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# Weekly



April 12 - April 18, 2024


Vol. 22, Issue 30

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# 2024 SCHEDULE

## MARCH/APRIL

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				28 CHC	29	30 CHC
31 CHC	1 TB	2 TB	3 TB	4	5 HOU	6 HOU
7 HOU	8 HOU	9 OAK	10 OAK	11 OAK	12 HOU	13 HOU
14 HOU	15 DET	16 DET	17 DET	18 DET	19 ATL	20 ATL
21 ATL	22	23 SEA	24 SEA	25 SEA	26 CIN	27 CIN
28 CIN	29	30 WSH				

## JULY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2 SD	3 SD	4 SD	5 TB	6 TB
7 TB	8 LAA	9 LAA	10 LAA	11	12 HOU	13 HOU
14 HOU	15	16 2024 ALL-STAR WEEK	17	18	19 BAL	20 BAL
21 BAL	22 CWS	23 CWS	24 CWS	25 CWS	26 TOR	27 TOR
28 TOR	29 STL	30 STL	31 STL			

## MAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 WSH	2 WSH	3 KC	4 KC
5 KC	6 OAK	7 OAK	8 OAK	9	10 COL	11 COL
12 COL	13 CLE	14 CLE	15 CLE	16	17 LAA	18 LAA
19 LAA	20	21 PHI	22 PHI	23 PHI	24 MIN	25 MIN
26 MIN	27	28 AZ	29 AZ	30	31 MIA	

## AUGUST

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1	2 BOS	3 BOS
4 BOS	5 HOU	6 HOU	7 HOU	8	9 NYY	10 NYY
11 NYY	12 BOS	13 BOS	14 BOS	15 MIN	16 MIN	17 MIN
18 MIN	19 PIT	20 PIT	21 PIT	22	23 CLE	24 CLE
25 CLE	26	27 CWS	28 CWS	29 CWS	30 OAK	31 OAK

## JUNE

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1 MIA
2 MIA	3 DET	4 DET	5 DET	6	7 SF	8 SF
9 SF	10	11 LAD	12 LAD	13 LAD	14 SEA	15 SEA
16 SEA	17 NYM	18 NYM	19 NYM	20	21 KC	22 KC
23 KC	24 MIL	25 MIL	26 MIL	27 BAL	28 BAL	29 BAL
30 BAL						

## SEPTEMBER

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 OAK	2 NYY	3 NYY	4 NYY	5 LAA	6 LAA	7 LAA
8 LAA	9	10 AZ	11 AZ	12 SEA	13 SEA	14 SEA
15 SEA	16	17 TOR	18 TOR	19 TOR	20 SEA	21 SEA
22 SEA	23	24 OAK	25 OAK	26 OAK	27 LAA	28 LAA
29 LAA	30					

Schedule subject to change. Times to be announced at a later date.

Home Games

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**AROUND THE AREA**

LOCAL NEWS OF INTEREST

**Mayor seeks second pro football team**



**Dallas mayor Eric Johnson calls for Chiefs to move back to Texas**

Dallas mayor Eric Johnson wants to bring the Kansas City Chiefs back to their Texas roots.

Voters in Jackson County, Missouri, rejected an effort by the Chiefs to renovate Arrowhead Stadium and build a new stadium for the Kansas City Royals.

Mayor Johnson posted an article about what the vote could mean for the future of the Chiefs with the playful comment, "Welcome home, Dallas Texans!" He also added #CottonBowl in the post.

The team that is now known as the Chiefs was founded as the Dallas Texans in 1959, before relocating to Kansas City. Mayor Johnson has previously lobbied on social media for an NFL to move a team to Dallas.

Johnson has suggested that the new team could be a part of the AFC and play in South Dallas.

Clark Hunt, the chairman and CEO of the Chiefs, lives in Dallas and has deep ties to the city.

The Cotton Bowl is receiving \$140 million worth of renovations, its largest investment in the fair grounds' 137-year history.

Despite the Chiefs' renovation rejection, it is highly unlikely that the reigning Super Bowl champs will be moved out of Kansas City entirely.



The Frisco RoughRiders, Double-A affiliate of the World Series champion Texas Rangers, started their home slate on Tuesday with a fun-stuffed week through Sunday, April 14th against the Houston Astros affiliated Corpus Christi Hooks. Buy tickets here.

**Friday, April 12th at 7:05 p.m. vs. Corpus Christi Hooks**

Friday brings a pair of giveaways to the Riders Field gates! The Riders are teaming up with Visit Frisco to celebrate Sports City USA with a koozie giveaway and make sure you grab a Rangers-inspired Champions Start Here t-shirt presented by Medium Giant as well! Once you're in the gates, head to Bull Moose Saloon for live music with Random Walk and hang around after the game for Fireworks Friday.

**Saturday, April 13th at 7:05 p.m. vs. Corpus Christi Hooks**

Saturday is a big day for Rangers fans as you can get a co-branded RoughRiders/Rangers Pennant giveaway presented by Medium Giant at the gates and get player autographs before the game with a RoughRiders Pregame Autograph Session! Fans can enjoy live music before the game

from Lorynn The Redhead too. Additionally, Derek Holland will be on hand for a meet and greet from 7-8 p.m. and it is also Kids Run the Bases Postgame presented by Raising Cane's.

**Sunday, April 14th at 4:05 p.m. vs. Corpus Christi Hooks**

Opening Week wraps with Josh Jung Day! Arrive early for a Josh Jung baseball card giveaway and enjoy odes to the Rangers All-Star third baseman all game long. Kids can play catch on the field before the game as part of Kids Sunday Funday presented by Raising Cane's and be sure to stop by the playgrounds for face painting too.

Additionally, come out to Riders Field on Monday, April 8th as the RoughRiders host "Total Eclipse of the Ballpark", starting at 11:00 a.m. with access to the event including an Opening Week ticket and Solar Eclipse Glasses for just \$10.






**O.J Simpson dead at 76**

Pro Football Hall of Famer O.J. Simpson has died at the age of 76, his family announced in a statement shared on his X account Thursday (April 11).

Simpson's cancer diagnosis was initially reported that he was undergoing chemotherapy in Las Vegas and that he told friends and family he was in hospice care, which he denied publicly in a video shared on his X account, instead claiming he was "hosting a ton of friends for the Super Bowl here in Las Vegas" at the time. respect their wishes for privacy and grace.

**NCAA Basketball Poll**

Coaches Poll	FINAL	AP Poll
1. Houston	1. Houston	1. Houston
2. UConn	2. UConn	2. UConn
3. Purdue	3. Purdue	3. Purdue
4. Iowa State	4. Iowa State	4. Iowa State
5. North Carolina	5. North Carolina	5. North Carolina
6. Tennessee	6. Tennessee	6. Tennessee
7. Auburn	7. Auburn	7. Auburn
8. Marquette	8. Marquette	8. Marquette
9. Arizona	9. Arizona	9. Arizona
10. Illinois	10. Illinois	10. Illinois
11. Creighton	11. Creighton	11. Creighton
12. Kentucky	12. Kentucky	12. Kentucky
13. Duke	13. Illinois	13. Illinois
14. Baylor	14. Baylor	14. Baylor
15. Saint Mary's	15. South Carolina	15. South Carolina
16. South Carolina	16. Kansas	16. Kansas
17. Kansas	17. Gonzaga	17. Gonzaga
18. Gonzaga	18. Utah State	18. Utah State
19. Alabama	19. Alabama	19. Alabama
20. Utah State	20. BYU	20. BYU
21. BYU	21. Saint Mary's	21. Saint Mary's
22. Texas Tech	22. Washington State	22. Washington State
23. Wisconsin	23. Nevada	23. Nevada
24. San Diego State	24. Dayton	24. Dayton
25. Washington State	25. Texas Tech	25. Texas Tech

	APRIL 5 FRIDAY	APRIL 6 SATURDAY	APRIL 7 SUNDAY	APRIL 8 MONDAY	APRIL 9 TUESDAY	APRIL 10 WEDNESDAY	APRIL 11 THURSDAY
	Mavs vs Golden State 7:30 / Bally's		Mavs vs Houston 2:30 / Bally's		Mavs at Charlotte 6:00 / Bally's	Mavs at Miami 6:30 / Bally's	
	Rangers vs Astros 7:05 / Bally's	Rangers vs Astros 6:05 / Bally's	Rangers vs Astros 6:00 / Bally's	Rangers vs Astros 7:05 / Bally's	Rangers vs Oakland 7:05 / Bally's	Rangers vs Oakland 7:05 / Bally's	Rangers vs Oakland 1:35 / Bally's
		FC Dallas at St. Louis 7:30					
		Stars at Chicago 2:30 / KTCK	Stars at Colorado 9:00 / KTCK		Stars vs Buffalo 7:00 / KTCK		Stars vs Winnipeg 7:00 / KTCK
	Allen at Adirondak 7:10	Allen at Adirondak 7:10	Allen at Adirondak 2:10				

# 2024 NHL Playoff Standings update



The Stars made it to last year's conference final and is in a good position to go further this spring

## Top Seeds, Wild-Card Update and Predictions

By Josh Mazacone

As the 2023-24 NHL season winds down, we're getting a good idea of which teams have a realistic shot at playing for the Stanley Cup. However, no team has truly separated itself from the pack, and there are tight races in both conferences with only a few games remaining.

The Boston Bruins, winners of last year's Presidents' Trophy, are headed back to the postseason. So are the Florida Panthers, who upset Boston in the 2023 playoffs, and the New York Rangers, who lead the league with 110 points. It's an intense battle at the top of the Eastern Conference

In the West, the Dallas Stars are on top with 107 points, but they're followed closely by the Vancouver Canucks and Colorado Avalanche. The defending-champion Vegas Golden Knights are pushing for a wild-card spot.

### Eastern Conference

#### Atlantic Division

1. Boston Bruins: 46-17-15, 107 points (Clinched playoffs)
2. Florida Panthers: 48-24-6, 102 points (Clinched playoffs)
3. Toronto Maple Leafs: 45-23-9, 99 points (Clinched playoffs)

#### Metropolitan Division

1. New York Rangers: 53-21-4, 110 points (Clinched playoffs)
2. Carolina Hurricanes: 49-22-7, 105 points (Clinched playoffs)

3. New York Islanders: 35-27-15, 85 points

#### Wild-Card Race

1. Tampa Bay Lightning: 43-27-7, 93 points (Clinched playoffs)
2. Detroit Red Wings: 38-31-8, 84 points
3. Pittsburgh Penguins: 36-30-12, 84 points
4. Washington Capitals: 36-30-11, 83 points
5. Philadelphia Flyers: 36-31-11, 83 points
6. New Jersey Devils: 37-36-5, 79 points
7. Buffalo Sabres: 37-36-5, 79 points
8. Ottawa Senators: 34-39-4, 72 points (Eliminated from playoff contention)
9. Montreal Canadiens: 29-36-12, 70 points (Eliminated from playoff contention)
10. Columbus Blue Jackets: 26-40-12, 64 points (Eliminated from playoff contention)

### Western Conference

#### Central Division

1. Dallas Stars: 49-20-9, 107 points (Clinched playoffs)
2. Colorado Avalanche: 48-24-6, 102 points (Clinched playoffs)
3. Winnipeg Jets: 47-24-6, 100 points (Clinched playoffs)

#### Pacific Division

1. Vancouver Canucks: 48-22-8, 104 points (Clinched playoffs)
2. Edmonton Oilers: 47-24-5, 99 points (Clinched Playoffs)
3. Los Angeles Kings: 41-25-11, 93 points

#### Wild-Card Race

1. Nashville Predators: 45-29-4, 94 points
2. Vegas Golden Knights: 42-27-8, 92

points

3. St. Louis Blues: 41-32-5, 87 points
4. Minnesota Wild: 37-31-9, 83 points
5. Seattle Kraken: 32-31-13, 77 points (Eliminated from playoff contention)
6. Calgary Flames: 34-37-5, 73 points (Eliminated from playoff contention)
7. Arizona Coyotes: 33-39-5, 71 points (Eliminated from playoff contention)
8. Anaheim Ducks: 25-48-5, 55 points (Eliminated from playoff contention)
9. Chicago Blackhawks: 23-49-5, 51 points (Eliminated from playoff contention)
10. San Jose Sharks: 18-51-8, 44 points (Eliminated from playoff contention)

While the Rangers have the best record in the East, the Carolina Hurricanes (+650, bet \$100 to win \$650) are slight favorites over the Panthers (+700) to win the Stanley Cup, according to DraftKings Sportsbook.

Carolina has a talented squad, headlined by the likes of Sebastian Aho, Jake Guentzel, Seth Jarvis and goalie Frederik Andersen—who shut out the Detroit Red Wings when the Hurricanes clinched all the way back on March 28.

The Hurricanes have been focused on the postseason for some time.

"I didn't even think about it because it has been a foregone conclusion," Carolina head coach Rod Brind'Amour said after the clinching victory, per Bob Sutton of the San Diego Union-Tribune.

Carolina has won seven of its last 10 and has generated all the momentum needed to threaten teams like New York and Boston in the East. However, the Rangers (+900) have won three in a row and eight of their last 10.

The Tampa Bay Lightning (+2500) are arguably the top threat among wild-card teams. Tampa has already clinched and has

gone 7-2-1 over its last 10 games.

The prediction here, though, is that Boston, which has won four straight, avenges last year's early playoff exit with a deep postseason run. David Pastrnak, Charlie Coyle and Co. will absolutely use last year's result as motivation.

The Bruins (+1100) have experienced their fair share of postseason disappointment in recent years, but they have a terrific all-around squad that has shown it can take down some of the league's best—Boston beat Carolina 4-1 last Thursday.

The playoff race is a little clearer in the West, where a good chunk of the conference has already been eliminated. Things are tight at the top, though, where several teams have the talent and chemistry needed to make a deep run.

The Avalanche (+700) and Edmonton Oilers (+750) are the favorites in the conference.

While it would be fun to see Colorado return to the Final after it lost in the first round last season—a Bruins-Avalanche redemption series would be chock full of storylines—the Stars (+900) are perhaps the hottest team in hockey.

Dallas made it to last year's conference final and is in a good position to go further this spring. The Stars beat Colorado 7-4 on Monday and have won nine of their last 10 games.

"If we take care of business, we'll end up being where we want to be," center Matt Duchene said, per Pat Graham of the Associated Press.

Where the Stars want to be is in the Final for the first time since 2020. The way they've been playing, it just might happen.

**Predicted Final Matchup:** Bruins vs. Stars

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# My lesson on taking a lesson



**TOM WARD**

TOMPWARD@SBCGLOBAL.NET

Back in the mid 1970's, after having quick success at the game of golf, my father thought it would be a good idea to get some professional help. Up to that point I had never taken a lesson except from my mother who was a low-handicap golfer. It was because of her that I took up the game in the first place. Sadly, she developed lung cancer and passed away.

Incredibly, I made the high school golf team which surprised everyone. I had gone from never playing to becoming the 6th man on the team. The coach only kept me on the team because he was a friend of my father.

High school matches back in those days were only 9 holes. My first match was a dismal 55. I quickly started to pick things up as my scores started going down into the low-mid 40's in the subsequent weeks. Then, after only 4 months playing, I broke par for the first time shooting a 35 (-1 under) and was medalist for the match.

My father intervened and arraigned a visit with a well-known pro named Jack Grout. I remembered reading about him as he was Jack Nicklaus' coach.

We drove over to Dublin, Ohio where I met Mr. Grout for the first time. After we visited for a bit, he asked me to hit some golf balls. He was patient and related things to me with good mental images. He was big on having sound fundamentals which I lacked at the time. Mr. Grout's valuable insights helped me a lot. I still use some of his teachings today.

One time after finishing my lesson with Mr. Grout, I saw Jack Nicklaus coming our way with his clubs. Mr. Grout introduced me to Nicklaus. They went over to another area to practice as I continued to hit balls. After Mr. Grout left, I decided to go over to Jack for a reason to this day I can't explain. Jack was very gracious. I asked him how he started his backswing? Nicklaus said that he takes the club back low and slow about 18 inches away. I thanked him and high-tailed it out of there

because I thought maybe I broke some kind of club protocol talking to him.

I went home and cut a piece of plywood 18 inches long. I placed it down as I hit balls to make sure it was exactly the distance Nicklaus told me. I figured if this is what the greatest player in golf does then I should practice like this too. I did this daily until my next lesson with Mr. Grout the following week. He watched in horror as my shots were spraying all over place. I was frustrated and disgusted when I finally fessed up to him that I spoke to Nicklaus after our last lesson. I told him about the 18 inches advice. Grout started laughing and then said,

"Jack is a great golfer, but what works for him, doesn't always mean it will work for someone else."

Translation: Different words mean different things to different people. I should of just listened to what this great teacher was telling me instead of soliciting advice from another golfer no matter how great he was.

I learned my lesson that day and as painful as it was those many decades ago it showed me the importance of trusting and listening to only one person at a time.

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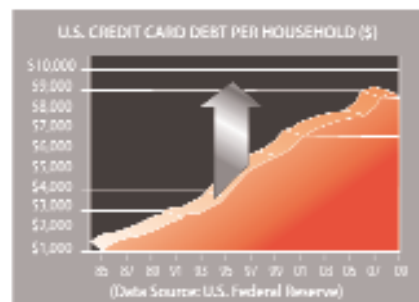


## Credit Card Debt?

Solutions that can help you get out of debt.

Tom Hill  
CGA STAFF WRITER

Every three minutes another person falls behind on credit card debt. It's no wonder, since every major credit card company has nearly doubled the minimum monthly payment on consumers' bills. Federal Regulators forced the change because of their concern about the growing mountain of consumer debt, which stands at \$2.17 trillion. Many consumers can only pay the minimum payment, which can take up to 30 years to pay off. Now, relief is in sight for millions of Americans.



CreditGUARD of America, a non-profit licensed debt management service provider, is making a new program available to lower debt payments and become free of all credit card debt in only three to five years. Consumers need only \$2,000 or more in total credit card debt and at least 30 days behind on any account, to cut their payment by 35% to 50%, and reduce or eliminate interest charges altogether.

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# This week: Masters Tournament



Jon Rahm returns to Augusta National to defend his 2023 win

**Masters Tournament**  
**April 11 - April, 2024**  
**Augusta National Golf Club**  
**Augusta, Georgia**  
**Purse - \$18,000,000**  
**Winners share - \$3,240,000**  
**Defending Champ - Jon Rahm**

By Adam Stanley

It's time for the first major championship of the PGA TOUR season.

Augusta National is primed and ready for the 2024 Masters Tournament after a fabulous finish to the Augusta National Women's Amateur and the wonderful Drive, Chip & Putt National Final.

Scottie Scheffler recently added a second PLAYERS Championship to his resume. Can the defending champ do the same at the Masters? He is the unquestioned No. 1 player in the world right now, but he will have plenty of challengers.

Here's everything you need to know as the TOUR returns to Augusta.

**FIELD NOTES:** Akshay Bhatia earned the

last spot in the field with his dramatic play-off victory Sunday at the Valero Texas Open. He is the first former Drive, Chip & Putt participant to make the Masters field. ... Scottie Scheffler arrives at Augusta National as world No. 1 and on top of the FedExCup standings. He has finished no worse than second in his past three starts since switching to a mallet putter. He went back-to-back at the Arnold Palmer Invitational presented by Mastercard and THE PLAYERS, then finished second at the Texas Children's Houston Open. This is Scheffler's fifth Masters. He finished T10 last year and has never finished outside the top 20... Tiger Woods is in the field and had a pre-tournament press conference on Tuesday. It is Woods' first start since The Genesis Invitational, where he withdrew in the second round after suffering flu-like symptoms. Woods played last year's Masters but withdrew on the weekend and underwent ankle fusion surgery shortly after. This marks the fifth anniversary of his "return to glory" victory in 2019.

Woods has made the cut 23 straight times at Augusta National – tied for most all-time – and will be looking to add that record this year... Rory McIlroy is taking his 10th crack at completing the career Grand Slam at the Masters. McIlroy has had his opportunities, most famously in 2011. He has finished in the top 10 in seven of the past nine Masters, including a runner-up in 2022 but is coming off a missed cut last year. He earned his first top-10 of the season last week, finishing third at the Valero Texas Open after a recent tuneup with noted swing coach Butch Harmon... Bhatia is among the 20 first-timers at Augusta. Wyndham Clark and Ludvig Åberg highlight the rookie class, along with 2023 PGA TOUR Rookie of the Year Eric Cole, Valspar Championship winner Peter Malnati (who is making his Masters debut at age 36) and first-time PGA TOUR winners Nick Dunlap, Stephan Jaeger, Austin Eckroat, Jake Knapp and Lee Hodges. Dunlap already was in the field as the reigning U.S. Amateur champion but then

turned pro after winning The American Express, which gave him a spot in the field after turning professional. Fuzzy Zoeller is the only Masters rookie to win the green jacket, while six have finished runner-up in their maiden Masters... There are plenty of notables looking for their first major title including Viktor Hovland, Patrick Cantlay, Max Homa and Xander Schauffele, who are all ranked in the top 10 in the world. In the case of Schauffele, he was in the final group on Sunday at both The Genesis Invitational and THE PLAYERS. He finished T10 last year at the Masters and was runner-up in 2019.

## HIGHEST-RANKED PLAYERS IN THE FIELD

World Ranking	FedExCup
1. Scottie Scheffler	1. S. Scheffler
2. Rory McIlroy	2. W. Clark
3. Jon Rahm	3. H.Matsuyama
4. Wyndham Clark	4. X. Schauffele
5. Xander Schauffele	5. S. Theegala
6. Viktor Hovland	6. M. Pavon
7. Patrick Cantlay	7. B. Hun An
8. Brian Harman	8. Ludvig Åberg
9. Ludvig Åberg	9. Chris Kirk
10. Matt Fitzpatrick	10. S.Jaeger

**NOTABLE INVITES AND AMATEURS:** Fred Ridley, the chairman of the Augusta National Golf Club and the Masters, extended three special invitations for 2024 to Denmark's Thorbjørn Olesen, Japan's Ryo Hisatsune and Chile's Joaquin Niemann. Olesen, who holds dual DP World Tour and PGA TOUR membership, has won three years in a row on the DP World Tour and finished T6 in his Masters debut in 2013. Hisatsune was last year's Rookie of the Year on the DP World Tour and has made seven of 10 cuts on the PGA TOUR this season. This will be his Masters debut. Niemann will be playing his fifth Masters... World No. 1 amateur Christo Lamprecht of South Africa headlines the amateur contingent. Lamprecht, who is in the field as the reigning British Amateur champion, made headlines by holding the first-round lead at The Open. Lamprecht also is No. 2 in PGA TOUR University. The other amateurs in the Masters are Santiago de la Fuente of Mexico (the Latin America Amateur Championship winner), Neal Shipley of the United States (U.S. Amateur finalist), Australia's Jasper Stubbs (Asia-Pacific Amateur Championship winner) and Stewart Hagestad (U.S. Mid-Amateur champion). All of the amateurs except Hagestad are making their Masters debut. Hagestad is playing for a third time; he was the low amateur in 2017.

## SIGNATURE EVENT STORYLINES:

The Aon Next 10 and Aon Swing 5 for the RBC Heritage will be finalized this week.

(continued on page 8)

Though the Masters does not count towards the Aon Swing 5, it could change if Peter Malnati or Thomas Detry are bumped from the Aon Next 10 this week. Malnati and Detry would move into the Aon Swing 5 if they fall out of the Aon Next 10. Click here for the full standings.

**COMCAST BUSINESS TOUR TOP 10 UPDATES:** Ludvig Åberg and Chris Kirk swapped spots in the TOUR TOP 10 after the Valero Texas Open, with Åberg now at No. 8 and Kirk at No. 9. The rest of the TOUR TOP 10 remained the same ... Akshay Bhatia jumped from No. 55 to No. 12 in the standings after his victory and is within shouting distance of the TOUR TOP 10 for the first time... Denny McCarthy, who Bhatia topped in a play-off in San Antonio, moved from No. 85 to No. 19.

**FEDEXCUP:** Winner receives 750 FedExCup points.

**COURSE:** Augusta National Golf Club, par 72, 7,555 yards. After multiple changes in 2022 and 2023, there was just one update for 2024, as the par-5 second was lengthened by 10 yards. Over the past three Masters, the second hole played as the easiest each year.

Rory McIlroy, in his pre-tournament press conference at the Valero Texas Open, also mentioned there were changes to the greens on Nos. 2, 4 and 6.

"There's like a back middle hole location on two, there's a slightly bigger area in there where they can sort of move that around a little bit," he said. "On four they've sort of made the back right section a little bit bigger for an extra pin position there. And then six is different, like the top right plateau is definitely bigger and then they've flattened out a section in the back left to maybe have an extra hole location there, too."

**72-HOLE RECORD:** 268, Dustin Johnson (2020)

**18-HOLE RECORD:** 63, Nick Price (third round, 1986) and Greg Norman (first round, 1996)

**LAST TIME:** Jon Rahm won the green jacket in a come-from-behind triumph on a marathon final day at Augusta National. Rahm was four shots back of the leader, Brooks Koepka, to start Sunday and had to play 30 holes due to weather knocking out much of Saturday's third round. Rahm shot a final-round 69 to win by four over Koepka and Phil Mickelson. Jordan Spieth and Russell Henley finished tied for fourth, along with Patrick Reed.

#### HOW TO WATCH (all times ET)

##### Television:

- Thurs.-Friday: 3-7:30 p.m.ET (ESPN)
- Saturday: 3-7 p.m. (CBS)
- Sunday: 2-7 p.m. (CBS)

##### Radio:

- Thursday-Sunday: 2 p.m. until play is complete (Masters Radio; SiriusXM 92)
- Stream via Masters.co

# Champions dinner menu 2024



## Masters Champions dinner menu 2024: How Jon Rahm's grandma, Spanish heritage influenced recipes for Augusta

By David Suggs

Being Masters champion brings a whole lot of perks. Not only do winners receive a sizable paycheck and a replica of the verdant green blazer undergirded by more than 80 years of tradition. But they also get a taste of the high life — literally.

Those who capture golf's ultimate prize are tasked with a rather crucial responsibility: setting the menu for the Master's Champions Dinner, a night for the stars in which all of golf's major dignitaries huddle beneath one roof on the eve of the Masters. Their only requirement is a simple one: make sure to wear that famous green jacket.

Past winners have made sure to leave their mark on the event. Hideki Matsuyama showed off his palate for Wagyu beef in 2022, while Scottie Scheffler opted to an All-American feast last year.

2023 champion Jon Rahm is taking on the responsibility this time around. And much like his predecessors, he's hoping to pen a love letter of sorts to the meals of his youth.

Here's a look at what some of golf's greatest competitors will be feasting on during this year's Masters Champions Dinner.

### Masters Champions Dinner menu 2024

Rahm is one of Spain's greatest golf imports. Unsurprisingly, he's bringing some Spanish flair to the Masters Champions Dinner.

Feast your eyes on the spread that Rahm has prepared for the festivities. Don't be surprised if your stomach starts to grumble uncontrollably.

- Tapas y Pintos (Starters and small snacks): Ibericos (Acord-fed Iberian ham cured pork loin), Idiazabal con Trufa Negra (Idiazabal cheese, black truffle), Tortilla de Patatas (Spanish omelette, onions with confit potatoes), Chistorra con Patata (Spicy Basque chorizo and potato), Lentejas Estofadas (Mama Rahm's classic lentil stew), Croqueta de Pollo (Creamy chicken fritters with confit potatoes).

- First course: Ensalada de Txangurro (Basque crab salad and potato)
- Main course: Chuleton a la Parrilla (Basque ribeye steak with Tudela lettuce and Piquillo peppers) or Rodaballo al Pil-Pil (Basque fish dish with turbot and Navarra white asparagus)
- Dessert: Milhojas de Crema y Nata (puff pastry cake with custard and chantilly cream)

Rahm hails from the Basque Country, a region which contains citizens of both Spain and France. It has its own distinct culture and traditions, one of which, it seems, revolves around mouth-watering food.

Rahm's meal comes present with some special alterations. For starters, Rodaballo al Pil-Pil tends to be served with cod where Rahm comes from. However, the Spaniard is not a fan of the flaky fish. So, he opted instead to serve turbot — a flat-fish native to the Mediterranean Sea.

The dessert course, Milhojas de Crema y Nata, also holds a special place in Rahm's stomach; it was the cake he and his wife, Kelley, ate during their wedding.

"It was basically Kelley and I's wedding cake," Rahm said during a March 19 presser at Augusta, per Golf. "It varies a little bit where you're doing it in Spain, but it's absolutely one of my favorites."

Famed Spanish-American chef Jose

Andres helped craft the fixings. Andres even had to place a call with Rahm's grandmother to get her recipe for the lentil stew.

"If somebody doesn't like it, please just don't tell me," Rahm said. "Don't tell anyone actually. It means a little bit too much to me to hear it."

### What was served at the 2023 Masters Champions Dinner?

Fresh off winning the 2022 Masters in fairly comfortable fashion, American Scottie Scheffler was presented the honor of filling his fellow Masters champions' stomachs ahead of the 2023 tournament.

He performed his honor dutifully, curating a spread rooted in all sorts of red-blooded Americana:

- Appetizers: Cheeseburger sliders, fire-cracker shrimp
- First course: Tortilla soup
- Main course: Texas ribeye steak or blackened redfish
- Dessert: Warm chocolate chip cookie skillet

### Who pays for the Masters Champions Dinner?

Creating such an ornate menu does come at a cost to the Masters champion. In addition to compiling the meal, the reigning Masters winner also has to foot the bill.

It's a responsibility that can catch some by surprise.

"That's another thing I learned," Rahm said on an episode of the podcast. "I went to [Augusta National] Chairman [Fred] Ridley, I was like, 'What's the budget for this?' Whatever you want to spend! Great!" Rahm netted a tournament-record \$3.24 million in winnings on account of his Masters conquest last year. So, it shouldn't hurt his pockets too much, either way.



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# Masters Amateur Christo Lamprecht



Amateur Christo Lamprecht smiles with the silver medal awarded for low amateur honors following the final round of The 151st Open Championship at Royal Liverpool Golf Club.

## Masters amateur Christo Lamprecht, 6-foot-8, does not have his head in clouds

By Paul Hodowanik

Towering success and expectations follow the 23-year-old amateur into his Masters debut. He's determined to enjoy the moment.

Christo Lamprecht Sr. kept getting interrupted – by texts, calls and co-workers in the office who saw what was happening.

"I'm busy," Lamprecht Sr. told them. "What's so interesting?"

They implored him to check The Open's leaderboard. That's when it became clear.

"Oh, my goodness," he said.

Some 8,500 miles away in Hoylake, England, his college-aged son was setting the golf world ablaze.

Who is this kid? Where did he come from? How is he doing this? At The Open Championship, of all places?

Lamprecht Sr. quickly caught up on the highlights. He saw his son, also named Christo, make routine birdies on Nos. 3 and 5, and hit his approach shot on the par-3 sixth to 4 feet. He watched the chip-in birdie on the 14th and one last one on the closing hole. The younger Lamprecht doffed his cap to the crowd and soaked in

the moment as he walked off the 18th green, then signed for a 66 that no one could better on the opening day at Royal Liverpool Golf Club. The senior Lamprecht, an accountant back in his hometown of George, a coastal city in South Africa's Western Cape, shook his head.

"I just couldn't believe it," he said.

That Thursday at Royal Liverpool was Lamprecht's "Hello world" moment. He didn't sustain the remarkable play, but the golf world was introduced to another young phenom that day, one who amazed with the power produced by his 6-foot-8 frame.

Lamprecht, 23, earned his place at The Open with his victory at the 2023 British Amateur. Now another major opportunity awaits. He is the headliner among the five amateurs in the field at this week's Masters Tournament.

Lamprecht, a senior at Georgia Tech, is the top player in the World Amateur Golf Ranking and No. 2 in PGA TOUR University, trailing only Stanford's Michael Thorbjornsen. History is on Lamprecht's side, as well. He is the third Yellow Jacket to win the British Amateur, joining two important figures in Augusta National's

history: Bobby Jones, the club's co-founder, and Charlie Yates, a former low-amateur in the Masters and the club's long-time secretary.

Lamprecht's presence is a connection to the past and another step in a bright future. He was a first-team All-American in 2023 and is on pace to earn that honor again this year. He's finished no worse than T16 in eight starts this season, including a victory at the OFCC/Fighting Illini Invitational (at Olympia Fields) and two runners-up.

He also was just two strokes off the lead halfway through the DP World Tour's Alfred Dunhill Championship in his native South Africa. It wasn't just his score that amazed. Lamprecht blasted an incredible 418-yard drive on the par-5 18th hole in the first round at Leopard Creek Country Club.

"No!" a SkySports announcer exclaimed. "That is ridiculous."

"Everyone talks about it now," Lamprecht told PGATOUR.COM, pointing out the shot was downhill and downwind, "but it was just another drive down the fairway for me."

In golf's distance age, Lamprecht stands alone with rare physical gifts that cannot be replicated. Only four of the 16

players on Georgia Tech's basketball team are taller than him. He may be taking those talents to the PGA TOUR soon.

The top-ranked player in PGA TOUR University after this year's NCAA Championship will follow in Ludvig Åberg's footsteps by immediately earning a PGA TOUR card. The Masters, in addition to giving him invaluable experience on arguably the game's biggest stage, will count toward those standings, meaning a good finish this week could set him up for so much more than the prestigious low-amateur prize.

An advertisement for 2nd Swing Golf. The top part features the text "New &amp; Used Clubs from the Top Brands in Golf" in white on a black background. Below the text is a collection of various golf clubs, including drivers, irons, and wedges, arranged in a cluster. The 2nd Swing logo is visible at the bottom of the advertisement.



Standing 6-foot-8, Lamprecht's legs are disproportionately longer than they should be for his height

The lessons he learned at Liverpool will come in handy.

A major championship allows an amateur to become famous faster than a ball leaves the clubface of Lamprecht's driver. Five months after The Open, Lamprecht sat on a serene South African cliffside and recalled the week to PGATOUR.COM, which visited him in his home country last December.

"I felt probably every emotion possible throughout that four rounds of golf," he said.

Lamprecht admits being thrown by the experience, by all the demands that followed his first round. The day was an amalgamation of excitement, gratitude and a heavy dose of "oh s---, this just got real." He barely made the cut after a second-round 79 and finished T74. But he also was the only amateur to make the cut. And now he has an opportunity to put everything that he learned into practice at Augusta National, a course he's played numerous times. Georgia Tech is just two hours away in Jones' hometown of Atlanta.

This week won't be the first time he's seen Amen Corner or attempted to knock it

tight to the traditional Sunday hole location on 16. There's familiarity with the course, even if everything else surrounding the week will be different.

With Lamprecht set to see more TV time this week at Augusta National, he would like to address the elephant in the room. Something that has been a hot topic since Royal Liverpool. His swing is... interesting.

If Rory McIlroy and Adam Scott are perfect portraits of the swing, à la Rembrandt, Lamprecht is more like the work of an abstract expressionist. By his own admission, his action is not visually appealing, but while it's atypical, that's a product of his lanky frame. His right knee dips abnormally low to the ground at contact as if he is chasing a 70 mph breaking ball low and away. The result is beautiful, though. Lamprecht averages about 325 yards off the tee on a standard course. He's found the swing that works for him.

"The golf swing doesn't need to be perfect, it just needs to be in control," Lamprecht said.

While most observers obsess over the look of Lamprecht's swing, another of the

game's sweet swingers says the secret is in the sound.

"As a person that understands ball striking, you don't have to look at it, you just hear it," said Ernie Els, a longtime friend of the Lamprecht family. "And at 16 (Lamprecht) had that distinctive hit on the ball. To come from this little town here and to have this kind of talent come out of this area is quite incredible."

Lamprecht's growth spurt came relatively late in his development, but at a perfect time for his golf. Lamprecht was required to develop a strong short game because he stood just 5-foot-7 at the start of high school. He loves his lob wedge and likes hitting soft flop shots as much as booming drives. When he practiced as a kid, he wouldn't let himself leave until he holed a chip and a bunker shot, reminiscent of another South African, Gary Player.

But when Lamprecht started rapidly sprouting, he went through new clubs every six months and pants even faster. His friends called him Melman, a reference to the giraffe from the movie "Madagascar." Even now, standing 6-foot-8, Lamprecht's legs are disproportionately longer than they should be for his height. With the maximum legal length of a driver capped at 46 inches, it limits the equipment he can use. His irons are 1.5 inches longer than standard.

This should come as no surprise, given that his grandfather was also 6-foot-8. His great-grandfather, who immigrated from Germany to George and was the town's first doctor, dentist, and pharmacist before later becoming mayor, was 7 feet tall.

"When you get really tall, in the five percentile of height like he is... the conventional aspects of the golf swing can be thrown out the window because your levers are so long," said Stewart Cink, the former Open champion and Georgia Tech alum who occasionally practices alongside the team. "It just creates a certain type of leg action and body action that we are not used to seeing. He's made it his and done a pretty good job of it."

Bruce Heppler, the Georgia Tech coach, puts Lamprecht in an elite class. "He's the best I've seen in 40 years off the tee and he's that good around the green, too," said Heppler, who has led the Yellow Jackets for 29 years and is the 10th-longest tenured head coach in Division I.

Those are bold statements, but the subject of that praise does his best to ignore it. Lamprecht tries not to look too far ahead.

"To think about everything that I want to accomplish and not actually appreciating where I'm at would do myself wrong," he said.

Lamprecht may be a ceiling-scraper at nearly 7 feet, and yes, the sky is the limit, but he still doesn't have his head in the clouds. He keeps a tangible reminder on the course, with "CWYC" written on his golf glove. It stands for "Control what you control," and he taps the glove when he

needs a reminder. He added a cross to the end of the acronym recently, a reminder of his faith but also an homage to a friend who tragically passed away in a car accident.

"I'm doing what I'm loving. I've got all 10 fingers and all 10 toes and I'm still enjoying the sport. I've got a lot of things to be thankful for," Lamprecht said.

Lamprecht would like to think he's slowly built toward thriving in these moments. The Open was the most recent, but he's been stacking these experiences since he was a boy trying to hit carts on the range of Kingswood Golf Course. He refined his game at the Louis 57 Academy, a junior teaching program in the Southern Cape of South Africa founded by Louis Oosthuizen. Before he was a teenager, Lamprecht's lesson plans were crafted with Oosthuizen's input. He'd already become friends with Els, as well. His family and Els' both owned property in Herolds Bay, a beach town southwest of George.

Lamprecht Sr. let his son play alongside him as soon as the excitable junior was strong enough to hit a wedge over the 100-foot tree in their yard. Soon after, Lamprecht competed in tournaments with kids five years older than him. When he reached high school, he ditched tennis, rugby and cricket and put his full energy into golf. And at 16, Lamprecht cemented his status as a prodigy, winning the South African Amateur Championship, becoming the youngest winner in the event's 110-year history – younger than past winners Els, Trevor Immelman and Retief Goosen. Lamprecht competed on Junior Presidents Cup teams and twice played the Junior PLAYERS Championship. He was drawn to Georgia Tech after coach Heppler, who had spent time in South Africa, greeted Lamprecht in Afrikaans, South Africa's native tongue. The recruiting all but ended there; Lamprecht was a Yellow Jacket.

Lamprecht's stroke average dropped by more than a shot between his freshman and sophomore seasons at Georgia Tech, and he won for the first time in his junior season. In 11 events that year, he notched eight top 10s. He was a finalist for the Fred Haskins Award, given to the country's top collegiate player.

"He's just got this unbelievable power on one end of the spectrum," said Cink. "And incredible touch and finesse on the short little tiny shots around the green that you just don't see from very many players, especially somebody who is 6-8."

Lamprecht's immense talent has everyone buying in. Heppler expects Lamprecht to leave Georgia Tech as one of the school's best. Cink believes PGA TOUR success will quickly follow. Els envisions Lamprecht as the next great South African golfer.

Lamprecht can't get there mentally. Not yet. The 23-year-old amateur is focused on where his feet are – firmly planted at Augusta National.

# Chandler Smith the favorite to win



Last season's Andy's Frozen Custard 300, won by John Hunter Nemechek

Andy's Frozen Custard 300, eighth race of the NASCAR Xfinity Series season, and SpeedyCash.com 250, seventh race of the NASCAR CRAFTSMAN Truck Series season comes to Texas Motor Speedway this weekend.

**WHEN:** Friday @ 7:30 p.m for the NCTS SpeedyCash.com 250.

Saturday @ 12:30 p.m. for the NXS Andy's Frozen Custard 300.

This will be the 47th NASCAR Xfinity Series race at Texas Motor Speedway. Last season's Andy's Frozen Custard 300, won by John Hunter Nemechek, was held on Saturday, Sept. 23, and served as the second race of the Round of 12 NASCAR Playoffs for the Xfinity Series. ... Nemechek gave Toyota its fourth NXS win at Texas in the last six visits. ... The race winner has started 10th or deeper in the field in four of the last six TMS races. ... Four Xfinity Series drivers – Chandler Smith and Sheldon Creed of Joe Gibbs Racing and Justin Allgaier and Sam Mayer of JR Motorsports – will be chasing a \$100,000 bonus if they can win the Andy's Frozen Custard 300. Aric Almirola of Joe Gibbs Racing won the 100k bonus last week at Martinsville, but will not be competing in the Andy's Frozen Custard 300 for a chance at another big payday. None of the four have previously won at Texas in

the Xfinity Series. Allgaier has a best finish of second in 2021 and has finished among the top five in four of his last five visits. He also won the pole last season. His teammate Mayer has a best finish of third (2022) in four career starts. Smith has a fourth-place finish in his only TMS start last season while Creed has a best of seventh (2022) in three starts. Creed does own a CRAFTSMAN Truck Series win at Texas in 2020. ... Smith is off to a tremendous start to the season, with a pair of wins and a perfect seven top-10 finishes in seven starts. He is the co-series leader in wins with Austin Hill of Richard Childress Racing, sole series leader in top-five finishes (6) and top 10s (7), and second in laps led (242). He sits first in the series points standings, 35 ahead of defending NXS champion Cole Custer of Stewart-Haas Racing. ... Custer has six top-10 finishes in seven starts at TMS. Four of those have been among the top five, highlighted by a win in the 2018 fall race. ... Allgaier owns the track record for career top-10 finishes in the Xfinity Series with 14, but is still chasing his first win after 26 career starts. Six of those finishes are among the top five, including a best of second in the 2021 spring race. Last season, he won his first pole at TMS en route to a fifth-place finish. ... Hill has finished seventh or better in his

last three visits to TMS, including a best of second in the 2022 fall race. During that span, he has qualified ninth or better in all three. He will be performing double duty this weekend for Richard Childress Racing. He also will be competing in the organization's third Cup entry in Sunday's Autotrader EchoPark Automotive 400.

**CRAFTSMAN TRUCK SERIES:** This will be the 50th NASCAR CRAFTSMAN Truck Series race at Texas Motor Speedway. The SpeedyCash.com 250 becomes part of a NASCAR tripleheader after being an April companion event with the NTT INDYCAR SERIES last season. Carson Hocevar gave Chevrolet the win in 2023, but Toyota has won five of the last seven. ... Kyle Busch will be making his fourth NCTS start of the season for Spire Motorsports and first at Texas Motor Speedway since winning in 2020. He has won in his last three starts at TMS (2020, '19, '14) and his five career victories rank second only to Todd Bodine (6). Busch also has finished among the top five in 10 of 14 starts at Texas and ranks second for career laps led with 525. In three starts this season, he collected his 65th NCTS win at Atlanta and added a runner-up effort at Bristol. ... Johnny Sauter, tied with Busch for second at TMS with five NCTS wins, also will be making a return in the

SpeedyCash.com 250. He will be driving the No. 45 Chevrolet for Niece Motorsports in his second start of the season. He drove for the organization in the season-opening race at Daytona, where he started second and finished 29th due to an accident. He finished 12th in his last appearance at TMS in 2021. ... Christian Eckes of McAnally Hilgemann Racing has won two of the series' last three races, including last week at Martinsville, and owns a streak of four consecutive races of finishing eighth or better. That run includes his win at Bristol. Eckes only has made four career NCTS starts at TMS, but has been strong. He has a pair of runner-up finishes (2020, '22), led a combined 94 laps and started among the top 10 in every race. Last season, he started sixth and finished 15th. ... The top four in the NCTS points standings are separated by just 11 points. Ty Majeski of ThorSport Racing sits on top by seven points over Corey Heim of TRI-CON Garage and Tyler Ankrum of McAnally-Hilgemann Racing. Eckes is fourth, 11 back. ... Heim, who secured his first win of the season at Circuit of The Americas, is a perfect six-for-six on the season for top-10 finishes. He leads the series in that category as well as top-five finishes (4). ... The race winner has started among the top six in the last 10 races, including back-to-back seasons from the pole. Sheldon Creed went wire to wire in 2020 and John Hunter Nemechek did the same the next season. ... ThorSport Racing's Matt Crafton has posted top-10 finishes in 18 of his last 20 starts at Texas, including 13 of those coming among the top five. Crafton, a two-time winner at TMS (2009, '10), holds track records for NCTS starts (43), top-five finishes (17) and top-10 finishes (30). ... Stewart Friesen of Halmar Friesen Racing has five top-five finishes in 11 career starts at Texas, including in his last two visits. He finished third last season to follow up his first career TMS victory in 2022. ... Grant Enfinger of CR7 Motorsports has seven top-10 finishes in 11 TMS starts, including five top-five efforts. He has finished a best of third on two occasions. ... Cup Series rookie and 2022 NCTS champion Zane Smith will be making his third start of the season for McAnally Hilgemann Racing in the SpeedyCash.com 250. Smith will be driving the No. 91 Chevrolet sponsored by Speedy Cash. Smith will be competing in the No. 71 entry for Spire Motorsports in Sunday's Autotrader EchoPark Automotive 400 Cup Series race.

# Autotrader Echopark Automotive 400



William Byron won the 2023 Autotrader Echopark Automotive 400

## Hendrick Motorsports, Joe Gibbs racing domination leads 'Fast Five'

Hendrick Motorsports and Joe Gibbs Racing have combined to win seven of the first eight NASCAR Cup Series races of the season.

- Prosper's Chris Buescher looking for his first top-10 finish at his home track.
- Penske duo of Joey Logano and Ryan Blaney hopeful recent successes at TMS will translate into victory.
- Texas Motor Speedway returns to its popular spring date with the NASCAR Cup Series arriving this weekend for the Autotrader EchoPark Automotive 400.

Sunday's Autotrader EchoPark Automotive 400 (2:30 p.m. CT, TV: FS1, Radio: PRN, SiriusXM, Lone Star 92.5 FM locally) will be Texas Motor Speedway's first points race in the spring since 2019 when Denny Hamlin was victorious for Joe Gibbs Racing.

The Cup Series opens its on-track action Saturday with a pair of 20-minute, split-field practice sessions beginning at 9:35 a.m. The practice will be immediately followed by pole qualifying at 10:20 a.m. It will be a single-lap, two-round format to set the field.

The Cup Series has completed eight of its 36 championship points races and plenty of storylines have developed in the early portion of the season.

Here's the "Fast Five" storylines to watch during the Autotrader EchoPark

Automotive 400:

### 1) Hendrick Motorsports and Joe Gibbs Racing have been dominant since the outset of the season as the two organizations have combined for seven wins in the first eight races.

Hendrick Motorsports owns four of those, with defending Autotrader EchoPark Automotive 400 winner William Byron powering the team with a series-leading three. Byron opened the season with a win in the Daytona 500, followed with another in late March at Circuit of The Americas and secured his third Sunday at Martinsville when he led Hendrick Motorsports to a 1-2-3 finish. The other victory for the organization came at Las Vegas in early March by Kyle Larson.

"I just feel like I trust myself a little bit more," said Byron when asked after the Martinsville win about going on this recent tear. "I know during the week that the preparation and the things going on are going to equate to the results. When you've had those things happen in the past, you start getting into a rhythm of it, it just starts stacking.

"But the sport is really competitive. It's not like football. You don't win third quarters of the games. I watch a lot of hockey. They win a lot or tie or go to overtime. We don't. We don't win a lot in this sport. It's very similar to golf. There's a lot of elements that have to go right. I just feel like it's trying to chip away and be mentally

strong."

Hendrick Motorsports also has all of its four drivers situated among the top 10, with Larson first in the points standings and followed by Byron (fourth), Chase Elliott (sixth) and Alex Bowman (10th).

Prior to Sunday's win by Byron, Joe Gibbs Racing had won three of the last four races. Denny Hamlin has been the catalyst with wins at Bristol and Richmond, respectively, while Christopher Bell collected the other at Phoenix to start the run. Byron interrupted the JGR charge for a four-race sweep with his win at COTA.

Joe Gibbs Racing has its four drivers among the top 11 positions, giving the two organizations eight of those spots. Martin Truex Jr. paces JGR in second, Hamlin is third, Ty Gibbs seventh and Bell 11th.

The only team to break through the two-organization stranglehold on Victory Lane has been Trackhouse Racing, which won the second race of the season at Atlanta courtesy of Daniel Suarez.

### 2) RFK Racing driver Chris Buescher, who grew up in nearby Prosper, Texas, returns to his home track on a recent roll as he seeks his first top-10 finish at Texas Motor Speedway.

Buescher had his bid for a fifth consecutive top-10 finish end Sunday at Martinsville when he finished 15th. That recent tear, which includes a season-best second at Phoenix, gave him five top-10 efforts in the first eight races. That total is

tied for the series lead with five other drivers.

Buescher is still seeking his first top 10 at TMS after 14 career starts, but he made progress in his last appearance. At September's Autotrader EchoPark Automotive 400, he earned his best starting position (2nd) and finish (14th) while also leading his first laps (2) at TMS.

### 3) Ryan Blaney and Joey Logano are winless at Texas Motor Speedway in their last 25 combined starts, but don't sleep on the Team Penske duo.

Logano owns 15 of those starts and converted them into 11 top-10 finishes, including eight among the top five. During that stretch, he has a pair of runner-up finishes (2016, '22) and has led laps in nine of those races.

Blaney has posted eight top-10 finishes in 10 starts for an 80 percent clip in that span. His best effort came in the 2018 fall race when he earned the pole and finished runner-up. While Blaney is still chasing his first win at Texas, Logano collected his first and only victory in the 2014 spring race.

### 4) It's difficult to believe that 2020 Cup Series champion Chase Elliott is winless in his last 42 starts, dating to his victory at Talladega on Oct. 2, 2022.

He has been on a strong run of late, with consecutive top-five performances and finishing among the top eight in three of his last four. Elliott followed up a fifth at Richmond with a season-best third Sunday at Martinsville. He also has been qualifying well, starting among the top five in four of his last five races and among the top 11 in all but one on the season.

"Nice to have a couple solid weeks, to be in contention there for a win," Elliott said post-race at Martinsville. "Haven't been in contention to win one in a while. It was fun to kind of get to that last restart and it actually mattered. Enjoyed that aspect. Certainly hungry for more."

### 5) This will be the 44th Cup Series race at Texas Motor Speedway, but first points-paying spring event since 2019 when Denny Hamlin won by 2.743 seconds over Clint Bowyer. It was the third career win at Texas for the Joe Gibbs Racing driver.

The following season was affected by the COVID pandemic that forced the spring race to move to July, which was won by Austin Dillon of Richard Childress Racing.

In 2021 and '22, the spring event was replaced by the NASCAR All-Star Race that was held in June and May, respectively. Last season, the Autotrader EchoPark Automotive 400 served as the Round of 12 opener for the NASCAR Playoffs in late September.

# Big 12 Baseball Power Rankings



Oklahoma State is on a roll

By Stacy Urban

Five weeks into the Big 12 baseball conference schedule, the race for first place is no better defined than in mid-February.

Oklahoma and West Virginia sit at the top with 8-4 conference records. Right behind those two are Kansas State, Oklahoma State, Texas and Cincinnati — the Bearcats, not the Reds — with 7-5 conference marks.

Hard to pick a favorite. Easier to deduce which teams are happiest with their current positions. New Big 12 member Cincinnati, picked to tie for last in the coaches' preseason poll, is a game out of first after sweeping preseason favorite TCU over the weekend.

Put Cincinnati's Jordan Bischel on the list of Big 12 coach of the year candidates. Put Bischel up there with UCF's Rich Wallace, whose team has won four conference series in a row, Kansas State the Knights' latest victim.

No team's fortunes have turned for the better lately, though, than West Virginia, which shares the conference lead after a sweep at Kansas. All-America middle infielder J.J. Wetherholt (hamstring) and catcher Logan Sauve (knee) have returned from 26- and 14-game absences, respectively, and lefty pitcher Derek Clark has lowered his earned-run average to 1.70 while going nine innings in each of his past three Big 12 starts.

WVU's Randy Mazey, the Big 12 coach of the year in 2023 when his team shared the conference title, is planning to retire at the end of this season. The Mountaineers might make it a sendoff to remember.

Here are this week's power rankings. All records and rankings in the USA TODAY

Top 25 coaches poll are as of Monday.

**1. Oklahoma State (21-11, 7-5)**

**Last week: 3**

**What to know:** No. 25 Oklahoma State took two of three from Oklahoma in last weekend's Bedlam games. Under Josh Holliday, the Cowboys are 36-13 against the Sooners, winning nine of 11 conference series.

**2. West Virginia (19-12, 8-4)**

**Last week: 8**

**What to know:** Aidan Major and Derek Clark give the Mountaineers an asset so many Big 12 teams are lacking: a strong one-two in the starting rotation.

**3. Oklahoma (17-14, 8-4)**

**Last week: 2**

**What to know:** Since those attention-getting sweeps of UCF and TCU to open Big 12 play, the Sooners are 4-8 with series losses to West Virginia and Oklahoma State.

**4. Central Florida (21-8, 8-7)**

**Last week: 4**

**What to know:** Oklahoma swept UCF in the Knights' intro to the Big 12. Since then, the 19th-ranked Knights have just been clipping along taking two of three from everybody.

**5. Texas (19-13, 7-5)**

**Last week: 1**

**What to know:** Texas had won six straight Big 12 regular-season series. Take a bow if you predicted Brigham Young snapping that streak in Austin.

**6. Kansas State (20-10, 7-5)**

**Last week: 5**

**What to know:** Wildcats rank among the leaders in NCAA Division I in walks (191) and stolen bases (77). Alas, they've been held to four or fewer runs in their past four

conference games, losing three.

**7. Texas Tech (24-9, 8-7)**

**Last week: 7**

**What to know:** Series sweeps against Stanford and Houston put Texas Tech on a six-game win streak. Now comes a challenging stretch of series at TCU and No. 1 Arkansas and at home versus West Virginia.

**8. Cincinnati (19-13, 7-5)**

**Last week: 12**

**What to know:** The Bearcats can swing the bats with anybody. In their first Big 12 series sweep, the pitchers shined in 4-2, 6-2 and 13-2 wins over TCU.

**9. Kansas (15-14, 7-8)**

**Last week: 6**

**What to know:** Two weekends ago at BYU, Kansas swept a three-game road series from a Big 12 opponent for the first time since 2014. Then the Jayhawks get swept at home by West Virginia.

**10. TCU (20-11, 5-10)**

**Last week: 9**

**What to know:** The Horned Frogs keep getting poll support and keep losing — four of their five Big 12 series, to be exact.

**11. Brigham Young (13-15, 6-9)**

**Last week: 13**

**What to know:** In the Cougars' series win at Texas, catcher Collin Reuter homered *four times — three in the finale — and Stone Cushing picked up his sixth and seventh saves, tied for the Big 12 lead.*

**12. Houston (16-15, 4-11)**

**Last week: 10**

**What to know:** Texas Tech extended Houston's conference losing streak to 11 games. Equally concerning, Jaxon Jelkin, who's not allowed more than three earned runs in any of his seven starts, didn't pitch in Lubbock.

**13. Baylor (13-18, 5-7)**

**Last week: 11**

**What to know:** Baylor's won four straight home series for the first time since 2015. The Bears did it against Oral Roberts, Texas Tech, Cincinnati and Incarnate Word.



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# College Football News and Notes



BO CARTER

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Connecticut has become the first NCAA Division I school to win back-to-back men's basketball titles since Florida in 2007 and '08 under Hall of Fame head coach Billy Donovan.

Updated NFF Chapter scholar-athlete recognition banquets are:  
 Thursday - Allstate Sugar Bowl (New Orleans); Saturday - Mountain Empire (Tenn.); Wednesday, April 17 - Moose Krause/South Bend Chapter (Ind.); Brian Piccolo/Ft. Lauderdale (Fla.); Saturday, April 20 - East Tennessee Chapter (Knoxville); April 21 - Central Indiana Chapter (Indianapolis); April 22 - Colorado Chapter; Memphis Chapter (Tenn.); University of Georgia (Athens). The NFF Gridiron Club of Dallas is partnering with the Dallas-Fort Worth chapter of the NFL Alumni Association for the club's second annual charity golf tournament on Monday, May 6. The tournament will focus on raising funds for college scholarships to benefit high school scholar-athletes recognized at its annual awards banquet each spring. "We are excited to partner with the DFW NFL Alumni Association for our tournament this year," said NFF Dallas vice president and tournament director Gary Peek. The tourney is set for the King's Course at award-winning

Gleneagles Country Club in Plano, Texas, and will be emceed by award-winning sportscaster Scott Murray. For additional information, please access: [www.nffdallas.golf](http://www.nffdallas.golf).

Featured speaker at the post-tourney banquet is NFF College Hall of Fame, NFL standout and award-winning broadcaster Gary Reasons of Northwestern State and the NFL. Golf professional Mitch Dobbyn of Fort Worth will offer entertainment as one of the world's longest drivers (record competitive drive of 442 yards) as the 10-time qualifier for the World Championship Long Drive contest continues to participate in 300-plus charity golf events with \$1 million-plus generated for charities and scholarships.

#### Caitlin Clark Record Watch:

Iowa's Caitlin Clark has passed both NCAA career scoring leader and Washington standout Kelsey Plum (3,527 points from 2012-16) with 3,951 markers currently and all-time major divisions' collegiate leader Lynette Woodard with 3,649 points from 1977-81 during the pre-NCAA Association of Intercollegiate Athletes for Women era as well as NCAA men's Division I men's DI basketball scoring leader the late Pistol Pete Maravich of LSU with 3,667 points from 1967-70. Clark, the sister of former Iowa State QB Blake Clark (2019-22) and whose father starred in baseball and basketball at Simpson (Iowa), added to the all-time mark last week. The Hawkeyes faced and downed Holy Cross on March 23 behind her 27 points in the NCAA Women's Championship first round at Iowa City, and she scored 32 points against Big 12 Conference power West Virginia last Monday night to advance the NCAA Women's Sweet 16. In the NCAA Sweet 16, the Hawkeyes faced Colorado, and Clark responded with 29 more points for starters and 41 last Monday in a

rematch of the 2023 NCAA Championship with LSU in the NCAA Albany Regional. Then she tallied 21 points in the semifinals of the NCAA Final Four against UConn and 30 against South Carolina in the NCAA Women's Championship clash...  
 ...NAIA All-America guard Grace Beyer of University of Health Sciences and Pharmacy in St. Louis ended her career with 3,961 points over five seasons from 2019-24 as the all-time women's basketball scoring leader for all NAIA and NCAA divisions. Clark needed 62 points to pass Beyer as all-time scoring leader on any collegiate level Saturday with the Final Four semis and the Sunday finals in a back-to-back Women's Final Four trophy tussle (last year vs. LSU) and scored 51 in her last two collegiate contests to miss the all-divisions' women's scoring mark by Beyer...  
 Also of note, this record stands: no team in the 42-year history of NCAA Division I Women's Basketball Championships ever has finished as runnerup and won the title the next season...Clark also captured the Naismith Women's Basketball Award last week as the top player in the women's hoops' game as well as Associated Press Women's College Player of the Year and USBWA Ann Meyers National Player of the Year Award.

The 66th NFF Awards Dinner is set for Tuesday, Dec. 10, in Las Vegas, Nev. For NFF membership, ticket information and additional data, please access [Footballfoundation.org](http://Footballfoundation.org).

The NIL INFLCR Summit is scheduled for June 22-24 at the NFF Chick-Fil-A College Hall of Fame in Atlanta. There will be an anticipated 500-plus student-athletes and nationally known speakers will help share ideas and conduct seminars. Some of the top speakers already secured for the 440-capacity conference are Sam Acho, 2010 William V. Campbell Trophy® recipient, former Texas and NFL defensive end, ESPN Analyst; Tom Bratton, Medallion Partners CEO, business consultant; Greg Johnson, McAfee President and CEO, former Intuit executive VP, and former Air Force halfback; and Joe Moglia, former TD Ameritrade Chairman and CEO, former Coastal Carolina head football coach.

#### NFF College Hall of Fame Facts:

**Some notable birthdates** in NFF College Hall of Fame annals in the April 8-14 time period are April 8 (1924) Jim Martin, Cleveland, Ohio; (1955) Ricky Bell, Houston, Texas; (1967) Anthony Thompson, Terre Haute, Ind.; April 9 (1871) John Minds, Clearfield County, Pa.; (1898) Paul Robeson, Princeton, N.J.; (1921) Vince Banonis, Detroit, Mich.; (1947) Ron Pritchard, Chicago, Ill.; (1966) Tracy Rocker, Atlanta, Ga.; April 10

(1909) Clarke Hinkle, Toronto, Ontario, Canada; (1918) Jim Daniell, Pittsburgh, Pa.; (1938) Don Meredith, Mt. Vernon, Texas; April 11 (1903) Jake Gaither, Dayton, Tenn.; (1916) Sam Chapman, Tiburon, Calif.; (1916) Danny Fortmann, Pearl River, N.Y.; (1941) Joe Romig, Salt Lake City, Utah; (1962) Terry Hoage, Ames, Iowa; April 12 (1870) Winchester Osgood, Port Bananas, Fla.; (1944) Mike Garrett, Los Angeles, Calif.; (1966) Lorenzo White, Hollywood, Fla.; April 13 (1897) Jimmy Leech, Collierville, Va.; (1915) Bob Devaney, Saginaw, Mich.; April 14 (1876) Eddie Rogers, Libby, Minn.; (1901) Mal Stevens, Stockton, Kan.; (1926) Harry Gilmer, Birmingham, Alabama.

**Some anniversary passing dates** of NFF Hall of Fame members are April 9 April 9 (1983) Jess Neely, Weslaco, Texas; April 10 (2015) Ray Graves, Tampa, Fla.; April 11 (1948) Jock Sutherland, Pittsburgh, Pa.; (2008) Bob Pellegrini, Marmora, N.J.; (2017) Wayne Hardin, Orelan, Pa.; April 12 (2013) Frosty Westering, Puyallup, Wash.; (2019) Forrest Gregg, Colorado Springs, Colorado. Happy birthdays to NFF Hall of Fame members born April 8 Anthony Thompson, April 9 Ron Pritchard, Tracy Rocker, April 11 Joe Romig (a spry 83), Terry Hoage, April 12 Mike Garrett, Lorenzo White...

#### Schedules:

The expanded Big Ten Conference slate begins with two Thursday non-conference clashes on Aug. 29 with North Carolina (guided by NFF College Hall of Fame head coach and Vanderbilt and Florida State alumnus Mack Brown) at Minnesota and Eastern Illinois at Illinois...Middle Tennessee have a long-range series set for 2033 and '34...Connecticut has completed its 2025 FBS independent schedule with key home games against Indiana, Syracuse and James Madison...Kentucky and Toledo will tangle in 2027 and '28...UNLV and UTEP are set for home-and-road meetings in 2029 and '30...Auburn played a spirited Orange and Blue intrasquad tussle last week in Auburn, Ala...TCU's Frogapalooza is set for Saturday, April 27, with music, games for kids and the Horned Frogs spring scrimmage at 2 p.m. (CDT) at Amon Carter Stadium in Fort Worth...

...There are a spring-most 41 training scrimmages or intrasquad games Saturday after Thursday spring activity at Minnesota and Towson and Friday intrasquad or scrimmage contests at Georgia State, Army West Point, Eastern Michigan, Presbyterian, UCF, Kansas, and Montana.

#### Good Works:

The Rice and Baltimore Brigance

(continued on page 16)

Brigade Foundation 5.7 Kilometers Championship Race and 1.57 Mile Family Run/Walk are set for Sunday, April 28, at the Maryland Zoo in Baltimore, Md., with proceeds going to Foundation to help research against ALS. The 57 in both faces represents former Rice and NFL star O.J. Brigrance's uniform number...Rice's annual Night of Flight celebration is set for April 25 with the theme "Night of Flight - Tradition of Excellence" along with local barbecue dishes, signature cocktails, discussions with Rice coaches and administrators in athletics, live auction items, and the popular dueling pianos' performance. Proceeds will benefit scholarships for all Owls varsity squads...Auburn students, faculty, staff, and local friends pronounced the bi-annual AubFest Music Festival a rousing success on the AU campus last week...The ToyotaUSA Foundation is granting \$2 million to science, technology, engineering, and math programs in schools in Randolph and Guilford, N.C., as part of its Driving Possibilities educational charities...The ECHL Allen (Texas) Americans hockey team continues to offer free tickets with student IDs for college students having proper identification cards...Eastern Michigan advanced science majors helped raise a weather balloon 80,000 feet aloft over the weekend to reveal closer views of Monday's solar eclipse.

#### Football Coaches:

Memphis head coach Ryan Silverfield inked a five-year contract extension through 2028...Ole Miss added former NFL New York Giants head coach and Mississippi State student-athlete Joe Judge as an assistant coach...New Texas A&M offensive coordinator and former Kansas State QB great Colin Klein has been encouraged by the Aggies offensive learning curve after a week of spring drills...Last spring's Ohio State Spring Coaches Clinic included a historic roundtable talk and reflections with head coach Ryan and former OSU mentors Jim Tressel, Urban Meyer and John Cooper...Colorado named former NFL standout George Hegamin as director of leadership and engagement.

**Hometowns** of more 2024 college head coaches – UW River Falls: Matt Walker, Greencastle, Ind.; UW Stevens Point: Luke Venne, Oshkosh, Wis.; UW Stout: Clayt Birmingham, Sturgeon Bay, Wis.; UW Whitewater: Jace Rindahl, Cambridge, Wis.; Wyoming: Jay Sawvel, Barnesville, Ohio.

#### Directors of Athletics:

Stetson named Ricky Ray director of athletics...Central Arkansas AD Brad Teague will become director of UCA's new Aviation Academy, and associate AD Matt Whiting will segue to director of athletics with Teague as a senior advisor to athletics...Long Island AD Ryan Kelly is heading west to become senior associate AD for football at Syracuse...UMBC AD Brian Barrio has left the program and yielded to interim ADs and senior woman adminis-

trator Whitney Ames and associate for business Rich Franchak...Nebraska executive associate AD Doug Ewald related the circumstances leading up former AD Trev Alberts heading to Texas A&M and the appointment of new AD Troy Dannen Washington AD Pat Chun had his compensation package approved formally by UW board members with a contract through the 2028-29 competitive year...New Notre Dame AD Pete Bevacqua plans to utilize many new ideas as he draws from the tradition of UND and to capitalize on the Roman Catholic tradition and heritage of the venerable university...Florida AD Scott Stricklin opined that money to compensate student-athletes as university employees is not available under the current NCAA structure, which includes almost \$4 billion in grants-in-aid nationally...Stephen F. Austin interim AD Loree McCary and other administrators met with student leaders about a proposed upgrade for student fees to support SFA athletics...Auburn AD John Cohen related that the Tigers are "in very positive place" with regards to apparel sponsorship, facility renovations and academic and athletics' success on The Plains...Oral Roberts AD Tim Johnson recalled how the Eagles advancing to the 2021 NCAA DI Basketball Men's Championship's Sweet 16 has had lasting positive effects for recruiting and donations to the department..Some leading prospects for St. Bonaventure's vacant AD's post have been identified as Le Moyne AD Bob Beretta, Northwestern deputy AD Deneé Barracato, John Carroll (Ohio) AD Brian Polian, St. Bonaventure executive senior associate AD Steve Mest, and interim co-AD Barb Questa...The Valdosta State AD's position is closing in on four primary candidates – St. Francis (Pa.) AD James Downer, Florida senior associate AD for administration Mike Spiegler, New Mexico senior associate AD Will Price, and Northwest Missouri State deputy AD Troy Katen...USC AD Jen Cohen has added the Parker Executive Search Group in its locating a new men's basketball head coach...Arizona State men's swimming and diving head coach Bob Bowman will replace Swimming Hall of Fame head coach retiring Eddie Reese as director of swimming and diving for the Texas Longhorns...Arizona State later named Herbie Behm swimming and diving head coach...Recent head basketball coaching additions have included SMU men's Andy Enfield, Oklahoma State mens Steve Lutz, Loyola (Md.) men's Josh Loeffler, Georgia Southern women's Hana Haden, James Madison men's Preston Spradlin, WKU men's Hank Plona, UIC men's Rob Ehsan, Tulane women's Ashley Langford, USC men's Eric Musselman, Siena men's Gerry McNamara, Wright State men's Clint Sargent, UTRGV men's Kahil Fennell, Nebraska-Kearney men's Martin Levinson, Western Carolina women's Jonathan Tsipis, Washington State men's David Riley, Pepperdine men's Ed Schilling,

Drake men's Ben McCollum Virginia Tech women's Megan Duffy, Detroit Mercy men's Mark Montgomery, and Utah State women's Wesley Brooks...Those leaving their basketball programs as head coaches prior to the 2024-25 season are Tennessee women's Kellie Harper, Canisius men's Reggie Witherspoon, Binghamton women's Bethann Shapiro Ord, Trinity Valley (Texas) Martin Levinson, Oklahoma State men's Mike Boynton, and Cal Poly's John Smith.... Kansas State head coach Jerome Tang has been identified as a probable candidate for the vacant Arkansas post after Ole Miss head coach Chris Beard withdrew his name...Appalachian State men's basketball head coach Dustin Kerns now is contracted through the 2029-30 campaign...Montana State men's basketball head coach Matt Logie is the owner of a four-year contract extension...Bowling Green named Tanner Barton men's swimming and diving head coach...Gardner-Webb chose Alex Hinsey as women's volleyball head coach....Missouri women's basketball head coach Robin Pingeton is returning for her 15th full outing with the Tigers in 2024-25... Baylor women's basketball head coach Nicki Collen opined that the Bears have remained a top tier program and annual NCAA Championship entry since former head coach Kim Mulkey left for LSU....Eastern Illinois gave a contract extension to men's basketball Marty Simmons through the 2026-27 outing... Stonehill added David Berard as men's hockey head coach...UCLA women's basketball head coach Cori Close regretted copying and sending out a Los Angeles Times newspaper story via social media areas about women's basketball and issued an apology...Manhattan College president Dr. Milo Rivero denied rumors that the schools is closing but admits the need for some immediate financial shoring up at the at the college where the famed seventh inning stretch in baseball was invented in the 1800s...Central Connecticut State added Alyssa Broccoli as women's volleyball head coach...South Carolina women's basketball head coach Dawn Staley is the featured subject of an upcoming documentary production set for release in spring 2025 about her playing career, the Olympics, her selection for the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame, and the national prowess of USC basketball under her canny tutelage. She was named Associated Press Women's College Coach of the Year last week..Carol Bonner, associate registrar for athletics certification and eligibility at Texas Tech, touted the key roles of certification officer as managing the process of determining eligibility for student-athletes, differences in certification on every college campus, objective decisions, measuring NCAA Graduation Success Rates and Academic Progress Rates, and cooperation with other certification offices about transfers and other data for incoming and outgoing student-athletes...Miami (Fla.) men's tennis head

coach Aljosa Piric is retiring in May... Louisville athletics and former men's basketball head coach Kenny Payne agreed on a buyout provision where Payne will be paid through March 31, 2017...Valparaiso softball head coach Meaggan Pettipiece has been replaced by interim head coach Laney Jones...Oklahoma president Dr. Joseph Harroz Jr. mentioned some alternatives if the Norman (Okla.) City Council does not approve a proposed \$1 billion entertainment district with a new arena for Sooners athletics...Arizona president Dr. Robert Robbins will retire at the end of his current personal pact with the university on June 30, 2026, unless a successor is chosen earlier...Seton Hall selected Msgr. Joseph Reilly as its president...Colorado designated Dr. Justin Schwartz as its new chancellor...The latest position openings in athletics on DITicker.com are at Stephen F. Austin, Arizona, Arizona State, the Big West Conference, Boise State, California, Charlotte, Colorado State, Connecticut, Vanderbilt, Citadel, Florida, Harvard, Missouri, the Missouri Valley Conference, Northwestern, Notre Dame, Omaha, Pittsburgh, Presbyterian, SMU, Southern Illinois, Stanford, Syracuse, TCU, UCF, USC, Virginia, Western Carolina, Western Michigan, and Wichita State.

#### The Conferences:

IMG Academy president and former Rutgers AD Tim Perneti will take over for the retiring legend Mike Aresco as commissioner of the AAC...The Northeast Conference is adding Mercyhurst as its ninth member in July with MU evolving into full NCAA Division I status in 2028-29...The Big 12 Conference has decided to hold off on its Big 12 to Mexico 2025 initiative because of six changes in membership starting in July and other external factors...Conference USA chose Tia Randolph and Drew Maulsby as associate commissioners....Missouri Valley Conference Baseball Players of the Week were Mason Landers, Belmont (player) and Connor Lockwood, Valparaiso (pitcher)...Mountain West Conference Baseball Players of the Week were Nolan Wilson, Nevada (player); Jacob Riordan, San Diego State (pitcher); and Colby Turner, San Diego State (freshman)...The Conference USA Baseball Players of the Week were Ethan Mann, DBU (hitter); and Nick Moran, Liberty (pitcher)...The Mid-American Conference Council of Student-Athletes drafted a communique for Congress with an explanation of the group's perspective and aspirations for the future of college athletics...Conference USA standouts DBU ace Ryan Johnson, Louisiana Tech utility man Ethan Bates and Sam Houston catcher Walker Janek are on the Golden Spikes Award Midseason Watch List...The Big 12 Conference has been highlighted by 24 national football players of the week from various agencies, 10 in equestrian, nine in women's basketball, eight in softball, six in wrestling, and five in men's basketball.

(continued on page 18)



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## The Bowls:

The Goodyear Cotton Bowl is continuing its renewals for the 2025 College Football Semifinal on Jan. 10, 2025, through May 1...The Rose Bowl presented by Prudential is celebrating the 122-year anniversary of its first contest since Jan. 1, 1902 (held annually since 1919). The Capital One Orange Bowl is set for its 91st renewal Jan. 9, 2025, as one of the College Football Playoff semifinals. The Allstate Sugar Bowl will have special ceremonies to denote its 90-year anniversary in 2025, and the Goodyear Cotton Bowl is entering a milestone era with its 88th contest and CFP semifinal tussle on Jan. 10, 2025.

## The Players:

Former Texas Tech QB Tyler Shough and former Tennessee signal caller Harrison Bailey have been vying for the top spot on the Louisville Cardinals depth chart...UTSA quarterback Frank Harris was commended for the final game in his college career when the Roadrunners downed USF 49-21 on Nov. 18 behind his 31-of-46 passing for 411 yards and three TDs and 10 carries for 112 yards and three additional scores. He missed UTSA's first-ever bowl victory due to injury as the Roadrunners topped Marshall 35-17 in the Scooter's Coffee Frisco Bowl...UTSA standout Jordan Ivy-Curry has transferred to Virginia Tech...UCF linebacker Rian Davis and Texas RB Derrian Brown have declared for the '24 transfer portal...Former All-SEC standout Meechie Johnson is transferring back to his original college destination Ohio State...Some of the standouts competing in the Reese's College All-Star Basketball Game last Friday in Glendale, Arizona were (head coaches 40-year veteran Greg Kampe of Oakland Greg Kampe and San Diego's Steve Lavin), among others, Jamison Battle, Ohio State; Isaiah Cozart, Eastern Kentucky; Jack Gohlke, Oakland; Jordan King, Richmond; Josh Oduro, Providence; Quincy Olivari, Xavier; Drew Pember, UNC Asheville; Branden Carlson, Utah; Isaiah Crawford, Louisiana Tech; Sean East II, Missouri; Jesse Edwards, West Virginia; Enrique Freeman, Akron; Jaalen House, New Mexico; and Isaac Jones, Washington State...Mississippi State standout Josh Hubbard will be staying with the Bulldogs for the 2024-25 campaign...LSU women's basketball standout Angel Reese and Iowa stalwart Caitlin Clark have had several communications about respecting their teams and superior abilities between their 2023 NCAA championship standoff and last week's NCAA Regional final win by UI over the Bayou Bengals. Reese also will pass up her final year of eligibility and declare for the WNBA Draft...LSU guard Hailey Van Lith is moving into the transfer portal for a second time after starting her career at Louisville.

## Around the Gridiron and Campus:

Wofford athletics gained a \$3 million donation from alumnus Robby Atkins for the Robert D. Atkins '65 Director of

Athletics Endowment...The LSU Economic Development District is working with businesses near campus and Tigers athletics to help construct a new \$400 million on-campus arena and other adjacent mixed use areas to replace the historic Pete Maravich Arena...The Louisville Cardinals 502 Circle NIL collective is working to reach a \$1 million commitment to receive a matching \$1 million gift from Glow Brands Group Rick Kueber...The San Diego State MESA Foundation NIL collective had a \$700,000-plus output for men's basketball in 2023-24 and is expecting close to \$1 million in NIL rewards for 2024-25...Vanderbilt athletics is holding annual Giving Day Thursday, April 11, along with several other universities and departments of athletics...Alabama State has become the first NCAA Division I HBCU member to add women's flag football starting in September...Stephen F. Austin is employing a new search group Cardinal Grange for its AD's search...Boise State has laid out its media policies and availability for 2024 spring football workouts...West Virginia athletics followed several other Power Five conference programs in looking to the mid-majors for its men's basketball appointment in Drake's Darian DeVries and received compliments for the hire from alumni, fans and student-athletes...Kennesaw State athletics and adidas have re-upped their apparel and marketing agreements through June 30, 2026...Kansas athletics and SIDEARM Sports will reload and revamp the Jayhawks digital services this summer...Temple athletics and the Van Wagner Group have a multiyear multimedia rights' agreement starting in 2024-25 with the advertising and entertainment giant...North Texas athletics and university development have designated May 1-2 as UNT Giving Days. UNT also provided free admission last weekend for the annual Green-White spring contest at DATCU Stadium...Vanderbilt athletics will feature a popular surplus items' sale to the public on Saturday, April 20, from 10 a.m.-noon (CDT) at the Indoor Football Practice Facility. Credit card payments are preferred for these collectibles from recent years...168-year-old Birmingham-Southern College appears to be closing on May 31 after encountering financial challenges for several years. The campus, adjacent to historic Legion Field in Birmingham, Ala., has been considered as a possible landing point for IMG Academy based in Bradenton, Fla. Mississippi University for Women in Columbus, Miss., is promising aid and early admission for BSC students affected by the closing...Louisville's entire 2023-24 men's basketball squad has entered the NCAA transfer portal...The DU Great Collective for Drake University partners with Basepath for NIL software updates...The UCF Board of Directors approves the Roth Tower stadium expansion project and is seeking Florida Board of Governors okay to begin the project

...Four of Ohio State's all-time linebacking greats are highlighting the 2024 OSU Spring Coaches Clinic with AJ Hawk, James Laurinaitis (new linebackers coach for the Buckeyes), Bobby Carpenter, and Anthony Schlegel gracing the program...Stanford's sand volleyball squad was riding a 10-match winning streak after capturing the LSU Death Valley Invitational...Michigan athletics updated its support. MGoBlue.com website with these key directives - inform, invest and improve...Entertainer Drake's October's Very Own brand and Kentucky, UCLA, North Carolina, Kansas, and Syracuse athletics are producing and vending a special edition OVO apparel collection...The Dollar Loan Center in Henderson, Nev., outside Las Vegas has had its naming rights changed to Lee's Family Forum...Washington State hopes to utilize the Parker Executive Search Firm for its AD's national queries...Connecticut and NC State are the 21st and 22nd schools to send both men's and women's basketball teams to NCAA Final Fours® in the same season. The UConn men and won both prevailed in the 2004 and 2014 NCAA hoops title games...Rice fans are set to gather for the annual Rice Athletics Coaches Caravan for a fun evening in Dallas on April 27, San Antonio on May 8, Austin on May 8, and Fort Worth on May 10.

## NFF College Hall of Fame, Other Notables:

NFF College Hall of Fame member R.C. Slocum now is back at semi-retirement living after serving as interim AD at Texas A&M for three months. He retired as head coach of the Aggies with an overall mark of 123-47-2 and 11 bowl berths over 14 seasons from 1989-2002...North Texas football and professional wrestling legends Keith and the late David Von Erich were featured in the UNT Alumnus magazine for their careers under then-Mean Green head coach Hayden Fry in the 1970s and their worldwide travels. Their father the late Fritz Von Erich played football at SMU as Jack Adkisson and later in the CFL. Fritz's life story was portrayed in the movie entitled The Iron Claw released in 2023..

...Northwestern athletics and former head coach and NFF College Hall of Fame player Pat Fitzgerald have a jurisprudence date month set in Cook County, Ill., for April 2025...Maryland Gov. Wes Moore was complimented for his actions during and after the Francis Scott Key Bridge accident in Baltimore and his leadership ability from playing wide receiver at exceptional academic and football-competing university Johns Hopkins...ABCA and College Baseball Foundation Hall of Fame head coach Wayne Graham of Rice and San Jacinto (Texas) celebrated his 88th birthday last Saturday. He won 1,800-plus games coaching on the Division I and Texas junior college levels.

## Media Musings:

Several ADs and conference administrators have given their thoughts about the

advantages and possible security challenges with TikTok social media...The March 31 NC State-Duke men's basketball South Region final polled a 15.4 million Nielsen Ratings' mark for the most-viewed NCAA Men's Elite Eight contest since 2019...The Iowa-LSU women's basketball Albany Regional last contest April 1 on ESPN was the most-watched women's hoops' contest in history with 12.4 million watchers on average and outdrew television interest for almost all broadcasts except the nationally televised NCAA men's South Regional, Super Bowl and NFL playoff skirmishes. The Connecticut-USC women's Elite Eight tussle averaged 6.7 million viewers on ESPN, and the Oregon State-South Carolina quarterfinal contest averaged 3.1 million...KETV-TV in Omaha, Neb., obtained key text messages from Nebraska regents hoping that Trev Alberts would meet with them about alternatives to stay at Nebraska before the NFF College Hall of Fame grid standout accepted the AD's position at Texas A&M...An Inside Higher Education research project with 380 college and university presidents found that campus leaders in all areas see race relations, diversity, equity, and inclusion improving at campus sites with 83 percent of those surveyed rating these relations as good or excellent...Sportico's Michael McCann studies the Washington Post article about LSU women's basketball head coach Kim Mulkey, the timing and the impact on the program...USA Today's Dan Wolken timed the success of the Atlantic Coast Conference in the NCAA Men's and Women's DI Basketball Championships and how it appears to have strengthened the ACC nationally in a number of areas...CNBC's Alex Sherman walked readers through the projected future of ESPN and the possibility of allying with a strategic media partner along with the Disney Corp. to produce more monetization....Front Office Sports columnist Amanda Christovich has been exploring the mindset and support of Big East Conference basketball fans and their expectations of additional NCAA Men's Basketball Championship at-large bids in 2024...Baseball America noted that Louisville paced leads all colleges on MLB opening day/night rosters with nine alumni ahead of Arizona State, Florida and Vanderbilt with eight each; Arkansas, Mississippi State and Texas A&M with seven apiece; Arizona, Cal State Fullerton, LSU, Oregon, and Virginia with six; and Florida State, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Ole Miss with five each...The San Jose (Calif.) Mercury News newspaper's columnist Jon Wilner believes that the remnants of the Pac-12 Conference may have as much as \$65 million from legal settlements over a two-year period if the circuit decides to reorganize...USA Today columnist Nancy Armour glanced at several stories circulating about College Sports Communicators Academic Hall of Fame women's basketball head coach Kim Mulkey of LSU and offered

editorial commentary about the state of women's college basketball coaches...The Washington Post newspaper documentary on LSU women's basketball head coach Kim Mulkey was published last week and drew an immediate response from the LSU mentor and her attorneys. She also criticized a Los Angeles Times story (that later was edited) that used derisive terms about Tigers student-athletes...ESPN's Jay Bilas and Athletes.org officials pointed out that the transfer portal evolved in 2018 from several jurisprudence cases involving student-athletes and choices of new schools. Bilas also noted that the transfer portal will diminish as NIL bargaining continues to peak...The Boulder (Colo.) Daily Camera has extended its bargain subscription prices with solid sports coverage of the Colorado Buffaloes and other area teams through April...Private equity firm Silver Lake has purchased the Endeavor Group for \$13 billion...The Teamworks Group has gathered its various Teamworks areas under a unified corporate umbrella...The Athletic's Dana O'Neil mentioned several men's basketball student-athletes who missed portions of seasons or who were late-game participants and their impact on NCAA Championship teams in 2023-24...The Chronicle of Higher Education listed the most expensive costs of attendance for universities for the 2023-24 academic year as USC, \$95,000; Harvey Mudd, \$93,000; Brown, \$92,000; Pennsylvania, \$92,000; Wellesley, \$92,000; Dartmouth, \$91,000; Harvard, \$91,000; and Boston U. \$90,000. Athletics' administrators at each school are looking at all ways to keep housing and incidentals' cost down to a minimum after these high basic expenses...ESPN related that NIT quarterfinal viewership increased up 33 percent from 2023 with semifinals among Georgia-Ohio State and Cincinnati-Indiana State drawing the highest television ratings since the 2017 NIT...The NFL Network is having cutbacks in talents areas, and Andrew Siciliano, Melissa Stark, Will Selva, and James Palmer will not be back for the '24 season...The Orlando (Fla.) Sentinel newspaper's Mike Bianchi considered the consequences of student-athletes being regarded as university employees and how actual wages may not stand up to previous scholarships, books, tuition, and boarding...USA Today's Dan Wolken reminisced about how USC women's basketball head coach Lindsay Gottlieb initially left as head coach at California for seven eight seasons, coached briefly with the NBA Cleveland Cavaliers and later guided Trojans women's hoops back to national prominence...Sports Illustrated owner Authentic Brands Group has filed jurisprudence against The Arena Group for \$48.75 in publishing rights, non-use of best business practices and other expenses owed by Arena to Authentic...Mollie Cahillane is now with Sports Business Journal as sports media reporter...JohnCanzano.com spoke about some possible solutions to reorganize the

Pac-12 Conference with continued cooperative efforts possible with the West Coast and Mountain West Conferences...FOX Sports' 16-team College Basketball Crown is preparing for a March 31-April 6, 2025, tourney at Las Vegas' MGM Garden Arena and MGM Arena with a format similar to the NIT. The Big Ten, Big 12 and Big East Conferences will receive initial automatic bids...NC State's men's basketball Final Four appearance after a conference-record five consecutive wins in the ACC tourney and the guidance of head coach Kevin Keatts were highlighted in a Richmond (Va.) Times-Dispatch story by David Teel. Teel also pointed out that 10 of the 15 men's basketball programs in the ACC have made the Elite Eight since 2016...The Daps Group has provided NIL technological services for student-athletes in the Men's Final Four® with NC State's DJ Burns, Purdue's Zach Edey, Alabama's Mark Sears, and Connecticut's Alex Karaban...Yahoo Sports' Dan Wetzel analyzed how the previous influence of shoe companies and similar equipment and apparel industries has been depleted by NIL and possible future employees' status for college student-athletes...For those in college athletics looking for retail discount prices, all 371 outlets of 99 Cents Stores will be closing in coming weeks.

#### **FWAA, CSC, NCAA, Etc.:**

Joye Lee-McNelis, who coached women's basketball team at Southern Miss in 2023-24 despite fighting stage 4 lung cancer, is the 2024 USBWA Pat Summitt Most Courageous Award recipient...The USBWA awarded national columnist Michelle Smith and Dan Fleser of the Knoxville (Tenn.) News-Sentinel 2023-24 USBWA Distinguished Journalists' recognition for their coverage of college athletics...Emily Adams of the Hartford (Conn.) Courant has received the USBWA 2024 Rising Star Award...The NABC denoted its 2023-24 Division I awards last week with Coach of the Year presented by the Marines: Kelvin Sampson (also the AP National College Coach of the Year), Houston; Player of the Year: Zach Edey, Purdue; Pete Newell Big Man of the Year: Zach Edey (also the Associated Press Men's Player of the Year), Purdue; Defensive Player of the Year: Jamal Shead, Houston; and Freshman of the Year presented by adidas: Reed Sheppard, Kentucky...College Sports Communicators members featured in the news and on social media posts in recent days are Bill Martin of Tennessee, SCS Hall of Fame members John Bianco of Texas and Alan Cannon of Texas A&M, Mark Cohen of TCU, and Chris Kutz of Texas State...Arizona State, Iowa, LSU, Michigan, Michigan State, North Carolina, Oregon, Tennessee, UCLA, and USC are convening with NCAA enforcement and compliance officials concerning possible issues and probes at their respective schools...The NCAA NIL Working Group has a proposal to allow colleges to provide assistance and

services for NIL opportunities for student-athletes...Kansas City, Mo., voters had a bond issue election last Tuesday to authorize city funding for a new downtown baseball park several miles away from the current facility Kaufman Stadium adjacent to Arrowhead Stadium in Independence, Mo., and for \$800 million in improvements to Arrowhead. The proposal was voted down by 18,000 votes...NCAA Men's Basketball Championship units have been distributed, and the ACC nailed down 17 units for approximately \$34 million along with the SEC's roughly \$32 million and Big Ten and Big 12 with close to \$30 million apiece...The workforce analytics ActivTrak Group now finds that in U.S. businesses as well as college athletics the average Friday signoff is 4:03 p.m. (local time). Of course, most of college athletics' scheduling is in the Friday-Sunday time frame and is reminiscent several years ago of a former Power Five conference office employee who asked if he could leave work at noon each Friday because he had weekend conference game travel and family obligations. The conference's answer: "Uh, no"...The two three-point lines on the court of the NCAA DI Women's Basketball Championship Portland Regional were found to be of different distances after four semifinal contests were played on March 28 and 30 and prior to the NC State-Texas finale...

The Connecticut women's basketball team made its NCAA-record 23rd appearance in the Division I Final Four last week in Cleveland, Ohio...Pepperdine athletics has been host of the NCAA DI Men's Basketball Championship West Regional at Crypto.com Arena for five times in the last 12 years...The Winston and Strawn law firm's Jeffrey Kessler compared current NIL agreements in college to changes in NFL and NBA free agency several years

ago...Lexus and the PGA of America have connoted the luxury vehicles as the official vehicle of the PGA Championship, KitchenAid Senior Championship, KPMG Women's PGA Championship, and the PGA Frisco (Texas) national office...The opt-out of 17 men's basketball teams from the 2024 NIT has caused the governing NCAA and senior vice president of basketball Dan Gavitt to study some alternatives. This was the first season after an earlier ruling that teams which won regular-season Division I championships but did not win their conference tournaments previously received automatic berths in the NIT...SEIU Local Union 560, representing Dartmouth's men's basketball players, filed a 54-page response to the school's request for a review of NLRB Regional Director's decision...The Franklin (Ky.) Circuit Court has ruled in favor of Kentucky priority seating season ticket holders and the pre-2024-25 locations during the ongoing renovation of Kentucky's Rupp Arena and re-seating configurations...The Athletic's Nicole Auerbach is wondering if first- and second-round NCAA Division I Women's Basketball Championship neutral sites might be in the offing and interviewed South Carolina head coach Dawn Staley who believes the Top 16 seeds should be rewarded with hosts' roles for their regular-season success...The Liberty Media Group is gaining 86 percent of MotoGP for a transaction in the \$4 billion range for two major entities on the NASCAR circuit and broadcast scene...The Knight Commission continues to lobby for the NCAA to provide equal rewards for the success of women's and men's teams in the Division I Basketball Championships...The U.S. Army has partnered with the UFL on multiple marketing and advertising opportunities.





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