

SPORTS

Miller's Corner

March madness begins

Eddie Miller
Capital Times Sports

The Big Dance. No event in athletics compares to the NCAA tournament. March Madness has dawned upon the ramparts of the basketball world. Need I say more?

Of course! What would the greatest spectacle in sports be without hype, hoopla, and Dick Vitale?

Just ask St. Francis, who made the tourney for the first time in the school's history, if they aren't ecstatic. I declared them my cinderella team in an earlier article, but their first round draw of Arizona may cut short any extended hopes for a round two game.

The Red Flash earned an automatic bid to the tourney by winning the Northeast Conference and by defeating Patriot League champ Fordham in an NCAA play-in game. Fordham with a 24-7 record including a victory over Seton Hall, didn't make the 64-team field. You have to feel for the little guys like Fordham.

Back to St. Francis, they have a record of 24-7 and are led by my hometown friend Mike Iuzzolino. Izzy has been named NCAA Academic All-American Player of the Year. He averages 25 points a game and shoots a *whopping 54 percent from three point range*. Watch out for Izzy and the Flash. Arizona could get caught sleeping.

The odds on favorite is defending

champ UNLV. I have a gut feeling that UNLV will not win the tournament. Who can run with the rebels? Indiana, Syracuse, and Duke.

Every year a few cinderella teams step into the limelight, and this year should be no different. I like Penn State, Wake Forest, Princeton, St. Peter's, and Pitt may find the slipper to their liking. I'm biased towards St. Francis, but I'd love to see them upset Arizona.

Penn State is making its first tournament appearance in 26 years. Their first round match-up with UCLA should be interesting. State likes to slow things up, and UCLA does not have dominant center. If state can limit the turnovers and control the boards, they could hand UCLA a quick trip back out west.

The NCAA committee laid several potential land mines in UNLV's trek to the Final Four. Montana will pose much of a threat for the Running Rebels, but Georgetown, Michigan St., and Arizona could pull off the upset.

Final Four predictions: Indiana, Syracuse, Duke, and UNLV. At the Final Four, Duke will not be embarrassed by UNLV two years in a row. Billy Owens is the most dangerous player in the nation and can keep Syracuse in any game. But don't forget *The General*, Bobby Knight, whose Hoosiers will be ready to play 40 minutes of basketball with anyone, including UNLV.

Hockey teams fight for title

Jon Fleck
Capital Times Sports

As the National Hockey season winds down and the playoffs near, teams continue to jockey for position in the standings in a quest for home-ice advantage.

The two Pennsylvania teams, the Pittsburgh Penguins and the Philadelphia Flyers, are virtually assured playoff spots this year after both teams missed out last year.

The Penguins are currently chasing the New York Rangers for first place in the Patrick Division and appear to be peaking at the right time. The Pens and Rangers meet three times in their last nine games.

A recent trade with the Hartford Whalers that brought center Ron Francis, defenseman Ulf Samuelson and Grant Jennings has really improved the Penguins weak defense. Mario Lemieux, Mark Recchi, Kevin Stevens, and company will put the puck in the net. Keeping the puck out of their own net is the big question mark with this team.

The Flyers should hold third place for the final 10 games and will meet the loser of the Pens-Rangers showdown in the first round of the playoffs. The Flyers play a tight checking style of hockey that tends to win in the playoffs. They frustrate explosive teams like the

Penguins by tying the puck up in the corners and along the boards a lot. Gutsy players like Ron Sutter, Derek Smith, and goalie Ron Hextall, when healthy, set the tone for this team. Rick Tocchet and Time Kerr, another player seen regularly on the scratch list, provide the scoring punch.

In the Adams Division, the Boston Bruins and Montreal Canadiens hold the one and two spots, respectively, and are headed for a showdown in the second round of the playoffs. The Bruins are led by All-stars Ray Bourque and Cam Neely while the Canadiens have a stone wall named Patrick Roy in goal.

In the Norris Division, another two team race between the Chicago Blackhawks and St. Louis Blues begins to take shape. The Blues are led by the best goal scorer in the game today Brett Hull and playmaking center Adam Oates but are most likely not physical enough to match up with the Blackhawks.

The Smythe Division may be the most interesting division of them all. The only spot rapped up is third place which is occupied by the defending champs Edmonton Oilers. The Los Angeles Kings, led by the Great One Wayne Gretzky, and the Calgary Flames battle for first place. The second place team will have its hands full with the Oilers and then will most likely meet the first place in the second round.

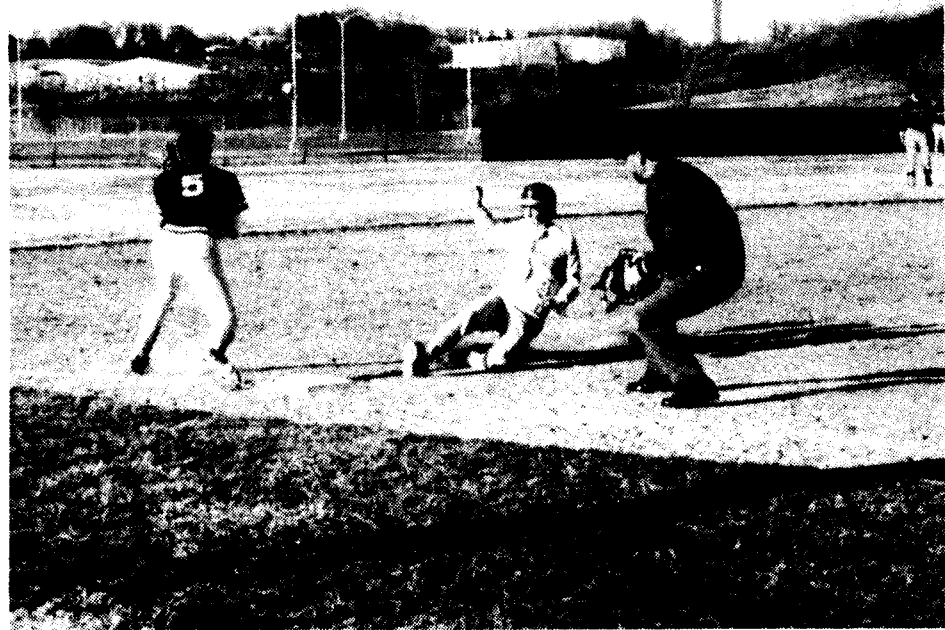


Photo by Karen Putt

Scott Werkheiser (5) awaits a throw from the outfield as an Eastern runner slides into third.

PSU basketball hits big time

Lady Lions earn no. 1 seed, men's squad to face UCLA

UNIVERSITY PARK--The no.1 ranked Penn State Lady Lions basketball team added to its considerable stockpile of riches by winning the Atlantic 10 Conference Championship for the sixth time and receiving the no.1 seed in the NCAA East Regional last weekend.

The Lady Lions earned a bye in the NCAA tourney's first round. They will play James Madison University who defeated Kentucky 80-72 Wednesday night. The teams will square off tomorrow at 1:30 p.m. at Rec Hall in the second round game.

Saturday's winner goes to Philadelphia for the East portion of the Sweet 16 which begins Thurs., March 21 and concludes Sat., March 23 at the Palestra.

Penn State's finale in the Atlantic 10 playoffs (the Lady Lions are a non-conference schedule in 91-92 before joining the Big Ten the following year) produced three more no.1's: Susan Robinson won player of the year, Helen Holloway received rookie of the year, and Tanya Garner was awarded tournament MVP.

Robinson, the Lions' scoring (18.3 ppg) and rebounding (8.6 rpg) leader, is the second Penn State player to win the Conference's top regular season honor. Kahadeejah Herbert captured the award in 1984-85.

Holloway, sidelined by stress fractures in her left foot since Feb.11, leads all Penn State first year players in scoring (6.1 ppg) and rebounding (4.4 rpg). She's in an elite group of Lady Lion first-year honorees that includes Robinson and Olympian Suzie McConnell.

Garner won the MVP award after scoring a season-high 25 points in the semifinals against West Virginia and providing 11 points and eight assists in the final with St. Joseph's. Garner is State's all-time leader in 3-point field goals and bucketed six in the tournament, five in the semis. She made 14 of 18 field goals during the two-day playoffs.

While the Lady Lions are making their making their ninth tournament appearance, the men's squad return to the tournament for the first time in 26 years.

Bruce Parkhill's Lion, seeded 13th in the East Regional, will play no.4 seed UCLA today at Syracuse's Carrier Dome. The winner will draw the winner between no.5 Mississippi State and no.12 Eastern Michigan. North Carolina is the no.1 seed in the East.

"I'm glad we are playing a marquee program like UCLA," said Parkhill, completing his eighth season at Penn State. "It's been so long since Penn State's been involved, I wanted the guys to experience playing against the best. That's what the NCAA Tournament is all about."

The Bruins (23-8) are a potent squad. Jim Harrick's club averages 93.1 points per game and comes into the tournament having won six of its seven games.

"We're definitely going to have our hands full," Parkhill said. "I had a chance to see UCLA play Pitt on television and they looked powerful. We're excited by the challenge of playing a program like UCLA."