



NCAA Tournament Projections

March 22 - March 28, 2024

Vol. 22, Issue 28

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4/13 Opening Weekend Night #2

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TBD RIDERS x RANGERS COBRANDED GIVEAWAY

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4/14 Josh Jung Day

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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 ESPN	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 2024 ALL-STAR WEEK 7-11 PM ESPN	9	10 COL	11 COL
12 COL	13 CLE	14 CLE	15 CLE	16	17 LAA	18 LAA
19 LAA	20	21 PHI	22 PHI	23 PHI	24 MIN	25 MIN
26 MIN	27	28 AZ	29 AZ	30	31 MIA	

AUGUST

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

JUNE

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

SEPTEMBER

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

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

Home Games

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AROUND THE AREA

LOCAL NEWS OF INTEREST

SMU Spring Game set for April 5



SMU Football Spring Game Set For April 5 At Highland Park High School

SMU Football will hold its annual Spring Game, presented by All My Sons Moving and Storage, Friday, April 5, at Highland Park High School. The game has been relocated due to the Weber End Zone Complex construction project taking place in Gerald J. Ford Stadium. The Mustangs will take the field at 6:15p.m. with action starting at approximately 6:30 p.m.

Gates will open at 5:45 p.m. on the north (home) side of the stadium and admission is free. Seating will be available in the north side bleachers. Parking is free in the garage off Westchester Street as well as in the H Lot off Westchester. Street parking is also available.

The Mustangs will play one weeknight game in the upcoming 2024 season, a non-conference game against BYU at home on Friday, Sept. 6 between the home opener against HCU (Aug. 31) and the 103rd edition of the "Battle for the Iron Skillet" against TCU (Sept. 21).

SMU begins its inaugural Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) eight-game schedule with a home contest on Family Weekend against Florida State on Sept. 28. The Mustangs hit the road for three straight

after that with games at Louisville (Oct. 5), Stanford (Oct. 19) and Duke (Oct. 26) to wrap up the month of October.

November opens with home games against Pitt (Nov. 2, Homecoming) and Boston College (Nov. 16). The Mustangs head back on the road for its final away game at Virginia (Nov. 23) before the home finale against Cal on Nov. 30.

Times and TV information for all games are TBD and will be announced as they become available.

The 2024 ACC Football Championship Game will be played on Dec. 7 at Bank of America Stadium in Charlotte, North Carolin, and will feature the top two teams based on conference winning percentage.



Texas Rangers fans line up outside Globe Life Field overnight for gold championship gear

Hundreds of Texas Rangers fans lined up outside of Globe Life Field in Arlington for a chance to grab jerseys, hats and more from the team's new Gold Collection, which celebrates the team's first World Series title.

The championship gear went on sale at the Texas Rangers Grand Slam Team Store at 9 a.m. Thursday.

The white jerseys include a bit of gold around the Rangers logo, the names on the back and the sleeves. The blue hat also fea-

tures a gold T, instead of the usual white.

The line to get the gold-trimmed merchandise nearly wrapped around the stadium. Some fans got in line at 10:30 p.m.

The merchandise is also available online, but some fans wanted to be sure to get their hands on some.

The Rangers will wear the new jerseys for their first series of the season against the Chicago Cubs.

The defending World Series champions have worn the gold jerseys dating back to 2005. The champs from the previous season get to wear the special edition gold home jerseys with a World Series patch on the right sleeve.

Opening day at Globe Life Field is one week away. And it's safe to say this home opener will be a little different. Chuck Morgan, the team's executive vice president of ballpark entertainment, says this season will be unlike anything fans have ever seen.

The Grand Slam shop is selling caps, t-shirts and novelty items like socks and magnets at the store.

The Rangers will unveil the world champions banner on the first game of the season and have the trophy on the field. Texas Rangers Gold Collection Games

The Rangers are scheduled to wear the Gold Collection jerseys for several games this season.

- Thursday, March 28, vs. Chicago Cubs
- Saturday, March 30 vs. Chicago Cubs
- Sunday, March 31 vs. Chicago Cubs
- Wednesday, April 10 vs. Oakland A's
- Tuesday, May 14 vs. Cleveland
- Tuesday, June 4 vs. Detroit Tigers

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

	MARCH 22 FRIDAY	MARCH 23 SATURDAY	MARCH 24 SUNDAY	MARCH 25 MONDAY	MARCH 26 TUESDAY	MARCH 27 WEDNESDAY	MARCH 28 THURSDAY
				Mavs at Jazz 8:00 / Bally's	Mavs at Kings 9:00 / Bally's		
	Rangers at Guardians 3:05	Rangers at Royals 2:05		Rangers vs Red Sox 7:05	Rangers vs Red Sox 1:05		OPENING DAY vs Cubs 6:05 / Bally's
	Stars vs Pittsburgh 7:00 / KTCK		Stars at Arizona 7:00 / KTCK		Stars at San Jose 9:30 / KTCK		Stars at Vancouver 9:00 / KTCK
	Allen vs Kansas City 7:10	Allen vs Kansas City 7:10				Allen at Rapid City 7:05	

Unleash The Beast coming to Cowtown



2024 PBR World Finals: Unleash The Beast Begins With Intimate, Can't Miss Eliminations and Ride For Redemption at Western Sports' Most Historic Venue this May in Fort Worth, Texas

Single-day tickets for Eliminations (May 9-12) and Ride For Redemption (May 15-16) at Cowtown Coliseum just released with No. 1 Cassio Dias and No. 2 John Crimber expected to compete alongside World Champions including Jose Vitor Leme and Daylon Swearingen

World Finals competition to be accompanied by free-to-attend Stockyards Stampede programming, musical performances from GRAMMY Award-winning Brothers Osborne and more, and PBR's unparalleled premium offerings affording fans a new intimate, all-inclusive way to experience the Biggest Week in Western Sports

This May, the 2024 PBR (Professional Bull Riders) World Finals: Unleash The Beast will debut a new format, with the opening two segments of bull riding's most prestigious event set to take over Western sports' most historic venue, Cowtown Coliseum, with Eliminations, May 9-12, and Ride For Redemption, May 15-16, in Fort Worth.

Eliminations and Ride For Redemption will set the 25-rider field that will advance to the PBR World Finals – Championship on May 18-19 in nearby Arlington, Texas, where the riders will contend for the 2024 PBR World Championship, \$1 million bonus and accompanying gold buckle,

inside AT&T Stadium. As part of the revolutionary new format for the 2024 PBR World Finals, the event will also award a record \$3.13 million across Eliminations, Ride For Redemption and Championship.

Single-day tickets for Eliminations and Ride For Redemption are on-sale now and can be purchased at PBR.com/WorldFinals, CowtownColiseum.com and AXS.com, or by phone at 1-800-732-1727.

For both Eliminations and Ride For Redemption PBR Elite Seats are available for avid fans who want an exclusive VIP experience while enjoying PBR's crown jewel in the most intimate venue in which the organization competes. These tickets, available in multiple tiers, offer premium seats, personal on-site concierge at the PBR fan loyalty booth and more.

PBR World Finals – Eliminations will showcase the Top 40 riders in the Unleash The Beast standings at the end of the season, alongside five riders who advance with the Pendleton Whisky Velocity Tour Finals on May 3-4 in Corpus Christi.

Among the current contenders fans can anticipate to see during Eliminations are rookie sensations Cassio Dias (Sao F. de Sales, Brazil) and John Crimber (Decatur, Texas), presently the No. 1 and No. 2 ranked riders in the race for the 2024 PBR World Championship.

Dias has been a dominant fixture atop the standings, winning a PBR-best five Unleash The Beast events, while teenage phenom Crimber is chasing history, attempting to become the youngest PBR World Champion in history.

They are expected to be joined by fellow Top 5-ranked riders in No. 3 Dalton Kasel (Muleshoe, Texas) and No. 5 Koltin Hevalow (Smithville, Missouri) who have been consistent forces throughout the 2024 campaign to date.

Other notable riders anticipated to qualify for the 2024 PBR World Finals: Unleash The Beast, beginning their journey to the Championship, inside Cowtown Coliseum are three-time World Champion Silvano Alves (Pilar do Sul, Brazil) and two-time title holder Jose Vitor Leme (Ribas do Rio Pardo, Brazil), in addition to 2022 World Champion Daylon Swearingen (Piffard, New York) and 2018 World Champion Kaique Pacheco (Itatiba, Brazil).

Following four rounds of competition, the Top 15 riders in the Unleash The Beast standings, and Top 5 riders in the event aggregate not already advancing, will punch their tickets directly to the PBR World Finals – Championship inside the home of the NFL's Dallas Cowboys.

Eliminations will take over Cowtown Coliseum, home of PBR's first event in 1993, on Thursday, May 9 at 7:45 p.m., Friday, May 10 and Saturday, May 11 at 6:45 p.m., and Sunday, May 12 at 1:45p.m.

The four-day ticket package, including daily event tickets to Eliminations, remains available affording fans the opportunity to take in the PBR World Finals in an all-encompassing manner. This unparalleled experience to the high-adrenaline competition will be accompanied by holistic hospitality offerings at Tannahill's Tavern & Music Hall providing access to a myriad of enhanced fan experiences, including live musical performances from the likes of GRAMMY Award-winning Brothers Osborne and renowned Texas country artist Stoney LaRue.

As part of the four-day Eliminations package, Tannahill's Tavern & Music Hall, the popular restaurant in Mule Alley from Chef Tim Love, will host daily pre-parties, providing fans curated cocktails and food offerings from world-renowned Chef Love, credited for helping reinvent urban western cuisine, and post-event hospitality and entertainment. The Eliminations package will also include access to curated rider meet and greets giving ticketholders the chance to get up-close and personal with contenders for the 2024 PBR World Championship.

PBR World Finals – Ride For Redemption will feature the 25 riders not advancing from Eliminations, joined by 10 riders from PBR Teams and five additional invites from a to-be-announced selection process. All 40 riders will attempt one bull each nightly, and those contenders with the

Top 5 scores in the aggregate will earn the final berths to the PBR World Finals – Championship in Arlington.

Ride For Redemption will begin at 7:45 p.m. on both Wednesday, May 15 and Thursday, May 16.

The on-the-dirt action for the two segments of the 2024 PBR World Finals inside Cowtown Coliseum will be accompanied by a myriad of programming throughout the Fort Worth Stockyards, including the Stockyards Stampede, which will take over the historic district beginning May 9 as the fan hub, highlighted by the Michelob ULTRA Beer Tent & Pendleton Whisky Lounge in front of Cowtown Coliseum offering adult beverages, in addition to special Texas cuisine and drink specials available in the surrounding restaurants.

The Stockyards Stampede will house special activations from PBR partners, feature daily musical and DJ performances from the Tractor Supply Co. Stage and serve as the home for the official 2024 PBR World Finals: Unleash The Beast parade on Saturday, May 11 at 11:45am.

The complete schedule of programming accompanying the 2024 PBR World Finals: Unleash The Beast is available at PBR.com/WorldFinals.

Following the conclusion of Ride For Redemption, all eyes will shift to Arlington for the biggest weekend in Western sports from May 17-19.

The can't-miss sporting weekend begins with the inaugural, \$1 million Kid Rock's Rock N Rodeo on Friday, May 17 at 7:45 p.m. CT. Kid Rock's Rock N Rodeo is a reimagined rodeo produced by PBR in partnership with Kid Rock. Six teams, each led by a legendary rodeo head coach, will compete head-to-head in bracket-style competition at AT&T Stadium on May 17 for a \$1 million purse. Within the new \$1-million team-formatted rodeo, Kid Rock will perform live in concert.

The PBR World Finals – Championship will then take over the famed venue on Saturday, May 18 at 7:45 p.m. and Sunday, May 19 at 1:45 p.m. Following the two days, and four rounds of action, PBR will crown the 2024 World Champion.

Single-day tickets for both Kid Rock's Rock N Rodeo and PBR World Finals – Championship are on-sale now. They can be purchased online at ATTStadium.com, SeatGeek.com, KidRockNRodeo.com and PBR.com/WorldFinals, or by phone at 1-800-732-1727.

Stay tuned to PBR.com for the latest news and results and be sure to follow the sport on all social media platforms at @PBR.

Hockey and golf swing comparisons



TOM WARD
TOMPWARD@SBCGLOBAL.NET

With the NHL playoffs around the corner, this would be a good time to illustrate how hockey and golf swings have some comparable components.

As a kid growing up in the Midwest, hockey was one of the sports I enjoyed playing. In my early days in the golf industry, I worked at Kemper Lakes Golf Club outside of Chicago (host of the 1989 PGA Championship). One of my co-workers was Stan Mikita, a Hall of Fame player with the Chicago Blackhawks. As Stan's Hockey

career was ending he became a golf pro. Mikita was a good golfer.

I remember talking to him on numerous occasions about the comparisons between the golf swing and the hockey swing. We both agreed that hockey players made the easiest transition into golf because of the similarities. Both sports had their own signature moves regarding pure power. In golf, it was booming a 300 plus yard drive off the tee. In hockey, it was the sizzling slap shot.

Over the years, I've given a few professional hockey players golf lessons and, with some subtle adjustments, was able to help improve their golf swings.

The key elements of a typical slap shot involve winding up by pulling the stick back waist-high or slightly higher before bringing it down to shoot the puck. It's then important to not strike the puck directly, but to first hit the ice around six inches behind the puck. This causes the stick to bend while the weight is shifted from play-

ers back leg to the front. The torque on the stick acts like a spring, supplying energy and power upon the follow-through.

In golf, we know hitting six inches behind the ball would cause you to chunk the shot.

In the photo sequence, is a hockey player making a slap shot. Next to the hockey player is one of my students demonstrating how to take a hockey slap shot and adapt it to a golf swing.

I had the golfer place his feet closer together for this drill to help promote balance. You can do this drill with your normal stance.

The top left photo is the hockey player winding up. The top right photo is the golfer winding up in a similar way with a golf club. Now, take note that the golfer has separated his hands. His right hand has been positioned about halfway down the golf shaft. I highlighted this with a circle.

In the middle sequence, the hockey player is at impact. The middle right photo

is the downward action by the golfer. I've drawn a box around the golfer's hands to showcase how he has slide his right hand down the shaft as he begins the downswing.

The far right photo is slightly after impact where his right arm is fully extended and right shoulder is working down and under just like the hockey player.

The bottom left photo is the hockey player on the follow-through.

The golfer has his right arm fully elongated like the hockey player. Both of these players have stayed centered and balanced throughout their respective swings which helps build up torque and energy on the backswings. They have created a dynamic spring-like action that will automatically unwind in the correct downward sequence at a high rate of speed. The golfer and the hockey player have exhibited swinging motions that are powerful and effective.

So stop pucking around and give this drill a try.



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This week: Valspar Championship



Taylor Moore returns to defend his 2023 title

Valspar Championship
March 21 - March 24, 2024
Innisbrook Resort and Golf Club
Palm Harbor, Florida
Purse - \$8,400,000
Winners share - \$1,512,000
Defending Champ - Taylor Moore

By Adam Stanley

The PGA TOUR’s Florida Swing reaches its conclusion at the Valspar Championship just outside Tampa, as players cross the state after THE PLAYERS Championship last week.

Several top PGA TOUR pros have made the short trip from TPC Sawgrass to Innisbrook Resort’s Copperhead Course, which features the famed “Snake Pit” trio of closing holes. Taylor Moore returns to defend his 2023 title, with past winners in the field including Jordan Spieth and Sam Burns.

Here’s everything you need to know before play begins at Innisbrook.
FIELD NOTES: Xander Schauffele, fresh off his T2 at THE PLAYERS, will return to action at the Valspar. Schauffele has five top-10 finishes in seven events so far this season. He last played Innisbrook in 2022 where he finished T12 ... Brian Harman, who tied Schauffele and Wyndham Clark at 19-under at THE PLAYERS, one shot back of Scottie Scheffler’s winning total, makes the trip to Innisbrook as well. Harman is rounding into form, having gone T12-T2 in his last two starts. But his effort at

Innisbrook has been curious over the last decade. He has missed the cut in five of his last six Valspar appearances, but his one made cut resulted in a T5 in 2022 ... Sam Burns returns to Innisbrook – a place he’s had plenty of success – looking for another win. Burns went back-to-back at the Valspar in 2021 and 2022 and finished sixth a year ago. He has notched four top-12s in five starts at Innisbrook, and he has yet to miss a cut ... Justin Thomas is hoping to turn things around after a missed cut at THE PLAYERS. Thomas finished 10th last year and was third the year prior. He’s missed just one cut at the Valspar in his career ... Tony Finau returns to Innisbrook for the first time since 2018. While he’s missed the cut three out of four times at Innisbrook, he did finish fifth in 2017 ... Taylor Moore returns to Tampa looking to go back-to-back at the Valspar. Moore has found the weekend in all seven of his PGA TOUR starts this season ... 2015 Valspar winner Spieth also returns. Spieth has finished in the top 20 at Innisbrook in five of his six starts, including a T3 a year ago.

HIGHEST-RANKED PLAYERS IN THE FIELD

World Ranking	FedExCup
5. Xander Schauffele	4. X. Schauffele
8. Brian Harman	10. B. Harman
15. Keegan Bradley	11. Nick Taylor
16. Jordan Spieth	18. Sam Burns
19. Sam Burns	20. C. Bezuidenhou
23. Cameron Young	26. J. Thomas
24. Nick Taylor	27. Eric Cole

26. Sepp Straka
28. Justin Thomas
29. Tony Finau
30. A.Hadwin
33. J. Spieth
36. K.Bradley

SIGNATURE EVENT STORYLINES:

Fred Biondi will play for the fourth time this season on the PGA TOUR. He’s back in action after finishing T32 at the Puerto Rico Open. Biondi, the 2023 NCAA individual champion at the University of Florida, has made the cut in all four of his Korn Ferry Tour starts so far this season ... Biondi’s University of Florida teammate Ricky Castillo will make his non-major debut on the PGA TOUR. Castillo, who debuted at the 2020 U.S. Open, turned pro last year and has made plenty of noise on the Korn Ferry Tour so far this season. The 23-year-old has made his last five cuts and finished no worse than T20, including two top-five showings ... Nick Gabreleick returns to action at the Valspar. The University of North Florida senior grew up just 20 minutes from Innisbrook and made the cut in 2023. He volunteered at the event as a standard bearer as a youngster. Gabrelick is a nine-time collegiate winner ... Kevin Roy will return to action on the PGA TOUR. The upstate New York native lost his TOUR card after 2023 but has made all four cuts on the Korn Ferry Tour this season including a runner-up at the season opener ... Rounding out the sponsor exemptions are TOUR veterans Luke Donald and Ryan Palmer.
COMCAST BUSINESS TOUR TOP 10 UPDATES: Shane Lowry moved inside

the Aon Next 10 (from No. 11 to No. 9) after his T19 at THE PLAYERS, highlighted by a final-round 66 ... Lowry was the only player who made a move inside the Aon Next 10 at THE PLAYERS ... The Aon Swing 5 standings remained unchanged. The next Signature Event on the PGA TOUR schedule is the RBC Heritage in mid-April. The Aon Swing 5 standings for that event starts with the Puerto Rico Open and continues this week at the Valspar Championship, followed by the Texas Children’s Houston Open and Valero Texas Open. With his win at the Puerto Rico Open, Brice Garnett stands No. 1 on the Aon Swing 5 race.

FEDEXCUP: The winner receives 500 FedExCup points.

COURSE: Innisbrook Resort (Copperhead), par 71, 7,340 yards
Located just north of Tampa, the tree-lined, Larry Packard design puts a premium on positioning off the tee. The course, which opened in the early 1970s, features a tough three-hole closing stretch known as the “Snake Pit” – two tough par 4s sandwiched between a bruising 200-yard par 3. Last year the rough height was increased to 3.75 inches from 3 inches in prior years – look for that to be a factor again on the golf course in 2024.

72-HOLE RECORD: 266, Vijay Singh (2004)

18-HOLE RECORD: 61, Matt NeSmith (Round 2, 2022), Pdraig Harrington (Round 1, 2012)

LAST TIME: Taylor Moore won for the first time on the PGA TOUR after a Sunday 67 at the Valspar Championship, topping Adam Schenk by one. Moore finished strong, making two birdies in his final four holes. He was waiting for a play-off before Spieth stumbled into the house. Spieth made bogey on the par-4 16th but appeared to be right back in it after hitting his tee ball on the par-3 17th to just 6 feet. He missed that birdie try, however, and bogeyed the 72nd hole of the championship to finish two shots behind Moore’s winning total. Spieth finished tied for third alongside Tommy Fleetwood while Wyndham Clark finished fifth.

HOW TO WATCH
(all times ET)

Television:

- Thursday-Friday: 2-6 p.m. (Golf Channel),
- Saturday-Sunday: 12:30-2:30 p.m. (Golf Channel), 2:30-6 p.m. (NBC)

PGA TOUR Radio on SiriusXM and free on PGATOUR.COM/liveaudio:

- Thursday-Friday: noon-6 p.m
- Saturday-Sunday: 1-6 p.m.

The Five: Post-PLAYERS storylines



By Paul Hodowanic

THE PLAYERS Championship is a pivotal point in the cadence of the PGA TOUR FedExCup Season. Split the season into three segments and both by calendar and by feel, THE PLAYERS serves as the conclusion of the opening third.

In a season that features 31 weeks and 36 events, THE PLAYERS is the 11th week and 12th event. It puts a bow on the TOUR's opening 10-week run and culminates at TPC Sawgrass, one of the best courses on TOUR in the backyard of the TOUR's headquarters.

While major championships and Signature Events define the middle third of the schedule and the final third encompasses the run into the FedExCup Playoffs, the beginning of the schedule provides the context needed to follow along for the rest of the year.

With so much of the season left to play, it's a time to take stock of what's happened and look to the future. This week's Valspar Championship is the last in the Florida Swing, with a short two-week stint in Texas to follow. Then, the major championship season begins, and the schedule kicks into gear.

So as a bit of a primer of what's to come, The Five looks at the biggest storylines to follow as the PGA TOUR season takes its next turn.

How dominant will Scottie become?

Scottie Scheffler has entered a stratosphere few golfers have found over the last 20 years, where dominance is expected and greatness is ordinary. After winning back-to-back events and back-to-back PLAYERS Championships, the conversations will occur every time Scheffler tees it up, "Scottie or the field?"

It reached its heyday with Tiger Woods, a peak nobody will reach for a very long time, if ever. As Scheffler put it, "11 more years to go" and "14 more majors and 70-some PGA TOUR events to catch up." But in a golf landscape that is as competitive as present-day, Scheffler's dominance is as convincing as any we've seen in a long time. And golf loves a dominant figure.

In recent memory, those dominant figures include Justin Thomas in 2017 (five wins), Jason Day in 2014 (five wins) and Jordan Spieth in 2015 (five wins). Scheffler amassed better statistical profiles than them with his 2022-23 season. He was just missing the wins. The dam has broken there. Scheffler has convincingly won his last two starts, the first in runaway fashion by five shots at the Arnold Palmer Invitational. The next was a different type of dominance that felt inevitable despite the obstacles. Scheffler came back from a five-shot deficit in the final round, battling significant neck pain and tracking down two of the top-five players in the world to win THE PLAYERS.

Scheffler is far and away the No. 1 player in the world right now. While everyone else is trying to catch him, he's trying to catch the all-time greats. Scheffler is laying the groundwork for one of the most impressive seasons in the sport's modern era. How history views it will depend on how many big events he wins.

What's next for slumping stars?

Let's start by saying there are levels of slump, dependent on a player's stature. What's disappointing for one player could be great for another. The determining fac-

tor is how a player talks about their game. Rory McIlroy has four consecutive top 25s, but none were better than T19, which came at this week's PLAYERS. Even that was disappointing, considering he fired a 7-under 65 in the first round and held the co-lead. He played the last three rounds in just 2-under. After notching 10 consecutive finishes inside the top 11 to close out the 2022-23 season, McIlroy is still searching for his first this season.

"Just a lot of volatility in my game," said McIlroy. "The good is good. The bad is still quite destructive. ... I honestly expect a lot more from myself."

McIlroy is playing whack-a-mole with his swing. At different points in the early season, he struggled with iron play and putting. He fixed those at TPC Sawgrass, but it came at the expense of his off-the-tee performance.

"Golf is a very fickle game. It gives you one thing and then takes away something else from you," he said.

McIlroy and his close friend Viktor Hovland sit outside the top 50 in the FedExCup. Hovland has only two top-30 finishes in five starts and is also battling swing struggles. Arguably the hottest player in the sport last fall — when he won back-to-back Playoffs events and the FedExCup — Hovland has struggled to replicate any semblance of that success.

"I feel like I've gotten a little bit off track and I just need to start working in the right way again," Hovland said at THE PLAYERS. "I think things are going to fall into place a little bit more, but it's not, I wish it was as simple as just kind of an overnight, one feel and then we're back on it. This is kind of a little bit of a project, but gives me something to work on and I believe that when this starts to get easier and easier to do, it's going to be right back to where we were."

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Neither player has lived up to their billing as an elite force in the game. There is still plenty of time to get back on track, but we said the same about Justin Thomas last year. The questions will only grow until one of them puts four great rounds together.

Can early-season performers keep pace?

The top of the FedExCup standings is littered with names you would expect, like Scheffler, Wyndham Clark, Hideki Matsuyama and Xander Schauffele. Several new faces, though, are on pace for career-best seasons. Can they keep it up? Here’s a look at a few.

- **Sahith Theegala:** Currently No. 5 in the FedExCup, Theegala is on pace to make his first TOUR Championship appearance. The 26-year-old has already notched four top 10s this season, including a runner-up at The Sentry. The driver of his heightened success is his driver. Theegala ranks 26th in Strokes Gained: Off-the-Tee this season, a marked improvement from his previous two seasons on TOUR (his best finish was 91st). He’s also putting better than at any point in his career. That’s a formidable combo for Theegala, who was already one of the best short-game players in the entire sport. If the driving success keeps up, Theegala can hold down a spot in the top 10.

- **Byeong Hun An:** Currently No. 7 in the standings, An’s best two weeks came in Hawaii. He finished fourth at The Sentry and lost in a playoff to Grayson Murray at the Sony Open. An added top-20s at The Genesis Invitational and the Arnold Palmer Invitational presented by Mastercard. His statistical profile looks similar to his 2019 season, which was his best on TOUR, and he’s not overperforming in one general area. That signals An’s start is sustainable.

- **Erik van Rooyen:** Outside the top 125 at the start of the FedExCup Fall, van Rooyen won the World Wide Technology Championship last November and has parlayed that momentum into a solid start to

2024. Van Rooyen is 23rd in the FedExCup behind a string of uncharacteristic consistency. The South African made just 53% of his cuts in his first three seasons on TOUR. He’s made seven of nine cuts thus far and has already notched as many top 25s (6) as he did all of last season. He’s improved every aspect of his game compared to last season and ranks inside the top 40 in both Strokes Gained: Tee-to-Green and SG: Putting.

Intriguing Rookie of the Year race building

Last year’s Rookie of the Year race wasn’t much of a race. Eric Cole spent the summer distancing himself from his competitors by the sheer force of his consistency. He didn’t win, but no rookie played better week after week than Cole. It wasn’t until a late charge by Ludvig Åberg that the race even became a toss-up.

The 2024 race is on a much different trajectory. Three rookies won in the season’s first two months, while several others knocked on the doorstep. The race could get even more crowded as the summer progresses, and there’s an argument that the TOUR’s new structure could produce one of the deepest rookie classes in recent memory.

The introduction of 10 DP World Tour players has already proven worthwhile with Matthieu Pavon’s victory at the Farmers Insurance Open. Sami Valimaki and Ryo Hisatsune have contended as well. At least one college phenom will join the PGA TOUR this summer: Stanford’s Michael Thorbjornsen and Georgia Tech’s Christo Lamprecht are in a tight battle for the No. 1 spot in the PGA TOUR University rankings, which will be finalized after the college season.

Then there’s Gordon Sargent, the Vanderbilt junior, who has already locked up his card through the PGA TOUR University Accelerated program. He can join the TOUR at the end of his college season but could also opt to play his senior year at Vanderbilt. Sargent hasn’t made a decision. Any of those collegiate players have the talent to do what Åberg and Dunlap have done, adding another layer of intrigue to the season’s final months.

With all that said, there are currently three frontrunners for Rookie of the Year:

- **Matthieu Pavon:** With his victory at the Farmers Insurance Open, Pavon became the first Frenchman to win on the PGA TOUR. He followed it up with a solo third at the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am and currently leads all rookies with 987 FedExCup points (No. 6 overall). He’s also No. 27 in the Official World Golf Ranking, the highest of any PGA TOUR rookie.

- **Jake Knapp:** He’s got Rory McIlroy’s stamp of approval, who said Knapp “could definitely be a star. It looks like he’s got the full package.” Knapp, the sweet-swinging bomber, won the Mexico Open at Vidanta and has two other top-10s, including at the Cognizant Classic in The Palm Beaches when he played with McIlroy.

Knapp is 12th in the FedExCup and 46th in the OWG.

- **Nick Dunlap:** His consistency isn’t comparable to Pavon or Knapp. For now, Dunlap’s breakthrough victory at The American Express is the only bright star on his resume. But it’s brighter than anything the other rookies have done this season. There’s something to be said for history, especially when it’s three decades in the making. Dunlap’s victory as an amateur was a seismic victory in the golf world. It’s something none of the modern stars in the game have done — not Jordan Spieth, Justin Thomas or Scottie Scheffler.

Will one of these three break ahead of the pack? Or will a surprise name insert itself into the conversation? We will find out.

Paving a path to the Signature Events Doug Ghim is an outlier in the FedExCup. The 27-year-old American is No. 47 in the FedExCup standings. And through the first 11 events of the season, he is the only player in this season’s top 50 who has not played in a Signature Event.

Ghim’s situation is a learning lesson, illustrative of the new hierarchy on the PGA TOUR. To get into next year’s Signature Events automatically (a top-50 finish in the FedExCup), you’ll likely need to play yourself into a few this season. Or you’ll need to rattle off five consecutive top-20 finishes, like Ghim, to sneak in.

It’s a bit of a self-fulfilling prophecy. As players rack up strong finishes in Full-Field Events, they will rise both the Aon Next 10 and Aon Swing 5 standings and likely earn their way in. That Ghim hasn’t gotten into any Signature Events of his strong play is a bit of a fluke.

So, here’s an update on the Aon Next 10 and Aon Swing 5.

The Aon Next 10 is the top 10 FedExCup points earners through the Masters Tournament. They will earn spots in the RBC Heritage.

1. Matthieu Pavon, 986.6 points
2. Ludvig Åberg, 892.7 points
3. Jake Knapp, 799.2 points
4. Will Zalatoris, 760.6 points
5. Christiaan Bezuidenhout, 627.6 points
6. Austin Eckroat, 605.9 points
7. Erik van Rooyen, 593.6 points
8. Grayson Murray, 589.4 points
9. Shane Lowry, 578.9 points
10. Justin Thomas, 575.7 points

The top five FedExCup points earners in the Puerto Rico Open, Valspar Championship, Texas Children’s Houston Open and Valero Texas Open will earn spots in the RBC Heritage via the Aon Swing 5.

It’s the longest stretch — four events — of any this season, meaning it will take sustained strong play to qualify. After a week off for THE PLAYERS, the Aon Swing 5 race picks back up with the Valspar Championship. The standings will likely feature a much different top-five at the end of the week. With more FedExCup points on the line at the Valspar

Championship compared to the Puerto Rico Open, a strong finish means more this week.

1. Brice Garnett, 300 points
2. Erik Barnes, 165 points
3. Victor Perez, 83.3 points
4. Hayden Springer, 83.3 points
5. Jimmy Stanger, 83.3 points

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Eovaldi gets Rangers Opening Day start



This will be Nathan Eovaldi's fourth career Opening Day start

By Jon Thomas

In 1992, Nolan Ryan, who went to Alvin (Texas) High School, made the final Opening Day start of his career for the Texas Rangers. Now, 22 years later, another pitcher from Alvin will take the mound in Arlington as just the second Texas-native to start for the club on Opening Day: Nathan Eovaldi.

"It's special anytime I get to be out there on the field pitching in Texas," Eovaldi said. "But I think it's also special because we won the World Series last year, and [it's special] to be able to come out [and pitch] that first one. There's gonna be a lot of excitement, a lot of adrenaline and the fans are going to be there for the first series. It's Opening Day and baseball is back, so it's very exciting."

It was seemingly a no-brainer for Rangers manager Bruce Bochy, who announced Eovaldi as the starter on Tuesday morning, but said he discussed it with him over the phone back in December. This will be Eovaldi's fourth career Opening Day start, as he also was handed the honors from 2020-22 in Boston.

It's easy to see why Bochy didn't even consider anybody else besides Eovaldi for the Opening Day start. The 34-year-old obviously brings fire and passion on the mound, but he's undoubtedly valuable to the Rangers in many other ways, both on and off the field.

"It's so hard to quantify what he does besides what he brings when he is on the mound," Bochy said. "You see him in the

bullpen in the early part of Spring Training. He's out there watching the guys, he's talking to them. It's great to have that kind of leadership.

"As a manager, you appreciate those guys that step in and reach out. As I've said, they really help you and they really become another set of eyes and ears. Guys just gravitate to him. He just has an infectious personality that you want to be around."

Eovaldi will be the club's 15th different Opening Day starter since 2010.

With 2023 Opening Day starter Jacob deGrom (Tommy John) and Max Scherzer (herniated disc) both sidelined to begin the season as they continue rehabbing, the Opening Day honors unsurprisingly landed with Eovaldi, who has been the pseudo-ace of the Rangers' staff since last season when deGrom landed on the injured list in May.

And he's looked every bit of an ace ever since then. In 2023, Eovaldi earned his second career All-Star bid, posting a 3.63 ERA in 25 starts (144 innings). He was one of the Rangers' many postseason heroes after going 5-0 with a 2.95 ERA in his six postseason outings en route to his second career World Series title.

Eovaldi clinched Texas' Wild Card Series win in Game 2 with 6 2/3 innings against the Rays at Tropicana Field. He held the in-state rival Astros to two runs over 6 1/3 innings to force Game 7 in the ALCS.

He was even on the mound to clinch Game 5 of the World Series, where he went toe-to-toe with Arizona ace Zac Gallen,

who carried a no-hitter into the seventh inning. Despite that, Eovaldi matched him zero for zero all night, even though he had traffic in almost every inning.

But even with a clinching game to his name, the lasting image of Eovaldi in Texas may be his seven innings of one-run ball to seal the Rangers' American League Division Series sweep over the Orioles at Globe Life Field. After his seven dominant innings, the sold-out crowd expressed its appreciation, rewarding Eovaldi with a curtain call as he stood atop the Rangers' dugout to tip his hat to the crowd.

He's sure to receive a similar ovation from the crowd on March 28.

"I take a lot of pride in being able to take that ball on every fifth day and making sure I make all those starts," Eovaldi said. "It'll definitely get the adrenaline going and it's going to be fun, especially coming off the World Series. The fans are going to be there, it's going to be a lot of excitement and it's a huge honor, again, to be able to have that first start on Opening Day."



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VS AUSTIN FC

SATURDAY, MARCH 30 | 7:30PM

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Our NCAA Tournament Predictions



Houston has spent much of the season as the best team in the best conference

NCAA tournament bracket picks and early prediction for every game

By Stacy Urban

Cinderella, Schminderella....

A long shot is not going to win the NCAA men's basketball championship.

Don't believe the hype. Don't be suckered by the song. There is no glass slipper. There is no dancing into the Final Four. One shining moment casts a narrow glow.

As you fill out your brackets, go ahead, inaugurate James Madison, camp out in Grand Canyon, brush hard with Colgate, embrace all kinds of double-digit dreamers throughout the opening weekend.

Feel free to play the annual lock of at least one 12-seed beating a 5-seed, bank on at least half of the nine-seeds beating the eight-seeds, go crazy with one of the play-in winners to stun the world for the opening two rounds.

Here's a look at the players to watch, potential Cinderella teams and matchup analysis for every first-round game in the men's 2024 NCAA tournament. March 19, 2024

But end it there. Reserve the next two weeks for the big guys. Ride only the top-four seed heavyweights into the Final Four. Realize that despite all the legend and lore and heart-stirring music, this tourney filled with Davids is ultimately a grab for Goliath.

There have been 38 national champions crowned since the tournament expanded in 1985. Of those, 24 were No. 1 seeds. That's 63%, a figure that grows to 75% when one considers that 12 of the last 16 champions were No. 1 seeds.

Admittedly, last year, no No. 1 seed even made the Final Four. But it was the first time in a dozen years and only the fourth time in 44 years. A fluke. And look who won — a fourth-seeded team from UConn that was hardly an underdog.

No seed lower than eight — and only three seeds below the top four — have ever won a championship.

When filling out your bracket, use your head, not your heart, and understand that March Madness is really a March from Madness, the tourney growing more predictable by the day.

Based on these truths, my bracket is mostly Cinderella free yet completely unbustable. Check it out. Apologies for all the pumpkins.

East Regional

Connecticut is attempting to become the first team to win consecutive titles since Florida 17 years ago. The tournament's top seed is missing two stars from last year's championship but they return the one mandatory piece for a Final Four contender — a veteran point guard. He is Tristen Newton, and he should be able to navigate the Huskies out of potential Auburn trouble

in the Sweet 16 and lead them on a seemingly inevitable journey to Glendale, Ariz., and State Farm Stadium for the Final. Hold up...

The Huskies will lose in the Elite Eight to the quietly elite Iowa State. The second-seeded Cyclones are devoid of superstars, but they have a bunch of solid players who ranked second in the country in defense and who just won the tournament championship of easily the toughest conference in the country, the Big 12. They beat Houston twice, Kansas, and they will beat Connecticut.

First Round

- Connecticut def. Stetson — Friday, 11:45 a.m. | CBS
- Northwestern def. Florida Atlantic — Friday, 9:15 a.m. | CBS
- Alabama Birmingham def. San Diego State — Friday, 10:45 a.m. | TNT
- Auburn def. Yale Friday, 1:15 p.m. | TNT
- Brigham Young def. Duquesne — Thursday, 9:40 a.m. | TruTV
- Illinois def. Morehead State — Thursday, 9:15 a.m. | TruTV
- Washington State def. Drake — Thursday, 7:05 p.m. | TruTV
- Iowa State def. South Dakota State — Thursday, 4:35 p.m. | TruTV

Second Round

- Connecticut def. Northwestern
- Auburn def. Alabama Birmingham
- Brigham Young def. Illinois

- Iowa State def. Washington State

Sweet 16

- Connecticut def. Auburn
- Iowa State def. Brigham Young

Elite Eight

- Iowa State def. Connecticut

West Regional

This region, which will finish at Crypto.com Arena, is a battle for redemption.

The top seed is North Carolina, which blew a double-digit lead to Kansas in the championship game two years ago and collapsed last year. The Tar Heels are led by that mandatory star guard — RJ Davis — and they have a strong veteran presence in Armando Bacot, who has seemingly been at UNC for a decade.

On the other side of the bracket is Arizona and, well, West Coast types know all about Arizona. Great talent, loud fans, zero fortitude. The Wildcats lost in the first round in three of their previous five NCAA tournament appearances and were recently knocked out of a Pac-12 tournament they should have dominated. This team, however, has one asset those other teams didn't — Caleb Love, a North Carolina transfer who almost single-handedly knocked UCLA out of the tournament two years ago. In front of the thousands of Arizona fans who will descend upon downtown Los Angeles, with his sights set on playing in front of a similar crowd in the Final Four, he will deliver the same crushing blow to his former school.

First Round

- North Carolina def. Howard/Wagner — Thursday, 11:45 a.m. | CBS
- Mississippi State def. Michigan State — Thursday, 9:15 a.m. | CBS
- Saint Mary's def. Grand Canyon — Friday, 7:05 p.m. | TruTV
- Alabama def. Charleston — Friday, 4:35 p.m. | TruTV
- New Mexico def. Clemson — Friday, 12:10 p.m. | TruTV
- Baylor def. Colgate — Friday, 9:40 a.m. | TruTV
- Nevada def. Dayton — Thursday, 1:30 p.m. | TBS
- Arizona def. Long Beach State — Thursday, 11 a.m. | TBS

Second Round

- North Carolina def. Mississippi State
- Saint Mary's def. Alabama
- Baylor def. New Mexico
- Arizona def. Nevada

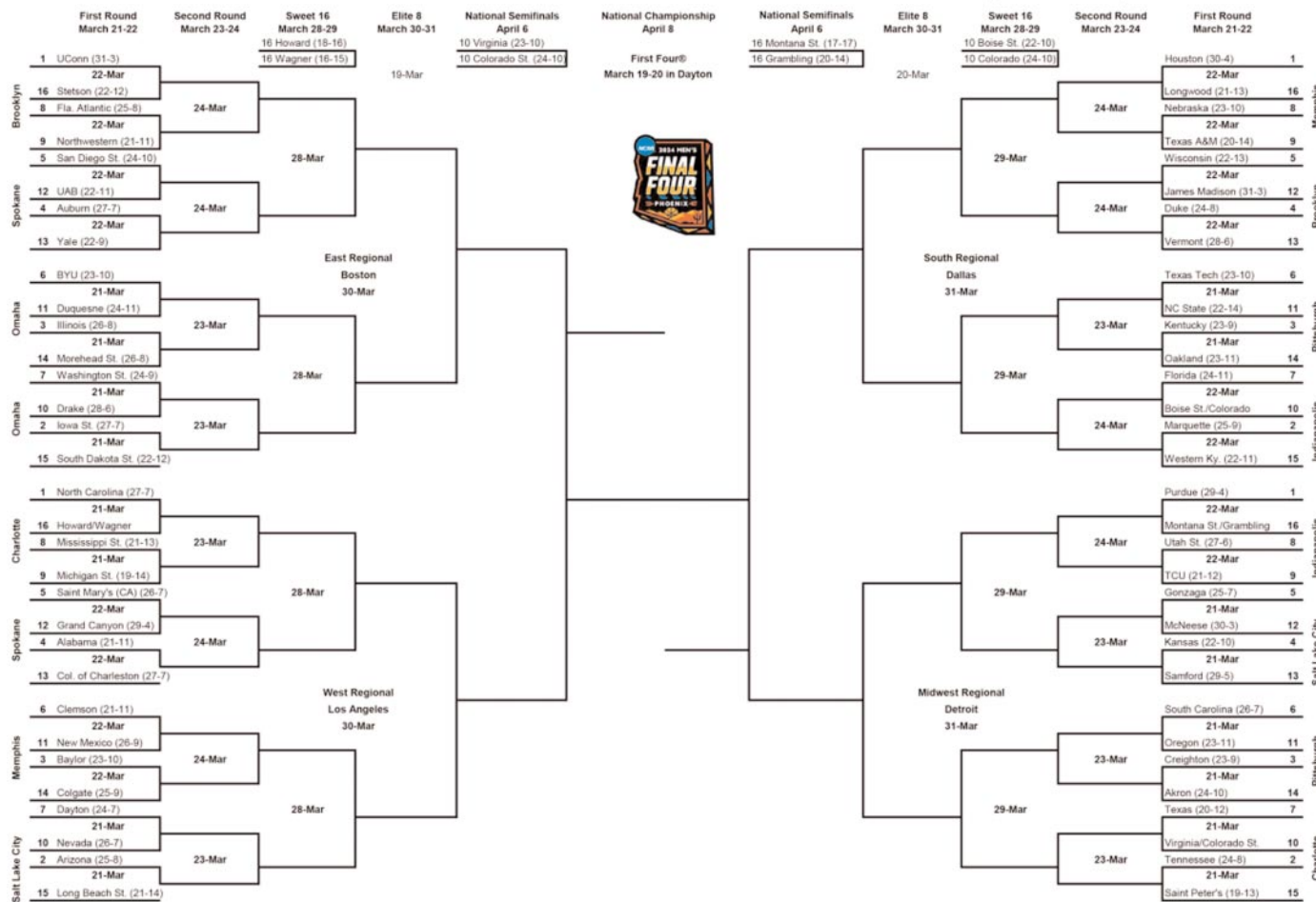
Sweet 16

- North Carolina def. Saint Mary's
- Arizona def. Baylor

Elite Eight

- Arizona def. North Carolina

2024 NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Championship



First- and second-round sites for March 21 and 23 include Charlotte, Omaha, Pittsburgh and Salt Lake City. First- and second-round sites for March 22 and 24 include Brooklyn, Indianapolis, Memphis and Spokane. Regional sites for March 28 and 30 are Boston and Los Angeles. Regional sites for March 29 and 31 are Dallas and Detroit.

South Regional

Houston is the deserved top seed here and the beneficiary of the tournament's easiest path. It is the best defensive team in the nation, leading in both opponents' points per game and field-goal percentage, and there's nobody in this bracket who can outscore the Cougars.

The Cougars may struggle with big-rebounding Texas A&M, streaking James Madison, or hot-shooting Kentucky. But for 40 minutes, no other team in the country can match their combination of smart coaching in Kelvin Sampson and savvy playmaking in Jamal Shead.

Oh, and No. 2-seeded Marquette? A nice team, but the Golden Eagles can't survive the oblique injury that is nagging star Tyler Kolek.

First Round

- Houston def. Longwood — Friday, 6:20 p.m. | TNT
- Texas A&M def. Nebraska — Friday, 3:50 p.m. | TNT
- James Madison def. Wisconsin — Friday, 6:40 p.m. | CBS
- Duke def. Vermont — Friday, 4:10 p.m. | CBS
- Texas Tech def. N.C. State — Thursday, 6:40 p.m. | CBS
- Kentucky def. Oakland — Thursday, 4:10 p.m. | CBS
- Boise State/Colorado def. Florida — Friday, 1:30 p.m. | TBS
- Marquette def. Western Kentucky — Friday, 11 a.m. | TBS

Second Round

- Houston def. Texas A&M

- James Madison def. Duke
- Kentucky def. Texas Tech
- Marquette def. Boise State/Colorado

Sweet 16

- Houston def. James Madison
- Kentucky def. Marquette

Elite Eight

- Houston def. Kentucky

Midwest Regional

Purdue can't keep collapsing, can it? The Boilermakers have been knocked out by a 13-seed, a 15-seed and a 16-seed in each of their last three NCAA tournaments. This year, as a No. 1 seed with giant defending Wooden Award winner Zach Edey in the middle and veterans everywhere, they are surely choke-proof, no?

They are 7-0 against top-25 opponents, Edey leads Division I in scoring, they have the requisite star point guard in Braden Smith and they carry the harsh memories of last season's landmark first-round loss to 16th-seeded Fairleigh Dickinson.

Remember several years ago when Virginia became the first No. 1 seed to lose to a 16-seed when they were defeated by University of Maryland-Baltimore County? Remember what happened the following year? Yeah, Virginia won the national title, and the same turnaround could be happening with Purdue.

The Boilermakers' biggest test will come in the Elite Eight against one of the tournament's most complete teams, a Creighton squad that beat UConn by 19.

Kansas? Too injured. Tennessee? Don't trust coach Rick Barnes in a big game. Gonzaga? Their run is done.

First round

- Purdue def. Montana State/Grambling State — Friday, 4:25 p.m. | TBS
- Utah State def. Texas Christian — Friday, 6:55 p.m. | TBS
- McNeese def. Gonzaga — Thursday, 4:25 p.m. | TBS
- Kansas def. Samford — Thursday, 6:55 p.m. | TBS
- South Carolina def. Oregon — Thursday, 1 p.m. | TNT

- Creighton def. Akron — Thursday, 10:30 a.m. | TNT

- Texas def. Virginia/Colorado State — Thursday, 3:50 p.m. | TNT

- Tennessee def. St. Peter's — Thursday, 6:20 p.m. | TNT

Second round

- Purdue def. Utah State
- Kansas def. McNeese
- Creighton def. South Carolina
- Tennessee def. Texas

Sweet 16

- Purdue def. Kansas
- Creighton def. Tennessee

Elite Eight

- Purdue def. Creighton

Final Four

Houston has the toughness to overcome Purdue's size, and the defensive ferocity to rattle its veterans. The Cougars constantly force turnovers, and pound the boards for offensive rebounds until those turnovers become points. Edey will be neutralized, and the quicker Cougars will dominate. With Love and Oumar Ballo and Pelle Larsson, Arizona has a veteran starting core worthy of a spot in the national title game. Iowa State may slow them, but the Cyclones can't score enough on them, and the Wildcats will use their home-state advantage to roll into the ultimate Monday night.

- Houston def. Purdue

- Arizona def. Iowa State

National Championship

Houston has spent much of the season as the best team in the best conference with the best player and the best defense. In the final game of the season, even amid a Glendale crowd that will be roaring for Arizona, the Cougars will be the best once more.

- Houston def. Arizona

Score: 70-60



Big 12 Power Rankings - Week 7



Oklahoma resurfaced as a team to reckon with

Oklahoma makes a jump in topsy turvy week | Big 12 baseball power rankings

Take a look at last week's edition of the Big 12 baseball power rankings, and you might conclude the guy who did them doesn't know ball.

Somehow, last week's top five all lost series this past weekend, four dropping conference series to lower-rated opponents. The teams slotted 10th through 13th in last week's power rankings all won twice in three-game conference series.

Parity proponents, this was right up your alley.

Amid the chaos, Oklahoma resurfaced as a team to reckon with. The Sooners, who opened Big 12 play with a three-game sweep of Central Florida, followed up by doing the same to TCU in Fort Worth. On Monday, Oklahoma moved into the USA TODAY Sports Top 25 coaches poll at No. 20 and knocked TCU to No. 18, a 10-spot drop for the Horned Frogs.

Here are this week's power rankings. Records and rankings are as of Monday.

1. Oklahoma (13-6, 6-0)

Last week: 6

What to know: Jumping the Sooners from middle of the Big 12 pack all the way to the top spot seems a little much, right?

Counterpoint: They've won eight of nine, and what other Big 12 team is looking great right now?

The Big 12 schedule has brought out the best in Oklahoma baseball. The Sooners have swept Central Florida and TCU the first two weekends.

2. TCU (15-5, 1-5)

Last week: 1

What to know: What's up with the Horned Frogs all of a sudden? They've gone from 13-0 and No. 4 in the USA TODAY Sports Top 25 coaches poll to last place in a 13-team conference in a span of 10 days.

3. Texas (11-8, 2-1)

Last week: 2

What to know: Texas salvaged game three of its series against sub-.500 Washington behind a quality start from sophomore Max Grubbs. The Longhorns' ceiling is limited, though, unless they get Charlie Hurley, Cody Howard and Tanner Witt straightened out.

4. Texas Tech (14-6, 2-4)

Last week: 3

What to know: The Red Raiders got valuable Kevin Bazzell back from an illness-induced nine-game absence. The team took it on the chin, though, scoring five runs while losing two of three at Baylor.

5. Oklahoma State (12-8, 1-2)

Last week: 4

What to know: No. 2 starter Brian Holiday has been superb with a 1.83 ERA. In a 4-3 loss to Central Florida, the Cowboys wasted Holiday's eight innings of one earned run and 11 strikeouts.

6. Kansas (10-8, 3-3)

Last week: 5

What to know: The Jayhawks dropped two of three at Cincinnati. Still, with three weekend starters sporting sub-3.00 ERAs, KU can win any conference series.

7. Kansas State (13-6, 2-1)

Last week: 9

What to know: Brady Day returned to school after the Atlanta Braves drafted him in the 12th round last year and could be

upping his stock. The Wildcats' second baseman is leading the Big 12 in slugging percentage (.770), on-base plus slugging (1.302), home runs (six) and runs batted in (30).

8. West Virginia (11-9, 2-1)

Last week: 7

What to know: We're about to find out what the Mountaineers are made of. Their next five conference series are against Oklahoma, Oklahoma State, Kansas, UCF and Texas Tech.

9. Houston (12-6, 4-2)

Last week: 8

What to know: Cougars lost the last two in a three-game series at Brigham Young, snapping their second six-game win streak of the season. They had won 12 consecutive series dating to March 2023.

10. Central Florida (12-5, 2-4)

Last week: 10

What to know: Getting swept at Oklahoma served as UCF's welcome to the Big 12. The Knights bounced back by tak-

ing two of three from the other Bedlam brother, Oklahoma State.

11. Cincinnati (12-9, 3-3)

Last week: 11

What to know: Favorite team of slugfest lovers, the Bearcats are third in the Big 12 in runs scored and last in team ERA. Big freshman righty Nathan Taylor (5-0, 4.81) is having a nice college debut, though.

12. Baylor (7-12, 2-4)

Last week: 12

What to know: Baylor's pitching took a step forward in a series victory over Texas Tech. The Bears lost 2-0, then won 5-1 and 7-2 with starters Mason Marriott, Collin McKinney and Mason Green allowing two runs on eight hits over 14 2/3 innings.

13. Brigham Young (9-8, 3-3)

Last week: 13

What to know: The key to winning two of three against Houston came in game two. After UH's Jaxon Jelkin fanned 13 in six innings, Easton Jones hit a go-ahead homer in the eighth of a 4-2 BYU victory.

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College Football News and Notes



BO CARTER

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The NFF Gridiron Club of Dallas will host its 15th Annual Scholar-Athlete Awards Banquet Sunday, March 24, at the Dallas/Addison (Texas) Marriott Quorum by the Galleria. The emcee for the banquet for the 15th consecutive year will be legendary sports broadcaster Scott Murray who was honored with the Distinguished Texan Award at the 2021 awards banquet. Tickets for the banquet are still available and may be purchased online. The URLs are for Banquet Tickets: www.nffdallas.org/store/banquet-tickets. The NFF Gridiron Club of Dallas will reveal major award winners for the banquet on March 19 and the high school and college honorees on March 21. The Passion Grants Foundation for a new college scholarship program also will provide the NFF Gridiron Club a \$2,500 scholarship for one exceptional senior scholar-athlete for the next five years starting this month.

The NFF Gridiron Club of Dallas also 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 excit-

ed 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. Special early bird pricing for teams will be available through Friday, March 15.

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-team 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.

Clark Record Watch:

Iowa's Caitlin Clark has passed both NCAA career scoring leader and Washington standout Kelsey Plum (3,527 points from 2012-16) with 3,737 markers currently and all-time major divisions' collegiate leader Lynette Woodard with 3,649 points from 1977-81 during the pre-NCAA, Association of Intercollegiate Athletes for Women era as well as NCAA men's Division I men's DI basketball scoring leader the late Pistol Pete Maravich of LSU with 3,667 points from 1967-70. Clark, the sister of former Iowa State QB Blake Clark (2019-22) and whose father starred in baseball and basketball at Simpson (Iowa), Clark added 86 points in three games to her all-time mark during last week's Big Ten Conference Women's Championship. The Hawkeyes will meet

the winner of the Holy Cross-UT Martin play-in contest in the NCAA Women's Championship in the first round at Iowa City this week in Hawkeyes 12th trip to the Women's Big Dance since 2010...The Iowa All-America also related that she will enter the WNBA Draft later this year in spite of having a fifth, COVID-allowed possible year of eligibility with the Hawkeyes...NAIA All-America guard Grace Beyer of University of Health Sciences and Pharmacy in St. Louis ended her career with 3,961 points over five seasons as the all-time women's basketball scoring leader for all NAIA divisions. 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 Football-foundation.org.

The NIL INFLCR Summit is scheduled for June 22-24, 2024, at the NFF Chick-Fil-A College Hall of Fame in Atlanta. There will be an anticipated 500-plus student-athletes and nationally known speakers will help share ideas and conduct seminars. Some of the top speakers already secured for the 440-capacity conference are Sam Acho, 2010 William V. Campbell Trophy® recipient, former Texas and NFL defensive end, ESPN Analyst; Tom Bratton, Medallion Partners CEO, business consultant; Greg Johnson, McAfee President and CEO, former Intuit executive VP, and former Air Force halfback; and Joe Moglia, former TD Ameritrade Chairman and CEO, former Coastal Carolina head football coach.

NFF College Hall of Fame Facts:

Some notable birthdates in NFF College Hall of Fame annals in the March 17-23 time period are March 17 (1871) John Outland, Hesper, Kan.; (1876) Bill Morley, Cimarron, N.M.; (1905) Joe Donchess, Youngstown, Ohio; (1912) Joe Styhahar, Kaylor, Pa.; (1914) Sam Baugh, Temple, Texas; (1915) Bill Hartman, Thomaston, Ga.; (1916) Bob Suffridge, Fountain City, Tenn.; (1931) Ray Beck, Bowden, Ga.; (1967) Johnny Bailey, Houston, Texas; March 18 (1905) Benny Friedman, Cleveland, Ohio; (1906) Frank Wickhorst, Aurora, Ill.; (1910) Wear Schoonover, Pocahontas, Ark.; (1928) James Williams, Waco, Texas; (1932) Dave Maurer, Duquesne, Pa.; (1938) Joe Kapp, Santa Fe, N.M.; (1961) Curt Warner, Pineville, W.Va.; March 19 (1913) Nello Falaschi, Dos Palos, Calif.; (1914) Jay Berwanger, Dubuque, Iowa; (1931) George Morris, Vicksburg, Miss.; March 20 (1906) Ben Stevenson, Smith Mills, Mo.; (1909) Marchmont "Marchy" Schwartz, New Orleans, La.; (1977) Corey Moore, Brownsville, Tenn.; March 21 (1884) Jim

McCormick, Boston, Mass.; (1889) Jock Sutherland, Coupar Angus, Scotland; (1951) John Hicks, Cleveland, Ohio; (1967) Clarkston Hines, Chapel Hill, N.C.; March 22 (1879) Art Poe, Baltimore, Md.; (1931) Billy Vessels, Cleveland, Okla.; (1954) Ross Browner, Warren, Ohio; (1960) Jimbo Covert, Conway, Pa.; (1969) Russell Maryland, Chicago, Ill.; March 23 (1886) Nathan Dougherty, Hales Mill, Va.; (1927) Wayne Hardin, Smackover, Ark. Some anniversary passing dates of NFF Hall of Fame members are March 17 (1965) Amos Alonzo Stagg, Stockton, Calif.; (1992) Frank Carideo, Ocean Springs, Miss.; March 18 (1975) Biggie Munn, Lansing, Mich.; (2000) Bob Blackman, Hilton Head, S.C.; March 19 (1977) Buck Shaw, Menlo Park, Calif.; March 21 (1971) Gomer Jones, New York City; (2015) Chuck Bednarik, Coopersburg, Pa.; March 23 (1934) George Woodruff, Harrisburg, Pa.; (1977) Joe Stydahar, Beckley, W. Va.

Happy birthdays to NFF Hall of Fame members born March 18 Curt Warner, March 20 Corey Moore, March 21 John Hicks, Clarkston Hines, March 22 Ross Browner, Jimbo Covert, Russell Maryland...

Schedules:

Butler will host Upper Iowa to complete its '24...James Madison and Wagner are set for a 2026 matchup...Mississippi State and North Alabama will open the 2028 season on Sept. 2 in Starkville, Miss., in their first-ever meeting. MSU has used the North Alabama-Florence-Muscle Shoals, Ala., area as a solid recruiting base for several seasons...Nicholls has completed its 2024 slate with a road test at Southern (Baton Rouge) on Oct. 5...Texas State has new series in the works with Kansas State in 2028, Texas Southern and nearby foe Incarnate Word...Massachusetts will travel to Rutgers in 2026 and will host Hawai'i in 2027.

Good Works:

Tennessee State U. Student Government Association president Derrell Taylor and several HBCU chief student governing members were highlighted with a visit to the White House, interviews with White House media and a visit with Vice President Kamala Harris for Black History Month...Notre Dame student-athletes with youngsters of an area elementary school that is closing in June to encourage the group to keep positive attitudes as it heads to future destinations...Several football and marketing offices are making plans for game day activities such as campus fun runs, interaction with community service projects, giveaways of future game tickets in multiple sports, and meet-and-greet ses

sions for non-football student-athletes with hospital patients, assisted living area members and underserved children to brighten their days.

Football Coaches:

SMU head coach Rhett Lashlee was featured in a website video with a first tour of the new Garry Weber End Zone Complex ... Colorado head coach and NFF College Hall of Fame member Deion Sanders has been delegating his off-campus recruiting visits to staff members due to travel and health challenges...Head coaches Eli Drinkwitz of Missouri and Clay Hendrix of Furman saw positive signs on both sides of the ball during early-season spring contests last Saturday...Michigan named Tony Alford running backs coach and Lionel Stokes as defensive analyst...Connecticut offensive coordinator Nick Charlton has left for a post with the NFL Cleveland Browns.

Hometowns of more 2024 college head coaches – Virginia Union: Alvin Parker, Washington, D.C.; Wake Forest: Dave Clawson, Youngstown, N.Y.; Washington: Jedd Fisch, Livingston, N.J.; Washington (St. Louis): Aaron Keen, Cheyenne, Wyo.; Washington State: Jake Dickert, Stevens Point, Wisconsin.

Directors of Athletics:

Texas A&M has named former Omaha and current Nebraska AD and NFF College Hall of Fame standout Trev Alberts director of athletics...FCGU named Colin Hargis director of athletics...Wright State AD Bob Grant is retiring March 29 after 30 years with the Raiders...Arizona AD Desiree Reed-Francois expounded on five priorities for Wildcats athletics and personal motivation for every student-athlete, coach and administrator in the UA program...Texas AD Chris Del Conte addressed the massive South By Southwest gathering in Austin, Texas, and how private equity firms might want solid rationales for investing in college sports...Florida A&M AD Tiffani-Dawn Sykes stated that all her decisions are based on the welfare and best results for the FAMU student-athletes...East Tennessee State AD Doc Sander covered some challenges with the Southern Conference and private schools' desires opposed to SoCon public school wishes on an almost daily basis...Tulane AD David Harris gave reasons for sitting down with each staff member for one-on-one meetings with questions they may have and their goals for the entire department...Vice president and director of athletics at Northern Illinois Sean Frazier shared his prime concerns as 2024 activities continue: clandestine NCAA transfer portal activities, future value of bowl games, a national invitational event for teams not competing in the College Football Playoff, antitrust considerations, and prevailing positivity in college athletics...Coastal Carolina tabbed Justin Gray as men's basketball head coach...Army West Point deputy AD Tom Theodorakis spoke about the positive experience of the NCAA Division I Men's

Lacrosse Championships and how tourney administrators, student-athletes and coaches have to push through fatigue and some occasional negative comments...Clemson executive senior associate AD Natalie Honnen and Iowa State director of sports medicine and associate AD Mark Coberley covered how technology and scientific advancements have allowed athletics trainers to help student-athletes to recover from illness and injury in a more efficient and quicker way...California assistant AD for compliance Kat Brown is now an associate AD level with the Golden Bears...Alabama men's basketball head coach Nate Oats stated that the Southeastern Conference has made a concerted effort to move back into the national limelight with a balanced power base...Chattanooga selected Ashley Alletto as associate AD...Former College Baseball Foundation board member Brad Walker is celebrating his 10-year anniversary as vice president and CFO at Texas A&M-Kingsville...Howard U. has added former sportswriter Tramel Raggs as men's assistant basketball coach...Oklahoma men's basketball head coach Porter Moser reaffirmed his desire to remain with the Sooners program...Monmouth men's basketball head coach King Rice has netted a contract extension through the 2028-29 season...Chris Holtman is the new men's basketball head coach at DePaul with a six-year, guaranteed contract...Western Carolina named Tim Craft men's basketball head coach...Oregon State men's basketball head coach Wayne Tinkle will be back for the 2024-25 season...Texas volleyball head coach Jerritt Elliott has a new contract running through December 2029...Kelly Widener is the new assistant AD for compliance at Lafayette...South Carolina men's basketball head coach Lamont Paris has a contract extension through 2029-30 with a solid compensation upgrade....Florida men's basketball head coach Todd Golden has a two-year elongation through the 2029-30 outing...Ole Miss men's basketball head coach Chris Beard had his contract renewed through 2028-29...Arizona State and men's basketball head coach Bobby Hurley is contemplating signing a contract extension (still unsigned) through the 2025-26 campaign...Head coaches Dawn Staley of South Carolina and Kim Mulkey of LSU explained the heated nature of major college women's basketball in the SEC Championship and similar areas and allowed how some tempers can flare unexpectedly.... Dr. Glenda Baskin Glover was celebrated last week for her efforts as the first woman president of Tennessee State...Washington men's basketball head coach Mike Hopkins, Clemson women's head basketball coach Amanda Butler, Cal Poly men's basketball head coach John Smith, Vanderbilt men's basketball coach Jerry Stackhouse, Stanford men's basketball head coach Jerod Haase, Utah State women's basketball head coach Kayla Ard, Kentucky women's basketball coach Kyra Elzy, Mercer women's basket-

ball head coach Susie Gardner, William & Mary men's basketball head coach Dane Fischer, Fresno State men's basketball head coach Justin Hutson, Michigan men's basketball head coach Juwan Howard, Louisville men's basketball head coach Kenny Payne (there will not be a national search for his replacement), Missouri State men's basketball head coach Dana Ford, UIC men's basketball head coach Luke Yaklich, UTSA men's basketball head coach Steve Henson, Rice men's basketball head coach Scott Pera, Miami (Fla.) men's basketball head coach Jim Larrañaga, Long Beach State men's basketball coach Dan Monson (ironically after his dismissal, Monson paced LBSU to the Big West Conference title and NCAA bid), Oklahoma State men's basketball coach Mike Boynton, and Pacific (Calif.) men's basketball head coach Leonard Perry will not return for the 2024-25 season...The latest position openings in athletics on D1Ticker.com are at Alabama State, Army West Point, Cal State Northridge, Eastern Washington, Lafayette, Lamar, Long Beach State, New Mexico, North Carolina Central, Portland State, Rutgers, San Jose State, Siena, South Carolina State, South Dakota, Southern Illinois, UCF, UC San Diego, USF, UT Arlington, UTSA, Virginia, Wichita State, Wyoming, Ball State, Barry, Boise State, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana Tech, Pittsburgh, Vanderbilt, Boise State, and Columbia.

The Conferences:

Big Ten Conference chief operating officer Kerry Kenny detailed how the popularity of Iowa women's basketball and star student-athletes Caitlin Clark has taken the conference to a new level in the women's game...Southeastern Conference commissioner Greg Sankey emphasized the need for more conversation and fewer media source reports on developments with the College Football Playoff. He also sees a solid opportunity to continue to grow and build the CFP...Big 12 Conference commissioner Brett Yormark believes an expanded NCAA DI Men's Basketball Championship would be good for the Big 12 (with as many as 11 Big 12 qualifiers available in a 96-team NCAA bracket) as well as college basketball...The Big East Conference may be on the verge of extending multimedia rights with both FOX and CBS...Denver's Jessica Hutchinson and Oklahoma's Ragan Smith were Big 12 Conference co-Gymnasts of the Week while the Denver's Momoko Iwai (event specialist) and Madison Ulrich (newcomer) also gained Big 12 weekly laurels...The Pac-12 Conference Network will remain in force covering Oregon State and Washington State and related stories starting July 1...In a story concerning NCAA Basketball Championships, SEC commissioner Greg Sankey noted fluidity and multiple dynamics involved in selecting and conducting the postseason classics...The Big 12 Conference also will keep its Phillips 66 Men's and Women's Basketball

Championships in Kansas City through the 2020-31 season...The Iowa State men's basketball squad won the Cyclones eighth postseason tourney title in 28-year Big 12 competitive history by upending then-No. 1 nationally Houston last Saturday. ISU's women's team under the legendary Bill Fennelly also duked it out with Texas for the Phillips 66 Women's Championship before falling.

The Bowls:

Some NCAA FBS members whose football and/or men's or women's basketball squads have appeared in bowl games and the NCAA Basketball Championships are Wisconsin, Iowa, Alabama, Auburn, Tennessee, Ole Miss, UCLA, USC, Minnesota, and North Carolina, among others ...The 89th Goodyear Cotton Bowl has begun selling and processing 2025 Classic tickets through SeatGeek...

...Executive director Missy Setters of the Radiance Technologies Independence Bowl and Rachel Quigley of the Myrtle Beach Bowl were featured on recent Bowlseason.com podcasts...Arkansas State is looking for its 11th bowl invitation since the 2011 season in December or January...Boston College is 2-2 in its last four bowl appearances with one COVID-19 cancellation and the no-contest due to incessant weather delays in the 2018 SERVPRO First Responder Bowl at historic Cotton Bowl Stadium in Dallas against Boise State.

The Players:

Oregon QB and 2023 NFF William V. Campbell Trophy® winner Bo Nix had some sterling throws and good running times at the UO Pro Timing Day last week...Pender (Neb.) HS senior student-athlete Caleb Kelly has received a University of Nebraska President's Scholarship for payment of full tuition, fees, room and board, books, and pertinent school costs with an additional cash payment of \$5,000 for Nebraska students who post perfect scores on the ACT entrance exam...Oklahoma freshman QB Jackson Arnold was lauded as a freshman starter at OU similar to eventual Sooners transfer QBs Spencer Rattler (South Carolina) and Heisman Trophy winner Caleb Williams (USC)...Former Ohio State TE Sam Hart is transferring to Colorado...LSU's Kateri Poole has entered the transfer portal.

Around the Gridiron and Campus:

Murray State athletics has received a \$1.4 million donation from the Jim Bob Kevil estate and the former MSU Racer Foundation...Northwestern gained a \$5 million pledge from Sara and Harreld "Kip" Kirkpatrick to assist in the building of a new softball stadium...Tennessee Tech athletics has received a principal donation of unknown public amount from Averitt Logistics for renovations at Tucker Stadium ...The Renaissance Search and Consulting Group has been assisting the NFL Chicago Bears and several college departments of athletics in recent talent searches...Some fans questioned the fact

(continued on page 18)

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that all tournament tickets for the recent Big Ten Conference Women's Basketball Championship were general admission and cause long lines outside the arena in Minneapolis...Nevada athletics and Learfield have a new marketing and media contract through 2034...TCU captured its fourth NCAA team championship in history at the 2024b NCAA Division I Rifle Championship, and Colorado nailed down its 21st national team crown (AIAW and NCAA) in the NCAA Skiing Championship earlier this month....

...Minnesota will not play a spring intrasquad game this year in '24 but will have two open workouts for the public and NIL Dinkytown Athletes collective members...Iowa and South Carolina women's basketball squads will be highlighted in next November's Ally National Challenge Invitational...Eastern Kentucky athletics signed a multi-year contract with Collegiate Sports Connect...MLB Arizona Diamondbacks owner Ken Kendrick, a founding member of the West Virginia athletics Country Roads NIL Trust, has distinct ideas about a fulltime head coaching replacement in men's basketball as WVU AD Wren Baker continues a national search for that slot...The Ole Miss Grove Collective added the full roster of the UM softball team to its NIL ambassador program...The Kentucky Basketball NIL Fund has been established to assist the historic UK men's hoops' program...Moody's Investors Service adjusted the University of Arizona's bond rating as UA attempts to help subsidize a \$177 million budget shortage...The Hilton Hotels chain is purchasing Graduate Hotels, located in and around 33 campus locales in the United States and Great Britain, for \$210 million.

NFF College Hall of Fame, Other Notables:

NFF College Hall of Fame member, former Wisconsin AD and head coach Barry Alvarez addressed immediate changes needed to sustain competitive NCAA football and reigning in the NIL...NFF College and Pro Football Hall of Fame member and former Florida star RB Emmitt Smith joined local NAACP chapters in the Sunshine State in urging Black student-athletes after thoughtful consideration to keep UF and other Florida universities in their recruiting plans despite some diversity, equity and inclusion measures taken by the state government...Naismith Hall of Fame retired Duke and Army West Point men's basketball head coach Mike Krzyzewski is not going public with his ideas about the expansion of the NCAA Men's Basketball Championship...Famed Arlington (Texas) surgeon Dr. Keith Meister received accord for developments he has made in arm and elbow surgery for college and pro athletes over the last 20-plus years.

Media Musings:

USA Today's Dan Wolken emphasized the national effect of the NIL and the NCAA transfer portal and how NCAA FBS talent became more spread than past

seasons in comments from retired Alabama head coach Nick Saban...CBS Sports columnist Dennis Dodd explained that the settlement of several jurisprudence cases could cause new subdivisions within the NCAA structure with legal fees cutting into conference distributions as early as the 2023-24 competitive...The Athletic's David Ubben pointed out that several individual FBS season awards will not be included in the EA Sports' College Football 25 game, but will feature the Heisman Trophy and the Goodyear Cotton Bowl...ESPN analyst and former Olympian Jessica Mendoza has a new long-term contract with the network...Hoops magazine and Slam now the college basketball apparel company 19nine...EverWonder Studio and the AND1 Group are launching a NIL-rewarding late fall men's basketball invitational tournament in Las Vegas with approximately \$2 million in NIL compensation for participating student-athletes...On3.com's Eric Prisbell has studied paths for NCAA Division I men's and Women's Basketball Championships' expansion...Fubo's CEO David Gandler has evoked jurisprudence against Disney, FOX and Warner Bros. Discovery over their proposed sports streaming extravaganza...Collegiate Sports Associates senior advisor Craig Littlepage and NCAA vice president for women's basketball Lynn Holzman conversed on career paths for major college administrators and their responsibilities to student-athletes, coaches and their colleges or national organizations...Sportico chronicled the 28-5 start by Indiana State in men's basketball and the success of unlikely hero and NIL aficionado center Robbie Avila for head coach Josh Schertz... ESPN men's basketball analyst Jay Bilas is calling for expanded NIL compensation for postseason tourneys and bowls based on individual performances...FOX Sports will offer a full lineup of Friday night college national telecasts this autumn with matchups to be determined...The Athletic noted that Ernie Johnson of TBS and CBS will have an expanded studio host's role in the upcoming NCAA Men's Basketball Championship for these networks...Progressive Insurance took top honors in men's national television college basketball games' advertising during the 2023-24 regular season with \$2.9 million...The Student Athlete NIL Group studied 50-plus NIL programs managed by SANI and projects \$3 million in total compensation for men's basketball student-athletes in 2024...The ONIT Group trading cards provider believes that these cards will gain value and possible NIL opportunities if marketing techniques prove effective...Sports Illustrated's Pat Forde commented on continuing plans by the Big Ten and SEC for enhanced revenue distribution for certain circuits in the expanded College Football Playoff...Major pay television groups such as Comcast, Charter, Altice, Spectrum, Verizon Fios, and others are seeking to

regain some of their 5.035 million lost subscribers in 2023...Puck magazine's John Ourand outlined a plan by North Carolina AD Bubba Cunningham, Tennessee AD Danny White, Cleveland Browns owner Jimmy Haslam, Philadelphia 76ers owner David Blitzer, Syracuse chancellor Dr. Kent Syverud, and other collegiate leaders to form a think tank, of sorts, to try and solve some of the current challenges facing college football...Spulu is hoping to launch soon in a consortium with streaming networks Disney, FOX and Warner Bros. Discovery for sports programming....

...College Football Realignment's Bill Farley glanced at the different philosophies of the departures and entries from the Pac-12 into the Big 12 Conferences by Colorado and Utah...ESPN's Heather Dinich relayed that commissioners of the Mountain West, Sun Belt, Mid-American, Conference USA, and American Athletic Conferences are seeking ways besides the current revenue distribution proposals to allow the money to be allayed more evenly to the Group of Five circuits...adidas' overall revenue in 2023 dropped eight percent to \$5.2 billion...The Financial Times' Olaf Storbeck updated adidas' continued recovery from COVID-19 financial setbacks under CEO Bjørn Gulden...On3.com's Pete Nakos gathered information that the Louisville 502Circle projects NIL expenditures in the \$3-4 million range for the UL men's basketball team in 2024-25 season...On3.com's Eric Prisbell believes that the days of the dominant men's basketball head coaches such as Georgetown's John Thompson, Temple's John Chaney, Maryland's Gary Williams, Indiana's and Texas Tech's Bob Knight, and St. John's Lou Carnesecca, among others, may be over due to NIL and transfer portal challenges...Advertising inventory for the 2024 NCAA DI Women's Basketball Championship essentially is sold out in information provided by ESPN...An Associated Press study indicates that 55 percent of Americans over 21 years of age thinks NCAA student-athletes should not be permitted to join unions...Several media outlets, including ESPN's Heather Dinich, explained how deadlines were established to sign off for the College Football Playoff multimedia rights' contract for post-2025...March Madness Live, the men's basketball streaming application via TNT Sports with the NCAA and CBS Sports has a new vertical video feed to enhance the Men's Championship experience...ESPN's Heather Dinich and Pete Thamel were lauded for in-depth coverage of the expanding College Football Playoff and efforts to expand the 12-team model to 14 schools...The Tampa Bay Times newspaper's Matt Baker uses multiple reasons to prove that USF football and men's basketball squads are the most improved from 2022-23 to 2023-24 seasons with data such as six more football victories, nine additional basketball triumphs and counting prior to the NIT, attendance figures for

both sports increasing a composite 28 percent, and a 5,000-plus average increase in home football attendance.

FWAA, CSC, NCAA, Etc.:

The USBWA tabbed broadcaster John Fanta of FOX Sports as the Rising Star Award 2024 winner in men's basketball. He will be honored at the association's annual awards luncheon in Glendale, Ariz., during the upcoming Men's Final Four®. A Cleveland, Ohio, native and 2017 graduate of Seton Hall, the 28-year-old has been lauded for his broadcasting versatility and enthusiasm...The USBWA also named Mike Jensen, longtime college basketball writer and columnist for the Philadelphia Inquirer, as the recipient of the prestigious Jim O'Connell Award for excellence in beat reporting...The USBWA also selected Jeremiah Armstead of Fisk as the 47th annual 2024 Perry Wallace Most Courageous Award given to a student-athlete, coach or administrator who shows courage on and off the hardwood. Armstead survived a homeless family situation in Long Beach, Calif., to advance to college basketball duties. The award memorializes Perry Wallace who was the Vanderbilt standout who integrated Southeastern Conference basketball and later became a prominent national attorney...College Sports Communicators members featured in the news and on social media posts in recent days are Jimmy Gill of Rutgers, Tom Fenstermacher of The American, Cody Stark of Sam Houston, Jamie McConeghy of San Diego State, and Sky Kerstein of San Jose State...Alabama, Arizona State, Loyola (Md.), LSU, Michigan, Michigan State, Oregon, Temple, Tennessee, UCLA, USC, and Washington are convening with NCAA enforcement and compliance officials concerning possible issues and probes at their respective schools...New York was named as "The Most Instagrammable City" nationally for photographers, and Houston was No. 10 in the survey...The Georgia Court of Appeals ruled that trial court's ruling that Atlanta's Mercedes-Benz Stadium will not be liable for injuries to a fan during a fight in the stands in a 2017 Alabama-Florida State game...NCAA President Charlie Baker and senior vice president of basketball Dan Gavitt observed that the current, 68-team NCAA DI Basketball Championships represent just 19 percent of the top division men's and women's programs. Baker also appeared on the AthleticDirectorU podcast last week to cover several innovations and reformations occurring within the NCAA structure...The Baker Hostetler law firm's Todd Lebowitz mentioned many technicalities and numerous legal issues associated with any National Labor Relations Board or NCAA rulings dealing with student-athletes as university employees...Fitch Credit Ratings is looking at the U.S. federal student loan program and how it might affect the credit ratings for students, their families and small private colleges that have hundreds of students receiving financial aid

...Economist Andy Schwarz projected unionization circumstances for the New York Times newspaper's Joe Nocera & Ephrat Livni on a conference level and how the payroll market would tend to even out over a period of time...The NHL Buffalo Sabres have added a state-mandated \$5 resale charge for fans who used second-hand groups to sell their season tickets...NBA administrators are looking at a similar professional basketball circuit in Europe and the Middle East...North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper has rescinded the state's NIL executive order to maintain competition with his state and other NIL-granting states...Sixteen former female student-athletes have filed a suit against the NCAA to dispute NCAA regulations

allowing birth-sex male student-athletes to compete in women's sports...The NCAA transfer portal opened Monday for Division I men's and women's basketball...The NCAA has issued memos about two-time transfers for the basketball and spring football windows to allow these student-athletes to gain immediate eligibility at the new schools for the 2024-25 competitive year...The Oklahoma Senate added legislation to allow state universities in the state to pay student-athletes if the federal government or the NCAA pass different measures to keep universities from hiring student-athletes as paid collegiate employees. State Sen. Dave Rader (Rep-Tulsa), the former QB at and head coach at Tulsa, related that the state might face possible

disadvantages with regard to payment regulations in other states...Nebraska Gov. Jim Pillen has released a statement regarding Nebraska AD Trev Alberts' move to AD at Texas A&M: "The University of Nebraska has existed as an institution for more than a century and a half. It is immeasurably bigger than any one person."

2024-25 College Football Playoff Bowl Schedule

(All Games Televised by ESPN, Eastern Standard Time Airtimes TBD)

Friday-Saturday, Dec. 20-21 – First Round (9-12 Seeds in CFP)

Dec. 20 – One game with 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 Seeds

Thursday-Friday, Jan. 9-10, 2025

Jan. 9 – Capital One Orange Bowl, Miami Lakes, Fla., winners of quarterfinals

Jan. 10 – Goodyear Cotton Bowl, Arlington, Texas, winners of quarterfinals

Monday, Jan. 20 – College Football Playoff National Championship Game, Mercedes-Benz Stadium, Atlanta, Ga., semifinal winners.

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