion first and then start filling out the rest.

Yes, you heard that correctly.

Why is this the smart way to start? Because getting your champion right, or getting as many teams in the Final Four correct as possible, will likely win your bracket contest. This is due to the bracket scoring system. The deeper you go in the tournament, the more points you receive for correct picks. As a result, it's far more important to get your later-round picks right as opposed to getting your early-round picks right. Think of the scoring system on Jeopardy, where it's far more important to get the \$1,000 clues right as opposed to cleaning up on the \$100 clues. Also, year after year, the person leading after the first few rounds rarely wins the whole thing. If you sweep the early rounds but your champion is knocked out early, you have no chance at winning.

In order to pick a contrarian champion, you have to select a team that the masses aren't playing. For example, Connecticut (+400) is the favorite to win it all, followed by Houston (+500) and Purdue (+600). Chances are, the vast majority of the public will pick one of these three as their champion. As a contrarian, you want to select a champion outside of these three favorites. In the end, if one of these three favorites win it all, you tip your cap to the public and lose your

bracket. However, historically, the most popular favorites rarely cut down the nets.

Also, wait until the last minute to submit your bracket. This way, you can wait for the public to show their hand as to who they are picking to win it all. Outlets like ESPN, Yahoo, and CBS will report the numbers in the days leading up to the first round. While it's safe to assume the public will pick Connecticut, Houston, or Purdue, you want to quantify that bias with a number and specifically bet against the most popular pick. In this case, maybe Connecticut will be the most-picked team to win it all, receiving something like 20% of all selections. As a result, you first want to pick any team other than the Huskies.

So who should you pick to win it all instead? A good choice would be one of the teams in the second tier, such as Arizona (+1200), North Carolina (+1400), Auburn (+1500) or Tennessee (+1600). Auburn is especially intriguing as Ken Pom has the Tigers rated as the 4th-best team in the country, yet they have the sixth-best championship odds. Iowa State (+2000) is another contrarian pick, with Ken Pom rating the Cyclones as the 5th best team, yet they have the eighth-best odds to cut down the nets.

If you select any of these second tier teams and they win it all, you are all but guaranteed to win your bracket since the public will most likely be avoiding them and focusing on Connecticut, Houston or Purdue instead.

Other ways to go contrarian, aside from picking an under-the-radar champion, is selecting "upsets" in the earlier rounds. Upsets are based on the seeds and you typically receive double points if the lower seeded team pulls off the win. Does this mean you should bet every worse seed to beat the better seed? Of course not. You want to be smart about it and not just be bold to be bold.

One tip when selecting upsets is focusing on the betting odds instead of the seeds. For example, if a 9 seed beats an 8 seed, that would be considered an upset and you would win double points. But maybe the betting market has the game as a pick'em or actually has the 9 seed favored over the 8 seed. These would be the situations to capitalize on, as seeds are determined by humans while betting odds are much more efficient because they are created based on power ratings. Once the bracket comes out, write down the betting odds next to every matchup and look for fishy lines that don't make sense and then go with the fishy side.

We have several "upset" opportunities in the first round, with 9 seed Michigan State (-1.5) favored over 8 seed Mississippi State, 11 seed New Mexico (-1.5) favored over 6 seed Clemson, 10 seed Nevada (-1) favored over 7 seed Dayton and 10 seed TCU (-3.5) favored over 8 seed Utah State.

Good luck!

Despite what seems to be an endless realignment, for a variety of reasons, whether it's matchups, motivations, or perceptions, the simple fact is that certain conferences generally match up well with others in certain types of games and line scenarios. A lot of this is part of what makes the NCAA Tournament such a draw. Fans and bettors are drawn to the games where a mid-major school takes on a Power 6 school. When these mid-major teams boast gaudy records, they are always popular Cinderella picks. At the same time, the teams that finish deep in Power Six leagues always seem ripe for the upset, but those that win their leagues are most often title contenders. There are always plenty of scenarios like this that the most successful tournament bettors have their sights set on for when the action commences and the opening lines are released.

In this particular piece that I run each March, I separate all of the various conferences in college basketball and determine their performance records in all kinds of different tournament game situations of late. In addition, I provide a list of the teams from each league that will be playing in this year's tournament and their opening matchups to help you spot the best qualifying Trends, on line and total ranges, round level of games, by seed numbers, and perhaps most importantly, how they fare against some of the other conferences.

Let's start with the ACC, one of the most successful leagues in the NCAA every year.

ACC

TEAMS IN THE FIELD/FIRST MATCHUP

CLEMSON (WEST, #6) vs. NEW MEXICO (#11-Mountain West)
DUKE (SOUTH, #4) vs. VERMONT (#13-America East)
NORTH CAROLINA (WEST, #1) vs. HOWARD (MEAC)/WAGNER (Northeast)
NC STATE (SOUTH, #11) vs. TEXAS TECH (#6-Big 12)
VIRGINIA (MIDWEST, #10) vs. COLORADO STATE (#7-Mountain West)

TRENDS

- Over the last two NCAA tournaments, the ACC boasts a record of 21-10 SU and 22-9 ATS (71%).
- ACC teams have been most successful in the Final Four Round, going 11-4 SU and 10-5 ATS (66.7%) since 2001.
- In the role of pick 'em or small underdog (up to 4.5 points), ACC teams are currently on a 16-3 ATS (84.2%) surge, including nine straight covers.
- ACC teams are just 29-47-1 ATS (38.2%) as favorites of 5 points or less in the NCAAs since 1998.
- ACC teams are 34-3 SU but 12-25 ATS (32.4%) in their last 37 as double-digit tourney favorites.
- Double-digit ACC seeds are 16-8-1 ATS (66.7%) since 2012.
- #2 ACC seeds are on a brutal 11-28-1 ATS (28.2%) slide since 2001. However, Duke did go 4-1 SU and 3-2 ATS in 2022.
- ACC teams are 16-4 SU but 1-19 ATS (5%) combined versus Atlantic Sun, Coastal Athletic, and Ohio Valley teams since 2001.
- ACC-Pac 12 tourney matchups have also gone Under on totals most often, 14-3-1 (82.4%) since 2003. ACC teams are on a 20-5 SU and 16-9 ATS (64%) tourney run in the last 25 vs. Pac-12 foes.
- ACC teams are on a current surge of 8-4 SU and 10-2 ATS (83.3%) in the NCAAs versus Big 12 foes.
- In 19 most recent NCAA tourney matchups between the ACC and Big East, Over the total is 13-6 (68.4%).
- Seventeen of the last 22 NCAA tourney matchups between the ACC and SEC have gone Under the total (77.3%).
- There have been eight tourney matchups since 2001, pitting ACC foes against one another. All eight went Over the total (100%), producing 150 PPG on totals averaging 142.

AMERICA EAST

TEAMS IN THE FIELD/FIRST MATCHUP

VERMONT (SOUTH, #13) vs. DUKE (#4-ACC)

TRENDS

- Vermont's loss to Marquette in 2023 dropped the America East record in the NCAAs to 11-4 ATS (73.3%) since 2011.
- America East teams are 15-8-1 Under (65.2%) the total since 2003.

TOP CONFERENCE TRENDS FOR THE TOURNAMENT

by Steve Makinen

AMERICAN ATHLETIC

TEAMS IN THE FIELD/FIRST MATCHUP

FLORIDA ATLANTIC (EAST, #8) vs. NORTHWESTERN (#9-Big Ten)
UAB (EAST, #12) vs. SAN DIEGO STATE (#5-Mountain West)

TRENDS

- American Athletic teams are 12-4 Under the total (75%) in their last 16 tourney games as underdogs.
- In their last 25 tourney games versus power conference foes, American Athletic teams are 17-10 Under the total (63%).
- AAC teams lost both of their two NCAA tourney games versus fellow mid-major teams last year, dropping their recent record in that scenario to 7-2 ATS (77.8%).
- As seeds #7-#10, AAC teams have been dangerous lately, going 11-9 SU and 14-6 ATS (70%) in their last 20 tourney tries. However, Memphis did lose a year ago.

ATLANTIC 10

TEAMS IN THE FIELD/FIRST MATCHUP

DAYTON (WEST, #7) vs. NEVADA (#10-Mountain West)
DUQUESNE (EAST, #11) vs. BYU (#6-Big 12)

TRENDS

- Atlantic 10 teams have won just two of their last 11 NCAA tourney games, both SU and ATS (18.2%).
- A-10 teams are also on a 2-9 SU and ATS (18.2%) skid in the NCAA's against fellow mid-major conference foes.
- Underdogs are 10-3 ATS (76.9%) in the last 13 NCAA tourney games between Atlantic 10 and Big East.
- Favorites are on an 18-4 SU and 15-7 ATS (68.2%) surge in Atlantic 10 NCAA tourney games since 2015.
- Atlantic 10 teams are 19-6 SU and 14-7-4 ATS (66.7%) in their last 25 games as tournament favorites.

ATLANTIC SUN

TEAMS IN THE FIELD/FIRST MATCHUP

STETSON (EAST, #16) vs. CONNECTICUT (#1-Big East)

TRENDS

- Atlantic Sun teams are on an 11-4 ATS (73.3%) run in NCAA tourney games since 2013, including 9-3 ATS (75%) vs. Power Six conferences.
- Atlantic Sun teams are on 12-6 Over (66.7%) the total run in NCAA's.

BIG 12

TEAMS IN THE FIELD/FIRST MATCHUP

BAYLOR (WEST, #3) vs. COLGATE (#14-Patriot)
BYU (EAST, #6) vs. DUQUESNE (#11-Atlantic 10)
HOUSTON (SOUTH, #1) vs. LONGWOOD (#16-Big South)
IOWA STATE (EAST, #2) vs. SOUTH DAKOTA STATE (#15-Summit)
KANSAS (MIDWEST, #4) vs. SAMFORD (#13-Southern)
TCU (MIDWEST, #9) vs. UTAH STATE (#8-Mountain West)
TEXAS (MIDWEST, #7) vs. COLORADO STATE (Mountain West)/VIRGINIA (ACC)
TEXAS TECH (SOUTH, #6) vs. NC STATE (#11-ACC)

TRENDS

- Big 12 teams have been dominant in the play-in/first-round games of the tournament since 2017, going 30-10 SU and 26-14 ATS (65%).
- Big 12 teams in the #4-#8 seed ranges are on a slide of 23-31 SU and 20-33 ATS (37.7%) since 2010, popular upset victims.
- Favorites are 14-5 SU and 12-6-1 ATS (66.7%) in the last 19 NCAA tournament games between the Big 12 and Big Ten.
- Against mid-major teams in the NCAAs, Big 12 teams are on an 18-6 ATS (75%) surge.
- Big 12 teams are just 11-13 SU and 8-16 ATS (33.3%) in their last 24 NCAA tourney games vs. the Big East.
- Big 12 teams have struggled against Missouri Valley teams in NCAA tourney play, going just 3-7 SU and 1-9 ATS (10%) since 2001.
- Underdogs are on a 16-3 ATS (84.2%) run in NCAA tourney games between Big 12 and Pac-12 teams. Big 12 teams are just 6-13 ATS (31.6%) in those contests.
- Big 12 teams have lost 57 of their 72 NCAA tourney games since 2000 as underdogs of 2.5 points or more and are 29-42-1 ATS (40.8%) in those games.
- As favorites of 7 points or more in the NCAAs, Big 12 teams are on a current run of 26-1 SU and 19-8 ATS (70.4%).

BIG EAST

TEAMS IN THE FIELD/FIRST MATCHUP

CONNECTICUT (EAST, #1) vs. STETSON (#16-Atlantic Sun)
CREIGHTON (MIDWEST, #3) vs. AKRON (#14-Mid-American)
MARQUETTE (SOUTH, #2) vs. WESTERN KENTUCKY (#15-Conference USA)

TRENDS

- Big East schools own a perfect 7-0 SU and ATS record in championship games since 2001, including Connecticut's win a year ago.
- Big East teams have also thrived in the tournament's second round of late, going 10-7 SU and 13-4 ATS (76.5%) since 2017.
- Top two seeded (#1s & #2s) from the Big East have validated their positions by going 20-5 SU and 18-7 ATS (72%) in the NCAAs since 2016.
- The last 46 Big East teams to play as seeds of #7 or worse in the NCAA tourney are 12-34 SU and 16-30 ATS (34.8%).
- Teams from the Big East Conference have been highly reliable double-digit favorites in the NCAAs since 2007, going 38-3 SU and 26-15 ATS (63.4%).
- Teams from the Big East in the #8-#9 First Round matchup have been just 4-13 SU and 3-14 ATS (17.6%) in the NCAA since 2005.
- Big East teams are on a 9-2 SU and ATS (81.8%) run against Mountain West teams in the tournament.
- Big East teams have struggled versus the Pac-12 in NCAA tourney play, 7-7 SU and 4-10 ATS (28.6%) since 2010.
- Favorites are 41-17 ATS (70.7%) in the last 58 Big East NCAA tourney games, including 13-3 ATS last year.
- In NCAA tourney games between Big East programs and non-major conferences since 2015, favorites are 29-11 SU and 28-10 ATS (73.7%).

BIG SKY

TEAMS IN THE FIELD/FIRST MATCHUP

MONTANA STATE (MIDWEST, #16) vs. GRAMBLING (#16-SWAC)

TRENDS

- Big Sky teams are just 1-22 SU and 6-17 ATS (26.1%) in the tournament since 2001, including 3-16 ATS (15.8%) as an underdog of less than 20 points.
- Big Sky teams have lost 21 straight NCAA tournament games against major conference teams, going 5-16 ATS (23.8%).

BIG SOUTH

TEAMS IN THE FIELD/FIRST MATCHUP

LONGWOOD (SOUTH, #16) vs. HOUSTON (#16-Big 12)

TRENDS

- Big South teams are 8-3-1 ATS (72.7%) as #16 seeds in the tournament since 2003, 3-8 ATS (27.3%) in all other seeds.
- Big South teams are on a 15-5 Under the total (75%) tourney surge vs. major conference teams, scoring just 57.1 PPG.

BIG TEN

TEAMS IN THE FIELD/FIRST MATCHUP

ILLINOIS (EAST, #3) vs. MOREHEAD STATE (#14-Ohio Valley)
MICHIGAN STATE (WEST, #9) vs. MISSISSIPPI STATE (#8-SEC)
NEBRASKA (SOUTH, #8) vs. TEXAS A&M (#9-SEC)
NORTHWESTERN (EAST, #9) vs. FLORIDA ATLANTIC (#8-American Athletic)
PURDUE (MIDWEST, #1) vs. GRAMBLING (SWAC)/MONTANA (Big Sky)
WISCONSIN (SOUTH, #5) vs. JAMES MADISON (#12-Sun Belt)

TRENDS

- Big Ten teams are winless at 0-7 SU and ATS in the championship game since 2001.
- Big Ten teams have been vulnerable in the #4 seed, 4-13-1 ATS (23.5%) in their last 18 tourney tries.
- Overall, Big Ten teams and top 6 seeds haven't meshed well since 2015, as they are 41-30 SU but 27-43-1 ATS (38.6%) in that scenario.
- Big Ten teams have been relatively strong in the double-digit chalk role in the tournament, 49-5 SU and 29-21-4 ATS (58%) since 1998. However, Purdue has lost outright in each of the last two years.
- Big Ten teams are on an 11-7 SU and 13-4-1 ATS (76.5%) run vs. SEC foes in the NCAA tourney but did go just 1-3 in 2023.
- Big Ten teams have gone just 8-18-1 ATS (30.8%) since 2015 in the NCAA tournament vs. Big 12 and Pac-12 foes.
- For as good as Big Ten teams have been in the big favorite role, they have been brutal as underdogs of 5.5 points or more in the tournament, 6-50 SU and 21-35 ATS (37.5%) since 1998.
- In tourney games with single-digit point spreads versus mid-major conference foes in the NCAAs, Big Ten teams are on an ugly 28-43 ATS (39.4%) skid since 2006.
- In tourney games of the Second Round and later, Big Ten teams are just 16-31 SU and 17-28-2 ATS (37.8%) since 2017.

BIG WEST

TEAMS IN THE FIELD/FIRST MATCHUP

LONG BEACH STATE (WEST, #15) vs. ARIZONA (#2-Pac-12)

TRENDS

- Big West teams are just 4-19 SU and 8-14-1 ATS (36.4%) in their last 23 NCAA tournament games.
- Big West teams have trended Under on totals in three straight NCAA tourney games.
- Big West teams have struggled in the role of large underdog, 1-19 SU and 7-14-1 ATS (33.3%) when catching 6.5 points or more in the tourney since 1998.
- All five Big West teams that reached the second round since 2001 lost SU and ATS, by an average of 18 PPG.

COASTAL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

TEAMS IN THE FIELD/FIRST MATCHUP

COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON (WEST, #13) vs. ALABAMA (#4-SEC)

TRENDS

- Coastal Athletic teams have been the country's best in terms of NCAA tournament spread performance, 26-12-3 ATS (68.4%) since 2001. However, they have lost their last four games SU and ATS and are on a 10-game outright losing streak.
- Coastal Athletic teams are on a 23-8-2 ATS (74.2%) run as NCAA tourney dogs to major conference teams. Again though, they are off three straight losses.
- Under the total is 8-2 (80%) in the last 10 Coastal Athletic NCAA tournament games versus other mid-major conference teams.
- CAA teams have covered the spread in all nine NCAA tourney games (9-0 ATS 100%) vs. ACC teams since 2001.

CONFERENCE USA

TEAMS IN THE FIELD/FIRST MATCHUP

WESTERN KENTUCKY (SOUTH, #15) vs. MARQUETTE (#2-Big East)

TRENDS

- Florida Atlantic's 4-1 SU and ATS run last year came on the heels of a 6-16 SU and 7-15 ATS NCAA tourney slide for Conference USA teams since 2009.
- Versus power conference schools in the NCAA tournament, Conference USA teams are just 24-38 SU and ATS (38.7%) since 1998, including 9-21 ATS (30%) as dogs of 4.5 points or more.
- Favorites have won the last six NCAA tourney games SU and ATS between Conference USA and ACC.
- Favorites are on a 10-2 SU and ATS (83.3%) run in NCAA tournament games between Conference USA and Big Ten, although North Texas did upend Purdue in 2021.
- Conference USA teams are on a brutal slide of 4-22 SU and 6-20 ATS (23.1%) as an underdog of +2 to +9.5 in the NCAA tournament.
- Double-digit seeded Conference USA teams are on a 6-16 SU and 7-15 ATS (31.8%) slide in the NCAAs.

HORIZON

TEAMS IN THE FIELD/FIRST MATCHUP

OAKLAND (SOUTH, #14) vs. KENTUCKY (#3-SEC)

TRENDS

- Horizon League teams have lost 12 of their last 13 NCAA tourney games while going 5-8 ATS (38.5%). However, they are currently on a three-game ATS win streak.
- Horizon League teams are on a 16-7 Under the total (69.6%) NCAA run.
- Line placement has been key in Horizon League NCAA tourney games. As dogs of 8 points or more, they are 0-14 SU and 5-9 ATS (35.7%) since 2002. In all other games, they are 20-10 SU and 22-8 ATS (73.3%).
- In their last 15 NCAA tourney games versus power conference foes, Horizon League teams are 1-14 SU and 5-10 ATS (33.3%) since 2002. Versus other mid-majors, Horizon League teams are on an 8-2 SU and ATS tourney surge.

IVY

TEAMS IN THE FIELD/FIRST MATCHUP

YALE (EAST, #13) vs. AUBURN (#4-SEC)

TRENDS

- Ivy League teams have gone 7-12 SU and 12-7 ATS (63.2%) in their last 19 NCAA tourney games, including Princeton a year ago, who won two games to reach the Sweet 16.
- Ivy League teams are on a 20-10 Under the total (66.7%) NCAA run.
- As underdogs of 6 points or more in the NCAAs, Ivy League teams are just 3-18 SU and 9-12 ATS (42.9%) since 2000. They are also 17-4 Under the total (80.8%) in those games, scoring just 60.1 PPG.

METRO ATLANTIC

TEAMS IN THE FIELD/FIRST MATCHUP

SAINT PETER'S (MIDWEST, #15) vs. TENNESSEE (#2-SEC)

TRENDS

- Metro Atlantic Athletic are now 1-6 SU and ATS (14.3%) in their last seven NCAA tourney tries as a non-double-digit underdog. They have won their last four ATS as a double-digit go.
- MAAC teams are historically 2-2 SU and 0-4 ATS (0%) in play-in games.
- Metro Atlantic Athletic teams have produced a record of 3-3 SU and 5-1 ATS versus SEC teams since 2001 in the NCAAs.

MID-AMERICAN

TEAMS IN THE FIELD/FIRST MATCHUP

AKRON (MIDWEST, #14) vs. CREIGHTON (#3-Big East)

TRENDS

- Mid-American Conference teams are 14-6 ATS (70%) in their last 20 NCAA tourney games as a #13 seed or worse but 9-11 ATS (45%) in other seeds during that stretch.
- Mid-American Conference teams are on a run of 11-3 ATS (78.6%) in their last 14 tries as dogs of 6.5 points or more in the NCAA tourney.
- MAC teams have won five straight NCAA tourney games versus the Pac-12 against the spread (100%).

MID-EASTERN

TEAMS IN THE FIELD/FIRST MATCHUP

HOWARD (WEST, #16) vs. WAGNER (#16-Northeast)

TRENDS

- MEAC teams are on a 4-15 SU and 5-14 ATS (26.3%) slide in the NCAAs.
- MEAC teams are 1-10 SU and 2-9 ATS (18.2%) in their last 11 NCAA tourney games as double-digit dogs.
- NCAA Tourney games featuring MEAC teams have trended heavily Under on totals, 18-9 (69.2%) in the last 27.

MISSOURI VALLEY

TEAMS IN THE FIELD/FIRST MATCHUP

DRAKE (EAST, #10) vs. WASHINGTON STATE (#7-Pac-12)

TRENDS

- Missouri Valley Conference teams have gone 20-14 SU and 20-13-1 ATS (60.6%) in the NCAA tournament since 2013 but are currently on a 0-3 SU and ATS skid.
- MVC teams are on an 18-9-1 ATS (66.7%) NCAA tourney run against power conference schools.
- Missouri Valley schools are 6-4 SU and 7-1-2 ATS (70%) in their last 10 NCAA tourney contests vs. SEC.
- MVC teams are 15-6-1 ATS (71.4%) since 2006 as an NCAA tournament underdog of 3 points or more.
- Underdogs have been 19-7-1 ATS (73.1%) since 2013 in MVC NCAA tourney games.
- Under the total is 14-6 (70%) in the last 20 Missouri Valley NCAA tourney games.

MOUNTAIN WEST

TEAMS IN THE FIELD/FIRST MATCHUP

BOISE STATE (SOUTH, #10) vs. COLORADO (#7-Pac-12)
COLORADO STATE (MIDWEST, #10) vs. VIRGINIA (#7-ACC)
NEVADA (WEST, #10) vs. DAYTON (#7-Atlantic 10)
NEW MEXICO (WEST, #11) vs. CLEMSON (#6-ACC)
SAN DIEGO STATE (EAST, #5) vs. UAB (#12-American Athletic)
UTAH STATE (MIDWEST, #8) vs. TCU (#9-Big 12)

TRENDS

- Mountain West teams' struggles in the NCAAs haven't been that well-documented, but collectively they are just 26-57 SU and 26-54-3 ATS (32.5%) since 2001, despite San Diego State's five outright wins last year, collectively the MWC was still 4-5 ATS.
- As tournament underdogs, Mountain West teams are just 10-40 SU and 13-34-3 ATS (27.7%) since 2001.
- Mountain West Conference teams have been totally overmatched against major conference programs in the NCAAs since 2000, 11-46 SU and 14-41-2 ATS (25.4%).
- As seeds of 8 or worse in the NCAAs, MWC teams are on a brutal 3-32 SU and 5-28-2 ATS (15.2%) since 2003!
- It's a stretch to find any NCAA tourney **TRENDS** in which MWC teams are successful, but they boast a 13-12-1 ATS (52%) mark versus fellow mid-major schools since 2002.

NORTHEAST

TEAMS IN THE FIELD/FIRST MATCHUP

WAGNER (WEST, #16) vs. HOWARD (#16-Mid-Eastern)

TRENDS

- Fairleigh Dickinson won two games last year and went 3-0 ATS, snapping a slide of 4-9-1 ATS in the prior 14 NCAA tourney games for Northeast Conference teams.
- Northeast Conference teams are on a 7-3 Over the total surge as a double-digit NCAA tourney underdog.

OHIO VALLEY

TEAMS IN THE FIELD/FIRST MATCHUP

MOREHEAD STATE (EAST, #14) vs. ILLINOIS (#3-Big Ten)

TRENDS

- Ohio Valley Conference teams have gone 1-4 SU and ATS (20%) in their last five NCAA tournament games after a 15-6 ATS run prior.
- OVC teams are 8-2 ATS (80%) in their last 10 NCAA tourney games when playing as dogs of 9 points or more.
- Over the total is 9-3 (75%) in the last 12 Ohio Valley NCAA tourney games.

PAC-12

TEAMS IN THE FIELD/FIRST MATCHUP

ARIZONA (WEST, #2) vs. LONG BEACH STATE (#15-Big West)
COLORADO (SOUTH, #10) vs. BOISE STATE (#7-Mountain West)
OREGON (MIDWEST, #11) vs. SOUTH CAROLINA (#6-SEC)
WASHINGTON STATE (EAST, #7) vs. DRAKE (#10-Missouri Valley)

TRENDS

- After an amazing 13-5 SU and 18-3 ATS run in the 2021 NCAA tournament, Pac-12 teams responded by going 7-7 SU and 4-10 ATS (28.6%) the last two years.
- Pac-12 teams are on a 16-4 ATS (80%) run versus Big 12 and Big East teams in NCAA tourney play since 2013.
- Underdogs are on a 14-6 ATS (70%) surge in NCAA tourney games between the Pac-12 and Big Ten conferences.
- Pac-12 teams are 11-1 SU and 9-2-1 ATS (81.8%) versus Mountain West teams since 2002, including 5-0 SU and ATS when favored.
- Pac-12 teams are on a run of 21-8 ATS (72.4%) in second-round.
- Pac-12 teams are 13-25-1 ATS (34.2%) in the Sweet 16 since 2001.
- Pac-12 teams have performed extremely well as underdogs lately in NCAA tourney games, 36-17 ATS (67.9%) since 2011.
- Double-digit seeded Pac-12 teams in the NCAAs have been hard to knock out, as they are 27-21 SU & 35-13 ATS (72.9%) since 2009.
- Alternatively, Pac-12 teams in the #7-#9 seeds are on an 8-22 SU and 11-19 ATS (36.7%) skid in the NCAAs.

PATRIOT

TEAMS IN THE FIELD/FIRST MATCHUP

COLGATE (WEST, #14) vs. BAYLOR (#3-Big 12)

TRENDS

- Patriot League teams are 10-8 ATS (55.6%) in the First Round of the NCAA tournament since 2004, including 5-3 ATS in the last eight, but are 1-4 ATS (20%) in all other games.
- Patriot League is 10-5 (66.7%) ATS as double-digit dogs since 2000.
- Patriot League teams are 12-7 (63.2%) ATS vs. power conference foes in the NCAAs since 2000, but 1-7 SU and 2-6 ATS (25%) against fellow mid-major teams.

SEC

TEAMS IN THE FIELD/FIRST MATCHUP

ALABAMA (WEST, #4) vs. COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON (#13-Coastal Athletic)
AUBURN (EAST, #4) vs. YALE (#13-Ivy League)
FLORIDA (SOUTH, #7) vs. BOISE STATE (Mountain West)/COLORADO (Pac-12)
KENTUCKY (SOUTH, #3) vs. OAKLAND (#14-Horizon)
MISSISSIPPI STATE (WEST, #8) vs. MICHIGAN STATE (#9-Big Ten)
SOUTH CAROLINA (MIDWEST, #6) vs. OREGON (#11-Pac-12)
TENNESSEE (MIDWEST, #2) vs. SAINT PETER'S (#15-Metro Atlantic)
TEXAS A&M (SOUTH, #9) vs. NEBRASKA (#8-Big Ten)

TRENDS

- The last five NCAA tournaments have been a struggle for SEC teams, as they are just 36-35 SU and 25-46 ATS (35.2%) since the Friday of the first round in the 2018 tourney.
- As NCAA favorites of more than 20 points, SEC teams are 10-0 Over the total (100%) since 2001, scoring 86.8 PPG.
- Underdogs are 43-21 ATS (67.2%) in the last 64 SEC games.
- As pick 'ems or small favorites of 5 points or less, SEC teams are an ugly 42-51 SU and 34-55-4 ATS (38.2%) in the NCAAs since 1999.
- SEC teams had been a solid wager in the Sweet 16 round, 18-5-2 ATS from 2003-2017, but they are just 4-8 SU and 3-9 ATS (25%) since.
- SEC teams are on a 16-7 Over the total run in Elite Eight games.
- SEC teams have gotten the better of Pac-12 teams recently in NCAA tournament games, 12-5 ATS (70.6%) in the last 17.
- Seeded in the bottom half of the field (#9-#14), SEC teams have struggled to an 9-24 SU and 11-20-2 ATS (35.5%) record since 2007.
- The #4 seed and the SEC haven't meshed well of late, as they are 14-23 ATS (37.8%) in that spot since 2000 and have gone Under the total at a 28-8-1 (77.8%) rate.
- SEC teams are on a 0-6 ATS (0%) skid versus mid-major teams in the NCAAs and are 4-12 ATS (25%) in the last 16.

SOUTHERN

TEAMS IN THE FIELD/FIRST MATCHUP

SAMFORD (MIDWEST, #13) vs. KANSAS (#4-Big 12)

TRENDS

- Southern Conference teams have been very competitive in the NCAAs when playing as an underdog of less than 15 points, 16-6 ATS (72.7%) in the last 22.
- SoCon teams have trended Under the total in recent NCAAs, 12-3 (80%) in the last 15.
- Teams from the SoCon have covered five straight NCAA first-round games (100% ATS).

SOUTHLAND

TEAMS IN THE FIELD/FIRST MATCHUP

MCNEESE STATE (MIDWEST, #12) vs. GONZAGA (#5-West Coast)

TRENDS

- As underdogs of 8.5 points or less (or favored), Southland Conference teams are 8-5-1 ATS (61.5%) in their last 14 NCAA tournament tries, but when a larger underdog than that, they are 0-15 SU and 5-9-1 ATS (35.7%) since 2000.
- Southland Conference teams are 12-4 Under the total (75%) in their last 16 NCAA tournament first-round games.

SUMMIT

TEAMS IN THE FIELD/FIRST MATCHUP

SOUTH DAKOTA STATE (EAST, #15) vs. IOWA STATE (#2-Big 12)

TRENDS

- Overall, Summit League teams are on a 7-3-1 ATS (70%) run in NCAA tournament action, including a 3-0 ATS sweep by Oral Roberts in 2021. Underdogs are 8-2-1 ATS (80%) in those games. However, both **TRENDS** are 0-2 SU and ATS in 2022 & 2023.
- Summit League teams have been a very competitive First Round NCAA team in recent years, going 2-7 SU but 6-2-1 ATS (75%) in the last nine.
- Recognized as a high-scoring, up-tempo league, five of the last six NCAA tourney games featuring a Summit League team went Under the total (83.3%).

SUN BELT

TEAMS IN THE FIELD/FIRST MATCHUP

JAMES MADISON (SOUTH, #12) vs. WISCONSIN (#5-Big Ten)

TRENDS

- Sun Belt teams have lost their last seven NCAA tournament games while going 2-5 ATS (28.6%). Under the total is also 6-1 (85.7%) in those games.
- As #14-#16 seeds in the NCAA's, SBC teams are on a 6-11-1 ATS (35.3%) slide since 1999, but as #13 or better they've gone 10-4 ATS (71.4%) in that same span.
- As underdogs of 7.5 points or less, Sun Belt teams are on a 2-9 SU and 2-8-1 ATS (20%) slide in the NCAAs.
- As double-digit dogs, although they've never pulled an outright upset, Sun Belt teams are on an 11-4 ATS (73.3%) surge in the NCAAs.
- Sun Belt teams seem to take some motivation from playing major conference teams, as they are on an NCAA tourney run of 8-4 ATS (66.7%) versus those foes since 2008.

SWAC

TEAMS IN THE FIELD/FIRST MATCHUP

GRAMBLING (MIDWEST, #16) vs. MONTANA STATE (#16-Big Sky)

TRENDS

- SWAC teams are currently on a 5-3 ATS (62.5%) run in NCAA tourney games, including back-to-back wins in Play-In games.
- Despite allowing 87.8 PPG, SWAC teams are 4-2 ATS in their last six NCAA first-round contests.

WAC

TEAMS IN THE FIELD/FIRST MATCHUP

GRAND CANYON (WEST, #12) vs. ST MARY'S-CA (#5-West Coast)

TRENDS

- WAC teams have won just two of their last 23 games in the NCAAs since 2006, going 10-13 ATS. However, they are on a current five-game ATS winning streak.
- Six of the last seven WAC first-round NCAA tourney games have gone Over the total (85.7%).

WEST COAST

TEAMS IN THE FIELD/FIRST MATCHUP

GONZAGA (MIDWEST, #5) vs. MCNEESE STATE (#12-Southland)
ST MARY'S-CA (WEST, #5) vs. GRAND CANYON (#12-WAC)

TRENDS

- Going into the 2024 NCAAs, St Mary's and Gonzaga are looking to snap a 3-11 ATS (21.4%) tourney skid for WCC teams.
- West Coast Conference teams are just 2-11 SU and 3-10 ATS (23.1%) in their last 13 NCAA games against top 3 seeds.
- West Coast Conference teams haven't been as good as suspected as NCAA tournament underdogs, 7-22 SU and 8-21 ATS (27.6%) since 2007, including 10 straight outright and ATS losses.
- WCC teams have struggled against other non-major conference teams in NCAA tourney play, 19-8 SU but 8-19 ATS (29.6%) since 2004.
- WCC teams are just 5-14 ATS (26.3%) in their last 19 NCAA tourney games as favorites of 9.5 points or more.
- Favorites have won the last seven tourney games SU and ATS (100%) between West Coast and Big East conferences in the NCAAs.

STEVE MAKINEN'S EAST REGION

POWER RATINGS GRID

	TEAM/SEED	#1 CONNECTICUT	#2 IOWA ST	#3 ILLINOIS	#4 AUBURN	#5 SAN DIEGO ST	#6 BYU	#7 WASHINGTON ST	#8 FAU	#9 NORTHWESTERN	#10 DRAKE	#11 DUQUESNE	#12 UAB	#13 YALE	#14 MOREHEAD ST	#15 S DAKOTA ST	#16 STETSON
TEAM/SEED	RATING	93.7	90.3	88.8	91.3	84.2	86.1	82.4	82.6	81.9	81.1	77.4	76.1	77.8	74.8	73.7	68.2
#1 CONNECTICUT	93.7		3.4	4.9	2.4	9.5	7.6	11.3	11.1	11.8	12.6	16.3	17.6	15.9	18.9	20	25.5
#2 IOWA ST	90.3	-3.4		1.5	-1	6.1	4.2	7.9	7.7	8.4	9.2	12.9	14.2	12.5	15.5	16.6	22.1
#3 ILLINOIS	88.8	-4.9	-1.5		-2.5	4.6	2.7	6.4	6.2	6.9	7.7	11.4	12.7	11	14	15.1	20.6
#4 AUBURN	91.3	-2.4	1	2.5		7.1	5.2	8.9	8.7	9.4	10.2	13.9	15.2	13.5	16.5	17.6	23.1
#5 SAN DIEGO ST	84.2	-9.5	-6.1	-4.6	-7.1		-1.9	1.8	1.6	2.3	3.1	6.8	8.1	6.4	9.4	10.5	16
#6 BYU	86.1	-7.6	-4.2	-2.7	-5.2	1.9		3.7	3.5	4.2	5	8.7	10	8.3	11.3	12.4	17.9
#7 WASHINGTON ST	82.4	-11.3	-7.9	-6.4	-8.9	-1.8	-3.7		-0.2	0.5	1.3	5	6.3	4.6	7.6	8.7	14.2
#8 FAU	82.6	-11.1	-7.7	-6.2	-8.7	-1.6	-3.5	0.2		0.7	1.5	5.2	6.5	4.8	7.8	8.9	14.4
#9 NORTHWESTERN	81.9	-11.8	-8.4	-6.9	-9.4	-2.3	-4.2	-0.5	-0.7		0.8	4.5	5.8	4.1	7.1	8.2	13.7
#10 DRAKE	81.1	-12.6	-9.2	-7.7	-10.2	-3.1	-5	-1.3	-1.5	-0.8		3.7	5	3.3	6.3	7.4	12.9
#11 DUQUESNE	77.4	-16.3	-12.9	-11.4	-13.9	-6.8	-8.7	-5	-5.2	-4.5	-3.7		1.3	-0.4	2.6	3.7	9.2
#12 UAB	76.1	-17.6	-14.2	-12.7	-15.2	-8.1	-10	-6.3	-6.5	-5.8	-5	-1.3		-1.7	1.3	2.4	7.9
#13 YALE	77.8	-15.9	-12.5	-11	-13.5	-6.4	-8.3	-4.6	-4.8	-4.1	-3.3	0.4	1.7		3	4.1	9.6
#14 MOREHEAD ST	74.8	-18.9	-15.5	-14	-16.5	-9.4	-11.3	-7.6	-7.8	-7.1	-6.3	-2.6	-1.3	-3		1.1	6.6
#15 S DAKOTA ST	73.7	-20	-16.6	-15.1	-17.6	-10.5	-12.4	-8.7	-8.9	-8.2	-7.4	-3.7	-2.4	-4.1	-1.1		5.5
#16 STETSON	68.2	-25.5	-22.1	-20.6	-23.1	-16	-17.9	-14.2	-14.4	-13.7	-12.9	-9.2	-7.9	-9.6	-6.6	-5.5	

HOW TO USE THIS GRID

The grid above outlines how each team in the region matches up against the other teams in the region, creating a hypothetical betting line should the teams meet in the tournament. The values in the grid display how many points the team on the top would be favored (-), or an underdog (positive number), by when facing the teams listed down the left side of the grid by taking the team on the top's rating and subtracting the team's rating listed on the left. For example, #1 seed Connecticut would hypothetically be listed as a 9.5-point favorite (-9.5) against #5 seed San Diego St, should the teams match up in the tournament, based on this rating.

STEVE MAKINEN'S EAST REGION

EFFECTIVE STRENGTH GRID

	TEAM/SEED	#1 CONNECTICUT	#2 IOWA ST	#3 ILLINOIS	#4 AUBURN	#5 SAN DIEGO ST	#6 BYU	#7 WASHINGTON ST	#8 FAU	#9 NORTHWESTERN	#10 DRAKE	#11 DUQUESNE	#12 UAB	#13 YALE	#14 MOREHEAD ST	#15 S DAKOTA ST	#16 STETSON
TEAM/SEED	RATING	22.5	19.9	17.2	21.3	13.3	18.2	11.3	12.5	10.6	10.8	6.7	3.8	6.7	3.3	1.5	-2.6
#1 CONNECTICUT	22.5		2.6	5.3	1.2	9.2	4.3	11.2	10	11.9	11.7	15.8	18.7	15.8	19.2	21	25.1
#2 IOWA ST	19.9	-2.6		2.7	-1.4	6.6	1.7	8.6	7.4	9.3	9.1	13.2	16.1	13.2	16.6	18.4	22.5
#3 ILLINOIS	17.2	-5.3	-2.7		-4.1	3.9	-1	5.9	4.7	6.6	6.4	10.5	13.4	10.5	13.9	15.7	19.8
#4 AUBURN	21.3	-1.2	1.4	4.1		8	3.1	10	8.8	10.7	10.5	14.6	17.5	14.6	18	19.8	23.9
#5 SAN DIEGO ST	13.3	-9.2	-6.6	-3.9	-8		-4.9	2	0.8	2.7	2.5	6.6	9.5	6.6	10	11.8	15.9
#6 BYU	18.2	-4.3	-1.7	1	-3.1	4.9		6.9	5.7	7.6	7.4	11.5	14.4	11.5	14.9	16.7	20.8
#7 WASHINGTON ST	11.3	-11.2	-8.6	-5.9	-10	-2	-6.9		-1.2	0.7	0.5	4.6	7.5	4.6	8	9.8	13.9
#8 FAU	12.5	-10	-7.4	-4.7	-8.8	-0.8	-5.7	1.2		1.9	1.7	5.8	8.7	5.8	9.2	11	15.1
#9 NORTHWESTERN	10.6	-11.9	-9.3	-6.6	-10.7	-2.7	-7.6	-0.7	-1.9		-0.2	3.9	6.8	3.9	7.3	9.1	13.2
#10 DRAKE	10.8	-11.7	-9.1	-6.4	-10.5	-2.5	-7.4	-0.5	-1.7	0.2		4.1	7	4.1	7.5	9.3	13.4
#11 DUQUESNE	6.7	-15.8	-13.2	-10.5	-14.6	-6.6	-11.5	-4.6	-5.8	-3.9	-4.1		2.9	0	3.4	5.2	9.3
#12 UAB	3.8	-18.7	-16.1	-13.4	-17.5	-9.5	-14.4	-7.5	-8.7	-6.8	-7	-2.9		-2.9	0.5	2.3	6.4
#13 YALE	6.7	-15.8	-13.2	-10.5	-14.6	-6.6	-11.5	-4.6	-5.8	-3.9	-4.1	0	2.9		3.4	5.2	9.3
#14 MOREHEAD ST	3.3	-19.2	-16.6	-13.9	-18	-10	-14.9	-8	-9.2	-7.3	-7.5	-3.4	-0.5	-3.4		1.8	5.9
#15 S DAKOTA ST	1.5	-21	-18.4	-15.7	-19.8	-11.8	-16.7	-9.8	-11	-9.1	-9.3	-5.2	-2.3	-5.2	-1.8		4.1
#16 STETSON	-2.6	-25.1	-22.5	-19.8	-23.9	-15.9	-20.8	-13.9	-15.1	-13.2	-13.4	-9.3	-6.4	-9.3	-5.9	-4.1	

HOW TO USE THIS GRID

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STEVE MAKINEN'S EAST REGION

BETTORS RATING GRID

	TEAM/SEED	#1 CONNECTICUT	#2 IOWA ST	#3 ILLINOIS	#4 AUBURN	#5 SAN DIEGO ST	#6 BYU	#7 WASHINGTON ST	#8 FAU	#9 NORTHWESTERN	#10 DRAKE	#11 DUQUESNE	#12 UAB	#13 YALE	#14 MOREHEAD ST	#15 S DAKOTA ST	#16 STETSON
TEAM/SEED	RATING	-22.9	-17.1	-15.9	-19.1	-15.2	-15.9	-10.4	-12.1	-8.4	-9.2	-5.5	-6.1	-6.8	-2.4	-2.6	3.3
#1 CONNECTICUT	-22.9		5.8	7	3.8	7.7	7	12.5	10.8	14.5	13.7	17.4	16.8	16.1	20.5	20.3	26.2
#2 IOWA ST	-17.1	-5.8		1.2	-2	1.9	1.2	6.7	5	8.7	7.9	11.6	11	10.3	14.7	14.5	20.4
#3 ILLINOIS	-15.9	-7	-1.2		-3.2	0.7	0	5.5	3.8	7.5	6.7	10.4	9.8	9.1	13.5	13.3	19.2
#4 AUBURN	-19.1	-3.8	2	3.2		3.9	3.2	8.7	7	10.7	9.9	13.6	13	12.3	16.7	16.5	22.4
#5 SAN DIEGO ST	-15.2	-7.7	-1.9	-0.7	-3.9		-0.7	4.8	3.1	6.8	6	9.7	9.1	8.4	12.8	12.6	18.5
#6 BYU	-15.9	-7	-1.2	0	-3.2	0.7		5.5	3.8	7.5	6.7	10.4	9.8	9.1	13.5	13.3	19.2
#7 WASHINGTON ST	-10.4	-12.5	-6.7	-5.5	-8.7	-4.8	-5.5		-1.7	2	1.2	4.9	4.3	3.6	8	7.8	13.7
#8 FAU	-12.1	-10.8	-5	-3.8	-7	-3.1	-3.8	1.7		3.7	2.9	6.6	6	5.3	9.7	9.5	15.4
#9 NORTHWESTERN	-8.4	-14.5	-8.7	-7.5	-10.7	-6.8	-7.5	-2	-3.7		-0.8	2.9	2.3	1.6	6	5.8	11.7
#10 DRAKE	-9.2	-13.7	-7.9	-6.7	-9.9	-6	-6.7	-1.2	-2.9	0.8		3.7	3.1	2.4	6.8	6.6	12.5
#11 DUQUESNE	-5.5	-17.4	-11.6	-10.4	-13.6	-9.7	-10.4	-4.9	-6.6	-2.9	-3.7		-0.6	-1.3	3.1	2.9	8.8
#12 UAB	-6.1	-16.8	-11	-9.8	-13	-9.1	-9.8	-4.3	-6	-2.3	-3.1	0.6		-0.7	3.7	3.5	9.4
#13 YALE	-6.8	-16.1	-10.3	-9.1	-12.3	-8.4	-9.1	-3.6	-5.3	-1.6	-2.4	1.3	0.7		4.4	4.2	10.1
#14 MOREHEAD ST	-2.4	-20.5	-14.7	-13.5	-16.7	-12.8	-13.5	-8	-9.7	-6	-6.8	-3.1	-3.7	-4.4		-0.2	5.7
#15 S DAKOTA ST	-2.6	-20.3	-14.5	-13.3	-16.5	-12.6	-13.3	-7.8	-9.5	-5.8	-6.6	-2.9	-3.5	-4.2	0.2		5.9
#16 STETSON	3.3	-26.2	-20.4	-19.2	-22.4	-18.5	-19.2	-13.7	-15.4	-11.7	-12.5	-8.8	-9.4	-10.1	-5.7	-5.9	

HOW TO USE THIS GRID

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STEVE MAKINEN'S EAST REGION

MOMENTUM RATING GRID

	TEAM/SEED	#1 CONNECTICUT	#2 IOWA ST	#3 ILLINOIS	#4 AUBURN	#5 SAN DIEGO ST	#6 BYU	#7 WASHINGTON ST	#8 FAU	#9 NORTHWESTERN	#10 DRAKE	#11 DUQUESNE	#12 UAB	#13 YALE	#14 MOREHEAD ST	#15 S DAKOTA ST	#16 STETSON
TEAM/SEED	RATING	27.5	21.0	17.8	22.4	14.4	12.9	12.2	8.9	13.8	11.3	9.1	5.2	7.7	2.3	6.9	-2.9
#1 CONNECTICUT	27.5		6.5	9.7	5.1	13.1	14.6	15.3	18.6	13.7	16.2	18.4	22.3	19.8	25.2	20.6	30.4
#2 IOWA ST	21.0	-6.5		3.2	-1.4	6.6	8.1	8.8	12.1	7.2	9.7	11.9	15.8	13.3	18.7	14.1	23.9
#3 ILLINOIS	17.8	-9.7	-3.2		-4.6	3.4	4.9	5.6	8.9	4	6.5	8.7	12.6	10.1	15.5	10.9	20.7
#4 AUBURN	22.4	-5.1	1.4	4.6		8	9.5	10.2	13.5	8.6	11.1	13.3	17.2	14.7	20.1	15.5	25.3
#5 SAN DIEGO ST	14.4	-13.1	-6.6	-3.4	-8		1.5	2.2	5.5	0.6	3.1	5.3	9.2	6.7	12.1	7.5	17.3
#6 BYU	12.9	-14.6	-8.1	-4.9	-9.5	-1.5		0.7	4	-0.9	1.6	3.8	7.7	5.2	10.6	6	15.8
#7 WASHINGTON ST	12.2	-15.3	-8.8	-5.6	-10.2	-2.2	-0.7		3.3	-1.6	0.9	3.1	7	4.5	9.9	5.3	15.1
#8 FAU	8.9	-18.6	-12.1	-8.9	-13.5	-5.5	-4	-3.3		-4.9	-2.4	-0.2	3.7	1.2	6.6	2	11.8
#9 NORTHWESTERN	13.8	-13.7	-7.2	-4	-8.6	-0.6	0.9	1.6	4.9		2.5	4.7	8.6	6.1	11.5	6.9	16.7
#10 DRAKE	11.3	-16.2	-9.7	-6.5	-11.1	-3.1	-1.6	-0.9	2.4	-2.5		2.2	6.1	3.6	9	4.4	14.2
#11 DUQUESNE	9.1	-18.4	-11.9	-8.7	-13.3	-5.3	-3.8	-3.1	0.2	-4.7	-2.2		3.9	1.4	6.8	2.2	12
#12 UAB	5.2	-22.3	-15.8	-12.6	-17.2	-9.2	-7.7	-7	-3.7	-8.6	-6.1	-3.9		-2.5	2.9	-1.7	8.1
#13 YALE	7.7	-19.8	-13.3	-10.1	-14.7	-6.7	-5.2	-4.5	-1.2	-6.1	-3.6	-1.4	2.5		5.4	0.8	10.6
#14 MOREHEAD ST	2.3	-25.2	-18.7	-15.5	-20.1	-12.1	-10.6	-9.9	-6.6	-11.5	-9	-6.8	-2.9	-5.4		-4.6	5.2
#15 S DAKOTA ST	6.9	-20.6	-14.1	-10.9	-15.5	-7.5	-6	-5.3	-2	-6.9	-4.4	-2.2	1.7	-0.8	4.6		9.8
#16 STETSON	-2.9	-30.4	-23.9	-20.7	-25.3	-17.3	-15.8	-15.1	-11.8	-16.7	-14.2	-12	-8.1	-10.6	-5.2	-9.8	

HOW TO USE THIS GRID

The grid above outlines how each team in the region matches up against the other teams in the region, creating a hypothetical betting line should the teams meet in the tournament. The values in the grid display how many points the team on the top would be favored (-), or an underdog (positive number), by when facing the teams listed down the left side of the grid by taking the team on the tops rating and subtracting the team's rating listed on the left. For example, #1 seed Connecticut would hypothetically be listed as a 6.5-point favorite (-6.5) against #2 seed Iowa St, should the teams match up in the tournament, based on this rating.

EAST



#1 CONNECTICUT (-26.5, 144) VS #16 STETSON

The path to a title defense for UConn begins with Stetson, the Atlantic Sun champs who have never met a 3-point shot they don't like. The Hatters were actually a top-100 team in both 2P% and 3P% this season, but they don't force any turnovers and don't play a whole lot of defense. That seems like a bad combination taking on UConn, the overall No. 1 seed in the tournament and a top-10 team in both offensive and defensive eFG%.

The Huskies allowed over 1.1 points per possession five times this season, including the game against St. John's in the Big East Tournament. In 34 games this season, Stetson allowed over 1.1 PPP on 20 different occasions. In 34 games, UConn had over 1.1 PPP on offense in 25 of them.

If the Hatters go lights out from 3 (36.5% for the season), they'll make this game reasonably interesting for a while, but UConn's title defense really starts in the second round with the winner of Northwestern/Florida Atlantic. If the chalk holds up in the 12/5 and 13/4 games, we'll either get a title game rematch against San Diego State or an extremely fascinating, and relatively dangerous, game against Auburn in the Sweet 16.



#1 CONNECTICUT

CONFERENCE
Big East

HEAD COACH
Dan Hurley

RECORD
31-3 SU, 22-12 ATS, 17-17 O/U



#16 STETSON

CONFERENCE
Atlantic Sun

HEAD COACH
Donnie Jones

RECORD
22-12 SU, 16-15 ATS, 13-17 O/U

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

VALUE (NCAA RANK)

81.5 (20) ✓	Offensive PPG	74.5 (127)
64.4 (13) ✓	Defensive PPG	75.1 (259)
62.9 (323)	Possessions	✓ 64.1 (274)
1.32 (1) ✓	Offensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	1.123 (126)
0.966 (13) ✓	Defensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	1.171 (320)
49.6% (5) ✓	Offensive FG%	45.8% (81)
39.8% (6) ✓	Defensive FG%	45.6% (264)
36.7% (30) ✓	Offensive 3PT%	36.5% (38)
74.2% (88)	Free Throw %	✓ 76.3% (36)
56.2% (4) ✓	Rebounding %	48.7% (248)
1.881 (1) ✓	Asst/TO Ratio	1.198 (122)
14.5% (46) ✓	Offensive TO%	15.5% (95)
15.7% (246) ✓	Defensive TO%	13.2% (344)

ODDS TO WIN

REGION

+105

500-1

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

+400

5000-1

EAST



#8 FLORIDA ATLANTIC

CONFERENCE
American Athletic

HEAD COACH
Dusty May

RECORD
25-8 SU, 15-17 ATS, 18-15 O/U



#9 NORTHWESTERN

CONFERENCE
Big Ten

HEAD COACH
Chris Collins

RECORD
21-11 SU, 18-13 ATS, 17-13 O/U

#8 FLORIDA ATLANTIC (-2.5, 142.5) VS #9 NORTHWESTERN

Cinderella really liked how the glass slipper fit last season, but this year's FAU team underwhelmed throughout most of the 2023-24 season. Dusty May was able to run it back with mostly the same roster, but the Owls were upset by Temple in the AAC Tournament, leaving their at-large hopes in question.

The boys from Boca Raton still have a strong offensive team, led by Johnell Davis, Vladislav Goldin, and Alijah Martin, but they dropped from a top-40 ranking in adjusted defensive efficiency per Bart Torvik to the 130s. This was a top-15 team in 2P% defense last year and a team that finished in the 120s this time around. The big drop-off defensively seems important given the strength of this bracket and the tough first-round matchup.

This game will probably come down to Northwestern's 3-point shooting. The Wildcats were not a very efficient team inside the arc, but were a top-10 team from 3-point land. The Wildcats also took excellent care of the basketball with a top-10 TO% on offense. Take that with a grain of salt, as Big Ten teams don't force a lot of takeaways, but neither did FAU as the season rolled along.

Northwestern plays at one of the slowest tempos in the nation. Florida Atlantic was a little higher than the national average. If the Owls can speed this one up in transition on missed shots, I like their chances to cover against the Wildcats. They took a lot more Close Twos and also fared much better on the offensive glass.

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

VALUE (NCAA RANK)

82.5 (14) ✓	Offensive PPG	73.7 (143)
73.3 (202)	Defensive PPG	69 (76) ✓
65.8 (156) ✓	Possessions	62.1 (344)
1.234 (16) ✓	Offensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	1.202 (32)
1.057 (102)	Defensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	1.046 (82) ✓
48.1% (22) ✓	Offensive FG%	45.9% (78)
43.6% (147) ✓	Defensive FG%	45.0% (228)
35.6% (85)	Offensive 3PT%	39.4% (4) ✓
71.8% (197)	Free Throw %	74.8% (71) ✓
52.9% (43) ✓	Rebounding %	48.3% (269)
1.345 (65)	Asst/TO Ratio	1.793 (4) ✓
15.5% (92)	Offensive TO%	13.1% (7) ✓
16.1% (218)	Defensive TO%	18.4% (65) ✓

ODDS TO WIN

REGION

40-1

50-1

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

140-1

160-1

EAST



#5 SAN DIEGO ST (-7, 139) VS #12 UAB

The leap from Conference USA to the AAC was definitely a step up for UAB, but three wins in three days later and here they are in the NCAA Tournament. Even though Andy Kennedy was let go by the program before the team went to Fort Worth for the conference tourney, they played hard for him and had three double-digit victories, including a 16-point win over Temple to ice it.

Statistically, though, these two teams aren't very comparable. UAB was terrific on the offensive glass and their physical style on the inside led to a lot of free throw attempts, but they're outside the top 150 in offensive and defensive TO%, 2P%, 3P%, and outside the top 200 in eFG% offense and defense. SDSU was in the top-100 in most defensive categories and much better offensively on 2-point shots than last year's team.

One of the main criticisms of the Selection Committee is that the Mountain West was under-seeded. I wouldn't say that the Aztecs are. This year's team does have a lesser statistical profile than last year's, especially because they ranked in the 300s in 3P% at 31.3% after shooting 34% from 3 last season. The Aztecs are also down a little bit in the defensive efficiency metrics and went just 4-9 in Quadrant 1 games.

But, UAB will not be a Quadrant 1 game. I think this is a decent matchup for the Aztecs to ease into the tournament, but Auburn looms as a very difficult matchup in the next round.



#5 SAN DIEGO ST

CONFERENCE
Mountain West

HEAD COACH
Brian Dutcher

RECORD
24-10 SU, 13-19 ATS, 16-16 O/U



#12 UAB

CONFERENCE
American Athletic

HEAD COACH
Andy Kennedy

RECORD
22-11 SU, 19-12 ATS, 18-14 O/U

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

VALUE (NCAA RANK)

74.2 (133)	Offensive PPG	✓	77.2 (61)
67.3 (41) ✓	Defensive PPG		76 (279)
64.6 (243)	Possessions	✓	65.5 (182)
1.171 (63) ✓	Offensive Efficiency Points Per Possession		1.163 (72)
0.965 (12) ✓	Defensive Efficiency Points Per Possession		1.11 (196)
43.9% (202)	Offensive FG%	✓	44.8% (133)
41.1% (32) ✓	Defensive FG%		44.7% (210)
31.3% (307)	Offensive 3PT%	✓	32.7% (241)
72.9% (137)	Free Throw %	✓	74.4% (80)
52.6% (55) ✓	Rebounding %		52.3% (66)
1.195 (124) ✓	Asst/TO Ratio		1.128 (159)
15.6% (106) ✓	Offensive TO%		16.3% (160)
17.6% (116) ✓	Defensive TO%		15.5% (259)

ODDS TO WIN

REGION

25-1

350-1

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

90-1

800-1

EAST



#4 AUBURN (-13, 140.5) VS #13 YALE

As the pundits were pounding on the table about bubble teams and mid-major upset candidates, I couldn't stop thinking about how Auburn was underseeded. Per Bart Torvik, this is a top-10 team in both adjusted offensive and defensive efficiency and a top-five team overall. The SEC Tournament champs did struggle when stepping up in class, as they went 1-5 in Quadrant 1-A games and 3-7 in Quadrant 1 games overall.

Apparently, they didn't have the results to be seeded higher, but four of those seven losses were by six or fewer points and they had zero close wins. The Tigers enter the NCAA Tournament as one of the nation's best in eFG%, 3P% defense, and 2P% defense, but they're also a very good shooting team. They plowed through the SEC Tournament with wins over South Carolina (by 31!), Mississippi State, and Florida (by 19!) - with the last two as Quadrant 1 wins.

Yale, meanwhile, squeaked through the four-team Ivy League Tournament with a buzzer-beater win over Brown after building more than a 20-point deficit. The Bulldogs, like the other top teams in the Ivy, run some really smooth offensive sets, but are mostly undersized and outgunned in these games against major-conference opponents.

The Bulldogs have lost in the first round in each of their last two NCAA Tournament appearances, including a loss in the 14/3 game to Purdue by 22 two years ago.

UConn down the line would be a tough Sweet 16 matchup for Auburn, but the Tigers have the stats, length, and efficiency metrics to be very dangerous.



#4 AUBURN

CONFERENCE
SEC

HEAD COACH
Bruce Pearl

RECORD
26-7 SU, 20-13 ATS, 14-19 O/U



#13 YALE

CONFERENCE
Ivy League

HEAD COACH
James Jones

RECORD
21-9 SU, 16-11 ATS, 16-12 O/U

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

VALUE (NCAA RANK)

83.2 (11)	✓	Offensive PPG	74 (137)
68.1 (60)	✓	Defensive PPG	68.4 (66)
67.1 (82)	✓	Possessions	63.4 (308)
1.259 (10)	✓	Offensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	1.153 (82)
0.942 (4)	✓	Defensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	1.048 (87)
47.4% (38)	✓	Offensive FG%	46.5% (62)
38.5% (2)	✓	Defensive FG%	42.7% (96)
35.3% (105)	✓	Offensive 3PT%	34.7% (138)
75.0% (64)	✓	Free Throw %	71.1% (225)
52.4% (61)	✓	Rebounding %	52.3% (65)
1.704 (8)	✓	Asst/TO Ratio	1.54 (21)
14.6% (49)		Offensive TO%	✓ 13.9% (24)
18.0% (93)	✓	Defensive TO%	15.6% (255)

ODDS TO WIN

REGION

+380

200-1

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

15-1

800-1

EAST



#6 BYU (-9, 142.5) VS #11 DUQUESNE

Duquesne is an excellent story. Since starting 0-5 in conference play, including two games without star Dae Dae Grant, the Dukes have only lost three times. The unlikely winners of the A-10 Tournament are dancing for the first time since 1977. They earned it, winning four games in five days with some sharp 3-point shooting and excellent defense.

My initial thought was that this run for the Dukes is reminiscent of what Richmond did two years ago when they won four games in four days and rode that right on into a win over Iowa in the 12/5 game when the Hawkeyes were a top-15 team per Bart Torvik.

The Dukes will get another team that was top-20 all season long in BYU. The Cougars wore down a bit throughout Big 12 play, as their first season in the conference led to a 10-8 record, but Duquesne doesn't have the size, shooting prowess, or depth of the teams that BYU has been facing for the last three months.

While I have been skeptical of Mark Pope's team because they statistically dominated a very weak non-conference slate, they more than held their own offensively as the third-best team in adjusted defensive efficiency in the conference. That's a tall task for Keith Dambrot's squad, as they played well defensively throughout the season, but BYU has shooters all over the floor.

Generally speaking, teams like BYU are a little scary when we get to these neutral-site, unfamiliar venues. The Cougars took a 3 for over 51% of their shots this season, so one bad shooting performance could be the kiss of death. That makes them a little bit of a scary pick to advance, let alone cover, even though they are obviously the better team.



#6 BYU

CONFERENCE
Big 12

HEAD COACH
Mark Pope

RECORD
23-10 SU, 20-13 ATS, 16-17 O/U



#11 DUQUESNE

CONFERENCE
Atlantic 10

HEAD COACH
Keith Dambrot

RECORD
23-11 SU, 17-16 ATS, 9-23 O/U

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

VALUE (NCAA RANK)

81.8 (16) ✓	Offensive PPG	70.5 (238)
69.9 (98)	Defensive PPG	✓ 67.1 (34)
66.9 (93) ✓	Possessions	65 (215)
1.265 (8) ✓	Offensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	1.113 (140)
1.003 (28) ✓	Defensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	1.019 (47)
46.2% (69) ✓	Offensive FG%	43.8% (208)
42.6% (94)	Defensive FG%	✓ 42.3% (73)
34.8% (132) ✓	Offensive 3PT%	34.0% (178)
73.8% (103) ✓	Free Throw %	71.4% (212)
54.2% (20) ✓	Rebounding %	50.0% (185)
1.741 (7) ✓	Asst/TO Ratio	1.135 (154)
14.8% (61) ✓	Offensive TO%	16.9% (199)
15.6% (254)	Defensive TO%	✓ 18.8% (53)

ODDS TO WIN

REGION

15-1

200-1

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

70-1

600-1

EAST



#3 ILLINOIS (-12, 147.5) VS #14 MOREHEAD ST

The toughest mid-majors to gauge are teams that dominated bad conferences. Morehead State wasn't that dominant from a wins and losses standpoint, as the Eagles were actually the No. 3 seed in the Ohio Valley Tournament, but they were easily the best team in that conference. Realignment hurt the OVC with the losses of teams like Belmont and Murray State. Bart Torvik's conference ratings had the OVC 29th out of 32 conferences.

The Big Ten ranked second and the conference tournament champions are the ones in this 14/3 matchup. Morehead State comes into the tourney in the top 10 in eFG% defense, including the top 35 in 3P% and top 20 in 2P%, but they also played the 338th-ranked strength of schedule per Torvik. Alabama beat them by 38 and Purdue beat them by 30. Penn State also beat them by 23.

Morehead State's Preston Spradlin is a really good head coach, but Illinois matches up really well all over the floor. The Illini suffered in the efficiency metrics on defense because they don't force any turnovers and they ranked in the 200s in 3P%. Down the line, I think those could be problematic metrics, but not here against Morehead State.

Illinois should comfortably win the battle on the glass and ranked in the top 50 in both eFG% offense and defense while playing a top-40 schedule. Morehead State does shoot a lot of 3s and Illinois will have to respect that, but I don't think the success of fellow Big Ten teams is indicative of Morehead State having similar success. Keep an eye on that if Illinois faces BYU in the next round, though.



#3 ILLINOIS

CONFERENCE
Big Ten

HEAD COACH
Brad Underwood

RECORD
25-8 SU, 18-14 ATS, 23-10 O/U



#14 MOREHEAD ST

CONFERENCE
Ohio Valley

HEAD COACH
Preston Spradlin

RECORD
26-8 SU, 19-11 ATS, 15-15 O/U

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

VALUE (NCAA RANK)

84.2 (8) ✓	Offensive PPG	72.4 (174)
73.4 (207)	Defensive PPG	✓ 65.7 (18)
67.8 (57) ✓	Possessions	62.6 (332)
1.271 (7) ✓	Offensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	1.121 (130)
1.032 (62) ✓	Defensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	1.077 (138)
47.0% (47) ✓	Offensive FG%	46.4% (64)
43.1% (116)	Defensive FG%	✓ 40.9% (25)
35.0% (121)	Offensive 3PT%	✓ 35.3% (103)
74.0% (96) ✓	Free Throw %	71.5% (208)
55.7% (7) ✓	Rebounding %	54.1% (23)
1.199 (120) ✓	Asst/TO Ratio	1.118 (164)
14.9% (62) ✓	Offensive TO%	18.1% (279)
12.1% (359)	Defensive TO%	✓ 15.1% (287)

ODDS TO WIN

REGION

+750

350-1

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

35-1

1000-1

EAST



#7 WASHINGTON ST

CONFERENCE
Pac 12

HEAD COACH
Kyle Smith

RECORD
24-9 SU, 17-15 ATS, 14-18 O/U



#10 DRAKE

CONFERENCE
Missouri Valley

HEAD COACH
Darian DeVries

RECORD
28-6 SU, 18-15 ATS, 17-16 O/U

#7 WASHINGTON ST VS #10 DRAKE (-2, 138)

One of the most compelling first-round games is this matchup between Drake and Washington State. Drake was one of the top offensive mid-major teams and they actually went 4-1 in Quadrant 1 games, including the win over Indiana State in the Missouri Valley Tournament title game. The game ended 84-80, but it wasn't nearly that close.

Drake also had neutral-site wins by 20 over Akron and 19 over Nevada, so they've picked up some nice wins this season. Washington State has done that as well, including a sweep of Arizona during the regular season. In their last three losses, which date back to late January, they were 11-for-61 from 3, including the 4-for-19 performance against Colorado in the Pac-12 Tournament.

Wazzu's strength of schedule was about 35 spots higher than Drake's per Ken Pomeroy, so maybe you weigh their metrics a little bit stronger. The Cougars were better on defense, including a top-30 ranking in adjusted defensive efficiency. The Bulldogs were legitimately good on offense with a top-60 mark per Bart Torvik and a top-40 mark per KenPom. Strength vs. strength.

There are a couple of wild cards to this game. The first is that Drake takes a lot more 3s. Their 3P Rate was nearly 40%, while Wazzu's was 32%. The second is that the Cougars play at a very slow tempo, while Drake is around the national average.

Ultimately, I think Washington State's advantages on the glass and better balance on offense and defense allow them to advance, but this should be an excellent 10/7 game between two very well-coached teams.

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

VALUE (NCAA RANK)

74.3 (131)	Offensive PPG	✓	80.3 (27)
66.9 (31) ✓	Defensive PPG		70.6 (118)
62.8 (325)	Possessions	✓	65.9 (149)
1.177 (58)	Offensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	✓	1.194 (38)
1.007 (31) ✓	Defensive Efficiency Points Per Possession		1.034 (68)
46.6% (52)	Offensive FG%	✓	47.7% (31)
42.2% (67) ✓	Defensive FG%		44.5% (193)
34.0% (174)	Offensive 3PT%	✓	36.5% (41)
70.1% (269)	Free Throw %	✓	76.3% (37)
54.4% (16) ✓	Rebounding %		51.5% (99)
1.16 (136)	Asst/TO Ratio	✓	1.643 (12)
15.7% (111)	Offensive TO%	✓	13.5% (13)
15.5% (264)	Defensive TO%	✓	17.2% (135)

ODDS TO WIN

REGION

45-1

55-1

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

140-1

180-1

EAST



#2 IOWA ST (-17, 135.5) VS #15 SOUTH DAKOTA ST

There will be no “Hilton Magic” for Iowa State in the NCAA Tournament, as home cooking is not a luxury afforded to most teams. The Cyclones were 18-0 at home and thoroughly dominant in most of those games. They were 9-7 in road/neutral settings, including conference losses to Oklahoma and Kansas State and early-season neutral-site defeats at the hands of Texas A&M and Virginia Tech.

That’s not to say that the Cyclones are a bad team just because they’re not at home, but they did struggle to make shots out on the road, firing away at 31.1% from 3 and 50.5% from 2. Of course, they also won three games in Kansas City in the Big 12 Tournament by 71 combined points, so maybe it simply won’t matter.

It shouldn’t matter against South Dakota State, anyway. The Summit League wasn’t very good this season and this wasn’t the best SDSU team of the Eric Henderson era. That team was probably the 2022 team that went 30-5 and 18-0 in league play. The Jackrabbits led the nation in eFG% offense and 3P% that year. They lost by nine points in the first round against Providence in the 13/4 game.

South Dakota State has always had good offenses, average defenses, and been a popular pick to pull a first-round upset. Of course, they’re usually higher than a No. 15 seed, but they haven’t won an NCAA Tournament game in six tries and likely won’t here either. Almost nobody in the Summit League forces turnovers and Iowa State nearly led the nation in doing that.

I could definitely see this game go Under the total, as Iowa State allowed a shot share on Close Twos of just 23.8% and South Dakota State allowed a shot share of just 27.7%. This game will feature a lot of jumpers in an unfamiliar setting.



#2 IOWA ST

CONFERENCE
Big 12

HEAD COACH
TJ Otzelberger

RECORD
27-7 SU, 24-10 ATS, 16-18 O/U



#15 SOUTH DAKOTA ST

CONFERENCE
Summit

HEAD COACH
Eric Henderson

RECORD
22-12 SU, 16-14 ATS, 15-15 O/U

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

VALUE (NCAA RANK)

75.6 (97) ✓	Offensive PPG	75.5 (99)
61.3 (4) ✓	Defensive PPG	71.6 (147)
65.5 (181)	Possessions	✓ 66 (143)
1.205 (29) ✓	Offensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	1.112 (143)
0.9 (2) ✓	Defensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	1.088 (154)
46.4% (63)	Offensive FG%	✓ 48.2% (20)
40.0% (9) ✓	Defensive FG%	42.0% (63)
34.9% (127)	Offensive 3PT%	✓ 36.5% (36)
69.7% (276)	Free Throw %	✓ 72.6% (155)
50.6% (152)	Rebounding %	✓ 50.9% (125)
1.483 (28) ✓	Asst/TO Ratio	1.122 (161)
15.3% (82) ✓	Offensive TO%	16.0% (131)
24.9% (2) ✓	Defensive TO%	16.0% (227)

ODDS TO WIN

REGION

+400

400-1

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

20-1

2000-1

STEVE MAKINEN'S WEST REGION

POWER RATINGS GRID

	TEAM/SEED	#1 NORTH CAROLINA	#2 ARIZONA	#3 BAYLOR	#4 ALABAMA	#5 SAINT MARY'S	#6 CLEMSON	#7 DAYTON	#8 MISSISSIPPI ST	#9 MICHIGAN ST	#10 NEVADA	#11 NEW MEXICO	#12 GRAND CANYON	#13 CHARLESTON	#14 COLGATE	#15 LONG BEACH ST	#16 HOWARD	#16 WAGNER
TEAM/SEED	RATING	89.1	90.2	86.1	86.1	86.5	82.5	81.9	83.1	84.1	82.6	85.0	80.8	77.5	72.7	71.5	65.7	64.5
#1 NORTH CAROLINA	89.1		-1.1	3	3	2.6	6.6	7.2	6	5	6.5	4.1	8.3	11.6	16.4	17.6	23.4	24.6
#2 ARIZONA	90.2	1.1		4.1	4.1	3.7	7.7	8.3	7.1	6.1	7.6	5.2	9.4	12.7	17.5	18.7	24.5	25.7
#3 BAYLOR	86.1	-3	-4.1		0	-0.4	3.6	4.2	3	2	3.5	1.1	5.3	8.6	13.4	14.6	20.4	21.6
#4 ALABAMA	86.1	-3	-4.1	0		-0.4	3.6	4.2	3	2	3.5	1.1	5.3	8.6	13.4	14.6	20.4	21.6
#5 SAINT MARY'S	86.5	-2.6	-3.7	0.4	0.4		4	4.6	3.4	2.4	3.9	1.5	5.7	9	13.8	15	20.8	22
#6 CLEMSON	82.5	-6.6	-7.7	-3.6	-3.6	-4		0.6	-0.6	-1.6	-0.1	-2.5	1.7	5	9.8	11	16.8	18
#7 DAYTON	81.9	-7.2	-8.3	-4.2	-4.2	-4.6	-0.6		-1.2	-2.2	-0.7	-3.1	1.1	4.4	9.2	10.4	16.2	17.4
#8 MISSISSIPPI ST	83.1	-6	-7.1	-3	-3	-3.4	0.6	1.2		-1	0.5	-1.9	2.3	5.6	10.4	11.6	17.4	18.6
#9 MICHIGAN ST	84.1	-5	-6.1	-2	-2	-2.4	1.6	2.2	1		1.5	-0.9	3.3	6.6	11.4	12.6	18.4	19.6
#10 NEVADA	82.6	-6.5	-7.6	-3.5	-3.5	-3.9	0.1	0.7	-0.5	-1.5		-2.4	1.8	5.1	9.9	11.1	16.9	18.1
#11 NEW MEXICO	85.0	-4.1	-5.2	-1.1	-1.1	-1.5	2.5	3.1	1.9	0.9	2.4		4.2	7.5	12.3	13.5	19.3	20.5
#12 GRAND CANYON	80.8	-8.3	-9.4	-5.3	-5.3	-5.7	-1.7	-1.1	-2.3	-3.3	-1.8	-4.2		3.3	8.1	9.3	15.1	16.3
#13 CHARLESTON	77.5	-11.6	-12.7	-8.6	-8.6	-9	-5	-4.4	-5.6	-6.6	-5.1	-7.5	-3.3		4.8	6	11.8	13
#14 COLGATE	72.7	-16.4	-17.5	-13.4	-13.4	-13.8	-9.8	-9.2	-10.4	-11.4	-9.9	-12.3	-8.1	-4.8		1.2	7	8.2
#15 LONG BEACH ST	71.5	-17.6	-18.7	-14.6	-14.6	-15	-11	-10.4	-11.6	-12.6	-11.1	-13.5	-9.3	-6	-1.2		5.8	7
#16 HOWARD	65.7	-23.4	-24.5	-20.4	-20.4	-20.8	-16.8	-16.2	-17.4	-18.4	-16.9	-19.3	-15.1	-11.8	-7	-5.8		1.2
#16 WAGNER	64.5	-24.6	-25.7	-21.6	-21.6	-22	-18	-17.4	-18.6	-19.6	-18.1	-20.5	-16.3	-13	-8.2	-7	-1.2	

HOW TO USE THIS GRID

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STEVE MAKINEN'S WEST REGION

EFFECTIVE STRENGTH GRID

	TEAM/SEED	#1 NORTH CAROLINA	#2 ARIZONA	#3 BAYLOR	#4 ALABAMA	#5 SAINT MARY'S	#6 CLEMSON	#7 DAYTON	#8 MISSISSIPPI ST	#9 MICHIGAN ST	#10 NEVADA	#11 NEW MEXICO	#12 GRAND CANYON	#13 CHARLESTON	#14 COLGATE	#15 LONG BEACH ST	#16 HOWARD	#16 WAGNER
TEAM/SEED	RATING	18.4	22.6	16.4	17.9	16.3	13.0	12.1	13.2	14.9	12.3	15.3	10.4	5.4	1.7	0.0	-6.0	-7.4
#1 NORTH CAROLINA	18.4		-4.2	2	0.5	2.1	5.4	6.3	5.2	3.5	6.1	3.1	8	13	16.7	18.4	24.4	25.8
#2 ARIZONA	22.6	4.2		6.2	4.7	6.3	9.6	10.5	9.4	7.7	10.3	7.3	12.2	17.2	20.9	22.6	28.6	30
#3 BAYLOR	16.4	-2	-6.2		-1.5	0.1	3.4	4.3	3.2	1.5	4.1	1.1	6	11	14.7	16.4	22.4	23.8
#4 ALABAMA	17.9	-0.5	-4.7	1.5		1.6	4.9	5.8	4.7	3	5.6	2.6	7.5	12.5	16.2	17.9	23.9	25.3
#5 SAINT MARY'S	16.3	-2.1	-6.3	-0.1	-1.6		3.3	4.2	3.1	1.4	4	1	5.9	10.9	14.6	16.3	22.3	23.7
#6 CLEMSON	13.0	-5.4	-9.6	-3.4	-4.9	-3.3		0.9	-0.2	-1.9	0.7	-2.3	2.6	7.6	11.3	13	19	20.4
#7 DAYTON	12.1	-6.3	-10.5	-4.3	-5.8	-4.2	-0.9		-1.1	-2.8	-0.2	-3.2	1.7	6.7	10.4	12.1	18.1	19.5
#8 MISSISSIPPI ST	13.2	-5.2	-9.4	-3.2	-4.7	-3.1	0.2	1.1		-1.7	0.9	-2.1	2.8	7.8	11.5	13.2	19.2	20.6
#9 MICHIGAN ST	14.9	-3.5	-7.7	-1.5	-3	-1.4	1.9	2.8	1.7		2.6	-0.4	4.5	9.5	13.2	14.9	20.9	22.3
#10 NEVADA	12.3	-6.1	-10.3	-4.1	-5.6	-4	-0.7	0.2	-0.9	-2.6		-3	1.9	6.9	10.6	12.3	18.3	19.7
#11 NEW MEXICO	15.3	-3.1	-7.3	-1.1	-2.6	-1	2.3	3.2	2.1	0.4	3		4.9	9.9	13.6	15.3	21.3	22.7
#12 GRAND CANYON	10.4	-8	-12.2	-6	-7.5	-5.9	-2.6	-1.7	-2.8	-4.5	-1.9	-4.9		5	8.7	10.4	16.4	17.8
#13 CHARLESTON	5.4	-13	-17.2	-11	-12.5	-10.9	-7.6	-6.7	-7.8	-9.5	-6.9	-9.9	-5		3.7	5.4	11.4	12.8
#14 COLGATE	1.7	-16.7	-20.9	-14.7	-16.2	-14.6	-11.3	-10.4	-11.5	-13.2	-10.6	-13.6	-8.7	-3.7		1.7	7.7	9.1
#15 LONG BEACH ST	0.0	-18.4	-22.6	-16.4	-17.9	-16.3	-13	-12.1	-13.2	-14.9	-12.3	-15.3	-10.4	-5.4	-1.7		6	7.4
#16 HOWARD	-6.0	-24.4	-28.6	-22.4	-23.9	-22.3	-19	-18.1	-19.2	-20.9	-18.3	-21.3	-16.4	-11.4	-7.7	-6		1.4
#16 WAGNER	-7.4	-25.8	-30	-23.8	-25.3	-23.7	-20.4	-19.5	-20.6	-22.3	-19.7	-22.7	-17.8	-12.8	-9.1	-7.4	-1.4	

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STEVE MAKINEN'S WEST REGION

BETTORS RATING GRID

TEAM/SEED	TEAM/SEED	#1 NORTH CAROLINA	#2 ARIZONA	#3 BAYLOR	#4 ALABAMA	#5 SAINT MARY'S	#6 CLEMSON	#7 DAYTON	#8 MISSISSIPPI ST	#9 MICHIGAN ST	#10 NEVADA	#11 NEW MEXICO	#12 GRAND CANYON	#13 CHARLESTON	#14 COLGATE	#15 LONG BEACH ST	#16 HOWARD	#16 WAGNER
TEAM/SEED	RATING	-17.4	-19.7	-16.8	-16.8	-13.8	-13.2	-9.9	-11.5	-13.8	-10.0	-11.2	-8.5	-6.2	-0.6	1.2	5.7	9.0
#1 NORTH CAROLINA	-17.4		-2.3	0.6	0.6	3.6	4.2	7.5	5.9	3.6	7.4	6.2	8.9	11.2	16.8	18.6	23.1	26.4
#2 ARIZONA	-19.7	2.3		2.9	2.9	5.9	6.5	9.8	8.2	5.9	9.7	8.5	11.2	13.5	19.1	20.9	25.4	28.7
#3 BAYLOR	-16.8	-0.6	-2.9		0	3	3.6	6.9	5.3	3	6.8	5.6	8.3	10.6	16.2	18	22.5	25.8
#4 ALABAMA	-16.8	-0.6	-2.9	0		3	3.6	6.9	5.3	3	6.8	5.6	8.3	10.6	16.2	18	22.5	25.8
#5 SAINT MARY'S	-13.8	-3.6	-5.9	-3	-3		0.6	3.9	2.3	0	3.8	2.6	5.3	7.6	13.2	15	19.5	22.8
#6 CLEMSON	-13.2	-4.2	-6.5	-3.6	-3.6	-0.6		3.3	1.7	-0.6	3.2	2	4.7	7	12.6	14.4	18.9	22.2
#7 DAYTON	-9.9	-7.5	-9.8	-6.9	-6.9	-3.9	-3.3		-1.6	-3.9	-0.1	-1.3	1.4	3.7	9.3	11.1	15.6	18.9
#8 MISSISSIPPI ST	-11.5	-5.9	-8.2	-5.3	-5.3	-2.3	-1.7	1.6		-2.3	1.5	0.3	3	5.3	10.9	12.7	17.2	20.5
#9 MICHIGAN ST	-13.8	-3.6	-5.9	-3	-3	0	0.6	3.9	2.3		3.8	2.6	5.3	7.6	13.2	15	19.5	22.8
#10 NEVADA	-10.0	-7.4	-9.7	-6.8	-6.8	-3.8	-3.2	0.1	-1.5	-3.8		-1.2	1.5	3.8	9.4	11.2	15.7	19
#11 NEW MEXICO	-11.2	-6.2	-8.5	-5.6	-5.6	-2.6	-2	1.3	-0.3	-2.6	1.2		2.7	5	10.6	12.4	16.9	20.2
#12 GRAND CANYON	-8.5	-8.9	-11.2	-8.3	-8.3	-5.3	-4.7	-1.4	-3	-5.3	-1.5	-2.7		2.3	7.9	9.7	14.2	17.5
#13 CHARLESTON	-6.2	-11.2	-13.5	-10.6	-10.6	-7.6	-7	-3.7	-5.3	-7.6	-3.8	-5	-2.3		5.6	7.4	11.9	15.2
#14 COLGATE	-0.6	-16.8	-19.1	-16.2	-16.2	-13.2	-12.6	-9.3	-10.9	-13.2	-9.4	-10.6	-7.9	-5.6		1.8	6.3	9.6
#15 LONG BEACH ST	1.2	-18.6	-20.9	-18	-18	-15	-14.4	-11.1	-12.7	-15	-11.2	-12.4	-9.7	-7.4	-1.8		4.5	7.8
#16 HOWARD	5.7	-23.1	-25.4	-22.5	-22.5	-19.5	-18.9	-15.6	-17.2	-19.5	-15.7	-16.9	-14.2	-11.9	-6.3	-4.5		3.3
#16 WAGNER	9.0	-26.4	-28.7	-25.8	-25.8	-22.8	-22.2	-18.9	-20.5	-22.8	-19	-20.2	-17.5	-15.2	-9.6	-7.8	-3.3	

HOW TO USE THIS GRID

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STEVE MAKINEN'S WEST REGION

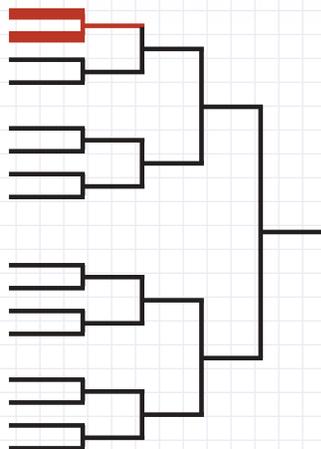
MOMENTUM RATING GRID

TEAM/SEED		TEAM/SEED	#1 NORTH CAROLINA	#2 ARIZONA	#3 BAYLOR	#4 ALABAMA	#5 SAINT MARY'S	#6 CLEMSON	#7 DAYTON	#8 MISSISSIPPI ST	#9 MICHIGAN ST	#10 NEVADA	#11 NEW MEXICO	#12 GRAND CANYON	#13 CHARLESTON	#14 COLGATE	#15 LONG BEACH ST	#16 HOWARD	#16 WAGNER
TEAM/SEED	RATING	RATING	18.1	21.9	16.1	10.7	20.5	11.6	10.1	14.3	12.7	13.9	12.6	10.1	10.6	2.2	0.6	-6.0	-6.7
#1 NORTH CAROLINA	18.1			-3.8	2	7.4	-2.4	6.5	8	3.8	5.4	4.2	5.5	8	7.5	15.9	17.5	24.1	24.8
#2 ARIZONA	21.9	3.8			5.8	11.2	1.4	10.3	11.8	7.6	9.2	8	9.3	11.8	11.3	19.7	21.3	27.9	28.6
#3 BAYLOR	16.1	-2	-5.8			5.4	-4.4	4.5	6	1.8	3.4	2.2	3.5	6	5.5	13.9	15.5	22.1	22.8
#4 ALABAMA	10.7	-7.4	-11.2	-5.4			-9.8	-0.9	0.6	-3.6	-2	-3.2	-1.9	0.6	0.1	8.5	10.1	16.7	17.4
#5 SAINT MARY'S	20.5	2.4	-1.4	4.4	9.8			8.9	10.4	6.2	7.8	6.6	7.9	10.4	9.9	18.3	19.9	26.5	27.2
#6 CLEMSON	11.6	-6.5	-10.3	-4.5	0.9	-8.9			1.5	-2.7	-1.1	-2.3	-1	1.5	1	9.4	11	17.6	18.3
#7 DAYTON	10.1	-8	-11.8	-6	-0.6	-10.4	-1.5			-4.2	-2.6	-3.8	-2.5	0	-0.5	7.9	9.5	16.1	16.8
#8 MISSISSIPPI ST	14.3	-3.8	-7.6	-1.8	3.6	-6.2	2.7	4.2			1.6	0.4	1.7	4.2	3.7	12.1	13.7	20.3	21
#9 MICHIGAN ST	12.7	-5.4	-9.2	-3.4	2	-7.8	1.1	2.6	-1.6			-1.2	0.1	2.6	2.1	10.5	12.1	18.7	19.4
#10 NEVADA	13.9	-4.2	-8	-2.2	3.2	-6.6	2.3	3.8	-0.4	1.2			1.3	3.8	3.3	11.7	13.3	19.9	20.6
#11 NEW MEXICO	12.6	-5.5	-9.3	-3.5	1.9	-7.9	1	2.5	-1.7	-0.1	-1.3			2.5	2	10.4	12	18.6	19.3
#12 GRAND CANYON	10.1	-8	-11.8	-6	-0.6	-10.4	-1.5	0	-4.2	-2.6	-3.8	-2.5			-0.5	7.9	9.5	16.1	16.8
#13 CHARLESTON	10.6	-7.5	-11.3	-5.5	-0.1	-9.9	-1	0.5	-3.7	-2.1	-3.3	-2	0.5			8.4	10	16.6	17.3
#14 COLGATE	2.2	-15.9	-19.7	-13.9	-8.5	-18.3	-9.4	-7.9	-12.1	-10.5	-11.7	-10.4	-7.9	-8.4			1.6	8.2	8.9
#15 LONG BEACH ST	0.6	-17.5	-21.3	-15.5	-10.1	-19.9	-11	-9.5	-13.7	-12.1	-13.3	-12	-9.5	-10	-1.6			6.6	7.3
#16 HOWARD	-6.0	-24.1	-27.9	-22.1	-16.7	-26.5	-17.6	-16.1	-20.3	-18.7	-19.9	-18.6	-16.1	-16.6	-8.2	-6.6			0.7
#16 WAGNER	-6.7	-24.8	-28.6	-22.8	-17.4	-27.2	-18.3	-16.8	-21	-19.4	-20.6	-19.3	-16.8	-17.3	-8.9	-7.3	-0.7		

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WEST



#1 NORTH CAROLINA VS #16 HOWARD/WAGNER

The Tar Heels await the winner of the Howard/Wagner matchup in Dayton, as North Carolina is a No. 1 seed for the 18th time in program history. They actually missed the NCAA Tournament last season for the first time since 2010.

Howard was the MEAC champ and Wagner was a real surprise winner of the Northeast Conference, as they entered the conference tourney with a losing record. Wagner won all three games on the road to punch a ticket to southwest Ohio. The Seahawks play at one of the slowest tempos in the nation and are a tremendously inefficient offense. By eFG% offense, Bart Torvik has them as a bottom-10 team in the country. Howard turns the ball over a ton, but can at least score.

North Carolina should have no problem rolling over either of these teams. Howard would likely provide a little more resistance, but this is all about seeing how the bracket sets up for the Tar Heels. Given how Alabama played down the stretch, they should be in pretty good shape, though a matchup with the suffocating Saint Mary's defense would be an interesting contrast of styles.



#1 NORTH CAROLINA

CONFERENCE
ACC

HEAD COACH
Hubert Davis

RECORD
27-7 SU, 19-15 ATS, 17-16 O/U

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

VALUE (NCAA RANK)

81.5 (20)	Offensive PPG
70.2 (105)	Defensive PPG
68.4 (37)	Possessions
1.224 (19)	Offensive Efficiency Points Per Possession
0.96 (10)	Defensive Efficiency Points Per Possession
44.9% (129)	Offensive FG%
40.7% (18)	Defensive FG%
35.4% (101)	Offensive 3PT%
75.4% (55)	Free Throw %
55.0% (13)	Rebounding %
1.405 (48)	Asst/TO Ratio
14.0% (30)	Offensive TO%
14.5% (310)	Defensive TO%

ODDS TO WIN

REGION

+230

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

14-1

WEST



#16 HOWARD (-3, 128) VS #16 WAGNER

The Seahawks had a losing record for the season before entering their conference tournament and winning three games on the road to take down the NEC title. Howard did as well before sweeping three games in three days in the MEAC Tournament to punch a second straight ticket into the NCAA Tournament.

Both teams wound up with similar strengths of schedule and, unlike a lot of small-conference programs, didn't schedule up all that much in the non-conference part of the year. Wagner played at the second-slowest tempo in the nation and defended really well, including a 29.9% 3P% against. Howard was a top-20 team in 3P%, so we've got strength on strength here.

But, there are a few key differences otherwise. Howard is much better on the offensive glass and had a much higher shot share on Close Twos at 40.3% compared to 30.2% for Wagner per Bart Torvik. Also, Howard didn't value the basketball nearly as much with a turnover on over 21% of their possessions.

The Bison do have the two best players in the game in Bryce Harris and Seth Towns. Marcus Dockery was originally at Maryland, while Towns was at Ohio State and Harvard. There should be a bit of a talent gap between these two teams, but defense typically travels, which makes Wagner a bit of an interesting underdog.

This is the first First Four appearance for both teams, but Howard and head coach Kenny Blakeney did make the tourney last year and play Kansas, while Wagner has not made it since 2003.



#16 HOWARD

CONFERENCE
Mid-Eastern

HEAD COACH
Kenny Blakeney

RECORD
18-16 SU, 12-19 ATS, 20-12 O/U



#16 WAGNER

CONFERENCE
Northeast

HEAD COACH
Donald Copeland

RECORD
16-15 SU, 15-13 ATS, 10-19 O/U

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

VALUE (NCAA RANK)

74.7 (124) ✓	Offensive PPG	61.7 (357)
75.3 (264)	Defensive PPG	✓ 63 (6)
65.9 (152) ✓	Possessions	59.8 (360)
1.098 (173) ✓	Offensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	0.992 (327)
1.187 (338)	Defensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	✓ 1.122 (214)
44.7% (148) ✓	Offensive FG%	38.5% (358)
45.2% (241)	Defensive FG%	✓ 42.3% (71)
37.5% (19) ✓	Offensive 3PT%	31.6% (291)
75.0% (64) ✓	Free Throw %	70.7% (249)
51.9% (79) ✓	Rebounding %	50.2% (175)
0.908 (300)	Asst/TO Ratio	✓ 1.195 (125)
20.8% (351)	Offensive TO%	✓ 15.6% (100)
16.3% (195)	Defensive TO%	✓ 16.6% (173)

ODDS TO WIN

REGION

500-1

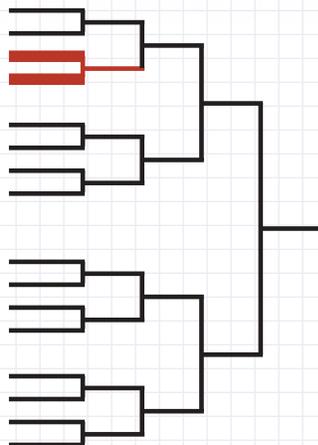
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NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

5000-1

5000-1

WEST



#8 MISSISSIPPI ST VS #9 MICHIGAN ST (-1, 130.5)

Some felt like Michigan State's presence in this year's NCAA Tournament field was up for some debate, but their seeding says otherwise. Usually teams get punished a little more for struggling down the stretch, and Michigan State did, as they lost five of their final seven games, but the close loss to Purdue in Minneapolis was at least a somewhat promising development.

Mississippi State also ended the regular season on a low note with four straight losses, but they played three Quadrant 1 games and lost in overtime to South Carolina at home. They had a resounding 17-point win over Tennessee in the SEC Tournament to beat the Vols for the second time before bowing out against Auburn.

These two teams feel very similar. Both have questionable offensive profiles, but have excelled on defense. Michigan State is better from 3 and Mississippi State is better from 2, but, ironically, it is the Bulldogs who take a lot of 3s and the Spartans who don't. Sparty also takes better care of the ball, though that might just be a Big Ten thing, where very few teams play pressure defense.

Both teams do a nice job of packing it in defensively to limit shot attempts at the rim. Mississippi State was better about getting the ball inside, though, and shot selection is a big part of my handicapping. Michigan State took a lot of mid-range jumpers. Mississippi State did not. The Bulldogs were also the better team on the glass. I think I prefer the south's version of MSU to the Midwest's version of MSU here, but it would be hard to see either team progress past North Carolina.



#8 MISSISSIPPI ST

CONFERENCE
SEC

HEAD COACH
Chris Jans

RECORD
21-13 SU, 17-16 ATS, 16-17 O/U



#9 MICHIGAN ST

CONFERENCE
Big Ten

HEAD COACH
Tom Izzo

RECORD
19-14 SU, 19-14 ATS, 14-19 O/U

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

VALUE (NCAA RANK)

74.8 (119) ✓	Offensive PPG	73.1 (157)
69.1 (79)	Defensive PPG	✓ 65.9 (21)
64.9 (225) ✓	Possessions	63.4 (307)
1.166 (67)	Offensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	✓ 1.187 (45)
0.972 (16)	Defensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	✓ 0.95 (8)
45.5% (96)	Offensive FG%	✓ 46.1% (71)
41.6% (42)	Defensive FG%	✓ 41.2% (34)
32.5% (247)	Offensive 3PT%	✓ 35.9% (67)
67.2% (324)	Free Throw %	✓ 70.6% (254)
54.1% (22) ✓	Rebounding %	50.6% (148)
1.086 (183)	Asst/TO Ratio	✓ 1.666 (10)
18.3% (293)	Offensive TO%	✓ 14.3% (39)
17.7% (103)	Defensive TO%	✓ 18.3% (73)

ODDS TO WIN

REGION

35-1

25-1

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

120-1

100-1

WEST



#5 SAINT MARY'S (-5.5, 131) VS #12 GRAND CANYON

I will start this capsule the same way I started McNeese vs. Gonzaga. Death, taxes, and dangerous mid-majors getting paired up in the first round.

This game is from the “anything you can do, I can do better” department. Both of these teams excelled defensively, ranking in the top 10 per Bart Torvik in 2P%. Saint Mary’s was a little bit better. Both teams got to the rim a lot on offense, but Saint Mary’s was a little bit better, in both shot share and FG%. Saint Mary’s was just a little bit better in 3P%. Saint Mary’s was just a little bit better on the offensive glass.

Basically, Grand Canyon could have given a middling high-major a real tough game, but instead they got paired with a better version of themselves. Last season, Grand Canyon was given Gonzaga and lost by 12. This is actually a better Grand Canyon team defensively, but a little worse offensively, especially in terms of 3P%.

This is the highest tournament seed for the Antelopes in the Bryce Drew era, so they’re getting a little bit more respect in that regard, but this looks to be a rather unfortunate matchup. Randy Bennett’s Gaels have one loss since December 23 and two losses since December 1. There is also a noteworthy strength of schedule discrepancy here, as Saint Mary’s played eight Quadrant 1 games and Grand Canyon played one, though it was a home win over San Diego State.



#5 SAINT MARY'S

CONFERENCE
West Coast

HEAD COACH
Randy Bennett

RECORD
26-7 SU, 18-14 ATS, 17-15 O/U



#12 GRAND CANYON

CONFERENCE
WAC

HEAD COACH
Bryce Drew

RECORD
28-4 SU, 18-14 ATS, 17-15 O/U

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

VALUE (NCAA RANK)

73.2 (153)	Offensive PPG	✓	78.4 (49)
59.7 (3) ✓	Defensive PPG		66.7 (29)
60.8 (357)	Possessions	✓	65.6 (174)
1.205 (31) ✓	Offensive Efficiency Points Per Possession		1.185 (50)
0.948 (6) ✓	Defensive Efficiency Points Per Possession		1.03 (61)
46.6% (56) ✓	Offensive FG%		45.8% (80)
40.4% (14) ✓	Defensive FG%		40.4% (15)
35.5% (93) ✓	Offensive 3PT%		34.4% (154)
67.4% (323)	Free Throw %	✓	75.3% (56)
58.4% (1) ✓	Rebounding %		53.3% (33)
1.571 (19) ✓	Asst/TO Ratio		0.949 (270)
15.5% (94) ✓	Offensive TO%		17.3% (217)
16.2% (208)	Defensive TO%	✓	19.3% (42)

ODDS TO WIN

REGION

11-1

75-1

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

70-1

300-1

WEST



#4 ALABAMA (-9.5, 173.5) VS #13 CHARLESTON

If good offense is what gets your motor running, be sure to oil up prior to this game. Alabama and Charleston both play at heightened tempos and both make a lot of shots while taking a lot of 3s. The CAA champs took a 3-pointer on 47.1% of their shot attempts and the Crimson Tide took one on 46.8% of their shot attempts. Both teams also shot better than the national average, with Alabama a top-35 squad in 3P%.

It will be interesting to see how many people look to fade Alabama. The Crimson Tide were horrendous on defense down the stretch, including three games in which they allowed over 100 points. Alabama guard Aaron Estrada is a really interesting player here, as he played four years for Hofstra before moving to Tuscaloosa, so he is plenty familiar with the Cougars, who won the CAA bid last season without having to face Estrada's Pride.

Charleston actually played really tight with San Diego State last season, despite a 5-of-24 performance from 3 and a 13-of-32 performance inside the arc. Last year's group was much more formidable on defense than this year's group, but this offense is quite a bit better.

The Cougars get inside a lot less than Alabama, so I'll be curious to see how that dynamic plays out, as it will take a really impressive shooting performance from Pat Kelsey's team to advance, but they are plenty capable of it in a track meet type of game.

As with most games like this, there is a big strength of schedule discrepancy, as Charleston played just one Quadrant 1 game and three Quadrant 2 games, while Alabama played 14 Q1 and eight Q2. Charleston was also 8-2 in close games, including the CAA title game against Stony Brook.



#4 ALABAMA

**CONFERENCE
SEC**

**HEAD COACH
Nate Oats**

**RECORD
21-11 SU, 17-14 ATS, 24-8 O/U**



#13 CHARLESTON

**CONFERENCE
Costal Athletic Association**

**HEAD COACH
Pat Kelsey**

**RECORD
27-7 SU, 16-16 ATS, 18-15 O/U**

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

VALUE (NCAA RANK)

90.8 (1) ✓	Offensive PPG	80 (29)
81.1 (348)	Defensive PPG	✓ 72.9 (196)
69.9 (15) ✓	Possessions	68.3 (45)
1.304 (2) ✓	Offensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	1.164 (71)
1.045 (80) ✓	Defensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	1.096 (166)
47.7% (32) ✓	Offensive FG%	44.2% (183)
44.0% (170) ✓	Defensive FG%	44.3% (183)
36.5% (34) ✓	Offensive 3PT%	34.8% (133)
78.4% (11) ✓	Free Throw %	72.2% (178)
53.0% (41) ✓	Rebounding %	52.7% (47)
1.345 (66)	Asst/TO Ratio	✓ 1.523 (23)
15.6% (110)	Offensive TO%	✓ 14.0% (27)
15.3% (278)	Defensive TO%	✓ 16.0% (226)

ODDS TO WIN

REGION

+900

150-1

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

40-1

1000-1

WEST



#6 CLEMSON VS #11 NEW MEXICO (-1.5, 150.5)

Everybody likes to point to Rick Barnes and Matt Painter when it comes to March futility, but Brad Brownell is up there. NC State won five games in five days in the ACC Tournament to get the auto bid. Brownell has been Clemson's coach since 2010 and has six wins total in the ACC Tournament. In the NCAA Tournament, he's 3-4 with the Tigers, with two of those wins coming back in 2018.

New Mexico was a team that got a lot of love coming into the season as somebody who could follow in the footsteps of fellow conference member San Diego State and make a deep NCAA Tournament run. They have all the pieces. They're a remarkably talented team out of a deep Mountain West with a lot of good statistical indicators. They have a high TO% differential and defend 3s really well.

Clemson doesn't really force turnovers and their shot selection leaves a lot to be desired, as they don't get the ball inside very much. There are some things to like about Clemson, as they did rank in the top 50 in both 2P% offense and defense. They beat North Carolina on the road and took Duke to the wire. There were some good regular season performances, but this is a program rarely ready for the March spotlight.

New Mexico is a very popular "upset" pick in brackets, in that they are the lower-seeded team, but they are actually favored in the game. After an uninspiring end to the regular season, New Mexico won four games in four days in Vegas to win the Mountain West and many, myself included, expect them to ride that wave to Memphis.



#6 CLEMSON

CONFERENCE
ACC

HEAD COACH
Brad Brownell

RECORD

21-11 SU, 17-14 ATS, 17-15 O/U



#11 NEW MEXICO

CONFERENCE
Mountain West

HEAD COACH
Richard Pitino

RECORD

26-9 SU, 23-11 ATS, 17-17 O/U

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

VALUE (NCAA RANK)

77.4 (57)	Offensive PPG	✓	81.6 (17)
71.3 (138)	Defensive PPG	✓	71 (128)
64.4 (259)	Possessions	✓	70.6 (9)
1.224 (20)	Offensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	✓	1.197 (36)
1.026 (55)	Defensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	✓	0.984 (20)
46.8% (49)	Offensive FG%	✓	46.0% (73)
41.8% (49)	Defensive FG%	✓	42.4% (78)
35.4% (102)	Offensive 3PT%	✓	33.4% (205)
79.0% (8)	Free Throw %	✓	71.8% (199)
52.8% (46)	Rebounding %	✓	52.9% (45)
1.443 (36)	Asst/TO Ratio	✓	1.462 (31)
14.6% (52)	Offensive TO%	✓	13.5% (14)
13.3% (342)	Defensive TO%	✓	19.0% (47)

ODDS TO WIN

REGION

35-1

25-1

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

120-1

120-1

WEST



#3 BAYLOR (-14, 138.5) VS #14 COLGATE

For the fourth straight year, Colgate represents the Patriot League. This year's team is a lot different than last season's. Last year's team actually led the nation in 3P% and eFG% going into the Big Dance. Texas beat them by 20. It felt all too similar to 2022, when Colgate was a popular upset pick against Wisconsin and lost. They were also a popular upset pick against Arkansas in 2021 and lost by 17.

I'm not sure we'll hear people singing the Raiders' praises this time around, as this year's team is in the 220s in adjusted offensive efficiency per Bart Torvik and 210s per KenPom. Last year's team was a top-50 squad per Torvik. Colgate has finished in the top 10 in 3P% against Division I foes in four of the last six seasons. This year's team is well off of that pace, though.

Of course, we've seen Scott Drew have his share of screw-ups early in the NCAA Tournament and Baylor seemed thoroughly disengaged against Iowa State in the Big 12 Tournament after beating Cincinnati. By Baylor standards, this isn't a great version. Offensively, they are quite good and shoot the 3 about as good as anybody, but this team has some major defensive flaws.

They still finished with 10 Quadrant 1 wins and I can't see Colgate putting too much fear into their hearts in this one, but focus seems to be a pretty regular issue. Outside of the championship team in 2021, Baylor has lost in the second round each of the last two years, second round in 2019, first round in 2015 and 2016. I'm not sure Colgate is the team, but they could keep this one close enough to make it interesting.



#3 BAYLOR

CONFERENCE
Big 12

HEAD COACH
Scott Drew

RECORD
23-10 SU, 19-11 ATS, 17-15 O/U



#14 COLGATE

CONFERENCE
Patriot

HEAD COACH
Matt Langel

RECORD
25-9 SU, 17-15 ATS, 12-21 O/U

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

VALUE (NCAA RANK)

80.1 (28) ✓	Offensive PPG	70.2 (249)
71.3 (134)	Defensive PPG	✓ 64 (10)
63.9 (281)	Possessions	✓ 65 (217)
1.287 (4) ✓	Offensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	1.083 (201)
1.027 (60) ✓	Defensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	1.064 (110)
48.0% (23) ✓	Offensive FG%	46.6% (54)
45.4% (252)	Defensive FG%	✓ 41.2% (35)
39.4% (6) ✓	Offensive 3PT%	35.7% (81)
74.0% (95) ✓	Free Throw %	68.0% (315)
54.3% (19) ✓	Rebounding %	51.8% (88)
1.218 (114)	Asst/TO Ratio	✓ 1.365 (58)
17.3% (218)	Offensive TO%	✓ 16.0% (132)
16.8% (160) ✓	Defensive TO%	15.8% (236)

ODDS TO WIN

REGION

+700

150-1

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

30-1

1000-1

WEST



#7 DAYTON VS #10 NEVADA (-1, 136.5)

The Dayton Flyers are back in the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 2017. Their last two appearances as a No. 7 seed have not worked out well, as they lost to Wichita State in 2017 and Syracuse in 2016. We'll see if things go differently here against an under-seeded Nevada team that actually ranks higher for Bart Torvik and just four spots lower for KenPom.

The Wolf Pack are a top-40 team in both adjusted offensive and defensive efficiency for Torvik and get a major travel advantage here with the game in Salt Lake City. They'll also be much more accustomed to the elevation playing in the Mountain West Conference.

This profiles as a potentially high-variance game. Not only are the teams rated close together, but both teams force opponents into a lot of 3s. Both teams shoot 3s very well, but Dayton shoots a lot more of them with a 44.5% 3P Rate and also makes a lot more of them with a 40.2% 3P%. Nevada's 3P Rate is only 33.6%, but they still shoot well at 36.5%. Both teams had a 3P Rate against over 40%.

Neither team gets the ball inside with great success unless Dayton is getting it to DaRon Holmes III and Nevada is getting it to Nick Davidson. That will be the matchup to watch in this one. This game is absolutely deserving of the coin flip line. Keep an eye on the total here, as Dayton plays really slow, but the emotion and the elevation could be factors in getting Steve Alford to push it a bit with his Wolf Pack squad.



#7 DAYTON

CONFERENCE
Atlantic 10

HEAD COACH
Anthony Grant

RECORD
24-7 SU, 15-14 ATS, 18-12 O/U



#10 NEVADA

CONFERENCE
Mountain West

HEAD COACH
Steve Alford

RECORD
26-7 SU, 21-11 ATS, 15-17 O/U

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

VALUE (NCAA RANK)

74.7 (121)	Offensive PPG	✓	75.9 (86)
66.3 (25) ✓	Defensive PPG		67.3 (40)
62.5 (334)	Possessions	✓	65 (213)
1.228 (17) ✓	Offensive Efficiency Points Per Possession		1.191 (43)
1.044 (79)	Defensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	✓	1.008 (32)
47.7% (29) ✓	Offensive FG%		47.2% (43)
41.5% (39) ✓	Defensive FG%		41.7% (46)
40.2% (3) ✓	Offensive 3PT%		36.5% (33)
73.4% (115) ✓	Free Throw %		72.3% (171)
50.8% (134)	Rebounding %	✓	51.1% (118)
1.44 (37)	Asst/TO Ratio	✓	1.472 (30)
15.5% (93)	Offensive TO%	✓	14.7% (57)
15.3% (276)	Defensive TO%	✓	17.0% (148)

ODDS TO WIN

REGION

55-1

30-1

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

200-1

160-1

WEST



#2 ARIZONA (-20.5, 161.5) VS #15 LONG BEACH ST

It's hard to tell if Dan Monson had vacation plans for this week or not, but Long Beach State's head coach agreed to a mutual parting of ways at season's end. Monson stuck around for the Big West Tournament and his team decided to go ahead and win it. The team actually lost five straight to finish the regular season before rolling through the conference tournament.

This is actually a really talented team that did underperform and underachieve during the regular season. It is a pretty experienced team as well. The one thing that has been true of every Monson team for about a decade is that they push the tempo. They'll keep doing it here against Arizona, another team that plays at a high rate of speed.

The big line seems fitting with all the possessions we'll see here, especially because the Wildcats are a very efficient offensive team. They score down low, they score out high, and they are very accurate from all areas on the floor. Arizona also has some massive advantages on the glass in this particular matchup.

Last year's team won the Pac-12 Tournament and then laid a giant egg against Princeton, scoring just 55 points in 15 over 2 upset. This year's team gracefully stepped aside after a loss to Oregon to get a little extra rest. They're also going into the NCAA Tournament healthier than the past two seasons. Whether or not they cover the big number remains to be seen, but West Region looks pretty kind for a deep run out of Tommy Lloyd's team to erase the bad memories of last year.



#2 ARIZONA

CONFERENCE
Pac 12

HEAD COACH
Tommy Lloyd

RECORD
25-8 SU, 21-12 ATS, 15-17 O/U



#15 LONG BEACH ST

CONFERENCE
Big West

HEAD COACH
Dan Monson

RECORD
21-14 SU, 16-17 ATS, 19-14 O/U

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

VALUE (NCAA RANK)

87.9 (3) ✓	Offensive PPG	76.5 (70)
72.2 (165) ✓	Defensive PPG	75.9 (277)
69.3 (21)	Possessions	✓ 69.5 (18)
1.276 (5) ✓	Offensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	1.104 (157)
0.95 (7) ✓	Defensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	1.113 (199)
48.9% (10) ✓	Offensive FG%	44.5% (163)
42.3% (72) ✓	Defensive FG%	43.4% (138)
37.1% (23) ✓	Offensive 3PT%	31.3% (302)
71.9% (192) ✓	Free Throw %	71.0% (231)
57.1% (3) ✓	Rebounding %	51.2% (110)
1.549 (20) ✓	Asst/TO Ratio	1.209 (118)
15.8% (114) ✓	Offensive TO%	16.7% (188)
17.7% (105)	Defensive TO%	✓ 18.1% (83)

ODDS TO WIN

REGION

+190

250-1

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

12-1

2000-1

STEVE MAKINEN'S SOUTH REGION

POWER RATINGS GRID

	TEAM/SEED	#1 HOUSTON	#2 MARQUETTE	#3 KENTUCKY	#4 DUKE	#5 WISCONSIN	#6 TEXAS TECH	#7 FLORIDA	#8 NEBRASKA	#9 TEXAS A&M	#10 BOISE ST	#10 COLORADO	#11 NC STATE	#12 JAMES MADISON	#13 VERMONT	#14 OAKLAND	#15 WKU	#16 LONGWOOD
TEAM/SEED	RATING	92.7	87.4	86.0	88.7	85.5	83.6	84.0	83.9	82.6	82.9	84.2	81.2	80.2	75.8	72.7	73.4	71.6
#1 HOUSTON	92.7		5.3	6.7	4	7.2	9.1	8.7	8.8	10.1	9.8	8.5	11.5	12.5	16.9	20	19.3	21.1
#2 MARQUETTE	87.4	-5.3		1.4	-1.3	1.9	3.8	3.4	3.5	4.8	4.5	3.2	6.2	7.2	11.6	14.7	14	15.8
#3 KENTUCKY	86.0	-6.7	-1.4		-2.7	0.5	2.4	2	2.1	3.4	3.1	1.8	4.8	5.8	10.2	13.3	12.6	14.4
#4 DUKE	88.7	-4	1.3	2.7		3.2	5.1	4.7	4.8	6.1	5.8	4.5	7.5	8.5	12.9	16	15.3	17.1
#5 WISCONSIN	85.5	-7.2	-1.9	-0.5	-3.2		1.9	1.5	1.6	2.9	2.6	1.3	4.3	5.3	9.7	12.8	12.1	13.9
#6 TEXAS TECH	83.6	-9.1	-3.8	-2.4	-5.1	-1.9		-0.4	-0.3	1	0.7	-0.6	2.4	3.4	7.8	10.9	10.2	12
#7 FLORIDA	84.0	-8.7	-3.4	-2	-4.7	-1.5	0.4		0.1	1.4	1.1	-0.2	2.8	3.8	8.2	11.3	10.6	12.4
#8 NEBRASKA	83.9	-8.8	-3.5	-2.1	-4.8	-1.6	0.3	-0.1		1.3	1	-0.3	2.7	3.7	8.1	11.2	10.5	12.3
#9 TEXAS A&M	82.6	-10.1	-4.8	-3.4	-6.1	-2.9	-1	-1.4	-1.3		-0.3	-1.6	1.4	2.4	6.8	9.9	9.2	11
#10 BOISE ST	82.9	-9.8	-4.5	-3.1	-5.8	-2.6	-0.7	-1.1	-1	0.3		-1.3	1.7	2.7	7.1	10.2	9.5	11.3
#10 COLORADO	84.2	-8.5	-3.2	-1.8	-4.5	-1.3	0.6	0.2	0.3	1.6	1.3		3	4	8.4	11.5	10.8	12.6
#11 NC STATE	81.2	-11.5	-6.2	-4.8	-7.5	-4.3	-2.4	-2.8	-2.7	-1.4	-1.7	-3		1	5.4	8.5	7.8	9.6
#12 JAMES MADISON	80.2	-12.5	-7.2	-5.8	-8.5	-5.3	-3.4	-3.8	-3.7	-2.4	-2.7	-4	-1		4.4	7.5	6.8	8.6
#13 VERMONT	75.8	-16.9	-11.6	-10.2	-12.9	-9.7	-7.8	-8.2	-8.1	-6.8	-7.1	-8.4	-5.4	-4.4		3.1	2.4	4.2
#14 OAKLAND	72.7	-20	-14.7	-13.3	-16	-12.8	-10.9	-11.3	-11.2	-9.9	-10.2	-11.5	-8.5	-7.5	-3.1		-0.7	1.1
#15 WKU	73.4	-19.3	-14	-12.6	-15.3	-12.1	-10.2	-10.6	-10.5	-9.2	-9.5	-10.8	-7.8	-6.8	-2.4	0.7		1.8
#16 LONGWOOD	71.6	-21.1	-15.8	-14.4	-17.1	-13.9	-12	-12.4	-12.3	-11	-11.3	-12.6	-9.6	-8.6	-4.2	-1.1	-1.8	

HOW TO USE THIS GRID

The grid above outlines how each team in the region matches up against the other teams in the region, creating a hypothetical betting line should the teams meet in the tournament. The values in the grid display how many points the team on the top would be favored (-), or an underdog (positive number), by when facing the teams listed down the left side of the grid by taking the team on the top's rating and subtracting the team's rating listed on the left. For example, #1 seed Houston would hypothetically be listed as a 4-point favorite (-4) against #4 seed Duke, should the teams match up in the tournament, based on this rating.

STEVE MAKINEN'S SOUTH REGION

EFFECTIVE STRENGTH GRID

	TEAM/SEED	#1 HOUSTON	#2 MARQUETTE	#3 KENTUCKY	#4 DUKE	#5 WISCONSIN	#6 TEXAS TECH	#7 FLORIDA	#8 NEBRASKA	#9 TEXAS A&M	#10 BOISE ST	#10 COLORADO	#11 NC STATE	#12 JAMES MADISON	#13 VERMONT	#14 OAKLAND	#15 WKU	#16 LONGWOOD
TEAM/SEED	RATING	23.8	17.6	15.3	17.8	14.5	12.9	13.7	13.2	11.1	12.2	13.6	9.8	10.4	4.3	3.0	2.5	0.1
#1 HOUSTON	23.8		6.2	8.5	6	9.3	10.9	10.1	10.6	12.7	11.6	10.2	14	13.4	19.5	20.8	21.3	23.7
#2 MARQUETTE	17.6	-6.2		2.3	-0.2	3.1	4.7	3.9	4.4	6.5	5.4	4	7.8	7.2	13.3	14.6	15.1	17.5
#3 KENTUCKY	15.3	-8.5	-2.3		-2.5	0.8	2.4	1.6	2.1	4.2	3.1	1.7	5.5	4.9	11	12.3	12.8	15.2
#4 DUKE	17.8	-6	0.2	2.5		3.3	4.9	4.1	4.6	6.7	5.6	4.2	8	7.4	13.5	14.8	15.3	17.7
#5 WISCONSIN	14.5	-9.3	-3.1	-0.8	-3.3		1.6	0.8	1.3	3.4	2.3	0.9	4.7	4.1	10.2	11.5	12	14.4
#6 TEXAS TECH	12.9	-10.9	-4.7	-2.4	-4.9	-1.6		-0.8	-0.3	1.8	0.7	-0.7	3.1	2.5	8.6	9.9	10.4	12.8
#7 FLORIDA	13.7	-10.1	-3.9	-1.6	-4.1	-0.8	0.8		0.5	2.6	1.5	0.1	3.9	3.3	9.4	10.7	11.2	13.6
#8 NEBRASKA	13.2	-10.6	-4.4	-2.1	-4.6	-1.3	0.3	-0.5		2.1	1	-0.4	3.4	2.8	8.9	10.2	10.7	13.1
#9 TEXAS A&M	11.1	-12.7	-6.5	-4.2	-6.7	-3.4	-1.8	-2.6	-2.1		-1.1	-2.5	1.3	0.7	6.8	8.1	8.6	11
#10 BOISE ST	12.2	-11.6	-5.4	-3.1	-5.6	-2.3	-0.7	-1.5	-1	1.1		-1.4	2.4	1.8	7.9	9.2	9.7	12.1
#10 COLORADO	13.6	-10.2	-4	-1.7	-4.2	-0.9	0.7	-0.1	0.4	2.5	1.4		3.8	3.2	9.3	10.6	11.1	13.5
#11 NC STATE	9.8	-14	-7.8	-5.5	-8	-4.7	-3.1	-3.9	-3.4	-1.3	-2.4	-3.8		-0.6	5.5	6.8	7.3	9.7
#12 JAMES MADISON	10.4	-13.4	-7.2	-4.9	-7.4	-4.1	-2.5	-3.3	-2.8	-0.7	-1.8	-3.2	0.6		6.1	7.4	7.9	10.3
#13 VERMONT	4.3	-19.5	-13.3	-11	-13.5	-10.2	-8.6	-9.4	-8.9	-6.8	-7.9	-9.3	-5.5	-6.1		1.3	1.8	4.2
#14 OAKLAND	3.0	-20.8	-14.6	-12.3	-14.8	-11.5	-9.9	-10.7	-10.2	-8.1	-9.2	-10.6	-6.8	-7.4	-1.3		0.5	2.9
#15 WKU	2.5	-21.3	-15.1	-12.8	-15.3	-12	-10.4	-11.2	-10.7	-8.6	-9.7	-11.1	-7.3	-7.9	-1.8	-0.5		2.4
#16 LONGWOOD	0.1	-23.7	-17.5	-15.2	-17.7	-14.4	-12.8	-13.6	-13.1	-11	-12.1	-13.5	-9.7	-10.3	-4.2	-2.9	-2.4	

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STEVE MAKINEN'S SOUTH REGION

BETTORS RATING GRID

TEAM/SEED	TEAM/SEED	#1 HOUSTON	#2 MARQUETTE	#3 KENTUCKY	#4 DUKE	#5 WISCONSIN	#6 TEXAS TECH	#7 FLORIDA	#8 NEBRASKA	#9 TEXAS A&M	#10 BOISE ST	#10 COLORADO	#11 NC STATE	#12 JAMES MADISON	#13 VERMONT	#14 OAKLAND	#15 WKU	#16 LONGWOOD
TEAM/SEED	RATING	-21.6	-16.7	-13.7	-17.4	-13.0	-11.7	-14.1	-10.5	-8.7	-11.3	-13.9	-6.3	-8.0	-5.9	-1.3	0.3	2.3
#1 HOUSTON	-21.6		4.9	7.9	4.2	8.6	9.9	7.5	11.1	12.9	10.3	7.7	15.3	13.6	15.7	20.3	21.9	23.9
#2 MARQUETTE	-16.7	-4.9		3	-0.7	3.7	5	2.6	6.2	8	5.4	2.8	10.4	8.7	10.8	15.4	17	19
#3 KENTUCKY	-13.7	-7.9	-3		-3.7	0.7	2	-0.4	3.2	5	2.4	-0.2	7.4	5.7	7.8	12.4	14	16
#4 DUKE	-17.4	-4.2	0.7	3.7		4.4	5.7	3.3	6.9	8.7	6.1	3.5	11.1	9.4	11.5	16.1	17.7	19.7
#5 WISCONSIN	-13.0	-8.6	-3.7	-0.7	-4.4		1.3	-1.1	2.5	4.3	1.7	-0.9	6.7	5	7.1	11.7	13.3	15.3
#6 TEXAS TECH	-11.7	-9.9	-5	-2	-5.7	-1.3		-2.4	1.2	3	0.4	-2.2	5.4	3.7	5.8	10.4	12	14
#7 FLORIDA	-14.1	-7.5	-2.6	0.4	-3.3	1.1	2.4		3.6	5.4	2.8	0.2	7.8	6.1	8.2	12.8	14.4	16.4
#8 NEBRASKA	-10.5	-11.1	-6.2	-3.2	-6.9	-2.5	-1.2	-3.6		1.8	-0.8	-3.4	4.2	2.5	4.6	9.2	10.8	12.8
#9 TEXAS A&M	-8.7	-12.9	-8	-5	-8.7	-4.3	-3	-5.4	-1.8		-2.6	-5.2	2.4	0.7	2.8	7.4	9	11
#10 BOISE ST	-11.3	-10.3	-5.4	-2.4	-6.1	-1.7	-0.4	-2.8	0.8	2.6		-2.6	5	3.3	5.4	10	11.6	13.6
#10 COLORADO	-13.9	-7.7	-2.8	0.2	-3.5	0.9	2.2	-0.2	3.4	5.2	2.6		7.6	5.9	8	12.6	14.2	16.2
#11 NC STATE	-6.3	-15.3	-10.4	-7.4	-11.1	-6.7	-5.4	-7.8	-4.2	-2.4	-5	-7.6		-1.7	0.4	5	6.6	8.6
#12 JAMES MADISON	-8.0	-13.6	-8.7	-5.7	-9.4	-5	-3.7	-6.1	-2.5	-0.7	-3.3	-5.9	1.7		2.1	6.7	8.3	10.3
#13 VERMONT	-5.9	-15.7	-10.8	-7.8	-11.5	-7.1	-5.8	-8.2	-4.6	-2.8	-5.4	-8	-0.4	-2.1		4.6	6.2	8.2
#14 OAKLAND	-1.3	-20.3	-15.4	-12.4	-16.1	-11.7	-10.4	-12.8	-9.2	-7.4	-10	-12.6	-5	-6.7	-4.6		1.6	3.6
#15 WKU	0.3	-21.9	-17	-14	-17.7	-13.3	-12	-14.4	-10.8	-9	-11.6	-14.2	-6.6	-8.3	-6.2	-1.6		2
#16 LONGWOOD	2.3	-23.9	-19	-16	-19.7	-15.3	-14	-16.4	-12.8	-11	-13.6	-16.2	-8.6	-10.3	-8.2	-3.6	-2	

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STEVE MAKINEN'S SOUTH REGION

MOMENTUM RATING GRID

	TEAM/SEED	#1 HOUSTON	#2 MARQUETTE	#3 KENTUCKY	#4 DUKE	#5 WISCONSIN	#6 TEXAS TECH	#7 FLORIDA	#8 NEBRASKA	#9 TEXAS A&M	#10 BOISE ST	#10 COLORADO	#11 NC STATE	#12 JAMES MADISON	#13 VERMONT	#14 OAKLAND	#15 WKU	#16 LONGWOOD
TEAM/SEED	RATING	22.5	18.1	16.5	19.9	16.1	15.1	14.0	16.5	10.6	13.4	15.9	13.5	10.7	4.9	4.5	5.1	3.5
#1 HOUSTON	22.5		4.4	6	2.6	6.4	7.4	8.5	6	11.9	9.1	6.6	9	11.8	17.6	18	17.4	19
#2 MARQUETTE	18.1	-4.4		1.6	-1.8	2	3	4.1	1.6	7.5	4.7	2.2	4.6	7.4	13.2	13.6	13	14.6
#3 KENTUCKY	16.5	-6	-1.6		-3.4	0.4	1.4	2.5	0	5.9	3.1	0.6	3	5.8	11.6	12	11.4	13
#4 DUKE	19.9	-2.6	1.8	3.4		3.8	4.8	5.9	3.4	9.3	6.5	4	6.4	9.2	15	15.4	14.8	16.4
#5 WISCONSIN	16.1	-6.4	-2	-0.4	-3.8		1	2.1	-0.4	5.5	2.7	0.2	2.6	5.4	11.2	11.6	11	12.6
#6 TEXAS TECH	15.1	-7.4	-3	-1.4	-4.8	-1		1.1	-1.4	4.5	1.7	-0.8	1.6	4.4	10.2	10.6	10	11.6
#7 FLORIDA	14.0	-8.5	-4.1	-2.5	-5.9	-2.1	-1.1		-2.5	3.4	0.6	-1.9	0.5	3.3	9.1	9.5	8.9	10.5
#8 NEBRASKA	16.5	-6	-1.6	0	-3.4	0.4	1.4	2.5		5.9	3.1	0.6	3	5.8	11.6	12	11.4	13
#9 TEXAS A&M	10.6	-11.9	-7.5	-5.9	-9.3	-5.5	-4.5	-3.4	-5.9		-2.8	-5.3	-2.9	-0.1	5.7	6.1	5.5	7.1
#10 BOISE ST	13.4	-9.1	-4.7	-3.1	-6.5	-2.7	-1.7	-0.6	-3.1	2.8		-2.5	-0.1	2.7	8.5	8.9	8.3	9.9
#10 COLORADO	15.9	-6.6	-2.2	-0.6	-4	-0.2	0.8	1.9	-0.6	5.3	2.5		2.4	5.2	11	11.4	10.8	12.4
#11 NC STATE	13.5	-9	-4.6	-3	-6.4	-2.6	-1.6	-0.5	-3	2.9	0.1	-2.4		2.8	8.6	9	8.4	10
#12 JAMES MADISON	10.7	-11.8	-7.4	-5.8	-9.2	-5.4	-4.4	-3.3	-5.8	0.1	-2.7	-5.2	-2.8		5.8	6.2	5.6	7.2
#13 VERMONT	4.9	-17.6	-13.2	-11.6	-15	-11.2	-10.2	-9.1	-11.6	-5.7	-8.5	-11	-8.6	-5.8		0.4	-0.2	1.4
#14 OAKLAND	4.5	-18	-13.6	-12	-15.4	-11.6	-10.6	-9.5	-12	-6.1	-8.9	-11.4	-9	-6.2	-0.4		-0.6	1
#15 WKU	5.1	-17.4	-13	-11.4	-14.8	-11	-10	-8.9	-11.4	-5.5	-8.3	-10.8	-8.4	-5.6	0.2	0.6		1.6
#16 LONGWOOD	3.5	-19	-14.6	-13	-16.4	-12.6	-11.6	-10.5	-13	-7.1	-9.9	-12.4	-10	-7.2	-1.4	-1	-1.6	

HOW TO USE THIS GRID

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SOUTH



#1 HOUSTON (-24.5, 128) VS #16 LONGWOOD

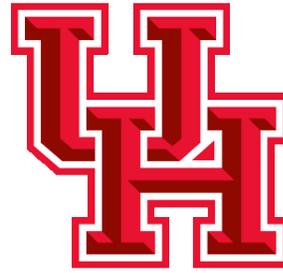
Call it a conspiracy theory if you want, but it was my belief that Houston would get a sweetheart draw in the NCAA Tournament now that they reside in the Big 12. It is an annual tradition to see the mid-majors get screwed over in one way or another, but joining a power conference is a good way to gain more favor. Sure, the strength of schedule metrics and whatnot help, but Houston, who plays in the sixth-ranked media market in the nation, was going to get a little preferential treatment.

The 1 vs. 16 game is what it is no matter what, but Houston's overall draw is decidedly easier than UConn's and the easiest of any No. 1 seed in my opinion. That's not to say that the Texas A&M/Nebraska winner is drawing dead or that any of the 4/5/12/13 seeds here could step up and play big, but it is set up well for Houston.

They also take on a conference champ in this one that had a 5-10 record in Big South play before getting hot at the right time to beat High Point in the regular season finale and then beat a good slate of Winthrop, High Point, and UNC Asheville to get the automatic bid. Since mid-February, Griff Aldrich's club has turned it up offensively in a big way.

The Lancers are a cool story and we'll see if they fare better than they did in 2022 with a better team that lost by 32 to Tennessee. That team at least ranked in the top 20 in 3P%. This one is around the national average.

The obvious concern with Houston here is covering a big number with the tempo that they play at, but this is really about analyzing the start of Houston's path to the Final Four.



#1 HOUSTON

CONFERENCE
Big 12

HEAD COACH
Kelvin Sampson

RECORD
30-4 SU, 17-16 ATS, 14-20 O/U



#16 LONGWOOD

CONFERENCE
Big South

HEAD COACH
Griff Aldrich

RECORD
21-13 SU, 16-15 ATS, 17-14 O/U

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

VALUE (NCAA RANK)

73 (160)	Offensive PPG	✓	73.8 (142)
57 (1) ✓	Defensive PPG		69.7 (92)
61.5 (351)	Possessions	✓	64.8 (234)
1.241 (13) ✓	Offensive Efficiency Points Per Possession		1.078 (207)
0.861 (1) ✓	Defensive Efficiency Points Per Possession		1.081 (142)
43.4% (231)	Offensive FG%	✓	44.6% (156)
37.9% (1) ✓	Defensive FG%		44.5% (192)
34.7% (141) ✓	Offensive 3PT%		33.7% (190)
69.4% (288) ✓	Free Throw %		68.7% (302)
52.7% (52)	Rebounding %	✓	55.1% (11)
1.457 (33) ✓	Asst/TO Ratio		0.969 (259)
13.4% (9) ✓	Offensive TO%		18.0% (277)
24.1% (3) ✓	Defensive TO%		19.6% (35)

ODDS TO WIN

REGION

+140

500-1

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

+500

5000-1

SOUTH



#8 NEBRASKA (-1, 147.5) VS #9 TEXAS A&M

Texas A&M has been a team on my radar all season long. Their shooting numbers are beyond atrocious, but they still won 20 games in a really solid conference. They even had seven Quadrant 1 wins while shooting 28.4% from 3 and 47% on 2s. The national averages are 33.8% and 50.3%, respectively. They rank in the 340s in eFG% offense.

And honestly, they don't even stand out that much on defense. Because they've played a top-20 schedule per KenPom, their efficiency metrics look a lot more favorably on them than they should. If any sponsors are looking for a NIL deal with the Aggies, it might as well be Windex because they've been outstanding when it comes to cleaning the glass this season, but that's where a lot of the accolades stop.

They were 13th in 3P% and 14th in 2P% in SEC play. Meanwhile, Nebraska was a top-five team in 2P% and 3P% on both offense and defense in the Big Ten. However, Fred Hoiberg's team was not good on the glass. They were the most frequent 3-point shooting team at 43.6% and made 37.7% of those shots in conference play. Texas A&M had the 12th-highest 3P Rate against this season, as almost 45% of opponents' shots were 3s.

That makes this game one of the most challenging handicaps of the first round. The statistical profile for Nebraska looks so much more impressive given their national and conference ranks. But, Buzz Williams' squad won five of the last six games coming into the NCAA Tournament and scored 90 points against Florida to continue a big offensive resurgence.

This is a really tough handicap, but isn't that what you want out of an 8/9 game? I do lean Under here, as Nebraska allowed a 28.3% shot share on Close Twos and Texas A&M allowed a 31.5% shot share. Both teams forced opponents to shoot a lot of 3s, which could make this one ugly in Memphis.



#8 NEBRASKA

CONFERENCE
Big Ten

HEAD COACH
Fred Hoiberg

RECORD
23-10 SU, 21-11 ATS, 21-11 O/U



#9 TEXAS A&M

CONFERENCE
SEC

HEAD COACH
Buzz Williams

RECORD
20-14 SU, 16-18 ATS, 21-13 O/U

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

VALUE (NCAA RANK)

77.6 (55) ✓	Offensive PPG	74.8 (117)
70.1 (100) ✓	Defensive PPG	70.8 (123)
66.8 (100) ✓	Possessions	63.6 (298)
1.186 (46) ✓	Offensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	1.186 (48)
1.002 (26) ✓	Defensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	1.023 (52)
45.2% (117) ✓	Offensive FG%	39.9% (341)
39.7% (5) ✓	Defensive FG%	42.5% (84)
35.8% (74) ✓	Offensive 3PT%	28.4% (353)
75.4% (53) ✓	Free Throw %	70.9% (235)
50.6% (154)	Rebounding %	✓ 55.7% (8)
1.383 (54) ✓	Asst/TO Ratio	1.174 (133)
15.5% (96)	Offensive TO%	✓ 13.8% (22)
16.1% (217)	Defensive TO%	✓ 16.5% (188)

ODDS TO WIN

REGION

18-1

40-1

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

100-1

160-1

SOUTH



#5 WISCONSIN (-5.5, 145) VS #12 JAMES MADISON

The most popular upset pick of the first round in bracket pools and contests will be James Madison over Wisconsin. It'll be a very popular moneyline upset pick as well. The Dukes won 31 games, including their season-opening win over Michigan State, and emerged from a decent mid-major conference as the Sun Belt Tournament champions, winning by 17, 5, and 20.

It is worth noting that 22 of James Madison's wins came in Quadrant 4 games, as they lost twice to Appalachian State, who wound up the No. 1 seed in the SBC Tourney and got upset by Arkansas State. James Madison does have the statistical profile, though, as they held opponents to just 28.6% on 3s and ranked in the top 50 in both 3P% and 2P% offense. They're a top-50 team in TO% on both sides as well, which is usually an indicator of a team that could have NCAA Tournament success.

Wisconsin put it together for a week in Minneapolis in the Big Ten Tournament, falling six points short to Illinois in a game where the Badgers had 1.278 points per possession. Prior to that, this was a team that went from 16-4 and 8-1 in league play to 19-12 and 11-9 in league play very, very quickly.

The biggest knock against the Badgers is that they are not a physical team. James Madison will grind. They will pressure you, as I mentioned with their TO% stats. They also went 8-2 in close games (games decided by six or fewer points), so they're okay with being in a battle. The strength of schedule difference is about as big as it gets here, so the Badgers and their numbers may be a bit truer to form.

I wouldn't be shocked if JMU wins. I wouldn't be shocked if Wisconsin wins and covers. But, this is the quintessential 12/5 game that gets everybody talking and it should be a good one.



#5 WISCONSIN

CONFERENCE
Big Ten

HEAD COACH
Greg Gard

RECORD
22-12 SU, 16-17 ATS, 21-12 O/U



#12 JAMES MADISON

CONFERENCE
Sun Belt

HEAD COACH
Mark Byington

RECORD
31-3 SU, 18-14 ATS, 16-16 O/U

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

VALUE (NCAA RANK)

74.7 (122)	Offensive PPG	✓	83 (12)
69.3 (84) ✓	Defensive PPG		69.5 (89)
63.2 (315)	Possessions	✓	67.2 (74)
1.238 (15) ✓	Offensive Efficiency Points Per Possession		1.181 (54)
1.013 (38) ✓	Defensive Efficiency Points Per Possession		1.032 (63)
46.3% (68)	Offensive FG%	✓	47.5% (36)
45.6% (270)	Defensive FG%	✓	41.7% (44)
34.8% (135)	Offensive 3PT%	✓	36.4% (42)
75.5% (49) ✓	Free Throw %		70.5% (258)
52.7% (51) ✓	Rebounding %		52.6% (57)
1.289 (82)	Asst/TO Ratio	✓	1.521 (26)
14.4% (44)	Offensive TO%	✓	14.3% (40)
16.7% (166)	Defensive TO%	✓	19.3% (41)

ODDS TO WIN

REGION

15-1

75-1

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

70-1

300-1

SOUTH



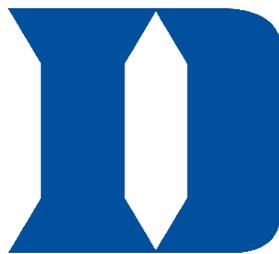
#4 DUKE (-12, 132) VS #13 VERMONT

Let me preface this by saying that I am not a Duke hater, but I am rooting for Vermont here. This is the 13th season for head coach John Becker and his sixth NCAA Tournament appearance. The Catamounts only have one win and it came in Dayton against Lamar in the First Four. Otherwise, they've lost to North Carolina, Purdue, Florida State, Arkansas, and Marquette.

We have strength vs. strength here, as Vermont ranked as a top-25 team in eFG% and Duke is definitely an offense-first type of squad. They were a top-15 offense from 3-point land and a top-40 offense on 2-point shots. Vermont just doesn't get challenged a whole lot in the America East Conference and they wind up struggling with more talented bigs in the NCAA Tournament.

Maybe if they forced more turnovers or shot better from 3, it would feel like more of a reality to see them knock off a major-conference opponent. In fact, this is one of Becker's lesser 3-point shooting teams and this one also has the lowest TO% of his tenure. Those aren't really recipes for upsetting a team like Duke.

The Blue Devils do have a knack for playing down to opponents in these early-round games, but that wasn't the case in Jon Scheyer's first year last season with the 23-point win over Oral Roberts. I can't help but feel like we're more likely to see a repeat of that here before a much tougher game in the second round.



#4 DUKE

CONFERENCE
ACC

HEAD COACH
Jon Scheyer

RECORD
24-8 SU, 18-13 ATS, 14-18 O/U



#13 VERMONT

CONFERENCE
America East

HEAD COACH
John Becker

RECORD
28-6 SU, 13-18 ATS, 9-23 O/U

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

VALUE (NCAA RANK)

79.8 (32) ✓	Offensive PPG	70.7 (231)
67.4 (44)	Defensive PPG	✓ 63.8 (9)
64.9 (223) ✓	Possessions	61.4 (352)
1.261 (9) ✓	Offensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	1.11 (148)
0.994 (23) ✓	Defensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	1.047 (86)
48.2% (21) ✓	Offensive FG%	44.4% (168)
43.2% (125)	Defensive FG%	✓ 41.0% (29)
37.7% (15) ✓	Offensive 3PT%	33.5% (200)
72.2% (175)	Free Throw %	✓ 72.3% (173)
53.7% (27) ✓	Rebounding %	50.2% (174)
1.585 (18) ✓	Asst/TO Ratio	1.436 (41)
14.1% (31)	Offensive TO%	✓ 13.6% (15)
16.5% (181) ✓	Defensive TO%	14.8% (298)

ODDS TO WIN

REGION

+450

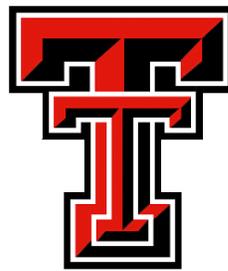
130-1

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

35-1

800-1

SOUTH



#6 TEXAS TECH

CONFERENCE
Big 12

HEAD COACH
Grant McCasland

RECORD
23-10 SU, 15-17 ATS, 19-14 O/U



#11 NC STATE

CONFERENCE
ACC

HEAD COACH
Kevin Keatts

RECORD
22-14 SU, 16-18 ATS, 20-14 O/U

#6 TEXAS TECH (-5, 145.5) VS #11 NC STATE

One of the more interesting talking points heading into the NCAA Tournament is how a bid stealer and surprise conference tournament champion will fare. NC State had lost seven of nine regular season games before heading to Washington D.C. for the ACC Tournament. Five wins in five days later, they're a No. 11 seed poised to take on Texas Tech.

The turnaround to take the floor isn't all that quick and the trip from Raleigh to Pittsburgh isn't that daunting, but it is a pretty big lift for the Wolfpack. Grant McCasland's Red Raiders weren't nearly as slow-paced or as aggressive in pursuit of turnovers as his North Texas teams were, but they shined in 3P% differential and that will cover up a lot of other potential issues. As a top-50 team in adjusted defensive efficiency and a top-25 team in adjusted offensive efficiency, the metrics are favorable.

The saving grace for NC State here is that they do take excellent care of the basketball. This is an extremely experienced team. But, that may only go so far, as McCasland gave positive updates on both 7-footer Warren Washington and sophomore Darrion Williams during his Sunday press conference.

Washington changes a lot of dynamics for Texas Tech as a rim protector and elite rebounder, so this is a situation to monitor closely as Thursday's tip-off approaches.

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

VALUE (NCAA RANK)

75.6 (96)		Offensive PPG	✓	76.4 (77)
69.3 (86)	✓	Defensive PPG		72.7 (184)
64.5 (251)		Possessions	✓	66.1 (138)
1.223 (22)	✓	Offensive Efficiency Points Per Possession		1.179 (55)
1.02 (49)	✓	Defensive Efficiency Points Per Possession		1.047 (84)
45.3% (103)	✓	Offensive FG%		45.0% (127)
42.8% (102)	✓	Defensive FG%		44.3% (184)
36.5% (39)	✓	Offensive 3PT%		34.7% (142)
77.8% (14)	✓	Free Throw %		73.4% (116)
50.9% (129)	✓	Rebounding %		49.2% (215)
1.321 (71)		Asst/TO Ratio	✓	1.343 (67)
16.2% (152)		Offensive TO%	✓	13.4% (11)
16.7% (169)		Defensive TO%	✓	17.6% (113)

ODDS TO WIN

REGION

18-1

55-1

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

90-1

180-1

SOUTH



#3 KENTUCKY (-13.5, 163.5) VS #14 OAKLAND

John Calipari has a few days to figure out what is wrong with the Wildcats defense before taking on Oakland. Kentucky allowed 1.186, 1.218, 1.184, 1.024, 1.098, and 1.279 points per possession to round out the regular season and also bow out early against Texas A&M in the SEC Tournament. Sometimes it's not a bad thing to get knocked out early, as you can conserve some energy and fix what's wrong with the team in practice as opposed to trying to adjust during a game.

The Wildcats had better figure it out because Oakland can score. Defense is really hit or miss in the Horizon League, so you have to consider that with the Golden Grizzlies and their offensive numbers. But, this is a team that has only lost three times in 2024 and won't be intimidated after playing the eighth-ranked non-conference schedule per Bart Torvik and 15th per KenPom.

Oakland didn't fare well in most of those games, losing to Ohio State, Illinois, Drake, Michigan State, and Dayton, but they did beat Xavier on the road in Cincinnati. Kampe has coached Oakland since 1984 and this is his first appearance in the NCAA Tournament since 2011. That 2011 team took a Texas team with Cory Joseph and Tristan Thompson to the wire in a four-point loss.

I'm not sure Oakland will do the same here against Kentucky, given that this isn't a Rick Barnes-coached team, but I could see them keeping this close for a while. Kentucky's athleticism and strong offensive efficiency numbers should ultimately create some distance and they're going to be a popular pick for a deep run given their pretty favorable draw at the bottom of the bracket.



#3 KENTUCKY

CONFERENCE
SEC

HEAD COACH
John Calipari

RECORD
23-9 SU, 17-14 ATS, 23-9 O/U



#14 OAKLAND

CONFERENCE
Horizon

HEAD COACH
Greg Kampe

RECORD
23-11 SU, 21-13 ATS, 19-13 O/U

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

VALUE (NCAA RANK)

89.4 (2) ✓	Offensive PPG	76.4 (75)
79.7 (340)	Defensive PPG	✓ 72.9 (194)
70 (14) ✓	Possessions	64.7 (239)
1.271 (6) ✓	Offensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	1.124 (123)
1.056 (100) ✓	Defensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	1.084 (149)
49.7% (4) ✓	Offensive FG%	45.2% (118)
42.9% (110) ✓	Defensive FG%	43.9% (165)
41.2% (1) ✓	Offensive 3PT%	35.5% (95)
77.3% (23) ✓	Free Throw %	76.5% (31)
50.6% (150)	Rebounding %	✓ 51.2% (111)
1.648 (11) ✓	Asst/TO Ratio	1.262 (95)
13.8% (23) ✓	Offensive TO%	16.4% (163)
15.6% (252)	Defensive TO%	✓ 16.5% (187)

ODDS TO WIN

REGION

+700

150-1

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

25-1

1000-1

SOUTH



#7 FLORIDA VS #10 BOISE ST/COLORADO

Florida awaits the winner of the play-in game between Boise State and Colorado. A few quick thoughts on the play-in teams: Boise State was part of the under-seeded Mountain West contingent. Colorado was on a roll before running into Dana Altman and the Ducks in Las Vegas.

The Buffaloes had reeled off six in a row to finish the regular season and two more in the final Pac-12 Tournament. Tad Boyle's crew doesn't force a lot of turnovers, but they make it for it by defending the 3-point line well. They're also a top-tier offense, so that will be an interesting battle against Boise State, who has been more of a defensive team under Leon Rice. Both teams have similar strengths and similar weaknesses, so it should be a close affair.

As far as matching up with Florida, the Gators lost a key piece in reserve center Micah Handlogten to a gruesome leg injury and that took some wind out of their sails against Auburn in the SEC Tournament final. They never led in the game and ran out of gas, but they were an offensive juggernaut in the first three games of the tourney and didn't really play an ounce of defense.

There should be a lot of points if Colorado and Florida meet. If it's Boise State, that is a major contrast of styles, with Boise's slower pace and more controlled game-plan. I like Florida in either matchup, but would be more apt to lay a number against Boise State and take an Over against Colorado. Florida is also a really dangerous team for however long they survive in the Big Dance.



#7 FLORIDA

**CONFERENCE
SEC**

**HEAD COACH
Todd Golden**

**RECORD
24-10 SU, 16-17 ATS, 23-11 O/U**

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

VALUE (NCAA RANK)

85.7 (5)	Offensive PPG
78.3 (325)	Defensive PPG
69.3 (22)	Possessions
1.239 (14)	Offensive Efficiency Points Per Possession
1.036 (69)	Defensive Efficiency Points Per Possession
45.9% (77)	Offensive FG%
43.4% (134)	Defensive FG%
34.6% (143)	Offensive 3PT%
71.1% (226)	Free Throw %
54.4% (18)	Rebounding %
1.284 (86)	Asst/TO Ratio
15.5% (97)	Offensive TO%
14.1% (322)	Defensive TO%

ODDS TO WIN

REGION

15-1

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

60-1

SOUTH



#10 BOISE ST VS #10 COLORADO (-2.5, 140.5)

Boise State was rightfully dejected on Selection Sunday to have to play for their NCAA Tournament lives in Dayton instead of jumping right into the first round. The anti-Mountain West stance from the Selection Committee permeated most of the conference's members, but the Broncos took the brunt of it.

A couple of top-50 wins in the Pac-12 Tournament seemed to propel Colorado into the field. Oregon being the team to win that event probably upped the perception and the metrics for the conference as well. Colorado also swept Oregon in the regular season before losing when it mattered most.

Colorado's metrics are a good bit more impressive than Boise State's, as the Buffaloes rank a good bit higher for both Bart Torvik and KenPom. Tad Boyle has a really good offensive team that ranked in the top 20 in eFG% and shot 39.4% from 3. The Broncos are more of a solid all-around team, including a top-25 rank in 3P% against.

These do appear to be two pretty evenly-matched teams, but Colorado had a much higher shot share on Close Twos, coming in at 48.1% and Boise State allowed a 62.7% FG% on those types of shot attempts. That is the main focal point for me here given the unfamiliar venue in Dayton and the benefits that come along with getting to the rim.



#10 BOISE ST

CONFERENCE
Mountain West

HEAD COACH
Leon Rice

RECORD
22-10 SU, 16-12 ATS, 16-14 O/U



#10 COLORADO

CONFERENCE
Pac 12

HEAD COACH
Tad Boyle

RECORD
24-10 SU, 16-17 ATS, 20-14 O/U

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

VALUE (NCAA RANK)

74.3 (132)	Offensive PPG	✓	79.3 (37)
67.9 (54) ✓	Defensive PPG		71.2 (131)
65 (214)	Possessions	✓	65.3 (194)
1.186 (47)	Offensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	✓	1.22 (24)
1.008 (33) ✓	Defensive Efficiency Points Per Possession		1.021 (50)
44.7% (146)	Offensive FG%	✓	49.3% (7)
44.2% (175)	Defensive FG%	✓	43.6% (150)
34.8% (130)	Offensive 3PT%	✓	39.4% (5)
74.0% (97)	Free Throw %	✓	77.8% (17)
54.4% (17)	Rebounding %	✓	55.6% (9)
1.081 (187)	Asst/TO Ratio	✓	1.253 (103)
16.2% (148) ✓	Offensive TO%		17.7% (258)
16.5% (185) ✓	Defensive TO%		14.9% (296)

ODDS TO WIN

REGION

80-1

80-1

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

300-1

300-1

SOUTH



#2 MARQUETTE (-14, 158) VS #15 WESTERN KENTUCKY

The status of Tyler Kolek will be the biggest talking point here, though Marquette played just fine without him in the Big East Tournament, making it all the way to the title game before the UConn buzzsaw caught them. Marquette does fit the profile of a National Championship contender by being top 20 in adjusted offensive and defensive efficiency per Bart Torvik and top 25 for Ken Pom.

Western Kentucky's ability to take care of the basketball will dictate how this one goes. The Hilltoppers won the watered-down Conference USA crown, but turned the ball over on 19.5% of their possessions in league action. There are several aggressive defenses in that conference and they had some issues as a result.

This will be a really fast-paced game. Western Kentucky led the nation in adjusted tempo per Torvik and KenPom. We know Shaka Smart's pressure-heavy defense speeds up games as well. Not only are turnovers a big point of contention, but WKU played an awful non-conference schedule and C-USA lost most of its top teams to the AAC, so that didn't help in the SOS department.

This seems like a good matchup for Marquette. I'm curious to see how this team fares in the tournament, given the anti-Big East bias from the Selection Committee to seemingly turn its noses up at the conference. I'd be worried about Marquette running into Florida in a track meet type of game.



#2 MARQUETTE

CONFERENCE
Big East

HEAD COACH
Shaka Smart

RECORD
25-9 SU, 20-13 ATS, 14-20 O/U



#15 WESTERN KENTUCKY

CONFERENCE
Conference USA

HEAD COACH
Steve Lutz

RECORD
22-11 SU, 19-11 ATS, 15-15 O/U

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

VALUE (NCAA RANK)

78.3 (50)		Offensive PPG	✓	79.1 (39)
69.7 (93)	✓	Defensive PPG		74.3 (228)
67.1 (83)		Possessions	✓	72.5 (1)
1.222 (23)	✓	Offensive Efficiency Points Per Possession		1.095 (177)
0.979 (18)	✓	Defensive Efficiency Points Per Possession		1.063 (108)
47.8% (26)	✓	Offensive FG%		46.6% (53)
42.4% (82)		Defensive FG%	✓	41.8% (52)
35.8% (73)	✓	Offensive 3PT%		34.4% (153)
71.5% (207)		Free Throw %	✓	71.9% (186)
48.0% (283)		Rebounding %	✓	51.9% (81)
1.592 (17)	✓	Asst/TO Ratio		0.935 (277)
14.0% (29)	✓	Offensive TO%		17.8% (267)
20.7% (20)	✓	Defensive TO%		18.2% (78)

ODDS TO WIN

REGION

+550

100-1

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

30-1

2000-1

STEVE MAKINEN'S MIDWEST REGION

POWER RATINGS GRID

	TEAM/SEED	#1 PURDUE	#2 TENNESSEE	#3 CREIGHTON	#4 KANSAS	#5 GONZAGA	#6 SOUTH CAROLINA	#7 TEXAS	#8 UTAH ST	#9 TCU	#10 COLORADO ST	#10 VIRGINIA	#11 OREGON	#12 MCNEESE ST	#13 SAMFORD	#14 AKRON	#15 SAINT PETER'S	#16 GRAMBLING	#16 MONTANA ST
TEAM/SEED	RATING	90.6	89.8	87.3	85.0	86.9	81.7	83.6	80.6	82.8	80.7	79.5	81.3	80.0	77.5	74.1	69.8	65.7	68.4
#1 PURDUE	90.6		0.8	3.3	5.6	3.7	8.9	7	10	7.8	9.9	11.1	9.3	10.6	13.1	16.5	20.8	24.9	22.2
#2 TENNESSEE	89.8	-0.8		2.5	4.8	2.9	8.1	6.2	9.2	7	9.1	10.3	8.5	9.8	12.3	15.7	20	24.1	21.4
#3 CREIGHTON	87.3	-3.3	-2.5		2.3	0.4	5.6	3.7	6.7	4.5	6.6	7.8	6	7.3	9.8	13.2	17.5	21.6	18.9
#4 KANSAS	85.0	-5.6	-4.8	-2.3		-1.9	3.3	1.4	4.4	2.2	4.3	5.5	3.7	5	7.5	10.9	15.2	19.3	16.6
#5 GONZAGA	86.9	-3.7	-2.9	-0.4	1.9		5.2	3.3	6.3	4.1	6.2	7.4	5.6	6.9	9.4	12.8	17.1	21.2	18.5
#6 SOUTH CAROLINA	81.7	-8.9	-8.1	-5.6	-3.3	-5.2		-1.9	1.1	-1.1	1	2.2	0.4	1.7	4.2	7.6	11.9	16	13.3
#7 TEXAS	83.6	-7	-6.2	-3.7	-1.4	-3.3	1.9		3	0.8	2.9	4.1	2.3	3.6	6.1	9.5	13.8	17.9	15.2
#8 UTAH ST	80.6	-10	-9.2	-6.7	-4.4	-6.3	-1.1	-3		-2.2	-0.1	1.1	-0.7	0.6	3.1	6.5	10.8	14.9	12.2
#9 TCU	82.8	-7.8	-7	-4.5	-2.2	-4.1	1.1	-0.8	2.2		2.1	3.3	1.5	2.8	5.3	8.7	13	17.1	14.4
#10 COLORADO ST	80.7	-9.9	-9.1	-6.6	-4.3	-6.2	-1	-2.9	0.1	-2.1		1.2	-0.6	0.7	3.2	6.6	10.9	15	12.3
#10 VIRGINIA	79.5	-11.1	-10.3	-7.8	-5.5	-7.4	-2.2	-4.1	-1.1	-3.3	-1.2		-1.8	-0.5	2	5.4	9.7	13.8	11.1
#11 OREGON	81.3	-9.3	-8.5	-6	-3.7	-5.6	-0.4	-2.3	0.7	-1.5	0.6	1.8		1.3	3.8	7.2	11.5	15.6	12.9
#12 MCNEESE ST	80.0	-10.6	-9.8	-7.3	-5	-6.9	-1.7	-3.6	-0.6	-2.8	-0.7	0.5	-1.3		2.5	5.9	10.2	14.3	11.6
#13 SAMFORD	77.5	-13.1	-12.3	-9.8	-7.5	-9.4	-4.2	-6.1	-3.1	-5.3	-3.2	-2	-3.8	-2.5		3.4	7.7	11.8	9.1
#14 AKRON	74.1	-16.5	-15.7	-13.2	-10.9	-12.8	-7.6	-9.5	-6.5	-8.7	-6.6	-5.4	-7.2	-5.9	-3.4		4.3	8.4	5.7
#15 SAINT PETER'S	69.8	-20.8	-20	-17.5	-15.2	-17.1	-11.9	-13.8	-10.8	-13	-10.9	-9.7	-11.5	-10.2	-7.7	-4.3		4.1	1.4
#16 GRAMBLING	65.7	-24.9	-24.1	-21.6	-19.3	-21.2	-16	-17.9	-14.9	-17.1	-15	-13.8	-15.6	-14.3	-11.8	-8.4	-4.1		-2.7
#16 MONTANA ST	68.4	-22.2	-21.4	-18.9	-16.6	-18.5	-13.3	-15.2	-12.2	-14.4	-12.3	-11.1	-12.9	-11.6	-9.1	-5.7	-1.4	2.7	

HOW TO USE THIS GRID

The grid above outlines how each team in the region matches up against the other teams in the region, creating a hypothetical betting line should the teams meet in the tournament. The values in the grid display how many points the team on the top would be favored (-), or an underdog (positive number), by when facing the teams listed down the left side of the grid by taking the team on the top rating and subtracting the team's rating listed on the left. For example, #1 seed Purdue would hypothetically be listed as a 7-point favorite (-7) against #7 seed Baylor, should the teams match up in the tournament, based on this rating.

STEVE MAKINEN'S MIDWEST REGION

EFFECTIVE STRENGTH GRID

	TEAM/SEED	#1 PURDUE	#2 TENNESSEE	#3 CREIGHTON	#4 KANSAS	#5 GONZAGA	#6 SOUTH CAROLINA	#7 TEXAS	#8 UTAH ST	#9 TCU	#10 COLORADO ST	#10 VIRGINIA	#11 OREGON	#12 MCNEESE ST	#13 SAMFORD	#14 AKRON	#15 SAINT PETER'S	#16 GRAMBLING	#16 MONTANA ST
TEAM/SEED	RATING	22.2	19.6	17.0	14.9	16.5	9.7	13.1	11.0	12.9	12.1	9.0	9.8	9.3	7.9	3.8	-1.4	-7.3	-2.9
#1 PURDUE	22.2		2.6	5.2	7.3	5.7	12.5	9.1	11.2	9.3	10.1	13.2	12.4	12.9	14.3	18.4	23.6	29.5	25.1
#2 TENNESSEE	19.6	-2.6		2.6	4.7	3.1	9.9	6.5	8.6	6.7	7.5	10.6	9.8	10.3	11.7	15.8	21.0	26.9	22.5
#3 CREIGHTON	17.0	-5.2	-2.6		2.1	0.5	7.3	3.9	6.0	4.1	4.9	8.0	7.2	7.7	9.1	13.2	18.4	24.3	19.9
#4 KANSAS	14.9	-7.3	-4.7	-2.1		-1.6	5.2	1.8	3.9	2.0	2.8	5.9	5.1	5.6	7.0	11.1	16.3	22.2	17.8
#5 GONZAGA	16.5	-5.7	-3.1	-0.5	1.6		6.8	3.4	5.5	3.6	4.4	7.5	6.7	7.2	8.6	12.7	17.9	23.8	19.4
#6 SOUTH CAROLINA	9.7	-12.5	-9.9	-7.3	-5.2	-6.8		-3.4	-1.3	-3.2	-2.4	0.7	-0.1	0.4	1.8	5.9	11.1	17.0	12.6
#7 TEXAS	13.1	-9.1	-6.5	-3.9	-1.8	-3.4	3.4		2.1	0.2	1.0	4.1	3.3	3.8	5.2	9.3	14.5	20.4	16.0
#8 UTAH ST	11.0	-11.2	-8.6	-6.0	-3.9	-5.5	1.3	-2.1		-1.9	-1.1	2.0	1.2	1.7	3.1	7.2	12.4	18.3	13.9
#9 TCU	12.9	-9.3	-6.7	-4.1	-2.0	-3.6	3.2	-0.2	1.9		0.8	3.9	3.1	3.6	5.0	9.1	14.3	20.2	15.8
#10 COLORADO ST	12.1	-10.1	-7.5	-4.9	-2.8	-4.4	2.4	-1.0	1.1	-0.8		3.1	2.3	2.8	4.2	8.3	13.5	19.4	15.0
#10 VIRGINIA	9.0	-13.2	-10.6	-8.0	-5.9	-7.5	-0.7	-4.1	-2.0	-3.9	-3.1		-0.8	-0.3	1.1	5.2	10.4	16.3	11.9
#11 OREGON	9.8	-12.4	-9.8	-7.2	-5.1	-6.7	0.1	-3.3	-1.2	-3.1	-2.3	0.8		0.5	1.9	6.0	11.2	17.1	12.7
#12 MCNEESE ST	9.3	-12.9	-10.3	-7.7	-5.6	-7.2	-0.4	-3.8	-1.7	-3.6	-2.8	0.3	-0.5		1.4	5.5	10.7	16.6	12.2
#13 SAMFORD	7.9	-14.3	-11.7	-9.1	-7.0	-8.6	-1.8	-5.2	-3.1	-5.0	-4.2	-1.1	-1.9	-1.4		4.1	9.3	15.2	10.8
#14 AKRON	3.8	-18.4	-15.8	-13.2	-11.1	-12.7	-5.9	-9.3	-7.2	-9.1	-8.3	-5.2	-6.0	-5.5	-4.1		5.2	11.1	6.7
#15 SAINT PETER'S	-1.4	-23.6	-21.0	-18.4	-16.3	-17.9	-11.1	-14.5	-12.4	-14.3	-13.5	-10.4	-11.2	-10.7	-9.3	-5.2		5.9	1.5
#16 GRAMBLING	-7.3	-29.5	-26.9	-24.3	-22.2	-23.8	-17.0	-20.4	-18.3	-20.2	-19.4	-16.3	-17.1	-16.6	-15.2	-11.1	-5.9		-4.4
#16 MONTANA ST	-2.9	-25.1	-22.5	-19.9	-17.8	-19.4	-12.6	-16.0	-13.9	-15.8	-15.0	-11.9	-12.7	-12.2	-10.8	-6.7	-1.5	4.4	

HOW TO USE THIS GRID

The grid above outlines how each team in the region matches up against the other teams in the region, creating a hypothetical betting line should the teams meet in the tournament. The values in the grid display how many points the team on the top would be favored (-), or an underdog (positive number), by when facing the teams listed down the left side of the grid by taking the team on the top's rating and subtracting the team's rating listed on the left. For example, #3 seed Creighton would hypothetically be listed as a 6-point favorite (-6) against #8 seed Utah St, should the teams match up in the tournament, based on this rating.

STEVE MAKINEN'S MIDWEST REGION

BETTORS RATING GRID

	TEAM/SEED	#1 PURDUE	#2 TENNESSEE	#3 CREIGHTON	#4 KANSAS	#5 GONZAGA	#6 SOUTH CAROLINA	#7 TEXAS	#8 UTAH ST	#9 TCU	#10 COLORADO ST	#10 VIRGINIA	#11 OREGON	#12 MCNEESE ST	#13 SAMFORD	#14 AKRON	#15 SAINT PETER'S	#16 GRAMBLING	#16 MONTANA ST
TEAM/SEED	RATING	-20.5	-20.4	-16.0	-16.6	-15.3	-10.7	-13.2	-9.7	-11.5	-11.0	-11.4	-9.9	-8.1	-6.1	-2.8	2.4	7.4	6.4
#1 PURDUE	-20.5		0.1	4.5	3.9	5.2	9.8	7.3	10.8	9.0	9.5	9.1	10.6	12.4	14.4	17.7	22.9	27.9	26.9
#2 TENNESSEE	-20.4	-0.1		4.4	3.8	5.1	9.7	7.2	10.7	8.9	9.4	9.0	10.5	12.3	14.3	17.6	22.8	27.8	26.8
#3 CREIGHTON	-16.0	-4.5	-4.4		-0.6	0.7	5.3	2.8	6.3	4.5	5.0	4.6	6.1	7.9	9.9	13.2	18.4	23.4	22.4
#4 KANSAS	-16.6	-3.9	-3.8	0.6		1.3	5.9	3.4	6.9	5.1	5.6	5.2	6.7	8.5	10.5	13.8	19.0	24.0	23.0
#5 GONZAGA	-15.3	-5.2	-5.1	-0.7	-1.3		4.6	2.1	5.6	3.8	4.3	3.9	5.4	7.2	9.2	12.5	17.7	22.7	21.7
#6 SOUTH CAROLINA	-10.7	-9.8	-9.7	-5.3	-5.9	-4.6		-2.5	1.0	-0.8	-0.3	-0.7	0.8	2.6	4.6	7.9	13.1	18.1	17.1
#7 TEXAS	-13.2	-7.3	-7.2	-2.8	-3.4	-2.1	2.5		3.5	1.7	2.2	1.8	3.3	5.1	7.1	10.4	15.6	20.6	19.6
#8 UTAH ST	-9.7	-10.8	-10.7	-6.3	-6.9	-5.6	-1.0	-3.5		-1.8	-1.3	-1.7	-0.2	1.6	3.6	6.9	12.1	17.1	16.1
#9 TCU	-11.5	-9.0	-8.9	-4.5	-5.1	-3.8	0.8	-1.7	1.8		0.5	0.1	1.6	3.4	5.4	8.7	13.9	18.9	17.9
#10 COLORADO ST	-11.0	-9.5	-9.4	-5.0	-5.6	-4.3	0.3	-2.2	1.3	-0.5		-0.4	1.1	2.9	4.9	8.2	13.4	18.4	17.4
#10 VIRGINIA	-11.4	-9.1	-9.0	-4.6	-5.2	-3.9	0.7	-1.8	1.7	-0.1	0.4		1.5	3.3	5.3	8.6	13.8	18.8	17.8
#11 OREGON	-9.9	-10.6	-10.5	-6.1	-6.7	-5.4	-0.8	-3.3	0.2	-1.6	-1.1	-1.5		1.8	3.8	7.1	12.3	17.3	16.3
#12 MCNEESE ST	-8.1	-12.4	-12.3	-7.9	-8.5	-7.2	-2.6	-5.1	-1.6	-3.4	-2.9	-3.3	-1.8		2.0	5.3	10.5	15.5	14.5
#13 SAMFORD	-6.1	-14.4	-14.3	-9.9	-10.5	-9.2	-4.6	-7.1	-3.6	-5.4	-4.9	-5.3	-3.8	-2.0		3.3	8.5	13.5	12.5
#14 AKRON	-2.8	-17.7	-17.6	-13.2	-13.8	-12.5	-7.9	-10.4	-6.9	-8.7	-8.2	-8.6	-7.1	-5.3	-3.3		5.2	10.2	9.2
#15 SAINT PETER'S	2.4	-22.9	-22.8	-18.4	-19.0	-17.7	-13.1	-15.6	-12.1	-13.9	-13.4	-13.8	-12.3	-10.5	-8.5	-5.2		5.0	4.0
#16 GRAMBLING	7.4	-27.9	-27.8	-23.4	-24.0	-22.7	-18.1	-20.6	-17.1	-18.9	-18.4	-18.8	-17.3	-15.5	-13.5	-10.2	-5.0		-1.0
#16 MONTANA ST	6.4	-26.9	-26.8	-22.4	-23.0	-21.7	-17.1	-19.6	-16.1	-17.9	-17.4	-17.8	-16.3	-14.5	-12.5	-9.2	-4.0	1.0	

HOW TO USE THIS GRID

The grid above outlines how each team in the region matches up against the other teams in the region, creating a hypothetical betting line should the teams meet in the tournament. The values in the grid display how many points the team on the top would be favored (-), or an underdog (positive number), by when facing the teams listed down the left side of the grid by taking the team on the top rating and subtracting the team's rating listed on the left. For example, #1 seed Purdue would hypothetically be listed as a 4.5-point favorite (-4.5) against #3 seed Creighton, should the teams match up in the tournament, based on this rating.

STEVE MAKINEN'S MIDWEST REGION

MOMENTUM RATING GRID

	TEAM/SEED	#1 PURDUE	#2 TENNESSEE	#3 CREIGHTON	#4 KANSAS	#5 GONZAGA	#6 SOUTH CAROLINA	#7 TEXAS	#8 UTAH ST	#9 TCU	#10 COLORADO ST	#10 VIRGINIA	#11 OREGON	#12 MCNEESE ST	#13 SAMFORD	#14 AKRON	#15 SAINT PETER'S	#16 GRAMBLING	#16 MONTANA ST
TEAM/SEED	RATING	18.1	19.5	18.8	10.2	18.6	8.6	14.3	9.4	12.9	9.1	4.5	9.8	11.9	6.8	-1.3	2.3	-2.1	0.1
#1 PURDUE	18.1		-1.4	-0.7	7.9	-0.5	9.5	3.8	8.7	5.2	9.0	13.6	8.3	6.2	11.3	19.4	15.8	20.2	18.0
#2 TENNESSEE	19.5	1.4		0.7	9.3	0.9	10.9	5.2	10.1	6.6	10.4	15.0	9.7	7.6	12.7	20.8	17.2	21.6	19.4
#3 CREIGHTON	18.8	0.7	-0.7		8.6	0.2	10.2	4.5	9.4	5.9	9.7	14.3	9.0	6.9	12.0	20.1	16.5	20.9	18.7
#4 KANSAS	10.2	-7.9	-9.3	-8.6		-8.4	1.6	-4.1	0.8	-2.7	1.1	5.7	0.4	-1.7	3.4	11.5	7.9	12.3	10.1
#5 GONZAGA	18.6	0.5	-0.9	-0.2	8.4		10.0	4.3	9.2	5.7	9.5	14.1	8.8	6.7	11.8	19.9	16.3	20.7	18.5
#6 SOUTH CAROLINA	8.6	-9.5	-10.9	-10.2	-1.6	-10.0		-5.7	-0.8	-4.3	-0.5	4.1	-1.2	-3.3	1.8	9.9	6.3	10.7	8.5
#7 TEXAS	14.3	-3.8	-5.2	-4.5	4.1	-4.3	5.7		4.9	1.4	5.2	9.8	4.5	2.4	7.5	15.6	12.0	16.4	14.2
#8 UTAH ST	9.4	-8.7	-10.1	-9.4	-0.8	-9.2	0.8	-4.9		-3.5	0.3	4.9	-0.4	-2.5	2.6	10.7	7.1	11.5	9.3
#9 TCU	12.9	-5.2	-6.6	-5.9	2.7	-5.7	4.3	-1.4	3.5		3.8	8.4	3.1	1.0	6.1	14.2	10.6	15.0	12.8
#10 COLORADO ST	9.1	-9.0	-10.4	-9.7	-1.1	-9.5	0.5	-5.2	-0.3	-3.8		4.6	-0.7	-2.8	2.3	10.4	6.8	11.2	9.0
#10 VIRGINIA	4.5	-13.6	-15.0	-14.3	-5.7	-14.1	-4.1	-9.8	-4.9	-8.4	-4.6		-5.3	-7.4	-2.3	5.8	2.2	6.6	4.4
#11 OREGON	9.8	-8.3	-9.7	-9.0	-0.4	-8.8	1.2	-4.5	0.4	-3.1	0.7	5.3		-2.1	3.0	11.1	7.5	11.9	9.7
#12 MCNEESE ST	11.9	-6.2	-7.6	-6.9	1.7	-6.7	3.3	-2.4	2.5	-1.0	2.8	7.4	2.1		5.1	13.2	9.6	14.0	11.8
#13 SAMFORD	6.8	-11.3	-12.7	-12.0	-3.4	-11.8	-1.8	-7.5	-2.6	-6.1	-2.3	2.3	-3.0	-5.1		8.1	4.5	8.9	6.7
#14 AKRON	-1.3	-19.4	-20.8	-20.1	-11.5	-19.9	-9.9	-15.6	-10.7	-14.2	-10.4	-5.8	-11.1	-13.2	-8.1		-3.6	0.8	-1.4
#15 SAINT PETER'S	2.3	-15.8	-17.2	-16.5	-7.9	-16.3	-6.3	-12.0	-7.1	-10.6	-6.8	-2.2	-7.5	-9.6	-4.5	3.6		4.4	2.2
#16 GRAMBLING	-2.1	-20.2	-21.6	-20.9	-12.3	-20.7	-10.7	-16.4	-11.5	-15.0	-11.2	-6.6	-11.9	-14.0	-8.9	-0.8	-4.4		-2.2
#16 MONTANA ST	0.1	-18.0	-19.4	-18.7	-10.1	-18.5	-8.5	-14.2	-9.3	-12.8	-9.0	-4.4	-9.7	-11.8	-6.7	1.4	-2.2	2.2	

HOW TO USE THIS GRID

The grid above outlines how each team in the region matches up against the other teams in the region, creating a hypothetical betting line should the teams meet in the tournament. The values in the grid display how many points the team on the top would be favored (-), or an underdog (positive number), by when facing the teams listed down the left side of the grid by taking the team on the top rating and subtracting the team's rating listed on the left. For example, #1 seed Purdue would hypothetically be listed as a .5-point underdog (+.5) against #5 seed Gonzaga, should the teams match up in the tournament, based on this rating.

MIDWEST



#1 PURDUE VS #16 GRAMBLING/MONTANA ST

No team should be more motivated entering the NCAA Tournament than Purdue. They were embarrassed last year by No. 16 Fairleigh Dickinson and have had over a year to think about it. They'll get the winner of the 16 vs. 16 play-in game between Montana State and Grambling.

Regarding the play-in game, Montana State was my pick to win the Big Sky and they did, relying on their 3-point shooting to carry them through. They're a legitimately good offensive team and they're adept at forcing turnovers, so I do like them against a Grambling team that doesn't shoot many 3s and ranked in the 300s in 2P%.

Regardless of who Purdue faces, Zach Edey should be a matchup nightmare. Both teams are relatively small, as 6-foot-11 Jonathan Aku would draw the assignment for Grambling and 6-foot-10 John Olmstead would be tasked with doing his best for Montana State. The Bobcats are definitely on the small side, but they would be comfortable with taking a ton of long jumpers to neutralize Edey's defensive presence. I think they're a bigger threat, if they can get by.

Matt Painter is a great regular season coach and a terrible postseason coach. Assuming they get past the No. 16 seed here, I wouldn't be shocked in the slightest if the TCU/Utah State winner beats them.



#1 PURDUE

CONFERENCE
Big Ten

HEAD COACH
Matt Painter

RECORD
29-4 SU, 15-15 ATS, 22-11 O/U

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

VALUE (NCAA RANK)

83.4 (10)	Offensive PPG
70.2 (101)	Defensive PPG
65.7 (164)	Possessions
1.302 (3)	Offensive Efficiency Points Per Possession
0.963 (11)	Defensive Efficiency Points Per Possession
48.8% (11)	Offensive FG%
41.9% (53)	Defensive FG%
40.8% (2)	Offensive 3PT%
72.1% (180)	Free Throw %
57.7% (2)	Rebounding %
1.602 (16)	Asst/TO Ratio
16.2% (153)	Offensive TO%
13.8% (336)	Defensive TO%

ODDS TO WIN

REGION

+165

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

+600

MIDWEST



#16 GRAMBLING VS #16 MONTANA ST (-4, 135)

It is not an easy trek from Bozeman to Dayton, nor is it an easy itinerary from Grambling, Louisiana, but both teams have to be excited to be heading to UD Arena. This is Grambling's first-ever Division I NCAA Tournament appearance. They had two at the Division II level in 1958 and 1976, so these players are making program history.

The Big Sky Tournament was littered with upsets, but Montana State pulled off two of their own to wind up in the Big Dance. They beat Weber State and rival Montana for a bid and bring a sharp-shooting group to Ohio. The Bobcats are a top-60 team in 2P% and 3P%, but they are not good at all on defense.

Grambling's stats require a lot of context, as they played a very difficult non-conference schedule and took some lumps against the likes of Colorado, Iowa State, Dayton, Washington State, Drake, and Florida. They lost to Drake by 12. They lost every other game by at least 18. The game against Dayton was at UD Arena, so they have played there and made that trip already this season. This will be Montana State's first game east of the Mississippi River this season.

Per KenPom, the Tigers played the fourth-toughest non-conference schedule, so you'll have to consider their SWAC numbers and figure that the truth lies somewhere in between. They did shoot 36% in SWAC games, but Montana State is also quite a bit better than all of those teams and higher-rated by a decent margin over Grambling.



#16 GRAMBLING

CONFERENCE
SWAC

HEAD COACH
Donte Jackson

RECORD
20-14 SU, 17-14 ATS, 15-16 O/U



#16 MONTANA ST

CONFERENCE
Big Sky

HEAD COACH
Matt Logie

RECORD
17-17 SU, 16-15 ATS, 17-14 O/U

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

VALUE (NCAA RANK)

65.1 (335)	Offensive PPG	✓	73.6 (144)
68.9 (73) ✓	Defensive PPG		74.3 (232)
62.7 (330)	Possessions	✓	67 (90)
1.011 (308)	Offensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	✓	1.062 (229)
1.133 (236)	Defensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	✓	1.113 (201)
43.1% (244)	Offensive FG%	✓	46.3% (65)
43.5% (140) ✓	Defensive FG%		46.5% (311)
34.1% (169)	Offensive 3PT%	✓	36.4% (44)
70.6% (252)	Free Throw %	✓	73.4% (113)
48.1% (277) ✓	Rebounding %		46.1% (334)
0.671 (357)	Asst/TO Ratio	✓	1.069 (193)
20.0% (340)	Offensive TO%	✓	16.5% (169)
18.6% (56) ✓	Defensive TO%		18.3% (68)

ODDS TO WIN

REGION

500-1

250-1

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

5000-1

2000-1

MIDWEST



#8 UTAH ST VS #9 TCU (-3.5, 150)

What a fascinating matchup this is. TCU is a big, fast, physical team that plays a lot of in-your-face defense. They ranked in the top 25 in TO% and they are going to harass Darius Brown II, the transfer who came over from Montana State with head coach Danny Sprinkle. Great Osobor is going to have his work cut out for him down low, but he's a terrific player.

Both of these teams have found success getting inside at a high rate. TCU has a shot share on Close Twos of 42.3% and Utah State is at 43.7%. I like teams that can get to the rim, especially in these neutral-site settings. Both teams also allowed high shot shares, with TCU at 41.6% and Utah State at 39.8%.

TCU was a top-100 team by 3P%, but few in the nation were as good as Utah State at defending the triple. The Mountain West was full of great teams, but I do worry that Utah State's defensive rebounding numbers are skewed by the play in the conference. Collectively, the conference ranked 24th in ORB%, while the Big 12 ranked third.

My concern here would be TCU's physicality down low in a game where real estate will be available based on the shot shares of both teams. If Osobor gets into foul trouble, the depth behind him is a huge step down. I don't think it's a coincidence that San Diego State handled Utah State twice and their only loss came when they shot 3-of-19 from 3.

TCU seems to match up pretty well here and I'd be intrigued about them against Purdue as well.



#8 UTAH ST

CONFERENCE
Mountain West

HEAD COACH
Danny Sprinkle

RECORD
27-6 SU, 15-15 ATS, 19-12 O/U



#9 TCU

CONFERENCE
Big 12

HEAD COACH
Jamie Dixon

RECORD
21-12 SU, 19-14 ATS, 18-15 O/U

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

VALUE (NCAA RANK)

79 (41)	Offensive PPG	✓	79.2 (38)
71.5 (144)	Defensive PPG	✓	71.2 (133)
66.9 (94)	Possessions	✓	67.8 (58)
1.192 (41)	Offensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	✓	1.193 (39)
1.032 (64)	Defensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	✓	1.009 (34)
48.8% (12) ✓	Offensive FG%		46.5% (60)
44.3% (179) ✓	Defensive FG%		44.6% (202)
32.1% (267)	Offensive 3PT%	✓	35.6% (88)
71.2% (223)	Free Throw %	✓	73.0% (134)
52.2% (67)	Rebounding %	✓	53.2% (35)
1.439 (40) ✓	Asst/TO Ratio		1.325 (69)
15.4% (89) ✓	Offensive TO%		17.5% (237)
16.0% (220)	Defensive TO%	✓	20.3% (23)

ODDS TO WIN

REGION

60-1

25-1

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

250-1

120-1

MIDWEST



#5 GONZAGA (-6.5, 150) VS #12 MCNEESE ST

Death, taxes, and dangerous mid-majors getting paired up in the first round. This one is obviously interesting in that Gonzaga has proven to be more than a mid-major over the years, but it took a while for Mark Few's crew to come together this season. Their only losses since mid-January have come against fellow No. 5 seed Saint Mary's. They lost at Santa Clara, but their other six losses are in Quadrant 1 games, including three in Quad 1-A games.

McNeese has played one Quad 1 game this season and it was a win over VCU in the first game of the year back on November 6. They lost non-conference Quad 2 games to Western Carolina and Louisiana Tech before beating UAB and Michigan. Other than that, they've just rolled through Southland Conference action.

The statistical profile is awesome, as it should be for a 30-win team with a strength of schedule in the 340s for Bart Torvik and 330s for Ken Pomeroy. It's hard to hold the schedule against the low-major teams because they can't help it, but Gonzaga is a big step up in class from anything they've faced this season. The Zags are still a top-10 offensive team and a top-50 defensive team.

The Committee was probably right to keep McNeese from a middle-of-the-road major-conference opponent, because they wouldn't want Will Wade's team to knock somebody off, but pairing them with Gonzaga, who may be under-seeded as a No. 5 based on reputation and recent form, was perfectly acceptable. It's a bummer for McNeese and it'll be their first noteworthy opponent in 2024.

Anything can happen in these 12/5 games and there are several Power Five transfers on the McNeese roster, but Gonzaga is a really, really tough draw.



#5 GONZAGA

CONFERENCE
West Coast

HEAD COACH
Mark Few

RECORD
25-7 SU, 15-16 ATS, 15-16 O/U



#12 MCNEESE ST

CONFERENCE
Southland

HEAD COACH
Will Wade

RECORD
30-3 SU, 16-11 ATS, 15-12 O/U

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

VALUE (NCAA RANK)

83.6 (9) ✓	Offensive PPG	78.4 (47)
69.4 (87)	Defensive PPG	64 (11) ✓
67.2 (73) ✓	Possessions	62.8 (324)
1.251 (11) ✓	Offensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	1.186 (49)
1.015 (39) ✓	Defensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	1.05 (92)
51.1% (2) ✓	Offensive FG%	48.3% (16)
41.0% (30)	Defensive FG%	39.9% (8) ✓
35.5% (94)	Offensive 3PT%	39.4% (7) ✓
72.6% (149) ✓	Free Throw %	69.5% (285)
54.7% (14) ✓	Rebounding %	51.4% (104)
1.679 (9) ✓	Asst/TO Ratio	1.509 (27)
13.7% (18) ✓	Offensive TO%	13.8% (21)
16.2% (210)	Defensive TO%	22.6% (6) ✓

ODDS TO WIN

REGION

+700

80-1

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

60-1

300-1

MIDWEST



#4 KANSAS (-7.5, 153) VS #13 SAMFORD

This is my favorite game of the first round. "Bucky Ball" under head coach Bucky McMillan took the Bulldogs to the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 2000 when Samford won the Atlantic Sun bid. The SoCon champs from Homewood, Alabama employ a high-pressure defense that led to a top-20 mark in TO%.

The Bulldogs parlayed a lot of those extra possessions into points, as they ranked in the top 10 in eFG%, 3P%, and top 25 in 2P%. They were thoroughly crushed by Purdue in the season opener and also lost by 10 to VCU in the next game before ripping off 17 straight wins.

To me, this is the kind of team that can make a high-major really uncomfortable, especially one like Kansas, who has been dealing with the injuries to Kevin McCullar Jr. and Hunter Dickinson. Achor Achor is a legit big for Samford and they've got a bunch of speedy guards and wings, including a real playmaker in Rylan Jones. The Jayhawks are absolutely on upset alert here.

I also think the profile of an upset-oriented team is to be able to shoot well from deep. Guard play is so big in the NCAA Tournament, but it also helps for the lesser teams to avoid banging down low with a bunch of better bigs. Samford shot 39.3% from 3 with a 3P Rate of nearly 41%. Kansas didn't take a lot of 3s.

Against teams like TCU, UCF, and Houston, Kansas had major turnover problems. Samford may find success here.



#4 KANSAS

CONFERENCE
Big 12

HEAD COACH
Bill Self

RECORD
22-10 SU, 13-17 ATS, 14-16 O/U



#13 SAMFORD

CONFERENCE
Southern

HEAD COACH
Bucky McMillan

RECORD
29-5 SU, 18-14 ATS, 15-17 O/U

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

VALUE (NCAA RANK)

75 (110)	Offensive PPG	✓	84.3 (6)
69.1 (82) ✓	Defensive PPG		74.4 (233)
67 (87)	Possessions	✓	70.3 (12)
1.184 (52) ✓	Offensive Efficiency Points Per Possession		1.178 (56)
0.968 (14) ✓	Defensive Efficiency Points Per Possession		1.069 (122)
48.5% (15)	Offensive FG%	✓	48.9% (9)
40.6% (16) ✓	Defensive FG%		43.2% (124)
33.3% (210)	Offensive 3PT%	✓	39.3% (8)
72.9% (136) ✓	Free Throw %		72.6% (154)
51.4% (102) ✓	Rebounding %		49.9% (188)
1.61 (15) ✓	Asst/TO Ratio		1.269 (92)
16.1% (144) ✓	Offensive TO%		17.7% (254)
16.5% (184)	Defensive TO%	✓	21.1% (17)

ODDS TO WIN

REGION

10-1

100-1

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

50-1

600-1

MIDWEST



#6 SOUTH CAROLINA (-1, 132.5) VS #11 OREGON

It almost doesn't matter what happens in the regular season because Dana Altman is going to make noise in the conference tournament. That may be tougher next season with the Ducks in the Big Ten, but Oregon rolled through the final Pac-12 Tournament to draw a matchup with South Carolina in Pittsburgh.

The Gamecocks were one of this season's biggest surprises, as they were picked to finish last in the SEC by a lot of people, but here they are favored in an NCAA Tournament game. This feels like it will be a popular upset pick, though, as the Gamecocks went 11-3 in games decided by six or fewer points and don't stand out a whole lot in most metrics. Regression seems to be lurking.

Of course, a week ago, Oregon wasn't even in the tournament. And it's not like they shot well in Vegas. They just took really good care of the ball and their opponents did not. They may not force a lot of turnovers here against the Gamecocks and then this becomes a battle of two pretty mediocre offensive teams going at it. South Carolina does actively force teams off the 3-point line and they do take a lot of 3s on offense, so that's the key to the game.

That's especially true given that the Gamecocks play at one of the 10 slowest tempos in the nation. The game basically hinges on how SC shoots from deep. That makes it a legitimate toss-up in my eyes. I also think both teams could ugly it up enough against Creighton to make the Sweet 16, so we'll see who emerges.



#6 SOUTH CAROLINA

CONFERENCE
SEC

HEAD COACH
Lamont Paris

RECORD
26-7 SU, 22-9 ATS, 16-17 O/U



#11 OREGON

CONFERENCE
Pac 12

HEAD COACH
Dana Altman

RECORD
23-11 SU, 15-18 ATS, 19-14 O/U

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

VALUE (NCAA RANK)

72 (191)	Offensive PPG	✓	75.3 (105)
67 (32) ✓	Defensive PPG		71.9 (154)
61.1 (355)	Possessions	✓	64.8 (232)
1.174 (60)	Offensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	✓	1.177 (57)
1.022 (51) ✓	Defensive Efficiency Points Per Possession		1.043 (77)
43.9% (203)	Offensive FG%	✓	45.7% (88)
42.7% (99) ✓	Defensive FG%		45.3% (251)
33.5% (198)	Offensive 3PT%	✓	33.6% (193)
71.4% (216)	Free Throw %	✓	71.5% (209)
52.3% (62) ✓	Rebounding %		50.4% (164)
1.523 (24) ✓	Asst/TO Ratio		1.349 (63)
15.0% (71)	Offensive TO%	✓	14.5% (47)
14.5% (311)	Defensive TO%	✓	17.5% (120)

ODDS TO WIN

REGION

40-1

50-1

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

140-1

200-1

MIDWEST



#3 CREIGHTON

CONFERENCE
Big East

HEAD COACH
Greg McDermott

RECORD
23-9 SU, 16-15 ATS, 16-16 O/U



#14 AKRON

CONFERENCE
Mid-American

HEAD COACH
John Groce

RECORD
24-10 SU, 15-16 ATS, 12-20 O/U

#3 CREIGHTON (-12.5, 141.5) VS #14 AKRON

You certainly make your own breaks in sports, but Akron is a little lucky to be here. Who knows what would have happened on the Zips' last possession of the MAC Championship Game, but they were gifted two free throws, got one stop, and cut down the nets in Cleveland.

To be honest, I don't think this is a completely awful matchup for the Zips. They are one of the few low-to-mid-majors with a big talented enough to keep Ryan Kalkbrenner at bay in Enrique Freeman. They'll be pretty well-represented in Pittsburgh, which is a reasonable two-hour drive from the Rubber City. Both teams love to take a ton of jump shots and a cold shooting effort from Creighton could make this game really close for comfort.

Greg McDermott is 9-8 in the NCAA Tournament with the Bluejays, who did make the Elite Eight last season and lost by a point to San Diego State. They shot very well en route, but jump shots can be fickle. Creighton has also been really strong defensively over the last four seasons and ranks in the top 30 in adjusted defensive efficiency and top 20 in eFG% and 2P% defense per Bart Torvik.

By the metrics, they are a borderline elite team. They force opponents into a lot of mid-range jumpers, which Akron has actually found success with. It is impressive that Creighton's efficiency and defensive shooting metrics are so good with the lowest TO% in the nation on defense. Imagine what they could do with extra possessions.

My guess is that Creighton's overwhelmingly good profile and Akron's "lucky" win could skew perceptions and the betting odds here. Akron is a pretty decent team, though, especially with Freeman, and I can see them hanging around here.

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

VALUE (NCAA RANK)

80.5 (23) ✓	Offensive PPG	72.3 (178)
69.7 (94)	Defensive PPG	✓ 66.8 (30)
65.1 (208) ✓	Possessions	63.8 (291)
1.249 (12) ✓	Offensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	1.102 (166)
0.996 (24) ✓	Defensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	1.056 (101)
48.6% (14) ✓	Offensive FG%	45.3% (108)
42.0% (62) ✓	Defensive FG%	43.1% (114)
36.1% (58) ✓	Offensive 3PT%	32.0% (274)
78.1% (12) ✓	Free Throw %	72.4% (161)
53.1% (36) ✓	Rebounding %	52.7% (50)
1.621 (14) ✓	Asst/TO Ratio	1.078 (188)
15.0% (68) ✓	Offensive TO%	16.9% (195)
11.0% (362)	Defensive TO%	✓ 16.0% (228)

ODDS TO WIN

REGION

+400

130-1

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

30-1

800-1

MIDWEST



#7 TEXAS VS #10 COLORADO ST/VIRGINIA

Texas draws the winner of Virginia and Colorado State, so I'll give a few quick thoughts on the play-in teams before getting to the Longhorns.

Nobody wants to see Virginia in the NCAA Tournament except for Virginia fans. The Cavaliers rank in the 300s in 2P% offense, but have shot 3s well. They just don't take a whole lot of them. The pack-line defense continues to bring Tony Bennett's team success, but they'll be tested here by a quick and efficient Colorado State crew.

Led by the very responsible senior point guard Isaiah Stevens, the Rams have a top-50 offense and a top-10 mark in 2P%. Their long-distance shooting could dictate how this game plays out because Virginia packs the paint so much, but they are far and away the better offensive team in this one.

Texas went 9-9 in Big 12 play and had a quick exit from Kansas City at the hands of Kansas State. Nothing really stands out in a negative way for Texas from the stats. They're a quality offensive team with some flaws on the defensive glass and in terms of defending the 3-point line. Regardless of who wins the play-in game, Texas's 3-point defense shouldn't be exposed too badly, so my guess is they advance to face the winner of Saint Peter's and Tennessee.



#7 TEXAS

CONFERENCE
Big 12

HEAD COACH
Rodney Terry

RECORD
20-12 SU, 12-20 ATS, 20-12 O/U

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

VALUE (NCAA RANK)

76.5 (72)	Offensive PPG
69.9 (97)	Defensive PPG
65.3 (195)	Possessions
1.22 (25)	Offensive Efficiency Points Per Possession
1.017 (43)	Defensive Efficiency Points Per Possession
47.4% (39)	Offensive FG%
43.3% (129)	Defensive FG%
36.2% (50)	Offensive 3PT%
75.7% (44)	Free Throw %
50.7% (137)	Rebounding %
1.382 (55)	Asst/TO Ratio
16.2% (149)	Offensive TO%
18.1% (87)	Defensive TO%

ODDS TO WIN

REGION

15-1

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

100-1

MIDWEST



#10 COLORADO ST (-2.5, 121) VS #10 VIRGINIA

This game is in the running for one of the lowest NCAA Tournament totals ever. Per Evan Abrams of ESPN, no NCAA Tournament game has closed Under 120 since 2019 and this one is tracking that way, as Virginia's slow tempo and hideous offense battle it out with Colorado State's slow tempo and impressive offense.

The pack-line defense continues to bring success to Tony Bennett's program, as that's the only reason UVA made the field. They are a top-10 squad in adjusted defensive efficiency, while ranking in the 190s for offense per KenPom and Bart Torvik. To be that bad with one of the lowest TO% marks on offense in the nation is crazy, but the Cavaliers are among the 60 worst teams in 2P% and bottom 10 in FT%. They are 20 spots lower per KenPom rankings than any other at-large qualifier.

One area where the Cavs do excel is with shooting 3s, where they are a top-50 offense, but they rank in the 290s in 3P Rate, so they don't use that strength often. They were 9-1 in games decided by six or fewer points, another reason why many wanted to see them outside the field.

Colorado State, like their Mountain West brethren, got shafted a little bit by being under-seeded. Their six Quadrant 1 wins are four more than Virginia's paltry total of two and the Rams are a top-50 team in adjusted offensive and defensive efficiency.

The travel is odd here for Colorado State and they did post just a 9-8 record in road/neutral settings, though that mark does include wins over Creighton and Colorado. They only shot 31.8% from 3 in those games, so the low total seems accurate and the Rams will have to figure out a way to make more 3s if they want to advance.



#10 COLORADO ST

CONFERENCE
Mountain West

HEAD COACH
Niko Medved

RECORD
24-10 SU, 16-16 ATS, 13-19 O/U



#10 VIRGINIA

CONFERENCE
ACC

HEAD COACH
Tony Bennett

RECORD
23-10 SU, 17-14 ATS, 15-18 O/U

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

VALUE (NCAA RANK)

75.1 (107) ✓	Offensive PPG	63.6 (349)
69 (78)	Defensive PPG	59.6 (2) ✓
64.2 (269) ✓	Possessions	58.6 (362)
1.199 (33) ✓	Offensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	1.106 (154)
1.01 (35)	Defensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	0.947 (5) ✓
48.2% (17) ✓	Offensive FG%	43.4% (234)
43.6% (146)	Defensive FG%	40.2% (12) ✓
33.2% (212)	Offensive 3PT%	36.3% (47) ✓
75.4% (54) ✓	Free Throw %	63.7% (355)
49.5% (202) ✓	Rebounding %	48.8% (246)
1.792 (5)	Asst/TO Ratio	1.863 (3) ✓
14.6% (50)	Offensive TO%	12.9% (5) ✓
16.6% (174)	Defensive TO%	18.9% (50) ✓

ODDS TO WIN

REGION

80-1

80-1

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

250-1

300-1

MIDWEST



#2 TENNESSEE (-21.5, 130) VS #15 SAINT PETER'S

I'm sure there weren't a whole lot of believers in the Saint Peter's Peacocks two years ago when they made the Elite Eight, but I can confidently say I think this is the worst No. 15 seed in the field. I still wouldn't put it past Rick Barnes to lose to them given his NCAA Tournament history, but the Peacocks are really fortunate to be here.

The 2022 Peacocks were dramatically better on defense and had more scorers on offense. The 2024 Peacocks are one of the worst 2-point shooting teams in the country and one of the worst offenses in general. They turned the ball over on nearly 20% of their possessions and were one of the worst teams in the country at converting layups, dunks, and tip-ins. Yet, here they are.

The Peacocks do force a lot of turnovers, but Tennessee takes outstanding care of the basketball. The Volunteers can get bogged down offensively with their shooting numbers, but they are a truly elite defensive team. They should avoid disaster here and Barnes gets a favorable draw in the bottom part of the Midwest Region, so I think it's set up for him to make something of a run.

I'm not going to say that the Committee tried to make this as easy as they could for Barnes, but they didn't exactly give Tennessee the Iowa State region with the defending National Champion, the Big Ten champ, and the SEC champ.



#2 TENNESSEE

CONFERENCE
SEC

HEAD COACH
Rick Barnes

RECORD
24-8 SU, 16-15 ATS, 15-16 O/U



#15 SAINT PETER'S

CONFERENCE
Metro Atlantic

HEAD COACH
Bashir Mason

RECORD
19-13 SU, 20-11 ATS, 14-17 O/U

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

VALUE (NCAA RANK)

79.5 (36) ✓	Offensive PPG	65.1 (336)
67.9 (55)	Defensive PPG	63.2 (7) ✓
66.7 (103) ✓	Possessions	62.5 (339)
1.213 (27) ✓	Offensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	1.027 (288)
0.92 (3) ✓	Defensive Efficiency Points Per Possession	1.058 (103)
44.4% (169) ✓	Offensive FG%	39.8% (346)
38.9% (3) ✓	Defensive FG%	41.2% (33)
34.2% (161) ✓	Offensive 3PT%	33.9% (181)
74.9% (67) ✓	Free Throw %	71.9% (188)
52.4% (60) ✓	Rebounding %	52.1% (74)
1.627 (13) ✓	Asst/TO Ratio	0.842 (328)
14.3% (41) ✓	Offensive TO%	19.0% (322)
18.6% (60)	Defensive TO%	19.8% (34) ✓

ODDS TO WIN

REGION

+350

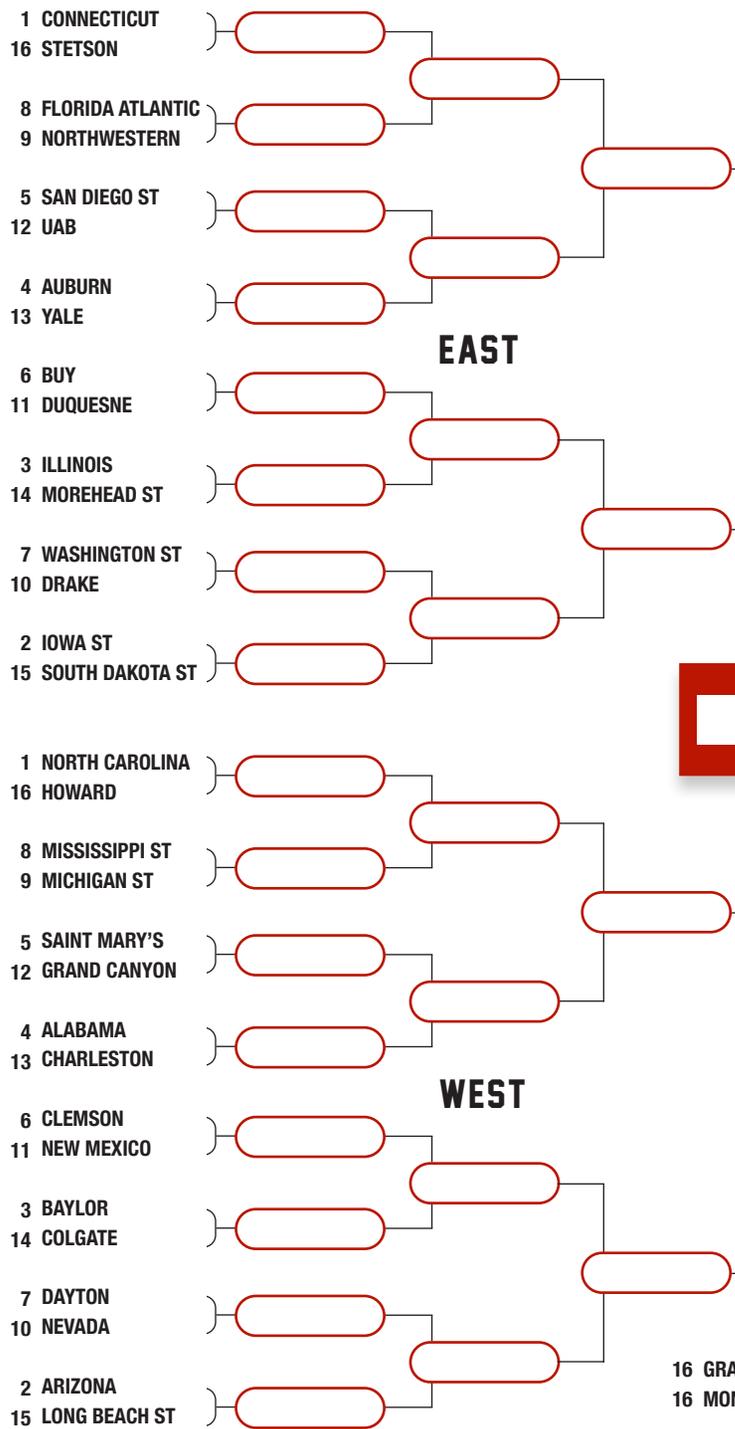
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NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

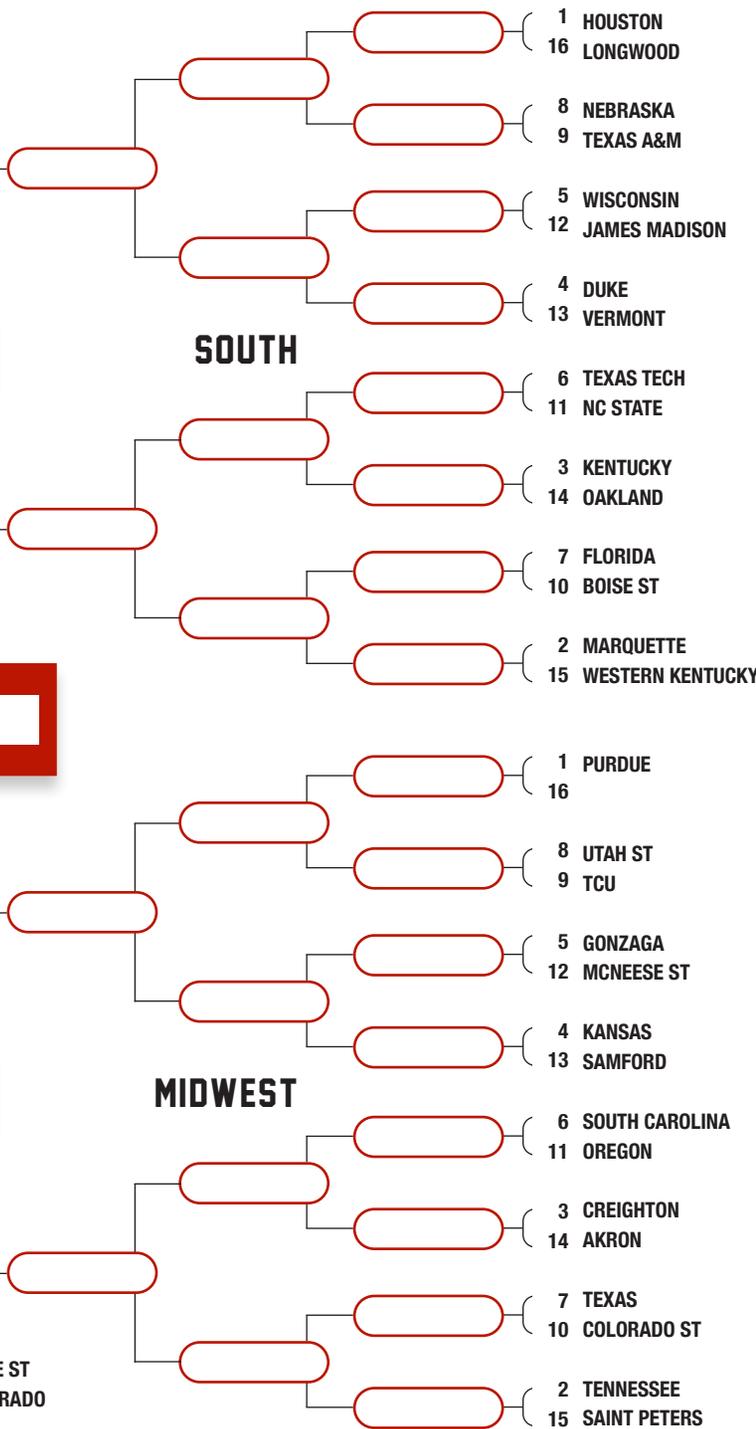
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NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP
APRIL 8



MIDWEST

SOUTH

WEST

MIDWEST

2024 NCAA TOURNAMENT

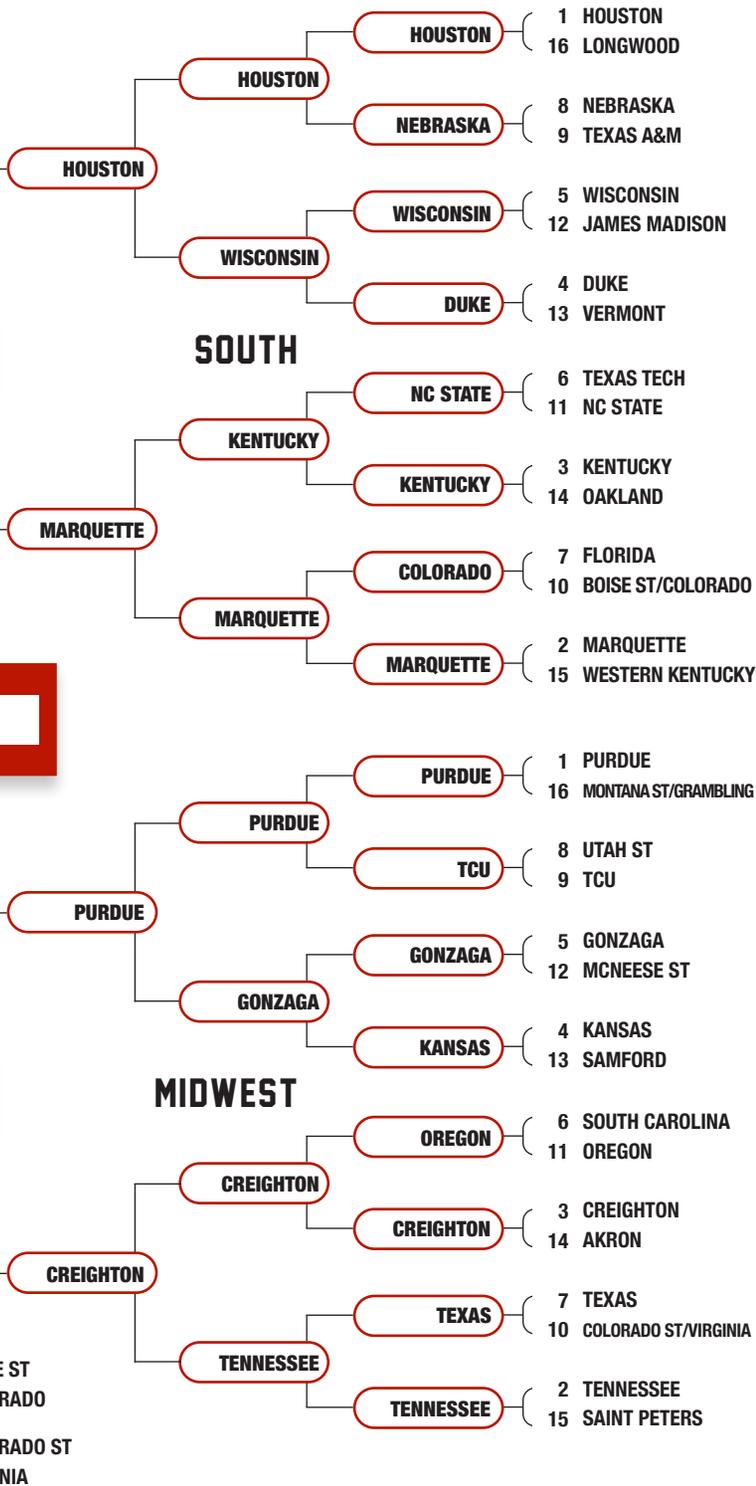
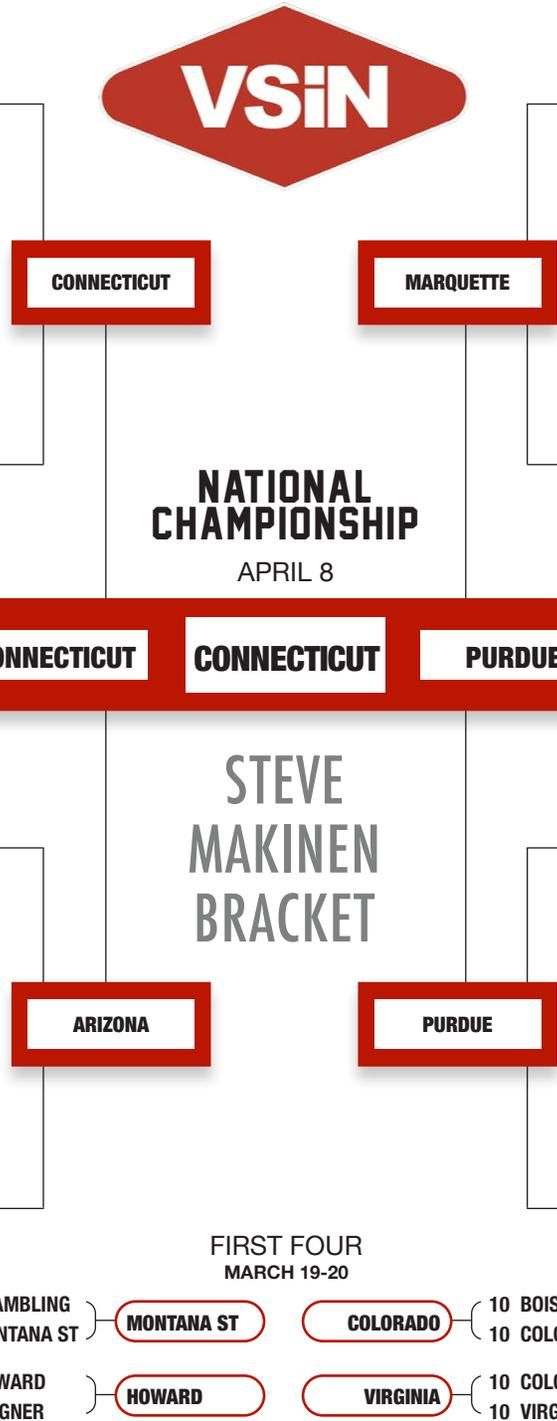
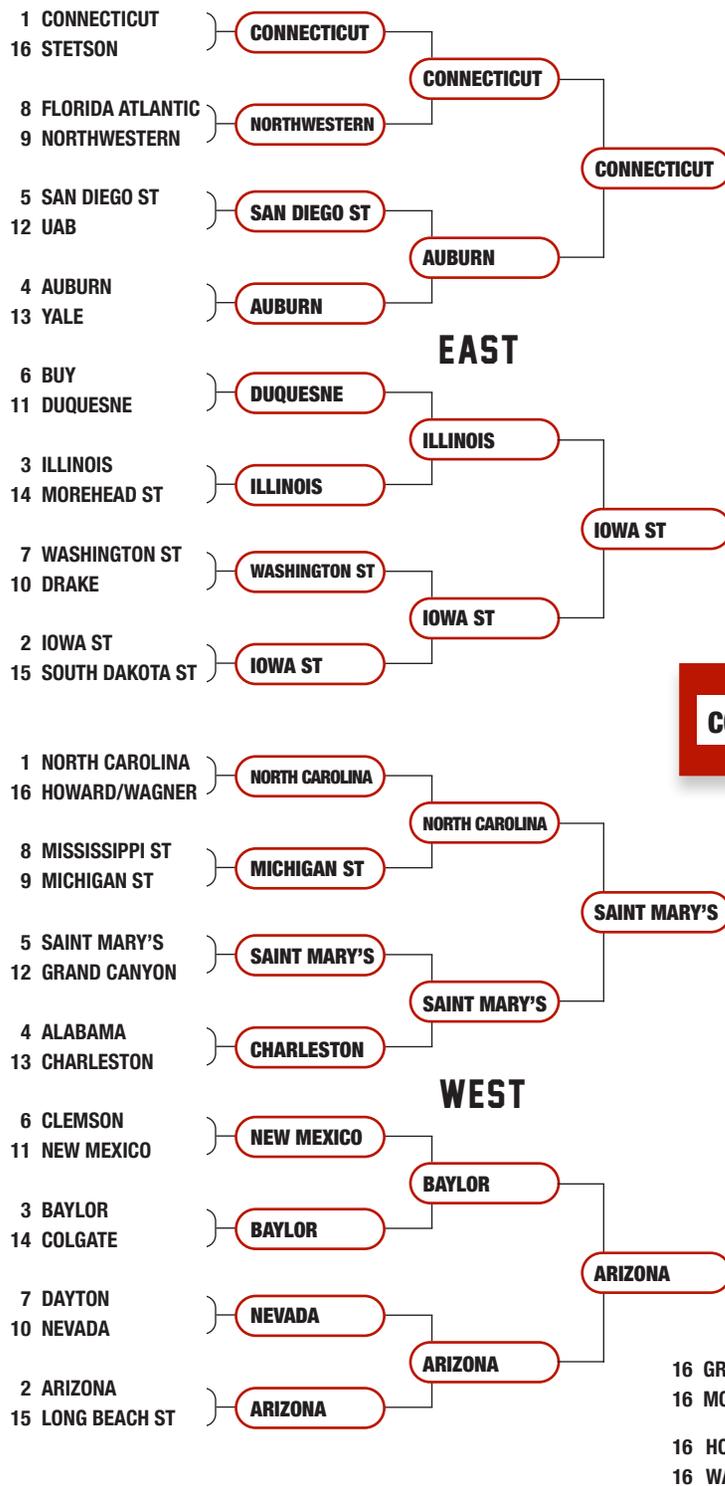


NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP APRIL 8

CONNECTICUT **CONNECTICUT** **PURDUE**

STEVE MAKINEN BRACKET

FIRST FOUR MARCH 19-20



ROUND 1
MARCH 21-22

ROUND 2
MARCH 23-24

SWEET 16
MARCH 28-29

ELITE 8
MARCH 30-31

FINAL FOUR
APRIL 6

FINAL FOUR
APRIL 6

ELITE 8
MARCH 30-31

SWEET 16
MARCH 28-29

ROUND 2
MARCH 23-24

ROUND 1
MARCH 21-22

2024 NCAA TOURNAMENT

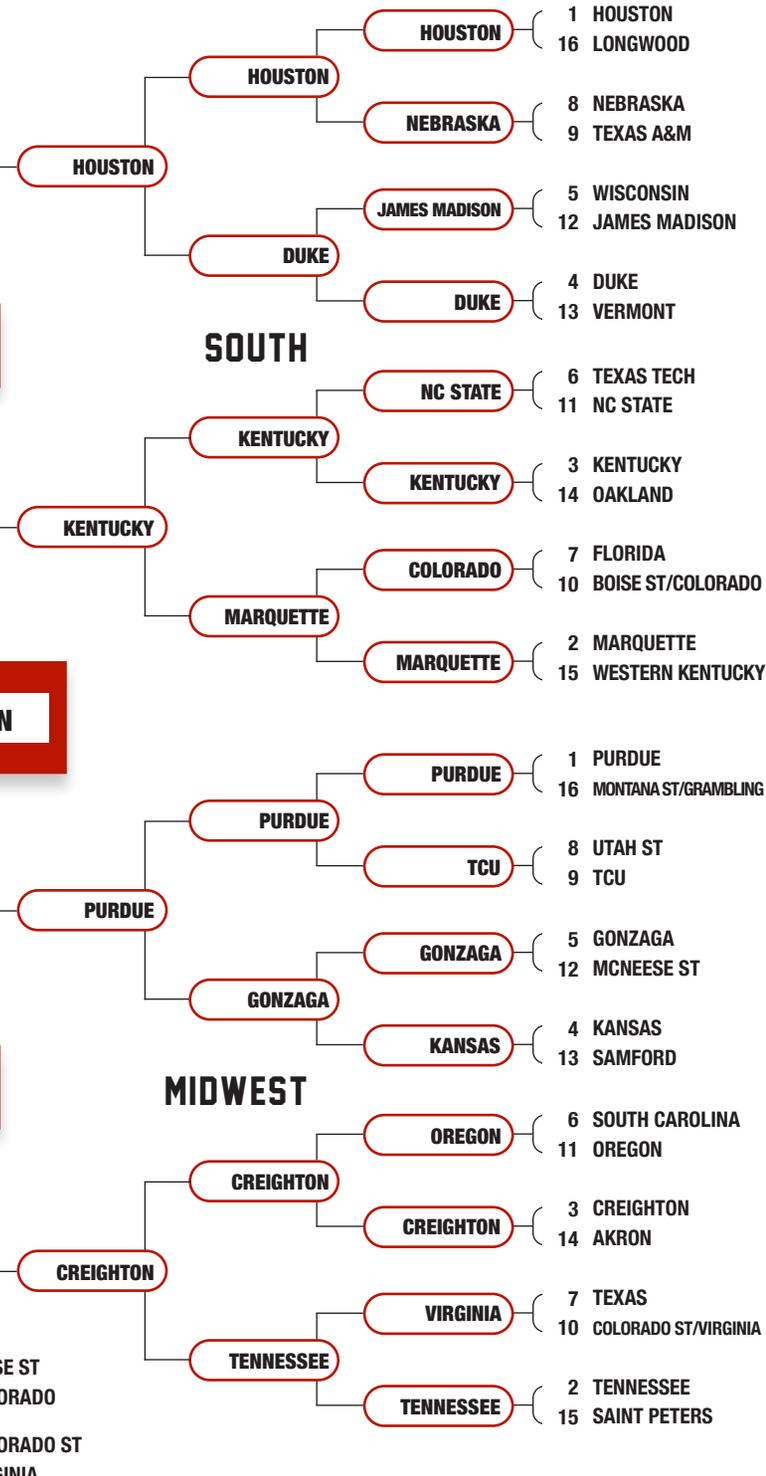
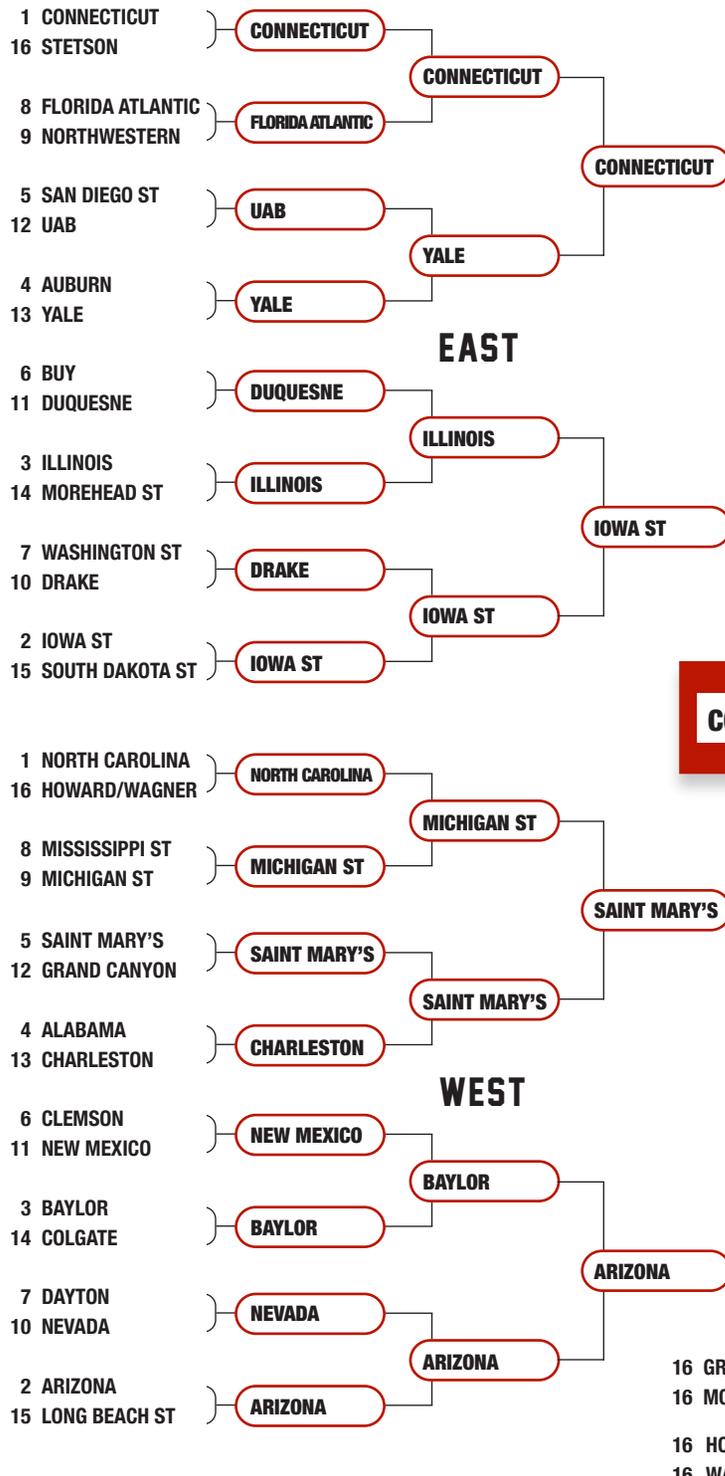


NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP APRIL 8

CONNECTICUT CONNECTICUT HOUSTON

BRENT MUSBURGER BRACKET

FIRST FOUR MARCH 19-20



ROUND 1
MARCH 21-22

ROUND 2
MARCH 23-24

SWEET 16
MARCH 28-29

ELITE 8
MARCH 30-31

FINAL FOUR
APRIL 6

FINAL FOUR
APRIL 6

ELITE 8
MARCH 30-31

SWEET 16
MARCH 28-29

ROUND 2
MARCH 23-24

ROUND 1
MARCH 21-22

2024 NCAA TOURNAMENT



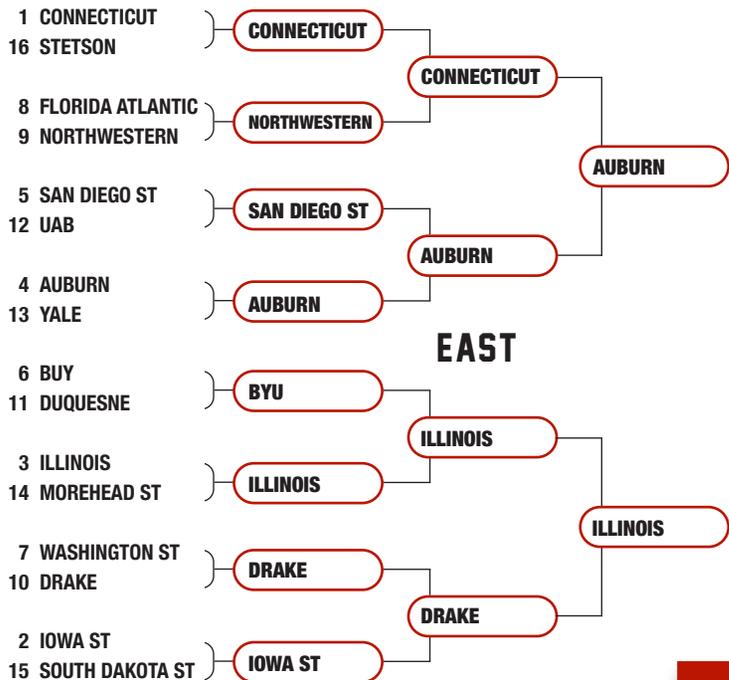
NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP APRIL 8

AUBURN **AUBURN** **CREIGHTON**

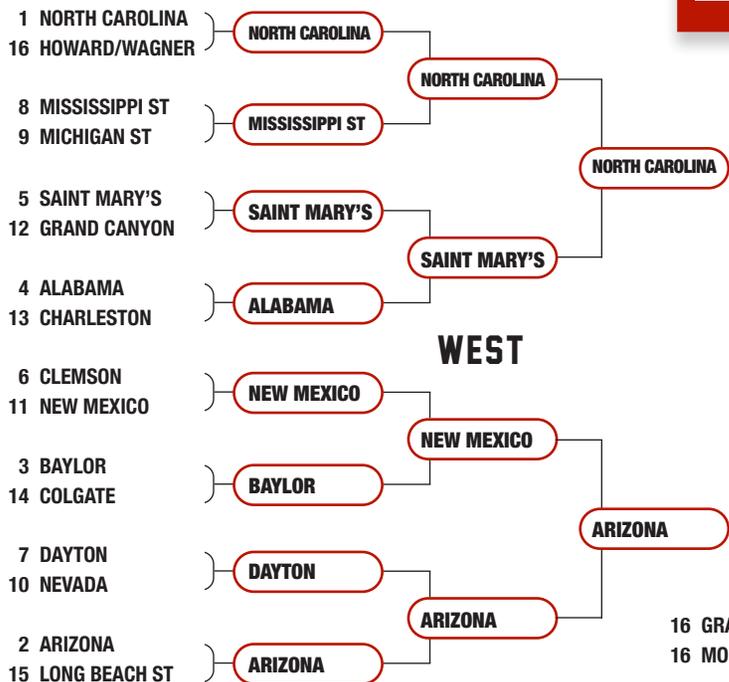
MITCH MOSS BRACKET

FIRST FOUR MARCH 19-20

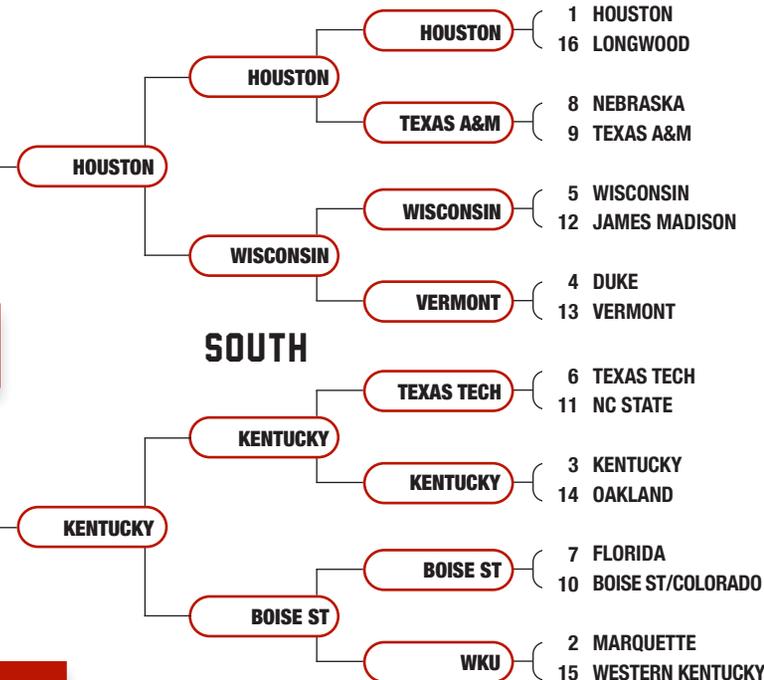
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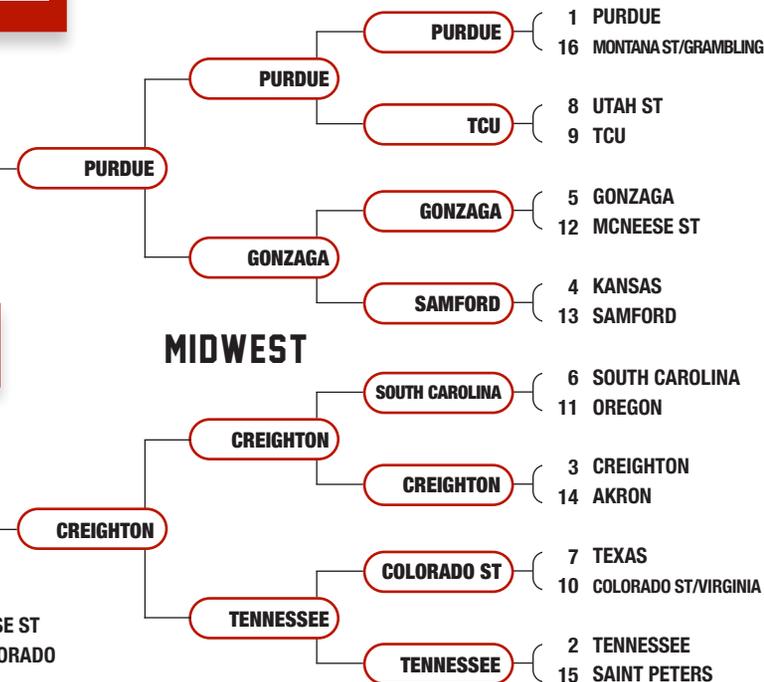
WEST



SOUTH



MIDWEST



ROUND 1
MARCH 21-22

ROUND 2
MARCH 23-24

SWEET 16
MARCH 28-29

ELITE 8
MARCH 30-31

FINAL FOUR
APRIL 6

FINAL FOUR
APRIL 6

ELITE 8
MARCH 30-31

SWEET 16
MARCH 28-29

ROUND 2
MARCH 23-24

ROUND 1
MARCH 21-22

2024 NCAA TOURNAMENT



NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP APRIL 8

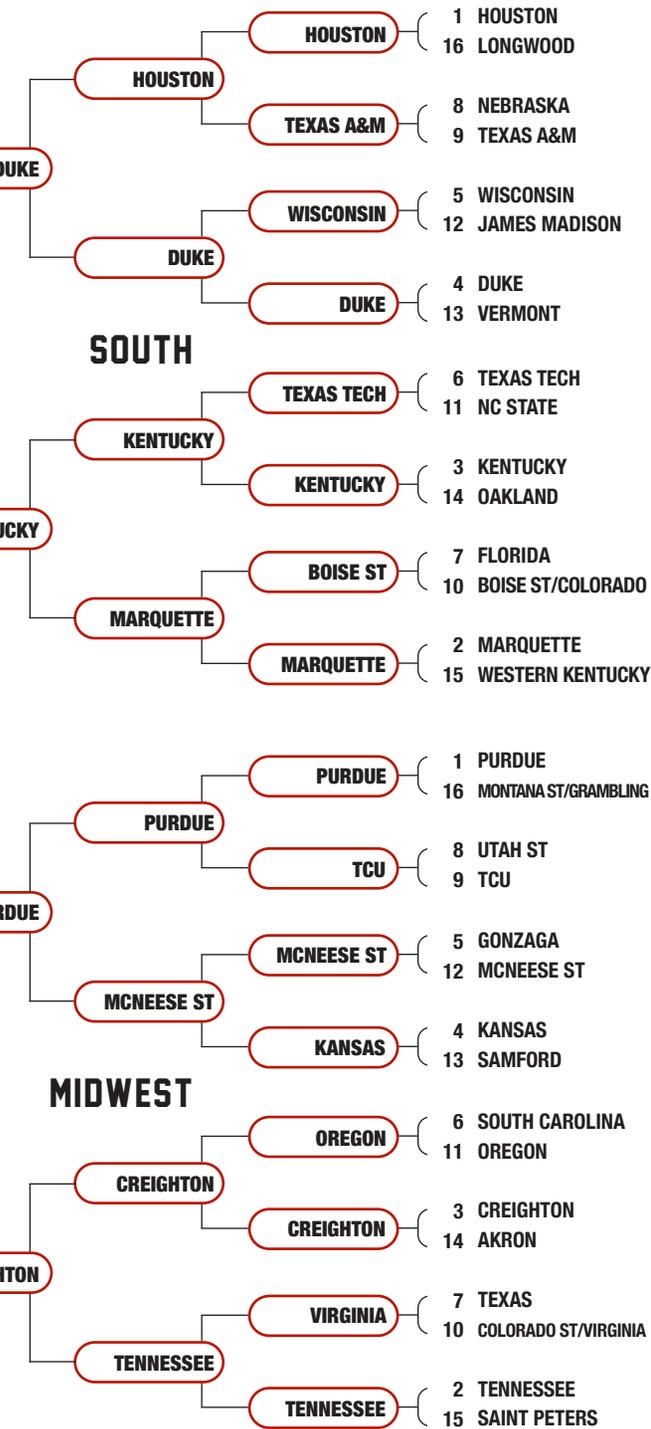
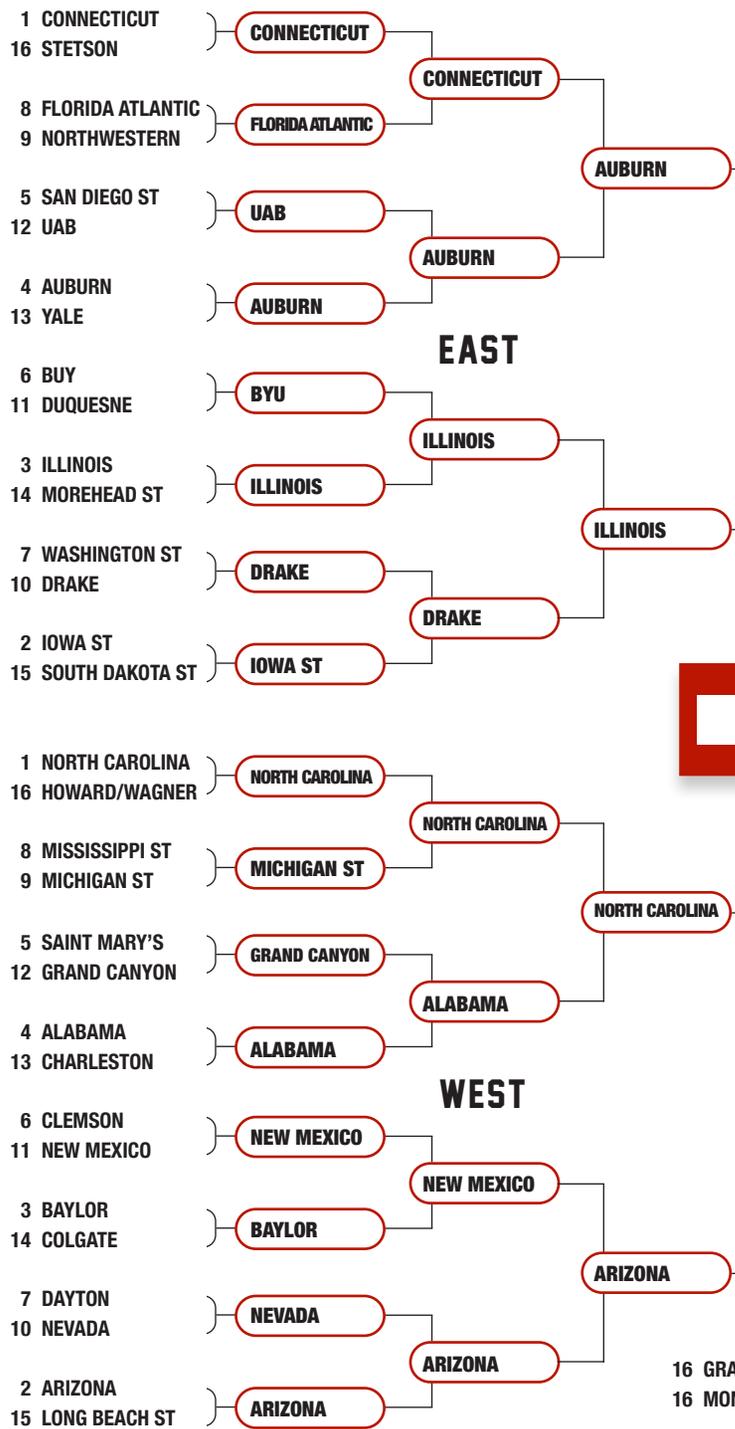
ARIZONA	PURDUE	PURDUE
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WES REYNOLDS BRACKET

ARIZONA	PURDUE
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FIRST FOUR MARCH 19-20

16 GRAMBLING 16 MONTANA ST	MONTANA ST	10 BOISE ST 10 COLORADO	BOISE ST
16 HOWARD 16 WAGNER	HOWARD	10 COLORADO ST 10 VIRGINIA	VIRGINIA



ROUND 1
MARCH 21-22

ROUND 2
MARCH 23-24

SWEET 16
MARCH 28-29

ELITE 8
MARCH 30-31

FINAL FOUR
APRIL 6

FINAL FOUR
APRIL 6

ELITE 8
MARCH 30-31

SWEET 16
MARCH 28-29

ROUND 2
MARCH 23-24

ROUND 1
MARCH 21-22

2024 NCAA TOURNAMENT



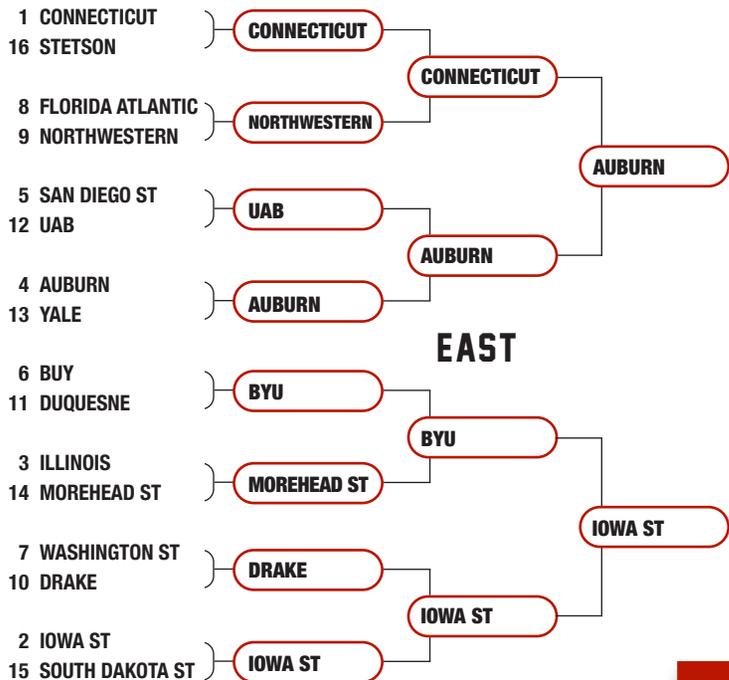
NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP APRIL 8

IOWA ST **IOWA ST** **TENNESSEE**

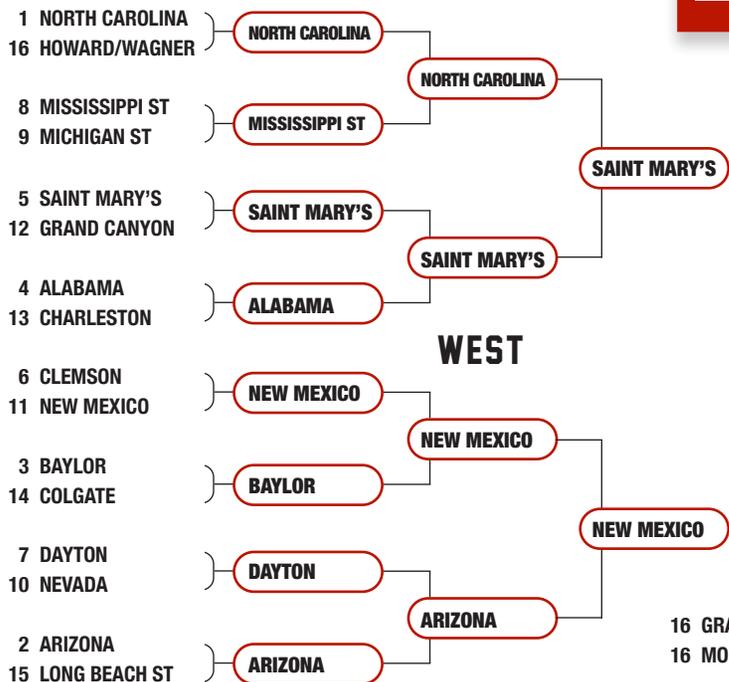
JONATHAN VON TOBEL BRACKET

FIRST FOUR MARCH 19-20

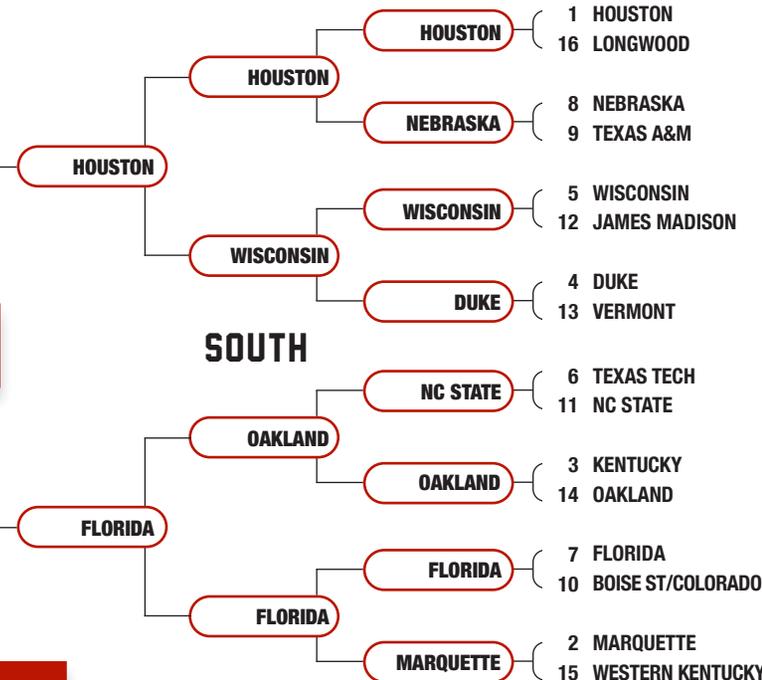
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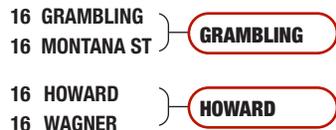
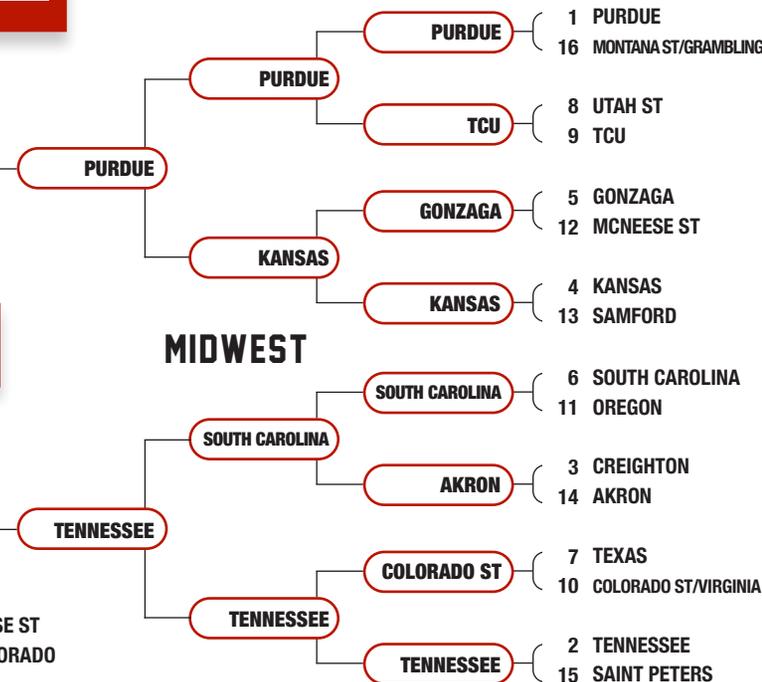
WEST



SOUTH



MIDWEST



2024 NCAA TOURNAMENT



NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP APRIL 8

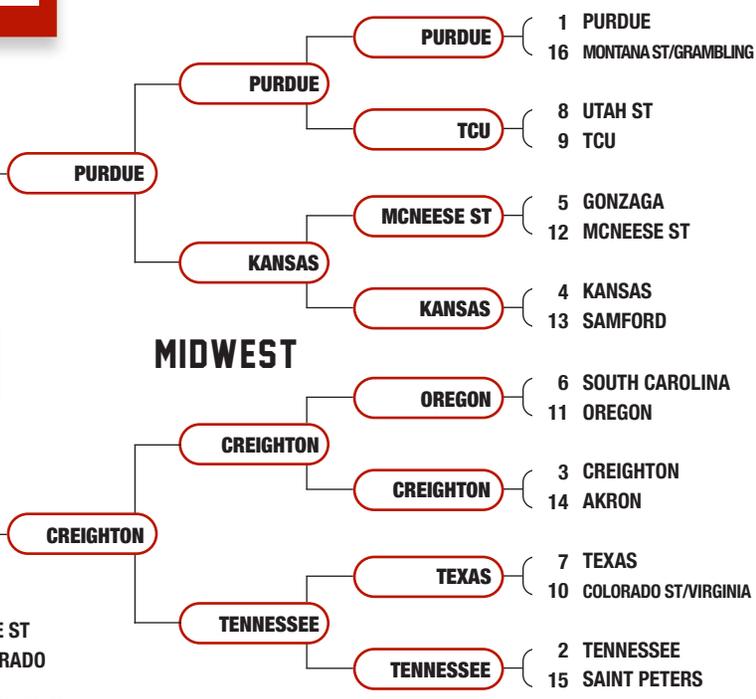
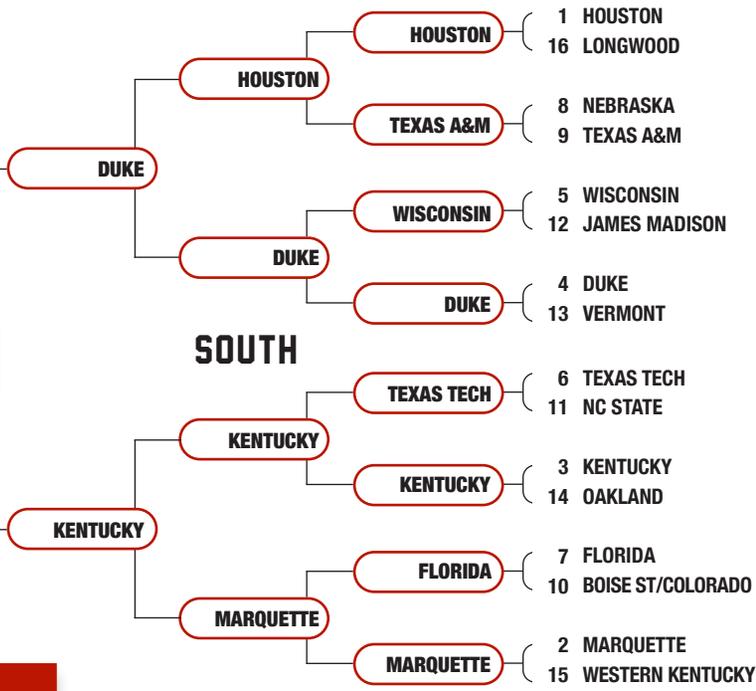
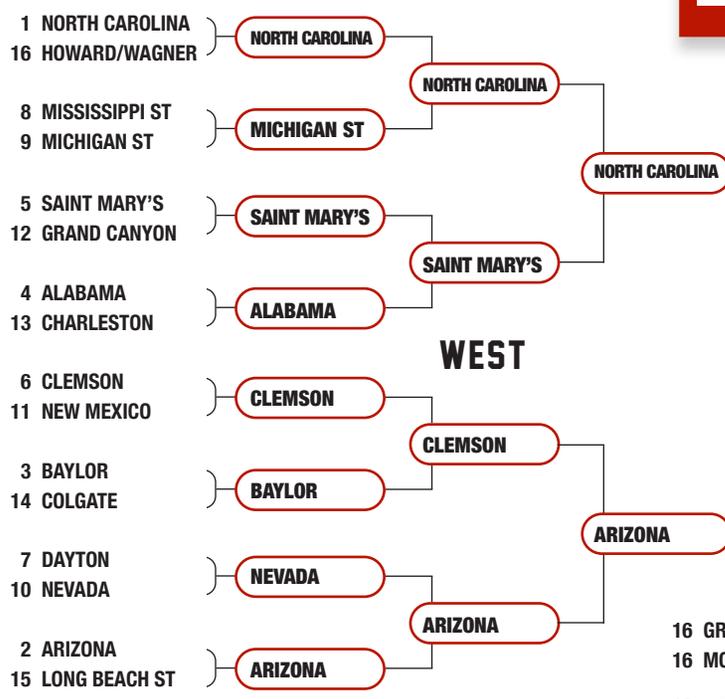
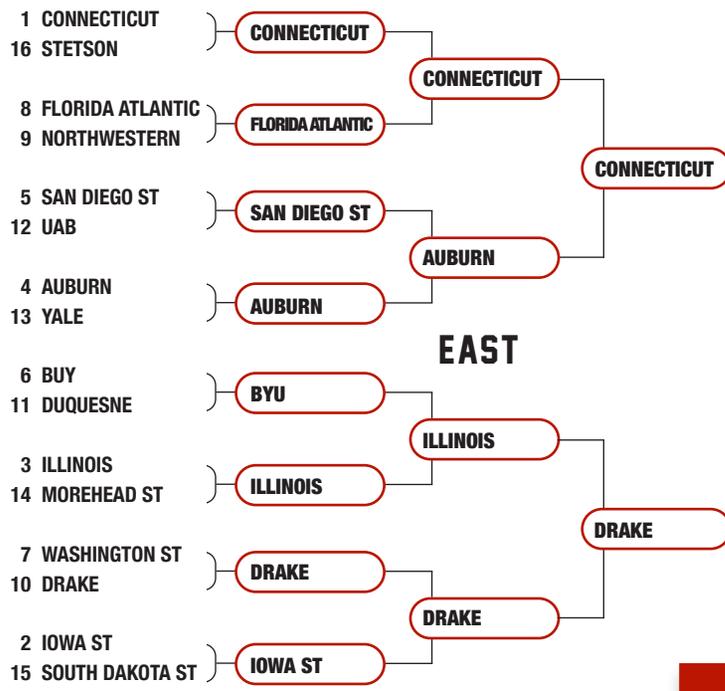
NORTH CAROLINA
 NORTH CAROLINA
 KENTUCKY

MATT YOUMANS BRACKET

NORTH CAROLINA
 CREIGHTON

FIRST FOUR MARCH 19-20

16 GRAMBLING 16 MONTANA ST **MONTANA ST**
 COLORADO
 10 BOISE ST 10 COLORADO
 16 HOWARD 16 WAGNER **WAGNER**
 VIRGINIA
 10 COLORADO ST 10 VIRGINIA



ROUND 1
MARCH 21-22

ROUND 2
MARCH 23-24

SWEET 16
MARCH 28-29

ELITE 8
MARCH 30-31

FINAL FOUR
APRIL 6

FINAL FOUR
APRIL 6

ELITE 8
MARCH 30-31

SWEET 16
MARCH 28-29

ROUND 2
MARCH 23-24

ROUND 1
MARCH 21-22

2024 NCAA TOURNAMENT



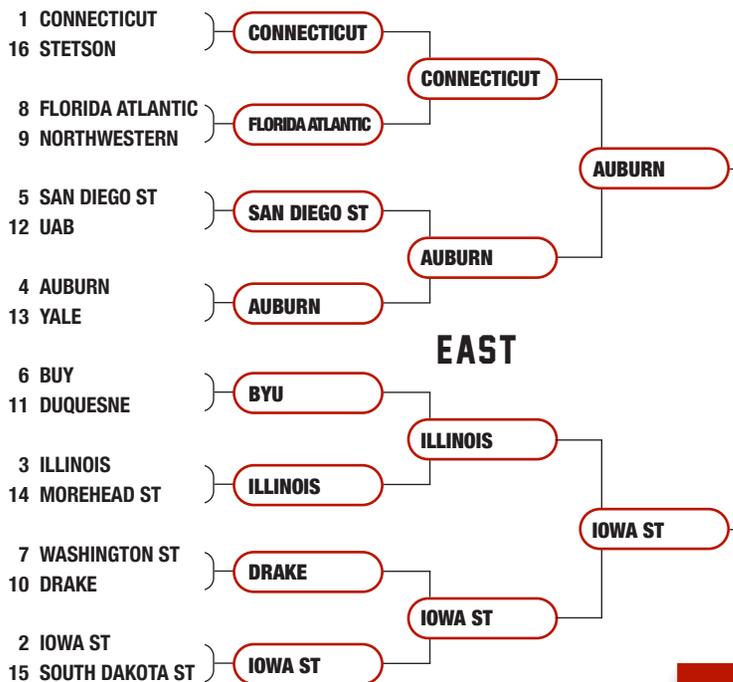
NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP APRIL 8



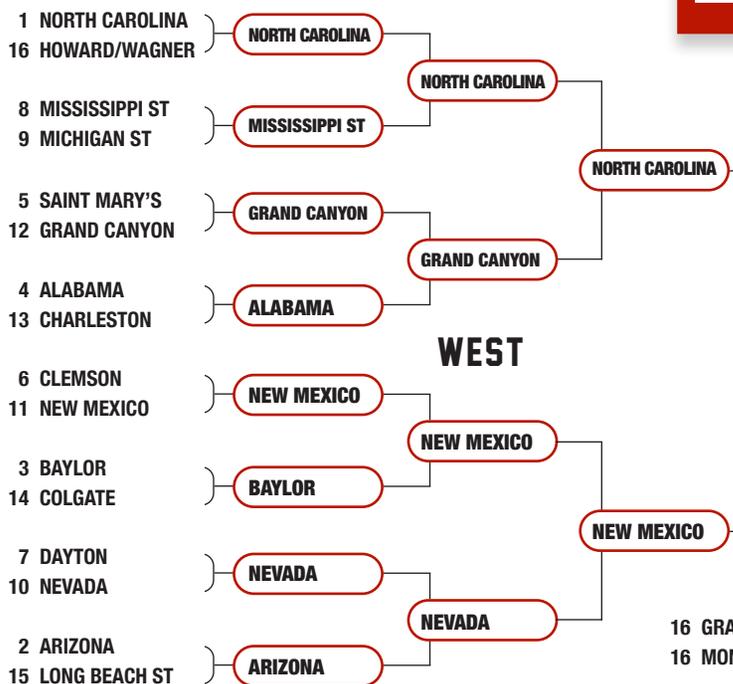
GREG PETERSON BRACKET



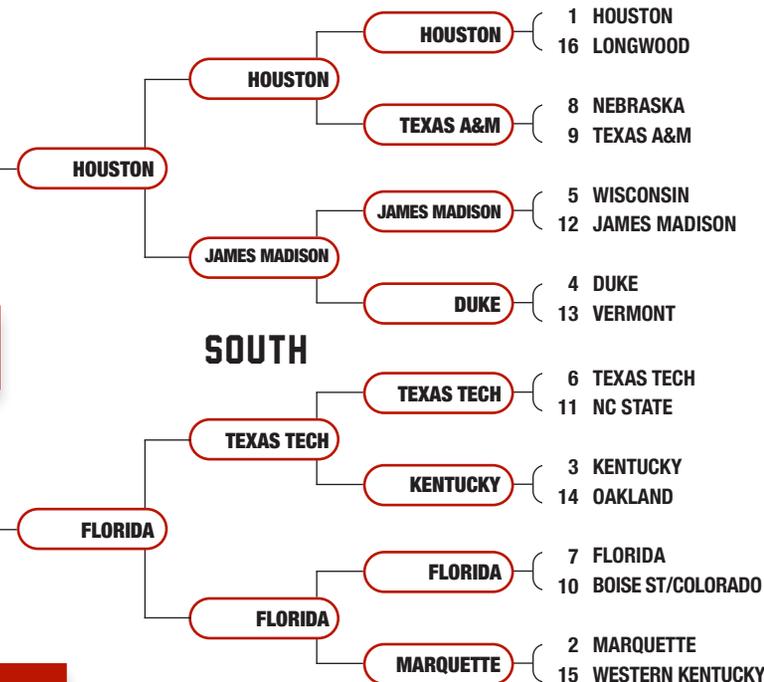
FIRST FOUR MARCH 19-20



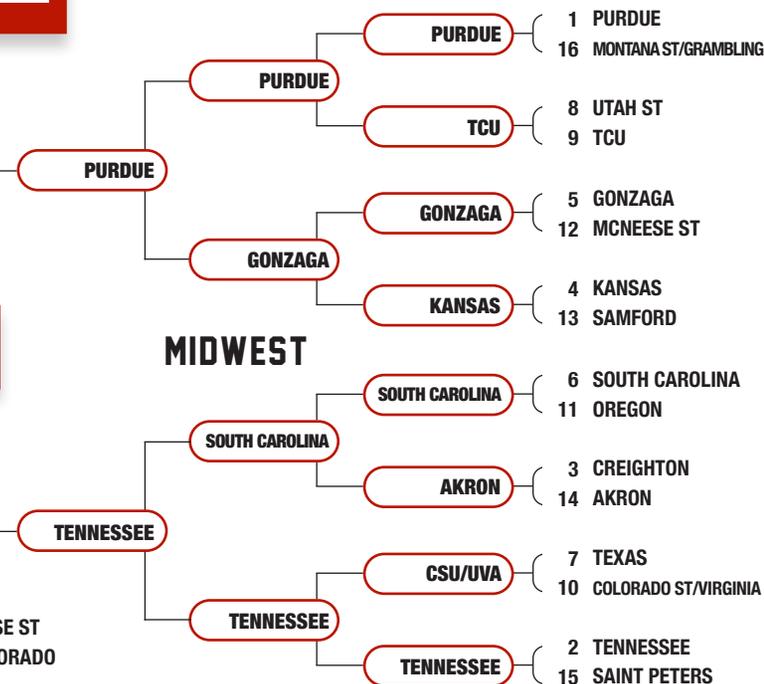
EAST



WEST



SOUTH



MIDWEST

ROUND 1
MARCH 21-22

ROUND 2
MARCH 23-24

SWEET 16
MARCH 28-29

ELITE 8
MARCH 30-31

FINAL FOUR
APRIL 6

FINAL FOUR
APRIL 6

ELITE 8
MARCH 30-31

SWEET 16
MARCH 28-29

ROUND 2
MARCH 23-24

ROUND 1
MARCH 21-22

2024 NCAA TOURNAMENT



NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP APRIL 8

NORTH CAROLINA **NORTH CAROLINA** **PURDUE**

PAUL HOWARD BRACKET

FIRST FOUR MARCH 19-20

