

SPORTS

Who will pacify this year's March Madness

By Chris LaFuria
sports commentary

While many students very patiently await the arrival of Spring Break, I have been compelled to deliver much needed information for those of you who are ready to fill out brackets. This year's NCAA Tournament of 64 (65 if you include the initial playoff) is chock full of talent and teams who anticipate the chance to cut down the nets after winning the National Championship. I am not consenting to the decency and morality of gambling; however, it is crucial that you concentrate on my analysis of this year's tournament so that you can fill in the brackets with the utmost competence.

For years, the judgment of excellence involved with the brackets has been based on the quality of the number one seeds. If there is an intense battle for the tops spots in each region, then we know the challenge for supremacy is elevated.

For instance, this year, each of the Top 10 teams has a chance at gaining a top seed. Illinois, North Carolina, Kentucky, Wake Forest Boston College, Kansas and Oklahoma State are the top contenders vying for a top seed. Each team has successfully overcome the top competitors to maintain admirable records.

Another factor that will be determined this week is the strength of each conference. By far, the toughest conference in which to excel is the Atlantic Coast Conference. Teams represented in the Top 25 from this conference are North Carolina, Wake, and Duke, each of which is in the Top 10. Bubble Teams including Georgia Tech and Maryland can pose a threat in this week's conference championship and, perhaps, in the Sweet 16.

Strength of conference has also been an issue for the team that has upheld the top spot for most of the season. The Illinois Fighting Illini, led by Deron Williams, Luther Head and Dee Brown, are off to a 28-0 record (*as of 3/2/05) and haven't nearly been challenged by a decent opponent, winning the majority of their games by over 20 points. The reason that strength of schedule is a factor for the Illini is that only two other Big Ten teams are in the Top 25, Michigan State and Wisconsin (barely).

Also, history is combating the fate of Illinois. The last team to preserve perfection in the regular season and win the National Championship was the Bobby Knight-led Indiana Hoosier team in 1976 (UNLV came close in 1991 but lost to Duke in the Final Four).

The aptitude of Bubble Teams also plays a role in determining the value of the tournament. Teams such as Maryland, Georgia Tech, Miami, Notre Dame, Texas, Minnesota, DePaul, Marquette, UCLA, Stanford and Arizona State each, even though ranked outside the top 25, can do much harm in the tournament if they can succeed in the conference tournament and maintain a decent RPI (Rating Percentage Index). Many of these teams have

notched losses for the Top 25 teams and there isn't a reason why the tournament should be any different.

Now it's time for the fun part, picking the winners.

Since the strong competition in the ACC has led to some powerful teams, there is no reason to doubt that one, if not two, teams should make the Final Four. Just watch North Carolina's chemistry and big-play-makers conquer their bracket and reach the Final Four.

Picking upsets is always hard, especially since the matchups haven't been delivered. However, some teams, due to either lack of strength or my seemingly unparalleled wisdom, have a very predictable fate. Illinois, for example, has had an astounding season. However, due to lack of a bench and competition, their season shall fall before the Sweet 16. Boston College, possessing the same traits as Illinois, shall have the same fate.

In my opinion, as a sports fan, the most exhilarating experience is determining the Final Four, especially with as much talent as this tourney contains (note, the matchups may be subject to change with the revelation of the actual bracket). The ACC will be represented by two teams in the Final Four. Even though having high expectations usually leads to broken hearts and empty wallets, I am sticking to my guns and number ones and predicting the arrival of North Carolina and Wake Forest in the Final Four.

The other two teams, rounding out the Four, will be the Cowboys from Oklahoma State, who have seen time in the top five this year and are led by the exceptional point guard John Lucas and a plethora of scorers, including Joey Graham and Ivan McFarlin and the surprising Syracuse Orangemen, who have encountered a downfall recently but, led by Gerry McNamara, can overcome it.

My choice for this year's National Champion is the Tar Heels from UNC, not only because I have been handed an earful by a friend of mine who is an avid Tar Heel, but also because of my faith in chemistry. Raymond Felton, Rashad McCants, Sean May, Jawad Williams and Marvin Williams round out a starting five in which each player is averaging over ten points per game. They gel together better than any other team and have overcome challenging opponents.

Well, there is an outline for this year's tourney. It will be exciting to see who will be cutting down the nets after March Madness is over. I've given you my picks, now it's up to the players to decide who wants it the most.



Senior forward Joey Graham and the Cowboys will finish up regular season play against Texas March 5.

KRT CAMPERS

Tennis team on winning streak...

Head to Hilton Head for spring break matches

By Amy Frizzell
managing editor

On Monday, the men's tennis team took on Westminster College for the first time. Going into the match, the Lions held a record of 2-1, which was quickly bumped to 3-1 after acing them 9-0.

"I feel real good [about our success]," said sophomore captain Brian Espin. "We lost a lot of players and have a young team, but the freshmen have really come through and not shown a lot of inexperience."

Freshmen Miles Boyea and Todd Guarnieri provided an 8-5 win at first doubles. Espin and sophomore captain Matt Meyer tallied up a win at second doubles, 8-3. Rounding out the doubles wins were freshmen James Myers and Trevor Dougherty at third doubles, 8-3.

Boyea provided his first singles win of the season with a score of 7-6, 6-4. Following him were wins by Espin 6-4, 7-6, Guarnieri, 1-6, 6-2, 6-2, Meyer 6-1, 6-3, Myers 6-1, 6-1, and Dougherty 6-0, 6-1.

"We're 3-1; that's pretty good," said Myers. "We've won some decent matches from what I've been told from the older guys."

The blue and white showed its skill as they defeated Waynesburg on Saturday, a team which has Head Coach Jeff Barger has expressed concern about in previous seasons. The team walked away with a 7-2 win over the Yellow Jackets. Once again Espin and Meyer provided a win at second doubles winning 8-3, followed by Boyea and Guarnieri at first doubles with an 8-4 win.

Espin tallied up another win at second singles 1-6, 6-4, 6-3. Guarnieri provided a win at third 7-5, 6-4, Meyer won at fourth 6-4, 6-4. Myers contributed a win at fifth 6-4, 6-2 and Dougherty rounded out the singles line-up with a win at sixth 6-1, 6-1.

"The team is playing well," said Barger. "Doubles are starting to come together well."

Doubles has always been a main focus point for past teams. With such a young team this year, doubles will play big role in the team's success as new players will need to learn how to play together.

"Trev and me, we're strong in singles," said Myers. "But we're getting better at doubles, communicating more and having a good time."

The team is looking to its trip to Hilton Head over Spring Break as a test of its strength and weaknesses.

"Our strength lies in the depth of the team," said Espin. "Our line-up is solid all the way through."

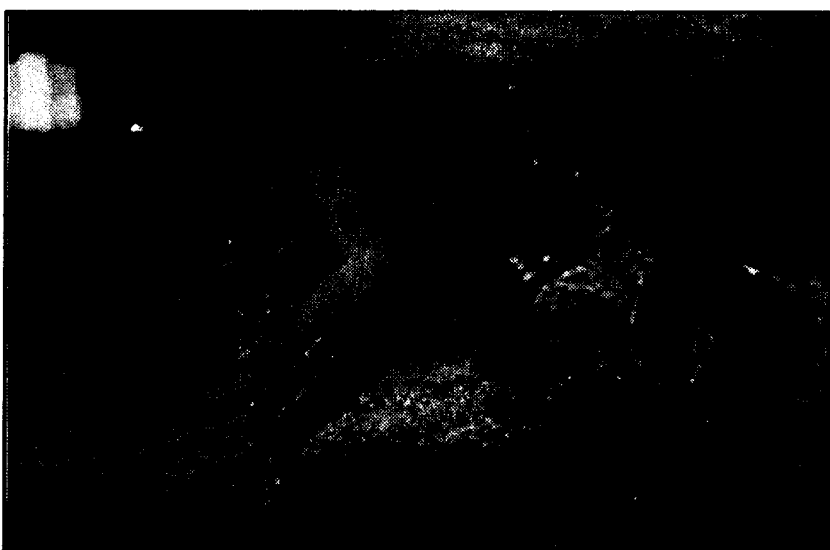
While in Hilton Head, the Lions will play six matches starting March 6 when they will compete with Concordia. The blue and white will also meet up with Mt. Union which is a team the Lions faced last season along with Eastern Nazarene.

"We don't really know the teams we are playing so we don't know what to expect," said Espin. "But we have a lot of confidence going in with the wins in the past week."

"We're not going to be asking ourselves 'What if?' We're just going to playing aggressive," said team manager Ryan Deimel.

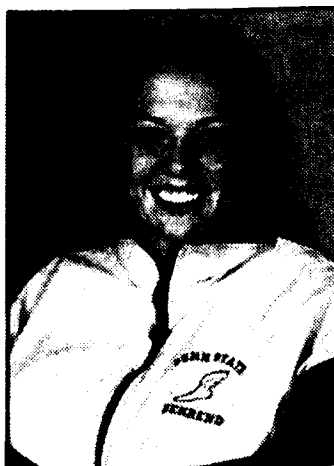
Swimming star competes at ECAC's

Freshman swimmer Cyndi Morales had a stand-out year as a varsity athlete. Morales broke numerous records this year including four individual team records and three AMCC records in the 500, 1000, 1650 yard freestyle events. Morales also made Behrend history becoming the first female swimmer to qualify for the ECAC meet. The meet was held at Trees Pool at the University of Pittsburgh Feb 24-27. Athletes competing at the three day meet came from DI, II and III schools. Morales swam both the 500 and 1650 yard freestyle. She placed 17th in the 500 yard freestyle and 21st in the 1650.



Senior Spotlight

Behrend Beacon: What are your plans for after graduation?
Stephen Feder: I plan on getting a job in mechanical engineering.
Marlena McNutt: I plan to either go on to graduate school to study school psychology or work a year, gain experience then go on to graduate school.
BB: What will you miss most about Behrend?
SF: I will miss all my friends I've made here over the past four years.
MM: The friendly atmosphere here. I am close to my coaches, teammates, friends and teachers.
BB: What is your favorite memory from your sport?
SF: My favorite memory is placing in the ECAC meet after having mono for the majority of the season.
MM: Any race where I know I did my best. I run because of the thrill of going as fast as you can and hopefully beating someone in the process! One of my favorite races was the 1600 meter relay last outdoor track season. I ran one of my best times, beat a girl at the line and the team broke the school record.
BB: What is your funniest/most embarrassing moment?
SF: I can't think of just one, I've had so many good times with the track team.
MM: Cross Country my freshman year. I thought that the team would stop to use the restroom like my high school team. They didn't want to stop. Everyone got mad at me when I made coach stop mid-trip! It has become a joke for four years!



Athletic teams hit the road for Spring Break competition

Mens Baseball

March 6-11 @ Port Lucia, Florida

Women's Softball

March 6-11 @ Kissimmee, Florida

Mens Tennis

March 8-11 @ Hilton Head

Women's Water Polo

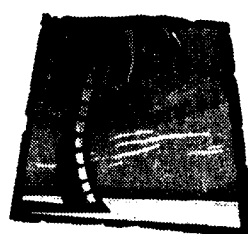
March 11-12 @ Colorado State Invitational

Make sure to check next week's edition of the Behrend Beacon to find out how the athletic teams rounded out Spring Break competition and training. Also stay posted for upcoming home games!

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