

# the SPORTS page

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## Weekly



## Mavericks vs Clippers Playoff Prediction

April 19 - April 25, 2024

Vol. 22, Issue 32

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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 7-11 PM	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

Cover Photo:

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**AROUND THE AREA**

LOCAL NEWS OF INTEREST

**Complimentary tickets to PGA event**



**Complimentary tickets available starting April 19**

The long-standing tradition of rolling out the red carpet for active and retired military members continues at the 78th Charles Schwab Challenge with complimentary tickets for these American heroes. Fort Worth Colonial Charities and the Charles Schwab Challenge announced today that they will provide complimentary tickets and on-course hospitality to military men and women, either active or retired, who have served our country.

The program is made possible by the Rainwater Charitable Foundation, with the tournament offering up to two complimentary grounds tickets along with entry into the Patriots Outpost private, on-course hospitality venue for any one day of the tournament, Thursday-Sunday, to US active duty, US Reserve and US military retirees. Children ages 15 and under are admitted free with an accompanying adult.

"The Rainwater Charitable Foundation is proud to be able to help continue this important tradition at Colonial. We are so appreciative of the active and retired military members and their families and are honored to pay tribute to their service,"

commented Jay McCall, Senior Principal for the Rainwater Charitable Foundation. Active and retired military members can register for complimentary tickets beginning April 19 at CharlesSchwabChallenge.com.

Up to two complimentary grounds tickets and one public parking pass any one day of the tournament, Thursday-Sunday, available for: US Active-Duty military members, US Reserve members and US Military Retirees.

Primary ticket holders must provide proof of military ID to access their tickets and gain entry into the Patriots Outpost.

Tickets must be utilized by the military personnel and one guest. Tickets are non-transferable to non-military personnel. Children 15 and under are free when accompanied by a ticketed adult. Tickets cannot be printed and can only be displayed on a smartphone.

Registration for complimentary military tickets opens April 19 at CharlesSchwabChallenge.com.

in the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), SMU announced Wednesday that it has already set a new season ticket sales record for Ford Stadium.

Season-ticket sales are up more than 50 percent compared to the end of the 2023, putting SMU on pace to more than double the amount of season tickets sold for the upcoming year.

"Our on-field success and move to the ACC have rallied the Dallas community around SMU and our ticket sales have shown that," Director of Athletics Rick Hart said. "We are excited about the future of SMU Athletics and the response of our fanbase shows just how excited they are as well."

To continue the momentum, SMU Athletics invites fans to become part of the Game Changer program, by selling football season tickets within your network. As SMU moves to the ACC, we need you to introduce SMU Football to your friends and colleagues. Signing up only takes one email. Once you sign up for the program, you will be paired with a Ticket Sales Executive. Your job is to use your network to provide leads to fill Ford Stadium this fall.

When your leads turn into sales, you'll earn exclusive SMU x ACC merch! Refer 20 new season ticket holders and we'll send you a custom SMU x ACC Mini Football Helmet, and for each ticket sold, you'll receive one entry into a drawing to win some SMU Sideline Gear (valued at \$500). Any Mustang fan can refer to a friend and receive a special SMU x ACC gift.



**SMU Sets Ford Stadium record for season ticket holders; launches game changer program**

On the heels of its first conference title since 1984 and set for its inaugural season

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**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

**WEEKLY CALENDAR**

	APRIL 19 FRIDAY	APRIL 20 SATURDAY	APRIL 21 SUNDAY	APRIL 22 MONDAY	APRIL 23 TUESDAY	APRIL 24 WEDNESDAY	APRIL 25 THURSDAY
			Mavs at LA Clippers 2:30 / ABC		Mavs at LA Clippers 9:00 / TNT		
	Rangers at Atlanta 6:20 / Bally's	Rangers at Atlanta 6:20 / Bally's	Rangers at Atlanta 6:00 / ESPN		Rangers vs Seattle 7:05 / Bally's	Rangers vs Seattle 7:05 / Bally's	Rangers vs Seattle 1:35 / Bally's
		FC Dallas at Colorado 8:30					
				Stars vs Golden Knights 8:30 / ESPN		Stars vs Golden Knights 8:30 / ESPN	
	Roughriders at Arkansas 7:05	Roughriders at Arkansas 4:05	Roughriders at Arkansas 1:35		Roughriders vs Amarillo 6:35	Roughriders vs Amarillo 6:35	Roughriders vs Amarillo 6:35



# Stars clinch No. 1 seed in playoffs



The Golden Knights won all three games against the Stars in the regular season

## Stars will play Golden Knights in Western Conference 1st Round

Vegas eliminated Dallas in 6 games in conference final last season

By Josh Mazacone

The Dallas Stars will play the Vegas Golden Knights in the Western Conference First Round of the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

The Stars (52-21-9), who finished first in the Central Division and Western Conference, will have home-ice advantage in the best-of-7 series. The Golden Knights (45-29-8) finished as the second wild card.

The playoffs begin Saturday.

The Golden Knights won all three games against the Stars in the regular season. They won 3-2 in a shootout on October 17, 2-1 in overtime on November 22, and 6-1 on December 9.

This season, the Stars were led by forwards Jason Robertson (80 points; 29 goals, 51 assists), Joe Pavelski (67 points; 27 goals, 40 assists), Wyatt Johnston (65 points; 32 goals, 33 assists), Roope Hintz (65 points; 30 goals, 35 assists), Matt Duchene (65 points; 25 goals, 40 assists), and Jamie Benn (60 points; 21 goals, 39 assists). Miro Heiskanen led their defensemen with 54 points (nine goals, 45 assists), and Thomas Harley had 47 points (15 goals, 32 assists) and led the team with a plus-28 rating.

Jake Oettinger was 35-14-4 with a 2.72 goals-against average, .905 save percentage and three shutouts in 54 games (53 starts), and Scott Wedgewood was 16-7-5 with a 2.85 GAA and .899 save percentage in 32 games (28 starts). Matt Murray had a

shutout in his only start, making 23 saves in a 4-0 win against the Minnesota Wild on January 8.

Against the Golden Knights, the Stars were led by Hintz and Pavelski, who each had a goal and an assist. Craig Smith and Evgenii Dadonov were the only other players to score a goal against Vegas.

Oettinger started all three games against the Golden Knights, going 0-1-2 with a 3.21 GAA and .885 save percentage.

The Golden Knights were led this season by forwards Jonathan Marchessault, who had 69 points, including an NHL career-high 42 goals, Jack Eichel (68 points; 31 goals, 37 assists), William Karlsson (60 points; 30 goals, 30 assists), Mark Stone (53 points; 16 goals, 37 assists), who was limited to 56 games because of a lacerated spleen, and Chandler Stephenson (51 points; 16 goals, 35 assists). Shea Theodore led their defensemen with 42 points (five goals, 37 assists). Logan Thompson was 25-14-5 with a 2.70 GAA, .908 save percentage and one shutout in 46 games (42 starts), and Adin Hill was 19-12-2 with a 2.71 GAA, .909 save percentage and two shutouts in 35 games. Jiri Patera was 1-3-1 with a 3.98 GAA and .893 save percentage in six games (five starts).

Against the Stars, the Golden Knights were led by Stone, Karlsson and Nicolas Roy, who each had a goal and two assists. Eichel was one of five other players who each had a goal and an assist.

Hill was 2-0-0 with a 1.43 GAA and .948 save percentage. Thompson made 19 saves in his only start, the 6-1 win on

December 9

The Stars and Golden Knights have played twice before in the playoffs, with each team winning once. Vegas eliminated Dallas in six games in the Western Conference Final last season en route to winning its first Stanley Cup championship. The Stars eliminated the Golden Knights in five games in the Western Conference Final in 2020.

The Stars won their only Stanley Cup championship in 1999.

Game 1 on the Stars' road to the Stanley Cup is Monday night at the American Airlines Center.

To celebrate the team's advancement to the playoffs, the Stars are hosting a drive-thru rally and block party Friday evening at Gilley's Dallas.

There will be a beer garden, food trucks, and appearances from some Stars alumni. Fans can also get their cars decorated and purchase Stars swag.

Festivities kick off at 4 p.m. and last until 7 p.m.

### Dallas Stars vs Vegas Golden Knights Playoff Schedule

Dallas Stars (1C) vs. Vegas Golden Knights (WC2)

Game 1: Golden Knights at Stars -- April 22, 9:30 p.m. ET (ESPN, SN360, TVAS, FX)

Game 2: Golden Knights at Stars -- April 24, 9:30 p.m. ET (ESPN, SN360, TVAS)

Game 3: Stars at Golden Knights -- April 27, 10:30 p.m. ET (TBS, truTV, MAX, SN, SN360, TVAS)

Game 4: Stars at Golden Knights -- April 29, TBD

Game 5: Golden Knights at Stars -- May 1, TBD

Game 6: Stars at Golden Knights -- May 3, TBD

Game 7: Golden Knights at Stars -- May 5, TBD



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# Mission Possible: A Gripping Situation



**TOM WARD**  
TOMPWARD@SBCGLOBAL.NET

Next month actor Tom Cruise has a new movie coming out called Mission Impossible: Dead Reckoning Part One. This is the 7th film in the series where he portrays a death-defying superspy named Ethan Hunt. His character performs incredible daredevil stunts, against all odds, to save the day. My mission is to help even the odds by improving your golf game.

The grip is the lifeline to the swing as it's the only contact you have with the club.

How to hold the golf club is critical in learning how to swing properly. A good grip (hands) leads to good wrist action. It's only natural to try and control the club with the hands. However, any attempt to use the hands incorrectly encourages breaking of the wrists. Improper wrist action can destroy your ability to play well.

So with the club face in a normal position, place your extended left hand (for right-handed golfers) with the thumb close to the fingers, slightly over the top of the shaft. The shaft of the club lies diagonally across the base of the first and middle fingers and across the palm below the ring finger and little finger. The thumb and forefinger should form a "V" which points toward the right shoulder. The grip must be firm, but not tense, at all times.

The right hand is placed on the shaft in such a position that the palm is squarely facing the target. Place the right hand over the shaft so that the "life line" of the right palm covers the left thumb. The little fingers of the right hand overlaps the first fin-

ger of the left hand. As with the left, the "V" formed by the thumb and first finger points toward the right shoulder. The two "V's" should be parallel. Both hands should be placed close together so they can work harmoniously for control.

Theoretically, the clubface is an extension of the right palm- for right handed golfers, the opposite for left-handed golfers. I have explained the overlapping grip, but there are two other standard types of grips: The "Interlocking" and the "Ten Finger grip". In the two other grips the placement of the hands on the club is the same. The only difference is one finger is interlocked with the other and the hands are separated on the "Ten-finger grip".

Notice the photos showcasing different types of grips, some which are unconventional. The middle photo is a good image of the correct standard grip. You can see the "V" formed with the right hand just above the Ben Hogan name on the golf club.

The other accompanying photos feature

unique grips that I use in drills to help understand that the hands just go for a ride in the golf swing.

The top left photo is the "Claw" grip.

The top right is the "Open Palm" grip.

Bottom left is the "Ball under the thumb".

The bottom right is the "Split" grip.

These grips are designed to de-sensitize your hands so they can't get too actively involved while swinging. Grip pressure affects swing speed as well as accuracy. A tight grip creates tension which will restrict motion. You want a firm grip without undo amounts of tension. On a scale of 1-10 you want somewhere along the lines of 3 or 4.

Without a good grip trying to play golf well would be an impossible mission. So getting a grip on your swing will make a huge difference in your quest for success. This article will self-destruct in 5 seconds...

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# This week on TOUR: RBC Heritage



Matt Fitzpatrick looks to become the first golfer to go back-to-back at the RBC Heritage since Boo Weekley in 2007-08

the back of his incredible runner-up in his Masters debut, skipped from No. 8 to No. 4 in the standings... Will Zalatoris jumped into the TOUR TOP 10 after his Masters top 10. He zipped from No. 16 to No. 10, bumping Stephan Jaeger outside the TOUR TOP 10....Chris Kirk and Byeong Hun An are the only golfers to be inside the TOUR TOP 10 every week so far this season.

**FEDEXCUP:** Winner receives 700 FedExCup points.

**COURSE:** Harbour Town Golf Links, par 71, 7,213 yards. The iconic Pete Dye/Jack Nicklaus design – lengthened slightly for 2024 – has hosted the RBC Heritage since the 1960s. It continues to challenge the best golfers in the world with its tight fairways, strategically placed bunkers and small, contoured putting surfaces. Once again, a premium will be placed on ball-striking. Two of the last three winners at Harbour Town were first in Strokes Gained: Tee-to-Green, while last year's winner, Matt Fitzpatrick, was third.

**72-HOLE RECORD:** 262, Webb Simpson (2020)

**18-HOLE RECORD:** 61, David Frost (second round, 1994) and Troy Merritt (second round, 2015)

**LAST TIME:** For the second year in a row, a playoff was needed to decide the winner of the RBC Heritage. Jordan Spieth, who won in extra holes in 2022, was defeated in 2023 by Matt Fitzpatrick, who birdied the third playoff hole for the win. Both participants in the 2022 playoff – Spieth and Patrick Cantlay – were firmly in the mix again Sunday in 2023, with Spieth shooting a 5-under 66 in the final round. But Fitzpatrick, who shot a 3-under 68 in the finale and overcame a two-shot deficit with just five holes to play, zipped a 9-iron to within a foot on the third extra hole to top Spieth, who had two glorious chances to win (he lipped out a birdie try on the first playoff hole and his 9-foot birdie attempt on the second playoff hole ran out of gas). Cantlay finished third, a shot out of the playoff, while Xander Schauffele finished fourth and Sahith Theegala and Hayden Buckley finished tied for fifth at 14-under.

## HOW TO WATCH (all times ET)

### Television:

- Thursday-Friday: 2-6 p.m. (Golf Channel)
- Saturday-Sunday: 1-3 p.m. (Golf Channel), 3-6 p.m. (CBS)

### Radio:

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

**RBC Heritage**  
**April 18 - April 21, 2024**  
**Harbour Town Golf Links**  
**Hilton Head, South Carolina**  
**Purse - \$20,000,000**  
**Winners share - \$3,600,000**  
**Defending Champ - Matt Fitzpatrick**

By Adam Stanley

The eyes of the golfing world move about 150 miles east from Augusta, Georgia, to Hilton Head, South Carolina, for the next Signature Event on the PGA TOUR schedule – the RBC Heritage.

It'll be quite the change for the best in the world coming from the Masters to Harbour Town with the low-country chill and charm a welcome respite after Augusta National Golf Club was at its toughest and brawniest last week.

But the best in the game are set to gather for the next Signature Event on the TOUR's schedule – including the undisputed world No. 1, Scottie Scheffler.

Here's everything else you need to know as the TOUR returns to Hilton Head:

**FIELD NOTES:** Scottie Scheffler is, for now, set to tee it up at the RBC Heritage. He was clear to say that if his wife, Meredith, would go into labor during the Masters, he would head home to be with her, so it's safe to assume that same rule will stand at Harbour Town. Scheffler has not shot an over-par round all season and has three victories (and one runner-up). He made his debut at Harbour Town last year and finished T11... Matt Fitzpatrick looks to become the first golfer to go back-to-

back at the RBC Heritage since Boo Weekley in 2007-08. Fitzpatrick, a playoff victor last year, has two top-10 finishes this season. He has just one missed cut at Harbour Town over the last six years and he finished fourth in 2021 to go along with two more top-15 results in a three-year span (T14 in 2018 and 2020)... Jordan Spieth is hoping to continue his run of fine play at Harbour Town after a playoff loss last season and a playoff win the season prior. Spieth has five top-25 finishes at the RBC Heritage in seven starts... Justin Thomas earned a spot in the field after remaining in the top 30 (he's No. 30) in the Official World Golf Ranking despite a missed cut at the Masters. Thomas, who finished T25 last season at Harbour Town, has two top 10s on the season... Ludvig Åberg, who is tops in the Aon Next 10, will head to Hilton Head for the first time. Åberg has had a fabulous 2024 campaign thus far with four top 10s (including two runner-up results) and is knocking on the door for a victory... Hideki Matsuyama was the only eligible player who did not commit to the RBC Heritage, while Viktor Hovland – after a missed cut at the Masters – withdrew from the field on Saturday.

## HIGHEST-RANKED PLAYERS IN THE FIELD

World Ranking	FedExCup
1. Scottie Scheffler	1. S.Scheffler
2. Wyndham Clark	2. Rory McIlroy
3. Xander Schauffele	3. X.Schauffele
4. Ludvig Åberg	5. W. Clark
6. Matthieu Pavon	7. Ludvig Åberg
7. Sahith Theegala	8. P. Cantlay

- |                    |                    |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| 8. Byeong Hun An   | 9. Max Homa        |
| 9. Chris Kirk      | 10. B. Harman      |
| 10. Will Zalatoris | 11. T. Fleetwood   |
| 11. Stephan Jaeger | 12. M. Fitzpatrick |

## SIGNATURE EVENT STORYLINES:

The RBC Heritage is the fifth Signature Event of the season... Erik van Rooyen, who finished T55 at the Masters, jumped into the Aon Next 10 and secured the final spot. His made cut at the Masters moved him from No. 11 to No. 10, and now he gets to tee it up at Harbour Town – a course he's had some fine results at in the past. He finished T21 and T10 in 2020 and 2022, respectively... Nicolai Højgaard looked like he was a lock to jump into the Aon Next 10 (especially after he held the solo lead at the Masters after a birdie at No. 10 Saturday). But he stumbled into the house with five straight bogeys and finished T16. He only moved from No. 20 to No. 17 in the Aon Next 10, falling outside the number... The Aon Swing 5 was firmed up after the Valero Texas Open, with Brice Garnett, Erik Barnes, Thomas Detry, Chandler Phillips and Alejandro Tosti earning those spots... The Wells Fargo Championship is the next Signature Event on the schedule.

## COMCAST BUSINESS TOUR TOP 10

**UPDATES:** After his Masters victory, Scottie Scheffler kept a stranglehold on the top spot of the TOUR TOP 10. He now has twice as many points as Wyndham Clark at No. 2... Xander Schauffele, who finished eighth at the Masters, moved up a spot from No. 4 to No. 3... Ludvig Åberg, on



# Corales Puntacana Championship Preview



Matt Wallace made four straight birdies on the back nine last season and won by one shot

**Corales Puntacana Championship**  
**April 18 - April 21, 2024**  
**Corales Golf Course**  
**Puntacana, La Altagracia, D.R.**  
**Purse - \$4,000,000**  
**Winners share - \$720,000**  
**Defending Champ - Matt Wallace**

By Adam Stanley

This week, the PGA TOUR will once again host an Additional Event, the Corales Puntacana Championship.

The Corales Golf Course is a tricky venue – especially when the wind blows – but it is chock-full of stunning vistas, too. With plenty of important FedExCup points on offer this week, and the first event of the new string of tournaments making up the Aon Swing 5 for the Wells Fargo Championship, it's going to be a key week for plenty on the PGA TOUR.

Here's everything you need to know from Puntacana.

**FIELD NOTES:** Nicolai Højgaard heads from the Masters to Corales Puntacana, where he nearly broke through for his maiden TOUR title a year ago. Højgaard had the lead at the first major of the season last week before stumbling home Saturday with five straight bogeys. Alas, he's back in action this week after his T16 at Augusta National....Francesco Molinari will make his debut at Corales Puntacana. The former winner of the Claret Jug will tee it up for the sixth time on TOUR this season...Billy Horschel will also make his Puntacana debut. Horschel has two top-10s on the season and two more top-20s...Past champ Joel Dahmen returns to Corales Puntacana looking for a new spark to his season. Dahmen finished tied for 11th at THE

PLAYERS but comes into the week after two missed cuts in Texas. Dahmen won the 2021 edition in Puntacana...Seven years ago Nate Lashley won at Corales Puntacana when it was a Korn Ferry Tour event and comes into the week after three straight made cuts – including a T13 at TPC Sawgrass. He also finished T3 at the Farmers Insurance Open earlier this year.

**SPONSOR EXEMPTIONS:** Alex Fitzpatrick is back in the field at a PGA TOUR event while his brother, Matt, defends his title at the RBC Heritage. Fitzpatrick finished in the top 20 in both the Zurich Classic of New Orleans (where he teamed with Matt) and at The Open Championship, where he finished T17. Fitzpatrick, who starred alongside Matt in the second season of Netflix's "Full Swing" docuseries, has four top-25 finishes on the DP World Tour this season... Joseph Deraney earned his way into his second PGA TOUR event after winning the Devil's Elbow Invitational by two shots last November. The native of Kentucky is the reigning Canadian Men's Mid-Amateur champion. He also won the title in 2019, becoming just the second American in the tournament's history to take the title... Thruston Lawrence, who has two runner-up results on the DP World Tour this season, will play his first TOUR event of 2024. He played six times last year, finding the weekend at both the PGA Championship and The Open Championship... There's a foursome of Latin-American golfers teeing it up at Corales Puntacana as well, featuring Juan Jose Guerra, with Guillermo Pumarol and Julio Santos playing the event for the fifth time, while Hiram Silva is playing it for the seventh time... Other

sponsor exemptions include TOUR winners D.A. Points, Nick Watney, Jason Dufner and Wesley Bryan, alongwith George McNeill, Jeff Overton, Ricky Barnes and Erik Compton.

**MONDAY QUALIFIERS:** The Monday Qualifier for the Corales Puntacana Championship was played on April 8 at Plantation Preserve Golf Course & Club in Plantation, Florida... Thomas Longbella was the medalist with a 9-under 62. Longbella has made one prior PGA TOUR start (last year's Corales Puntacana Championship, which he also Monday qualified for).He competed on PGA TOUR Canada in 2022 and 2023... Ryan Celano of Naples, Florida, made seven birdies and zero bogeys and got into a PGA TOUR field for the first time. He has caddied for various TOUR members in the past...Chase Johnson made seven birdies and one bogey to earn his third PGA TOUR start of the season. Johnson also competed at The Genesis Invitational on the Charlie Sifford Memorial Exemption and the Cognizant Classic in The Palm Beaches on a sponsor invite... Brandon Berry also made seven birdies and one bogey in the qualifier – including a run of six straight circles on the scorecard. This will be his first PGA TOUR start. He holds a bachelor's degree in finance and, impressively, an MBA from Loyola U. Maryland.

**SIGNATURE EVENT STORYLINES:** The Corales Puntacana Championship marks the first event in the Aon Swing 5 for point-earners looking to get a spot in the Wells Fargo Championship – the others being the Zurich Classic of New Orleans and the AT&T Byron Nelson... The RBC Heritage, played alongside the Corales

Puntacana Championship, is the fifth Signature Event of the season.

## COMCAST BUSINESS TOUR TOP 10

**UPDATES:** After his Masters victory, Scottie Scheffler kept a stranglehold on the top spot of the TOUR TOP 10. He now has twice as many points as Wyndham Clark at No. 2... Scheffler's 1,660-point lead is the largest with 16 weeks left in the regular season since 2009... Xander Schauffele, who finished eighth at the Masters, moved up a spot from No. 4 to No. 3... Ludvig Åberg, on the back of his incredible runner-up in his Masters debut, jumped from No. 8 to No. 4 in the standings... Will Zalatoris jumped into the TOUR TOP 10 after his Masters top 10. He zipped from No. 16 to No. 10, bumping Stephan Jaeger outside the TOUR TOP 10... Chris Kirk and Byeong Hun An remain the only two golfers to be inside the TOUR TOP 10 every week so far this season.

**FEDEXCUP:** Winner receives 300 FedExCup points.

**COURSE:** Corales Golf Course, par 72, 7,670 yards. One of the longest courses on the PGA TOUR, the course – opened in 2010 and designed by Tom Fazio – is open off the tee but features difficult green complexes and, often, a challenging wind. The course boasts six oceanside holes and plenty of natural beauty. The closing three-hole stretch at Corales Puntacana, will once again be in the spotlight.

**72-HOLE RECORD:** 264, Dominic Bozzelli (2016 Korn Ferry Tour); as PGA TOUR event: 269, Matt Wallace (2023)

**18-HOLE RECORD:** 62, Stephan Jaeger (second round, 2016 Korn Ferry Tour), Scott Harrington (second round, 2016 Korn Ferry Tour), Alexandre Rocha (third round, 2016 Korn Ferry Tour); as PGA TOUR event: 63, Brice Garnett (first round, 2018), Chip McDaniel (fourth round, 2019), Akshay Bhatia (second round, 2023)

**LAST TIME:** Matt Wallace made four straight birdies on the back nine last season at Corales Puntacana and won by one shot over Nicolai Højgaard, the 54-hole leader. Wallace opened with a bogey on the par-3 second but clawed his way back with two straight birdies immediately afterward. His 6-under 66 Sunday was tied for the low round of the day. Højgaard had a 20-foot birdie try on the 72nd hole that would have forced a playoff, but it missed on the low side. He won in his 80th start on the PGA TOUR. Tyler Duncan and Sam Stevens tied for third, while Austin Eckroat rounded out the top five.

## HOW TO FOLLOW

(all times ET)

### Television:

- Thursday-Friday: 8-10 a.m. (GC)
- Saturday-Sunday: 3-5 p.m. (NBC)





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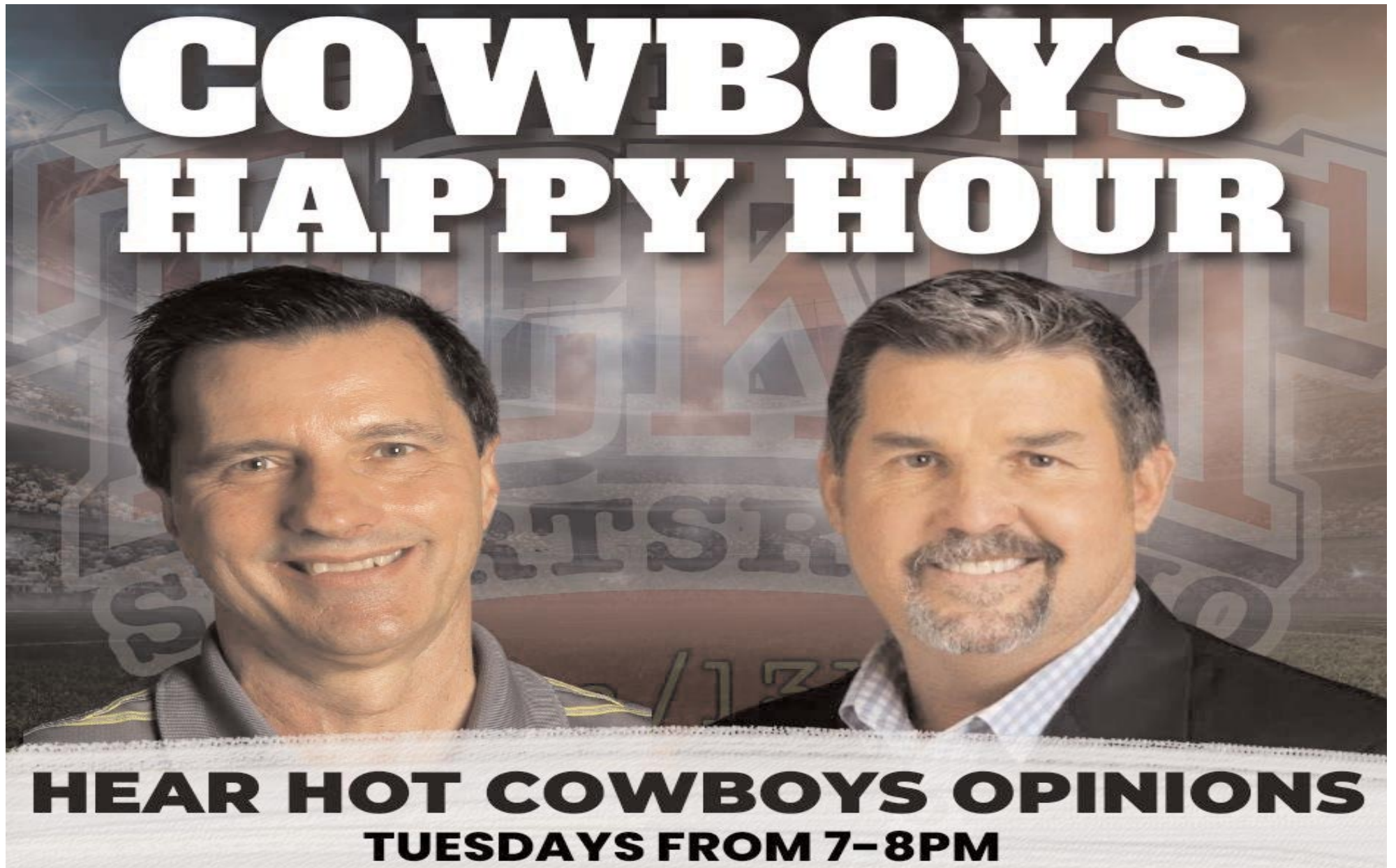
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# Harbour Town Golf Links is a gem



Harbour Town Golf Links is a Pete Dye-designed gem that debuted in 1969 to much acclaim

## Harbour Town Golf Links just one gem in golf-rich state of South Carolina

By Bradley Klein

South Carolina, known as the Palmetto State, boasts 351 golf courses that form a remarkably varied offering. From coastal gems, broad-based meadowland layouts and even courses up in the mountains in the western part of the state, the variety runs the gamut. Additionally, designs range from exclusive private clubs and real estate ventures to resort courses and remarkably affordable daily fee and municipal layouts. Moreover, golf in South Carolina is a year-round affair. In short, it's an ideal state for diverse golf.

The state is particularly strong as a golf destination, whether for public players seeking affordable access, resort goers seeking a golf vacation, or second-home residents from other states. Data drawn from the National Golf Foundation shows that four out of every 10 rounds played in South Carolina come from out-of-state players. That's the fourth-highest total in the country. The state has two of the four most intense regional markets in the country: the Grand Strand north and south of Myrtle Beach, and the Hilton Head-Bluffton-Beaufort area. Both are heavy on the side of resort and residential golf.

Among the draws – besides the favorable, virtually year-round golf season – is the quality of golf in South Carolina.

Harbour Town Golf Links, this week's perennial host venue for the PGA TOUR's RBC Heritage, is a Pete Dye-designed gem

that debuted in 1969 to much acclaim for its low-lying intimacy through native corridors of live oaks and pines. It was a revolutionary golf course in its day for its small greens, reliance on all of 4-5 feet of elevation change across the entire site, and finish along the Calibogue Sound, with the iconic lighthouse behind the 18th green.

Back then, land developer Charles Fraser was just trying to establish the island as a golf destination. He seems to have succeeded beyond even his ambitious dreams, what with two dozen golf courses now on the island and at least another 30 on the mainland side in the corridor between Savannah and Beaufort.

These, too, run the gamut of design character, including elegant real estate developments like the 36-hole properties of Colleton River, Belfair and Berkely Hall; the upscale sensibility of a resort-like May River Golf Club; or the privacy of intimate clubs like Chechessee Creek, Old Tabby Links and Secession. All are routed within the native land shaped by the Intracoastal Waterway. Their playing character changes with the tide and the wind.

Up in the Charleston area, the quality of golf starts with two classic Seth Raynor designs: the Country Club of Charleston (1925) and Yeamans Hall Club (1926). The picturesque clubhouse at the Country Club of Charleston during the 2019 U.S. These are both private clubs, though anyone playing the recently restored Charleston Municipal Golf Course would find Raynor's influence palpable here as well, even though he did not directly

design the course. When it comes to impressive coastal properties, Wild Dunes Resort's Links Course (1981) still resonates with golfers four decades after it opened. Credit for that is due to the pristine nature of the site on Isle of Palms that designer Tom Fazio inherited and the way his chief shaper there, a young upstart named Mike Strantz, let his creativity run free.

Strantz further solidified his reputation as an unparalleled artisan with such designs as Bulls Bay Golf Club in the Charleston area and both Caledonia Golf & Fish Club and True Blue Golf Club up on Pawleys Island in the Myrtle Beach area.

There, they joined the region's first golf course, Pine Lakes Country Club (Robert White, 1927), and the region's first nationally acclaimed design, Dunes Golf and Beach Club (Robert Trent Jones Sr., 1949). By the end of the 20th century, there were more than 100 courses in the region, including four resort layouts at Barefoot Landing, two at Grande Dunes Resort and Tidewater Golf Club.

Inland, the state has just as much quality to offer. The Palmetto Golf Club in Aiken sports the distinctive design flair of Herbert Leeds (1890s), complemented by a wedge-shaped clubhouse with eyebrow windows that is the 1902 handiwork of Stanford White, who also designed the famous clubhouse of Shinnecock Hills Golf Club on Long Island.

A look at the 5th hole of the Palmetto Golf Club. (David Cannon/Getty Images) On the other side of town in Aiken Golf

Club, a 1912 design that maxes out at 5,795 yards and yet holds up well for its Pinehurst style of shot-making demands. Small wonder it is a favorite among golfers gathered in the area during Masters week. In the more mountainous, western half of South Carolina, the golf tends to be much more parkland-oriented. That's the appeal of the seven-course residential golf repertoire comprising The Cliffs communities, which brought to bear the design talents of Tom Fazio, Tom Jackson, Jack Nicklaus, Gary Player and Ben Wright. The Player-designed Cliffs at Mountain Park (2013) in Travelers Rest, 25 miles north of Greenville, is an intimately routed, very walkable course. Its vast sand splashes and wide fairways straddle the North Saluda River along a valley that sits 1,600 feet above sea level in the Blue Ridge Mountains – hardly your conventional real estate golf course.

When it comes to drama that contrasts with South Carolina's coastal golf treasures, you can't find a sharper counterpoint than The Cliffs at Glassy (1994) in Landrum, 11 miles east of Mountain Park. The Cliffs at Glassy, which tops out at 3,353 feet above sea level, feels like golf on the roof of the world – or at least of the Palmetto State. If it doesn't take your breath away, it will at least make you gasp at the distant views.

For all this strength of its diverse golf offerings, the supply is still getting more interesting. Two courses east of Aiken have just debuted and already have caught the buzz of social media architecture aficionados. Old Barnwell, by Brian Schneider and Blake Conant of Tom Doak's Renaissance Golf Design team, fills up a sandy, 575-acre site that provides plenty of room for distinct angles and alternate paths of play. Though a private club, it has a mission of inclusivity and public service that ensures its place in the greater community of state golf and sports culture.

The Tree Farm, midway between Aiken and the state capital in Columbia, is the product of PGA TOUR member Zac Blair's imagination, a routing by Tom Doak, and the shaping skills of Kye Goalby. It's South Carolina's version of a trendy place like Sweetens Cove Golf Club in Tennessee or Landman Golf Club in Nebraska – golf for hearty walkers who love the game, play fast, utilize the ground game and cannot wait to tee it up again.

The vast scale of the land provides a very unconventional scope for the golf. Think of it as Mike Strantz's Caledonia Golf & Fish Club on a much larger canvas.

When it comes to interesting golf, South Carolina menu of courses offers a wide variety that appeals to players of every imaginable sort. Small wonder it's



# Verne Lundquist says emotional goodbye



## Broadcaster Verne Lundquist says emotional goodbye to Masters

Written by Staff

Sunday at the Masters was about who will don the green jacket. This one was also about Verne Lundquist.

The esteemed CBS broadcaster made his final Masters call Sunday afternoon, his 40th and final Masters on the mic. Lundquist, 83, has voiced several iconic moments at Augusta National, including Tiger Woods' chip-in birdie from behind the par-3 16th green in the 2005 final round, en route to a playoff victory over Chris DiMarco.

The moment wasn't lost on Lundquist, whose dulcet tones have grown synonymous with the Masters' storied history. "When I leave here on Sunday, I'll have nine billion memories, and a choked-up voice," Lundquist told ESPN earlier this week.

Lundquist made his final call at No. 16 for Sunday's final pairing of winner Scottie Scheffler and Collin Morikawa, after which play-by-play commentator Jim Nantz offered a tribute amidst soft music and slow-motion shots of Scheffler walking to glory.

"Verne wrote a book back in 2018 called 'Play by Play,' and the last line in the book that you wrote, Verne, I'm going to apply it to you. You said thanks, to borrow a phrase, thanks for the memories. Your voice has been a beautiful instrument. Thank you for a wonderful soundtrack for all of our lives," Nantz said.

A clearly emotional Lundquist responded with brevity: "Thank you so much, Jim. My honor. My privilege."

Woods and Lundquist shared a moment Sunday afternoon as Woods played No. 16, a testament to the five-time green jacket winner's high esteem for the broadcaster.

"I've heard that call a couple times," Woods quipped earlier this week, before

turning serious. "That's what I grew up watching. I grew up listening to Verne. He has just an amazing ability to bring in the audience and describe a situation and just be able to narrate it in a way that is poetic but it's also – he describes it with emotionality. He just draws the audience in. It's amazing.

"And he made a nice call there at (hole) 16, and it's one that I've been lucky enough to ... I will have that memory with Verne for the rest of my life."

Lundquist worked nationally for ABC Sports from 1974 to 1981, CBS from 1982 to 1995, and TNT from 1995 to 1997, before returning to CBS from 1998 to 2016. He spent a decade-plus as the radio voice of the Dallas Cowboys, and he has covered everything from the NFL, NBA and Olympics to college football, basketball and even the game show "Bowling for Dollars." He was lead play-by-play announcer for SEC football on CBS from 2000 to 2016, before retiring from college football broadcasting.

The Masters has been a constant. Lundquist took the mic at Augusta National in 1983, and he maintained the role aside from a two-year hiatus in 1997-98. His first Masters assignment was on the par-5 13th hole, the final leg of Amen Corner, and he was assigned to the 17th-hole tower for 1986 – after longtime 17th-hole announcer Frank Glier, a close friend, died of a heart attack in 1985. Lundquist eventually moved to the tower at No. 16, the picturesque par 3 known as Redbud with water guarding the green's left side and a mid-green ridge that tends to funnel balls toward a traditional Sunday hole location tucked near the water's edge.

Augusta National's par-3 16th tower was a fitting place for Lundquist's Masters career to conclude, where he punctuated Scheffler's 10-foot birdie Sunday that extended his lead to four strokes, en route to his second green jacket.

## Semifinalists named for Hogan Award



### 10 Semifinalists Named for 2024 Ben Hogan Award presented by PNC Bank

The Hogan Trophy Award Foundation, Friends of Golf (FOG) and Golf Coaches Association of America (GCAA) have announced the 10 semifinalists for the 2024 Ben Hogan Award presented by PNC Bank, which annually awards the top men's NCAA Division I, II or III, NAIA or NJCAA college golfer based on all collegiate, amateur and professional events over the previous 12 months.

Determined by voting from the award's selection committee, the 2024 Ben Hogan Award semifinalists are Luke Clanton (Florida State), Wenyi Ding (Arizona State), David Ford (North Carolina), Nick Gabrelcik (North Florida), Ben James (Virginia), Jackson Koivun (Auburn), Christo Lamprecht (Georgia Tech), Gordon Sargent (Vanderbilt), Preston Summerhays (Arizona State) and Michael Thorbjornsen (Stanford).

The list includes three seniors, three juniors, two sophomores and two freshmen. Four conferences are home to semifinalists, led by the ACC with four honorees. The other leagues represented are the Pac-12 (three), SEC (two) and ASUN (one).

Sargent and Thorbjornsen were two of the three Ben Hogan Award finalists last year, while Ford (2023), Gabrelcik (2021, 2023) and Lamprecht (2023) are previous semifinalists. Arizona State is the lone school with multiple semifinalists (Ding, Summerhays).

The three finalists selected from this list of 10 golfers will be named on Tuesday, May 7. The finalists will attend a black-tie dinner Monday, May 20, at Colonial Country Club in Fort Worth, Texas, where the winner will be crowned as the Charles Schwab Challenge week kicks off.

The Ben Hogan Award presented by PNC Bank has honored the outstanding amateur collegiate golfer at Colonial Country Club since 2002. Prior to its move to Fort Worth, the original Ben Hogan Trophy, which was awarded based on a

different list of criteria, was issued at Bel-Air Country Club in Los Angeles beginning in 1990.

An esteemed selection committee, comprised of more than 30 leaders in collegiate, amateur and professional golf, votes during each stage of the process.

Recipients of the Ben Hogan Award presented by PNC Bank have combined to accumulate 88 worldwide victories, including 66 PGA TOUR wins, and have amassed more than \$420 million in prize money on the PGA TOUR. Additionally, the group has appeared in 17 Ryder Cups and a dozen Presidents Cups.

**Past recipients** are Ludvig Åberg ('22, '23), Ricky Barnes ('03), Patrick Cantlay ('12), Matt Every ('06), Rickie Fowler ('08), Doug Ghim ('18), Bill Haas ('04), Viktor Hovland ('19), Chris Kirk ('07), Hunter Mahan ('03), Maverick McNealy ('17), Ryan Moore ('05), John Pak ('21), Jon Rahm ('15, '16), Patrick Rodgers ('14), Kyle Stanley ('09), Nick Taylor ('10), Sahith Theegala ('20), D.J. Trahan ('02), Peter Uihlein ('11) and Chris Williams ('13).

Since 2002, the Hogan Trophy Award Foundation has awarded over \$875,000 in scholarships to more than 30 universities. For more information on the Ben Hogan Award presented by PNC Bank, visit [TheBenHoganAward.org](http://TheBenHoganAward.org) and follow @BenHoganAward on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

### 2024 Semifinalists

Luke Clanton, Florida State  
Sophomore, Hialeah, Fla.  
Wenyi Ding, Arizona State  
Freshman, Beijing, China  
David Ford, North Carolina  
Junior, Peachtree Corners, Ga.  
Nick Gabrelcik, North Florida,  
Senior, Trinity, Fla.  
Ben James, Virginia  
Sophomore, Milford, Conn.  
Jackson Koivun, Auburn  
Freshman, Chapel Hill, N.C.  
Christo Lamprecht, Georgia Tech  
Senior, George, South Africa  
Gordon Sargent, Vanderbilt  
Junior, Birmingham, Ala.  
Preston Summerhays, Arizona State  
Junior, Scottsdale, Ariz.  
Michael Thorbjornsen, Stanford  
Senior, Wellesley, Mass.



# Clippers vs. Mavs series breakdown



Mavericks - Clippers is a rematch of back-to-back first-round series in 2020 and 2021

## Clippers vs. Mavericks series breakdown and prediction

By Jon Thomas

The Western Conference's fourth-seeded Los Angeles Clippers (51-31) will face the fifth-seeded Dallas Mavericks (50-32) in the first round of the 2024 NBA playoffs. This is a rematch of back-to-back first-round series in 2020 and 2021, both of which the Clippers won — in six and seven games, respectively.

### How the Clippers got here

The aging Clippers began the season with a two-time Finals MVP (Kawhi Leonard), a perennial All-Star (Paul George) and a former MVP (Russell Westbrook) and discovered it was not enough, even with a hefty luxury tax bill that paid for plenty of support around them. So, they swung big for yet another Los Angeles native and one-time MVP, James Harden, who had begged off his third team in as many years.

And it clicked. For a while, anyway. It took five straight losses for head coach

Tyronn Lue to sort out his rotation (and split time between Harden and Westbrook, in particular) before this forgotten contender reestablished itself as a serious threat. From mid-November to early February — half the season, really — the Clips posted the league's best record (31-8) and offensive rating (122.3 points per 100 possessions).

Then, the same thing that happens to every old team happened to this old team. Around the All-Star break, everyone began coasting, and they barely finished above .500 for the last 33 games of the year. This was always the concern about pairing Westbrook, who often cares too much, and Harden, who is just the opposite, with Leonard and George, whose health has been a concern for their entire L.A. tenure. It should surprise nobody that Leonard and Harden will enter the playoffs with lingering knee and foot injuries, respectively. Worse, though, is how Lue defined his star-laden team's identity in recent weeks.

"Do we have an identity? I think, yeah: We're soft," he said. "That can be an

identity."

### How the Mavericks got here

The Mavericks re-signed Kyrie Irving over the summer, despite their 11th-place finish last season, and reconfigured the roster around him and Luka Dončić. They drafted Dereck Lively II and Olivier-Maxence Prosper, signed Grant Williams, reunited with Seth Curry, rediscovered Dante Exum in Serbia and took a flier on journeyman Derrick Jones Jr. And still they were struggling to stay above .500 come February.

So, they reconfigured the roster around Dončić and Irving again at the trade deadline, dealing Williams, Curry and the rights to two future first-round draft picks for big men P.J. Washington and Daniel Gafford.

It reeked of desperation. Except, it worked (at least until those picks come due). Dallas sandwiched seven straight wins around the All-Star break, hit a rough patch and rode a 16-2 stretch to secure the fifth seed.

It sounds simple, but it does not take much to build around Dončić and Irving,

so long as you can find the right blend of willing and selfless role players. A hint of Lively here. A dash of Washington and Gafford there. A sprinkle of Maxi Kleber. There is your frontcourt. A little Exum and Jones. Some Tim Hardaway Jr. A splash of Josh Green. These are the wings of a 50-win team when Dončić is performing at an MVP level.

### Head to head

The Clippers won the regular-season series, 2-1.

All three meetings took place before Christmas, so Dallas was weeks from becoming the team it is today, and there are plenty more random reasons not to place too much faith in their three-game sample size.

Their first meeting came in Harden's third game as a Clipper, and Westbrook was starting beside him — a combination Lue soon abandoned. Dončić and Irving countered with 71 points on 62.5% shooting in a 144-126 blowout. Afterwards, Harden lamented, "I didn't have a training camp. I didn't have a preseason."





Leonard, George and Harden are mainstays of the Clippers' closing lineup

Their first meeting came in Harden's third game as a Clipper, and Westbrook was starting beside him — a combination Lue soon abandoned. Dončić and Irving countered with 71 points on 62.5% shooting in a 144-126 blowout. Afterwards, Harden lamented, "I didn't have a training camp. I didn't have a preseason."

The Clippers returned the favor in a 101-88 win two weeks later that marked Dallas' worst scoring output of the first three months. The Mavericks were without Lively and Kleber and started Richaun Holmes at center, so Ivica Zubac had a field day (11 points, 14 rebounds) for L.A. Leonard and Harden combined for 16 points on 20 shots on the second night of a back-to-back, and George was the best player on the floor.

The final meeting was the weirdest. No George for the Clippers; no Irving, Lively, Kleber or Green for the Mavericks. It was a one-point game in the fourth quarter until Leonard's 9-0 run fueled a 120-111 victory. The biggest takeaway? Dončić and Irving again. In their two games together against the Clippers, they combined to average a 64-11-8 on 54/43/100 splits. Give them their new supporting cast and good God.

#### Matchup to watch

How do the Clippers stop Dončić?

Dončić's eyes get awfully wide whenever he works Harden or Zubac into a switch, and he will do that — a lot. Even George has a hard time guessing which comes next, the drive or a stepback. Dončić's size and footwork give him the option between shooting over the top or getting to his spot, and whatever the Clippers threw at him — hedges, double teams, everything — did not work.

Heck, even when the Clippers had younger legs underneath them, they had no answer for Dončić in back-to-back first-round playoff meetings in 2020 and 2021. He averaged a 34-9-10 on 49.4% shooting from the field (39.2% from deep) in those 13 games against L.A., and he was barely old enough to buy a beer.

The only answer was a weaker Dallas team around him and Leonard, who was playing to his peak level at the time. Can he match Dončić again? And if he cannot offensively, how much can he handle defensively? Leonard spent little time defending Dončić this season. Back in the 2021 playoffs, though, Leonard drew Dončić as his primary assignment and made him work for every bucket. Asking Leonard to match Dončić offensively and limit him on the other end is a lot to ask of anyone, let alone someone on a balky knee. Dončić also did not have a safety valve like Irving when last these teams met in the playoffs. That allows the Mavericks to get even more creative with off-ball movement to work matchups in Dončić's favor. Conventional wisdom says the Clippers have two of the best defensive options possible to throw at the Mavericks' superstar, but even conventional wisdom stands little chance against this version of Dončić.

#### Los Angeles Clippers

Leonard, George and Harden are mainstays of the Clippers' closing lineup. Zubac and Norman Powell round out their best five-man unit, a group that has outscored opponents by a startling 18.4 points per 100 possessions (albeit in a total of 121 minutes). But Lue likes to go with his gut, and his gut is often right.

We might see Mason Plumlee in place

of Zubac or Terance Mann instead of Powell or Amir Coffey in the mix, depending on how much Dončić is cooking Zubac or who has the hotter hand. It takes some serious guts to challenge any Dončić-led team in a small-ball contest, but Lue has that in him, too.

#### Dallas Mavericks

The Mavericks are just as likely to play around with their closing unit. Dončić and Irving are the only two locks to finish games. Washington should be in there, too. In the middle, do they want Lively's

bounce, Gafford's dependability or Kleber's spacing? On the wing, do they need Jones' length, Exum's shooting or Green's energy? These are the questions that Dallas head coach Jason Kidd will be asking over and over.

**For the record:** Kidd's most used and most successful lineup features Dončić, Irving, Jones, Washington and Gafford, who have outscored opponents by 15.5 points per 100 possessions. That they have played only 176 minutes together tells you how fresh this fit is — and how much more tinkering there could be.

#### Prediction

Mavericks in seven. If the last month is any indication, the series will not be so close, as the Mavericks were the West's best team over the season's final six weeks, save for two meaningless losses at the end. The Clippers, for all their veterans, deserve the benefit of the doubt. They are a team that could flip a switch, so long as they are healthy. Although, Harden-led playoff teams all too often flip the switch off.

Series odds

Los Angeles Clippers (+100)

Dallas Mavericks (-120)

#### Series schedule

(all times Eastern)

Game 1: Sun., April 21 @ L.A. Clippers (3:30 p.m. ET, ABC)

Game 2: Tue., April 23 @ L.A. Clippers (10 p.m. ET, TNT)

Game 3: Fri., April 26 @ Dallas (8 p.m. ET, ESPN)

Game 4: Sun., April 28 @ Dallas (3:30 p.m. ET, ABC)

Game 5: Wed., May 1 @ L.A. Clippers (TBD)\*

Game 6: Fri., May 3 @ Dallas (TBD)\*

Game 7: Sun., May 5 @ L.A. Clippers (TBD)\*



# Big 12 Baseball Power Rankings



Oklahoma State holds on to top spot

By Stacy Urban

When last weekend's slate of Big 12 games wrapped up, Oklahoma baseball and surging West Virginia shared first place in the conference standings.

The Mountaineers have won seven Big 12 games in a row, including series sweeps of Kansas and Central Florida. The Sooners swept K-State over the weekend.

We aren't obligated to follow the standings, though, in the weekly Big 12 power rankings. Oklahoma State is one game out of first place, but the Cowboys have won four conference series in a row, including winning two of three at West Virginia and at home against Oklahoma.

Big 12 newcomer Cincinnati has given some legacy teams trouble, but that wasn't the case last weekend in Stillwater.

You can make a case for any of three teams to be atop the Big 12 power rankings. We're sticking with OSU for the second week in a row.

Here's how we put them in order this week. Records and rankings are as of Monday.

## 1. Oklahoma State (25-11, 10-5)

**Last week:** 1

**What to know:** The Cowboys, up to No. 17 in this week's USA TODAY Sports Top 25 coaches poll, lead the Big 12 in strikeouts and have eight pitchers with earned-run averages under 3.75. Top two starters Sam Garcia (4-3, 3.47) and Brian Holiday (3-2, 3.13) have combined for a 0.93 WHIP and 133 strikeouts to 18 walks.

## 2. West Virginia (22-13, 11-4)

**Last week:** 2

**What to know:** Lefthander Derek Clark sports a Big 12-best 2.15 ERA and threw nine innings for his fourth start in a row.

The Mountaineers swept UCF 7-6, 7-5 and 11-10 and moved into the poll at No. 24.

## 3. Oklahoma (21-14, 11-4)

**Last week:** 3

**What to know:** Freshman shortstop Jaxon Willits hit his first five home runs of the season in his past seven games, and junior second baseman Jackson Nicklaus has five homers in his past 10 games. Nicklaus finished the weekend on the shelf with a hamstring injury, though.

## 4. Texas (22-15, 9-6)

**Last week:** 5

**What to know:** Last year, Lebarron Johnson Jr. was 8-4 with a 2.91 ERA. As the Longhorns' No. 1 starter this season, he's 1-3 with a 5.57 ERA and hasn't lasted more than three innings in his past four appearances.

## 5. Central Florida (21-12, 8-10)

**Last week:** 4

**What to know:** UCF is second in the Big 12 in team ERA, first in fielding and third from the bottom in slugging and home runs. The upshot: The Knights play a lot of close, relatively low-scoring games. Helps explain how they won series against Oklahoma State, Kansas, Texas Tech and Kansas State and got swept by Oklahoma and West Virginia.

## 6. Texas Tech (26-11, 9-9)

**Last week:** 7

**What to know:** Tech bashed its way to winning eight games in a row, a season-best streak. Then the Red Raiders dropped the last two in a three-game series at TCU, making them 3-8 in their past 11 games in Fort Worth.

## 7. Kansas State (21-13, 7-8)

**Last week:** 6

**What to know:** K-State, after getting off

to a hot start in Big 12 play, is 1-7 in its past eight conference games. Oh, and up next in conference are Oklahoma State and preseason favorite TCU on the road.

## 8. Cincinnati (20-16, 7-8)

**Last week:** 8

**What to know:** Getting swept at Oklahoma State dropped Cincinnati from a tie for third to a tie for seventh in the Big 12 standings. That sounds a little more believable.

## 9. Kansas (19-14, 7-8)

**Last week:** 9

**What to know:** Third baseman Michael Brooks had two home runs and seven RBI in an 18-7 rout of Pacific. That touched off a three-game sweep of a non-conference series.

## 10. TCU (22-12, 7-11)

**Last week:** 10

**What to know:** TCU won only its second of its first six Big 12 series, taking two from Texas Tech. Struggling starter Kole Klecker struck out the side in the ninth for

his first save in Saturday's 4-2 victory.

## 11. Baylor (16-18, 8-7)

**Last week:** 13

**What to know:** That Baylor is below .500 more than 30 games into the season isn't surprising. The surprise is the Bears finished last weekend in fifth place and above .500 in the conference after sweeping Brigham Young in Provo.

## 12. Brigham Young (14-18, 6-12)

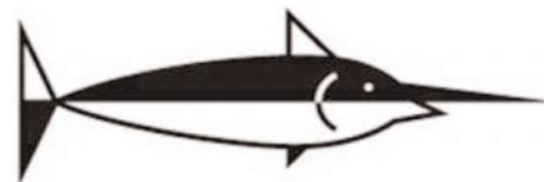
**Last week:** 11

**What to know:** Cougars produced the eye-opening outcome of the week two weekends ago by taking two of three at Texas. Then they came home and got swept by Baylor.

## 13. Houston (17-18, 5-13)

**Last week:** 12

**What to know:** Good news is, Houston snapped an 11-game conference losing streak in the series opener at Texas. Bad news is, the Cougars lost the last two in Austin, blowing an 8-5 ninth-inning lead in the finale.



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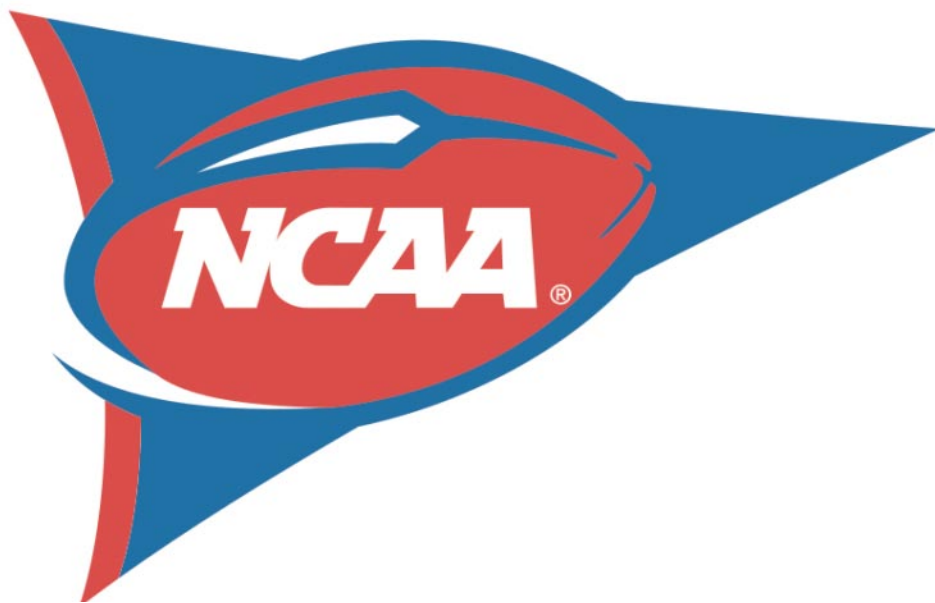
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# College Football News and Notes



BO CARTER

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O.J. Simpson, who advanced from an underserved community to San Francisco to NFF College and Pro Football Halls of Fame after starring at Southern California, passed away after a bout with cancer on April 10 in Las Vegas, Nev. He was 76. Simpson was noted for wearing short-sleeved jerseys even in the coldest collegiate and NFL conditions to elude potential arm tackles with his speedy and elusive running style. At San Francisco City College in 1965-66, Simpson established himself as the then-all-time junior college rushing leader with 2,552 yards and 54 touchdowns. At USC in 1967 and 1968, his 9.3-second 100-yard speed and mystifying evasive rushing bursts led the Trojans to the national championship honors during the 1967 season with a 14-3 victory over Indiana in the 1968 Rose Bowl contest. The '67 season saw Simpson gain 22 individual national honors and multiple school records. He led the country in rushing with 1,451 yards on 266 carries and 11 touchdowns and was 1967 Back of the Year from United Press International with consensus first team All-America recognition. In 1968, he rushed 355 times for 1,709 yards and 22 touchdowns as the Trojans closed 9-0-1 during the regular season record, won the coveted Heisman Trophy and was

MVP in the 1969 Rose Bowl with 171 yards rushing when USC fell to Big Ten Conference champ Ohio State 27-16. The 18th annual NFF Hampshire Honor Society with a record 1,989 student-athletes from 339 schools was released last week. Qualifiers from all NCAA and NAIA divisions posted cumulative 3.2 grade point averages (4.0 scale), all were among the nation's top scholars and playing status student-athletes. The Big 12 Conference featured 70 student-athletes, including 2023 NFF National Scholar-Athletes presented by Fidelity Investments – Cooper Beebe of Kansas State, Walter Rouse of Oklahoma and Zach Frazier of West Virginia.

Connecticut became 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 and the first No. 1 seed to win the crown since Louisville in 2013. Purdue faced off against the defending NCAA champs in its first trek to the title tilt since 1969 against UCLA.

#### Updated NFF Chapter scholar-athlete recognition banquets are:

Wednesday, April 17 - Moose Krause/South Bend Chapter (Ind.); Brian Piccolo/Ft. Lauderdale (Fla.); Saturday, April 20 - East Tennessee Chapter (Knoxville); Sunday, April 21 - Central Indiana Chapter (Indianapolis); Monday, April 22 - Colorado Chapter; Memphis Chapter (Tenn.); University of Georgia (Athens).

The NFF Iowa Chapter had its annual Awards Dinner in Des Moines on April 6 with numerous and distinguished high school and college scholar-athletes honored.

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.

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. Nominees for the 2024 NIL Awards powered by Influencer at the NIL Summit include such categories as Female Athlete of the Year, Male Athlete of the Year, Innovator of the Year, the Hustle Award, Scholar Athlete of the Year, Athlete Advocate of the Year, Breakthrough Athlete of the Year, Athlete Creator of the Year, Best Institutional Program, and Brand of the Year. Some of the top institutional program nominees include Cincinnati, Florida, Grand Canyon, Ole Miss, Nebraska, Ohio State, Saint Joseph's (Pa.), and UCLA. Student-athlete and coach/administrator

registration also remains open for the NIL Summit in upcoming weeks.

#### NFF College Hall of Fame Facts:

**Some notable birthdates** in NFF College Hall of Fame annals in the April 15-21 time period are April 15 (1938) Richie Lucas, Glassport, Pa.; (1947) Ted Kwalick, McKees Rocks, Pa.; April 16 (1970) Steve Emtman, Spokane, Wash.; (1972) Jim Ballard, Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio; April 17 (1905) Herb Joesting, Little Falls, Minn.; (1941) Bill Redell, Red Bluff, Calif.; (1972) Tony Boselli, Modesto, Calif.; April 18 (1913) Pug Lund, Rice Lake, Wis.; (1931) Harley Sewell, St. Jo, Texas; (1962) Wilber Marshall, Titusville, Fla.; (1970) Willie Roaf, Pine Bluff, Ark.; (1973) Derrick Brooks, Pensacola, Fla.; April 19 (1883) Germany Schulz, Ft. Wayne, Ind.; (1892) Ernie Godfrey, Dover, Ohio; (1907) Jack Cannon, Columbus, Ohio; (1925) Chuck Klausing, Wilmerding, Ohio; (1936) Jack Pardee, Exira, Iowa; (1964) Harris Barton, Sandy Springs, Ga.; (1965) Keith Jackson, Little Rock, Ark.; (1981) Troy Polamalu, Garden Grove, Calif.; April 20 (1893) Murray Shelton, Dunkirk, N.Y.; (1915) Eric Tipton, Petersburg, Va.; (1926) Hub Bechtol, Amarillo, Texas; (1930) Harry Agganis, Lynn, Mass.; (1945) Steve Spurrier, Miami Beach, Fla.; (1991) Luke Kuechly, Cincinnati, Ohio; April 21 (1935) Jim Young, Franklin Lakes, N.J.; (1980) Tony Romo, San Diego, Calif.

**Some anniversary passing dates** of NFF Hall of Fame members are April 15 (2002) Byron "Whizzer" White, Denver, Colo.; (2021) Leroy Keyes, W. Lafayette, Ind.; April 16 (1981) Lee Tressel, Berea, Ohio; April 18 (2005) Sam Mills, Charlotte, N.C.; April 19 (2009) Felix "Doc" Blanchard, Bulverde, Texas; April 20 (2018) Earle Bruce, Columbus, Ohio; April 21 (1974) Charles "Chic" Harley, Columbus, Ohio.

**Happy birthdays** to NFF Hall of Fame members born April 15 Richie Lucas (a spry 86), Ted Kwalick, April 16 Steve Emtman, Jim Ballard, April 17 Bill Redell (a spry 83), Tony Boselli, April 18 Wilber Marshall, Willie Roaf, Derrick Brooks, April 19 Harris Barton, Keith Jackson, Troy Polamalu, April 20 Steve Spurrier, Luke Kuechly, April 21 Jim Young (a spry 89), Tony Romo...

#### Schedules:

Oklahoma and Temple have moved up their Aug. 31 opener (OU's first as a member of the SEC) to Friday, Aug. 30, for a national telecast...Lafayette's '24 slate features a first-ever meeting Aug. 20 with Mid-American Conference contender Buffalo on the road...Sam Houston has

(continued on page 16)



added four, key con-conference clashes to its future schedules – at Texas and hosting UNLV in 2025, at TCU and at ULM in '27 ....Ole Miss is set for a historic 2028 date with traditional HBCU power Alcorn State...Spring football still is in the air with spring games or scrimmages scheduled for Friday (among others) Central Connecticut, Delaware, East Tennessee State, Jacksonville State, and Kennesaw State; and Saturday featuring Maine, Ohio, Iowa, Georgia Southern, Iowa State, defending CFP champ Michigan, and South Alabama with several national telecasts (please check local listings for broadcast times).

#### **Good Works:**

The Hank and Billye Aaron Foundation granted \$100,000 in academic scholarships to Tuskegee Institute to celebrate the 50-year anniversary of Hank Aaron breaking Babe Ruth's MLB career home run record of 714 in April 8, 1974...Toyota North America and Toyota Ventures, the early-stage venture capital arm of Toyota, have approved two \$150 million funds to expand its investments in startups. Several former collegiate student-athletes have applied and own these startups...The Rice Alumni Association newsletter chronicled RU alumni and world travelers who came to the Southwest to view the total solar eclipse last week...Following the South Carolina win over Iowa, Gamecocks head coach and consensus National Coach of the Year Dawn Staley congratulated the Hawkeyes and thanked UI's Caitlin Clark (consensus 2023 National Player of the Year) for lifting up women's college basketball over her four-year career...North Texas and Vanderbilt celebrated alumni and athletics National Giving Day April 11 with ample additional donations. Vandy reported \$9.4 million in new gifts from 8,000-plus donors.

#### **Football Coaches:**

Texas A&M head coach Mike Elko has stressed repetitions and discipline on both sides of the ball as Aggies spring drills begin winding down...LSU head coach Brian Kelly reminded media and fans about a needed salary or compensation cap if the NIL is not remanded or if student-athletes are paid like university employees...New Harvard head coach Andrew Aurich was highlighted in a recent story about continuing the historic success of the 151-year-old program...Former Georgia star and Super Bowl MVP Hines Ward accepted a post as wide receivers coach at Arizona State... One Southeastern Conference head coach (anonymously) was told by his informed AD that a proposed super conference headed by the Big Ten and SEC may be years away as NIL, transfer portal, College Football Playoff, and other elements come to more complete fruition. Hometowns of more 2024 college head coaches – Yale: Tony Reno, Oxford, Mass.; Youngstown State: Doug Phillips, Toledo, Ohio; Air Force: Troy Calhoun, McMinnville, Ore.; Akron: Joe Moorhead,

Pittsburgh, Pa.; Alabama: Kalen DeBoer, Milbank. S.D.

#### **Directors of Athletics:**

Connecticut director of athletics David Benedict has been pleased with the success of not only Huskies national-class men's and women's basketball programs but also of the facilities' improvement and ability of UConn student-athletes to continue to excel since he took the AAD's reins in 2016...Harvard AD Erin McDermott spoke about the tremendous loyalty of former Harvard student-athletes and many current students and alumni toward overall Crimson athletics and the football program...Arkansas AD Hunter Yurachek noted how he treats positive comments and any negativity via social media sites and how he is able to tune out the noise often associated with chats and comments...Colorado AD Rick George helped host a NIL panel during the university's Conference on World Affairs and how 2,000-plus current student-athletes are profiting from the NIL agreements...Chattanooga AD Mark Wharton updated alumni and friends on donation opportunities for the Mocs Club booster groups and The Flock NIL Collective...Rhode Island AD Thorr Bjorn expressed appreciation to the three presidents with which he worked and the tools they allowed for continued success for Rams programs...Ole Miss AD Keith Carter expressed delight that men's basketball head coach Chris Beard is remaining with the program after other offseason coaching offers...Nicholls State AD Jonathan Terrell is now vice president of collegiate athletics...Utah AD Mark Harlan and Big East Conference commissioner Val Ackerman believe that the larger spotlight shown on women's college basketball and increased fan interest will help raise the quality of women's hoops' officiating in coming seasons. Baylor women's head coach Nicki Collen of the NCAA Women's Basketball Rules Committee noted that the speed and more physicality in the women's game have made officiating more challenging in recent seasons...Former Georgia Southern associate AD David Cutler is GSU's new director of development for university advancement...Arkansas men's basketball head coach John Calipari has inked a five-year personal pact with the Razorbacks...Doug Ewald, Nebraska's executive associate AD and chief financial officer, has completed his service with the Huskers...Tennessee State is using the Collegiate Consulting Group in its women's basketball head coaching pursuit...Cal State Northridge added Aquiles Montoya as its women's volleyball head coach...Former Mississippi State men's basketball head coach Rick Ray is leaving Colorado as an assistant for the same position at Vanderbilt...Ashton Henderson, deputy AD at Michigan State, discussed updated means for MSU alumni from athletics for available counseling for any former student-athletes, 24-hour crisis line for MSU athletics alumni via The Hope Desk

Group, discounted business services, and assistance for these groups without current insurance through MSU Fund Recovery... Texas Tech faculty representative Dr. Brian Shannon and beloved former Nebraska faculty rep, longtime MLB New York Yankees and college baseball enthusiast and noted attorney Josephine Potuto suggested in an Inside Higher Educational editorial that college athletics should set a NCAA budget threshold with upward adjustments to help manage NIL compensation – especially to avoid reducing varsity teams due to financial considerations... Notre Dame executive associate AD JP Abercrombie praised efforts of his staff and UND student-athletes after the Fighting Irish received the 2024 NCAA Diversity and Inclusion Award and spoke of even more innovations to the program in coming months...Kennesaw State named Jacob Dye assistant AD for marketing and fan experience...Duke women's basketball head coach and former Tennessee star Kara Lawson is staying at Duke after receiving overtures after returning to UT as head coach...Providence men's basketball head coach Kim English signed a six-year contract extension...New Toledo women's basketball head coach Ginny Boggess has signed an initial five-year contract...Mount St. Mary's men's basketball head coach Dan Engelstad has finished his tenure and may be up for an assistant coaching position at Syracuse...Recent head basketball coaching updates have been Arkansas men's John Calipari, Morehead State men's Jonathan Mattox, Kentucky's Mark Pope, Appalachian State women's Alaura Sharp, Siena women's Terry Primm, Eastern Washington men's Dan Monson, Cornell men's Jon Jaques, Tennessee women's Kim Caldwell, USC Upstate men's Marty Richter, Fresno State men's Vance Walberg, Chicago State women's Corry Irvin, Canisius men's Jim Christian, Bryant men's Phil Martelli Jr., and Central Arkansas men's John Shulman...Wyoming selected Josh Purdum as women's soccer head coach...Longtime assistant to head coach Chris Jans at New Mexico State and Mississippi State – David Miller – has left for a similar post at Oklahoma State... California Baptist named Jim Bossert swimming and Diving head coach... Connecticut's Dan Hurley and Baylor's Scott Drew rejected overtures from Kentucky to take over for men's basketball head coach John Calipari after he left for Arkansas...California named Dr. Rich Lyons chancellor...The latest position openings in athletics on DITicker.com are at Central Missouri, George Washington U., Dartmouth, Lake Forest, Dubuque, Wartburg, Long Beach State, UW Stevens Point, Presbyterian, John Brown U., Erie, Edward Waters, Chadron State, Colorado State, Illinois, Massachusetts, NC State, San Diego State, Santa Clara, Utah, Wyoming, and Western Michigan.

#### **The Conferences:**

The East Coast Conference chose

Jessica Grasso as commissioner...Nine-time Final Four® veteran and legendary men's basketball John Higgins, who spent 35 years as an on-court official, will serve as coordinator of officials for the new men's basketball Collegiate Officiating Consortium among the Big 12, Big Sky, Big West, Western Athletic, Missouri Valley, and West Coast Conferences. The consortium also will join similar conference officiating groups to provide officials for regional and national contests... Western Athletic Conference commissioner Brian Thornton opined about the effect of sports wagering on college athletics and student-athletes, the future of WAC basketball championships and proper balance between athletics and academics in the WAC...The Atlantic Coast Conference is utilizing the NET Ratings, KenPom Group and now the Wasserman Media Group to do a better job of national marketing and league performance recognition...Big East Conference commissioner Val Ackerman complimented mid-major conference winners in the NCAA Men's Championship - Oakland and Yale – and related that the Power Five conferences should not be able to dictate additional at-large invitations...Southeastern Conference commissioner Greg Sankey advocates a different timetable for NCAA distribution of financial units for men's Division I basketball...Fresno State's Tommy Hopfe (player), FSU's Noah Beal (pitcher) and San Diego State's Colby Turner (freshman) tallied Mountain West Conference Player of the Week kudos...Texas Tech's Damian Bravo (player) and West Virginia's Derek Clark (pitcher and newcomer) gained Big 12 Conference Baseball Players of the Week honors...Missouri Valley Conference Baseball Players of the Week were Mark Shallenberger (player), Evansville; and Tanner Perry (pitcher), Illinois State...The Southeastern Conference reversed some of the on-field fight suspensions for Georgia and Mississippi State baseball students-athletes as UGa came to the road contest at State with just one healthy catcher for the third game of the series...The Big 12 Conference has maintained its No. 2 circuit NCAA Ratings Percentage Index throughout the season with a .778 winning percentage against non-loop opposition.

#### **The Bowls:**

Mississippi State president and College Football Playoff Board of Governors chair Dr. Mark Keenum is seeking more autonomy in NCAA governance from Division I schools in football and basketball and acknowledges the monetary differences between DI and Divisions II and III – especially in postseason competition...UTSA joins the likes of Alabama, Georgia, Michigan, and Michigan State in playing in four consecutive bowls after the 2020-23 seasons...Michigan and Stanford have the longest history in terms of years competing in bowl contests. The Wolverines and Cardinal first met in the 1902 Rose Bowl



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– 122 years ago...Appalachian State brings a .875 winning percentage in FBS bowl appearances into the 2024 season with seven victories in eight bowl treks.

#### **The Players:**

Quarterback Drew Allar passed for 202 yards to lead the Blue squad past the White crew in the annual Penn State spring contest...Colorado has added offensive lineman Yahya Attia from the NFL Academy in Loughborough, England, to the '24 roster...SMU quarterback Preston Stone was held out of the SMU spring game after breaking his leg against Navy...SMU cornerback Teddy Knox is seeking to return to the team in August after a suspension....

...Oregon State RB Damien Martinez will transfer for the '24 campaign...True freshman RB Micah Welch decided to forgo the second semester of his high school senior season to raise eyebrows in Colorado '24 spring drills...UCF defensive tackle Joshua Celiscar has transferred to Texas A&M...

...Alabama QB Jalen Milroe threw out the ceremonial first pitch for the Alabama vs. No. 1 nationally Arkansas in last Friday's SEC baseball opener between the schools...Tennessee returning running backs

Dylan Sampson and Cameron Seldon have been counted upon for spring practice leadership after several RBs closed their UT careers in 2023...Nebraska has acquired the services of North Dakota State transfer Andrew Morgan via the portal...

...Reggie Thomas will take his talent to North Dakota after starring at Hastings (Neb.)...Amari DeBerry of Connecticut has left for the transfer portal...NC State men's basketball standout DJ Burns made thousands of new fans with the Wolfpack's ACC and NCAA success and is expected to ink several endorsement and appearance contracts...

...Janiah Barker is leaving Texas A&M for the transfer portal...Indiana State standout Robbie Avila has hit the transfer portal...Houston stalwarts J'Wan Roberts and LJ Cryer have committed to return to the Cougars next season...Ole Miss OL Joshua Harris is a new portal entry...

...Vanderbilt's Ezra Manjon has been granted a sixth year of eligibility and will return for the 2024-25 Commodores....

...Kentucky's Rob Dillingham has declared for the 2024 NBA Draft...Notre Dame's Nat Marshall is now in the NCAA transfer portal along with Auburn student-athletes Aden Holloway and K.D. Johnson, Mississippi State's Keshawn Walsh, and Texas LB S'Maje Burrell...Florida State golfer Lottie Woad captured the Augusta (Ga.) National Women's Amateur Championship earlier this month.

#### **Around the Gridiron and Campus:**

Central Michigan athletics has gained a \$2 million donation from alumni Tim and Sherry Magnusson for both that department and the CMU College of Business Administration...Colorado has sold 18,000-plus advance tickets for its April 27 Black-Golf Game in Boulder, Colo., through April 89 compilations. The CU 5430 NIL Alliance also has sold out its

tables for a Prime Table Banquet celebrating Buffaloes head coach and NFF College Hall of Fame member Deion Sanders along with Buffs standout student-athletes QB Shedeur Sanders and CB-WR Travis Hunter...Army West Point starts construction on the Michie Stadium Preservation Project Monday with stadium capacity revised from 38,000 to 30,000 and temporary relocation of the cadet corps to the north and some east end sections at the stadium...Northwestern will play all its home football games at the NU lakefront soccer and lacrosse stadium (with temporary seating to be determined after assistance from the InProduction Group) – the Lanny and Sharon Martin Athletics Facility on campus. That will be the football site until Ryan Field reconstruction is finished in summer 2026...Dan Furman of the Louisville 502 Circle NIL collective reports 800-plus contributions to the collective over the last 10 days...Ole Miss spiced up its spring game activities with a hotdog eating contest last weekend...Boise State football held two open spring workouts last week with amiable media available through communications director Patrick Walsh. BSU also has placed the popular Flex Pass Plan on sale for selected football game ticketing...North Texas athletics had a field day with special merchandise sales during Green-White spring game activities at DATCU Stadium...Bruin Capital CEO George Pyne told CNBC that college women's athletics are continuing to gain major traction for fan interest and potential sponsors...San Francisco athletics is eliminating its men's and women's tennis programs in May as part of university-wide budget adjustments...Michigan Board of Regents member Denise Ilitch hopes to add women's ice hockey to UM varsity sports. Ilitch is the daughter of late Detroit sports teams' owner Mike Ilitch and a prominent Michigan attorney...Lone Star NIL founder and former Southland Commissioner Tom Burnett purports that he thinks projected NCAA reforms will keep the national agency viable and that unification, more stability and self-governance are keys to survival of college athletics with some tweaks to assist the process. He also entertains thoughts about expanding the field for March Madness® as a former chair of the NCAA Men's Basketball Selection Committee...Valparaiso is partnering with Parker Executive Search for its AD location search with no specific timeline denoted...North Carolina A&T's Pride of A&T NIL collective is the latest NIL initiative to support A&T athletics through the auspices of the SANIL Group...Miami (Fla.) athletics and OnBalance have come together to assist with measuring, managing and improving student-athletes' mental healthcare...North Texas' annual Homecoming Week Oct. 20-26 will be capped off with a first-ever campus meeting with American Athletic Conference opponent Tulane...Princeton's current Clarke Baseball Field and Strubing Softball

Field are being deconstructed and replaced by the Quantum Institute for Quantum Science and Engineering. The Tigers have a new softball almost completed, and baseball will have to be relocated for the 2025 campaign...Utah Valley had groundbreaking last week for the ceremony for UCCU Stadium at Clyde Field for the men's and women's soccer programs...The 18th annual The 18th annual Cyclone Athletics Tailgate Tour powered by MidAmerican Energy begins May 9 in Des Moines and concludes with its 13th city on May 22 in Clear Lake...San Diego State will increase men's basketball ticket prices by 20 percent throughout its home arena for 2024-25...Kentucky baseball started the 2024 season with a school-record 14-1 record (30-5 overall) for its first 15 Southeastern Conference clashes...Texas A&M became the first NCAA Division I member to reach 30 wins on April 12 to raise its overall worksheet to 30-4...Arkansas men's basketball averaged a sellout 19,267 for its 2023-24 home contests...USC athletics had the groundbreaking last week for the Rawlinson Soccer and Lacrosse Stadium...The Rice Athletics Coaches Caravan heads to Dallas on April 27 with AD Tommy McClelland and head coaches men's basketball Rob Lanier and football's Mike Bloomgren.

#### **NFF College Hall of Fame, Other Notables:**

NFF College Hall of Fame members Lee Roy Jordan of Alabama and D.D. Lewis of Mississippi State both starred at linebacker for the NFL Dallas Cowboys and maintain a solid presence in the Dallas business and civic communities. Jordan owns Lee Roy Jordan Lumber Co. while...Former Michigan men's basketball head coach Juwan Howard reflected on his days as a student-athlete and coach with the Wolverines and how health issues affected the final months of his coaching career...

...Three memorable names in Mississippi State baseball history have entered the MSU Ron Polk Ring of Honor. Standout MLB second baseman, Bulldogs pitching great Jody Reed and 46-year Bulldogs duties) play-by-play broadcaster Jim Ellis have been included in the Polk-Dement Stadium exhibit...Former TCU student-athlete and publicist Texas State Sen. Lois Kolkhorst (Rep-Brenham) reacted at a news conference to a recent fatality accident at a Department of Public Safety regional office in Brenham...Former AD at Montana, Oregon, Washington State, and Nebraska AD Bill Moos recalled his initial days in college athletics in 1982 and how the landscape has changed 360 degrees ((or more)...Legendary Stanford, Ohio State and Idaho women's basketball head coach Tara VanDerveer is retiring. She won a NCAA-record 1,216 games over 45 seasons as a college head coach with a career .818 winning percentage...Miller Lite® House will host a special NFL Dallas Cowboys Tacos and Tunes Festival present-

ed by Miller Lite on May 4 to help celebrate Cinco de Mayo week in Arlington, Texas, around AT&T Stadium.

#### **Media Musings:**

The new College Football Playoff revenue distribution agreements puts the Big 12 and Atlantic Coast Conferences in interesting positions for future income after the SEC (17 teams competing in the CFP since the 2014 season) and Big Ten (12 members making the CFP field over its first 10 seasons) to establish their bargaining positions in a story last week by the San Jose (Calif.) Mercury News editions...Nielsen Ratings for the two NCAA Men's and Women's Basketball Championships showed 18.9 million average viewers for the women's title contest on ESPN and 14.8 million viewers for the TBS/TNT/Tru TV telecast for the men's crown – a first in NCAA hoops' history for the women to outrate the men's final...Award-winning CBS Sports columnist Dennis Dodd featured the work that Big League Advance founder Michael Schwimer performed for the Alabama's men's basketball squad with emphasis on positive mental attitudes, specific skillsets and advice on incoming transfer portals. Schwimer's group also works with Duke athletics...The celebratory Hog Wild: The Razorbacks' Championship Season podcast went nationwide to highlight Arkansas' magical run to the 1994 NCAA DI Men's Basketball Championship...Sportico's Daniel Libit pointed out a letter the IRS sent to selected collegiate NIL collectives with tax interpretations and possibilities about tax-exempt or tax responsibility status...ESPN executive editor and head of production Norby Williamson is retiring after close to 40 years with the entertainment giant...ExtraPoints.com glanced at the high propensity of "prop" wagering in football and other sports and if there is any way to control these challenges...Altius Sports Partners and NBC Sports have extended their marketing agreements...The Men's NIT Basketball Championship contest between Indiana State and Seton Hall drew 280 percent higher Nielsen Ratings' watchers than the 2023 final between winning North Texas and UAB...LEAD1 CEO Tom McMillen also allayed that the prop bets are easy and convenient for college students and heavily promoted through major network advertising...Phoenix-based journalist Jeff Metcalfe protrudes that current Arizona State interim AD Jim Rund or senior associate AD Graham Rossini may be probable successors for the open ASU AD's seat...InsideNDSports interviewed Notre Dame AD Pete Bevacqua about the national relevance of Fighting Irish athletics and keeping the Notre Dame brand in the limelight for many years to come...Silver Lake Co. and newly-acquired the Endeavor Group may resell certain areas of Endeavor's business portfolio...On3.com's Pete Nakos lists the most critical men's basketball transfer portal positions as power forwards and centers...Sports



Business Journal's Forty Under 40 Leaders in Athletics has such mainstays as Toledo AD Bryan Blair, Elevate Group chief of business operations Jonathan Marks and Learfield chief strategy officer Ben Mathan ...Extra Points' Matt Brown glanced at the Internal Revenue Service's interpretations and memos about non-profit tax certification for new collegiate NIL collectives and "letter of the law" updates pertaining to NIL objectives...Sportico's Michael McCann thinks that direct NIL payments will make amateurism in college athletics a thing of the past and may create a play-for-pay situation in the near future...Tulane Sports Law program director Gabe Feldman and Altius Sports Partners' Casey Schwab have been taking a thoughtful glance at how private equity might affect the overall budgeting of college athletics and potentially NIL agreements...The WNBA released its national broadcast live and streaming schedules for the upcoming season with 36 of 40 Indiana Fever games set for national exposure. Incidentally, the Fever squad is expected to select National Player of the Year Caitlin Clark of Iowa in Monday's WNBA draft...The Sue Bird and Diania Taurasi Show on ESPN averaged 1.4 million Nielsen Ratings' viewers during the NCAA Division I Women's National Championship with favorable comparisons to ESPN's NFF College Hall of Fame QB Peyton Manning and NFF National Scholar-Athlete Eli Manning's simultaneous programming on Monday Night Football telecasts...Curry Brand has put up 10 billboards in Columbia, S.C., to salute standout freshman women's basketball student-athlete and local star MiLaysia Fulwiley's and the South Carolina NCAA championship with the headers Hometown Hero. Homegrown Champion...247Sports reporter John Talty visited with numerous men's basketball coaches and aficionados about how drastically NIL measures and roster moves via the transfer portal have impacted the 133-year-old hoops' game...The Athletic's Scott Dochterman queried Iowa AD Beth Goetz related ideas about department of athletics and best practice relationships with NIL groups such as the UI The Swarm collective...The D1.ticker's Sport Administrator Database will be updated for the full second quarter of '24 with scheduling features, best practices, coaching and staff searches, and other upgrades...Learfield and USA Baseball are continuing their multimedia rights' contract with Learfield Amplify added to assist USA Baseball's community giving programs...Extra Points award-winning editor Matt Brown believes that EA Sports will have a news conference concerning College Football 25 on May 16 and a national game release on July 19 ...HBCU GameDay saluted coaches moving up in the ranks and Jackson State's return to school colors in blue and white uniforms for all varsity sports...One Denver-area media member posted this ditty: Metro State U. in Denver Creates

New Cannabis Hospitality Program For Higher Education...FOX Sports provided Nielsen Ratings' demographics and percentages of age groups who watched the April 7-8 NCAA Men's and Women's Basketball Championships...Athletes.org Founder Jim Cavale had his say last week about NIL developments, an American Council on Education memo dealing with Dartmouth's unionization in athletics and the estimated \$16 billion it would require for colleges to compensate student-athletes if they become classified as university employees.

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

The FWAA, USBWA and NCBWA are accepting annual joint dues' discounts at their official websites (by adding .com to the initials) and Collegepressbox.com...College Sports Communicators members featured in the news and on social media posts in recent days are Paul Helgren of Toledo, Adam Prendergast of Troy, James Carriher of Tulane, Chuck Sullivan of the American Athletic Conference, and Don Tomkalski of Tulsa...CSC Hall of Fame member Tom Kroeschell was a featured speaker at the Iowa State Communications ISU Bootcamp and Discussion Seminar...Arizona State, LSU, Michigan, Michigan State, Oregon, Tennessee, UCLA, USC, and UTRGV are convening with NCAA enforcement and compliance officials concerning possible issues and probes at their respective schools...The World Athletics Group will pay an additional \$50,000 to each men's and women's track and field gold medalist in the 2024 Paris Olympics...Alabama State president Dr. Quinton T. Ross will begin a term on the NCAA Division I Board of Directors starting Aug. 7...The NCAA and Women Leaders in Sports are co-hosted a NCAA Division I Women's Final Four Women's Sports Leadership VIP Summit to discuss the ever-changing world of women's athletics and the great surge in women's basketball popularity over the last 15-20 years...NCAA president Charlie Baker is seeking increased monetary units for the NCAA Division I Women's Basketball Championships for 2024-25 and beyond if interest and attendance continue to surge...To secure a bid for the NCAA Men's Final Four® and other major NCAA events, Phoenix, Ariz., was required to gold a minimum of 8,000 quality hotel rooms, and the average nightly "special event" rate was \$359...The NFL is making extensive plans for coverage of the 89th annual NFL Draft on April 25-27 at Detroit's Fox Theater...Attorney Eric MacMichael, who represented Oregon State and Washington State in their jurisprudence against the 10 leaving Pac-12 Conference members, connoted that the key arguments in the entire process have to do with allied cases against the NCAA such as House v. NCAA case and how they might affect financial settlements...The NCAA conducted its Above the Rim Summit with 11 stellar women's basketball

players who have finished their eligibility and have played in or are considering competing in the WNBA. Some of the key participants were Naismith Hall of Fame star Sheryl Swoopes of Texas Tech and Florida standout Faith Dut...The NAIA Council of Presidents has approved a policy to require student-athletes to compete according to their assigned gender at birth...The CCA 22, a group of 22 NCAA Division I commissioners from the NCAA FCS commissioner's ranks and traditional basketball competitors, has issued some proposals to continue to develop NCAA women's basketball in its marketing, equity and increased financial considerations...Jacksonville State won its first NCAA Division I team title in bowling in first year of the program with a dual match triumph over Arkansas State in the finals last Saturday at Allen Park, Mich...The USA Basketball Women's National Team will face Germany in a special exhibition game at London's O2 Arena in England on July 23 prior to the Paris Olympic Games...Dordt (Iowa) is the final school to win a 2024 national basketball championship as the Dordt women downed Providence (Mont.) 57-53 in the NAIA title tilt...The Chronicle of Higher Education searched compensation data bases for faculty members at nearly 2,200 colleges from 2012-13 to 2022-23 and found that female professors at public four-year colleges average

\$120,848 for a nine-month payrolls while male professors make \$151,947 for the standard, nine-month teaching contracts...The Louisiana House Education Committee is proposing that public colleges and universities accept cash at all events rather than total use of credit cards and personal devices to gain admission and to use concession areas...The 76,000-square-foot headquarters for the Player 15 Group - NBA Phoenix Suns, WNBA Phoenix Mercury and new Phoenix NBA G League team - is set to open after being converted from a Coors Beer Brewing warehouse with a pair of regulation basketball courts, several players' lounges and a modern training facility.

#### 2024-25 College Football Playoff Bowl Schedule

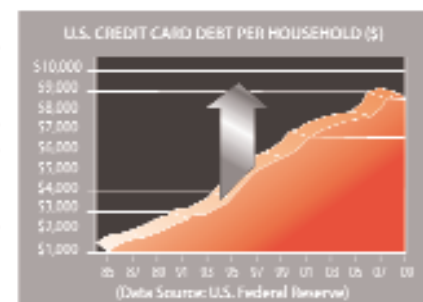
(All Games ESPN, Eastern Standard)  
Friday-Saturday, Dec. 20-21 – First Round (9-12 Seeds in CFP)  
Dec. 20 – One game teams, time and site TBD  
Dec. 21 – Three games with teams, times and sites TBD  
Tuesday-Wednesday, Dec. 31-Jan. 1, 2025  
Dec. 31 – Vrbo Fiesta Bowl, Glendale, Ariz., teams and time TBD  
Jan. 1 – Chick Fil-A Peach, Atlanta, Ga.; Rose Bowl presented by Prudential, Pasadena, Calif.; Allstate Sugar, New Orleans, Dec. 20-21 winners vs. Top Four  
Thursday-Friday, Jan. 9-10, 2024

## 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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One such case is Sandra L. who proclaimed "CreditGUARD cut my monthly payment by \$666 and saved me over \$29,206.53 in interest. They saved my way of life and gave me back my peace of mind! Now I can see myself on my way to becoming debt free." or Jeffrey C. who said "CreditGUARD of America helped me consolidate 3 of my credit cards into one affordable payment. They are now saving me nearly \$200 a month. Now I will be debt free in 2 years or less"

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