

College Basketball Weekly - Friday, March 4th, 2005
BY MATTHEW HATFIELD

We are a week away from Selection Sunday this coming Sunday. 64 teams (65 if you include the loser of the play-in game) will be chosen for the NCAA Tournament, but only four get #1 seeds. Here are my top four going into this weekend....

- 1. Illinois - Illini just simply do not look like they are going to lose to anyone anytime soon. Deadly outside shooters are there, the development of Roger Powell and James Augustine has taken place and Bruce Weber is a marvelous ball coach.**
- 2. North Carolina - Like I thought at the beginning of the season, all the ACC powers and Big 12 top teams have beaten up on each other. That will continue to happen, but when all is said and done four potential NBA picks put UNC here.**
- 3. Wake Forest - To survive the ACC like Wake Forest has deserves a #1 seed in my opinion, regardless who gets hot in the Big 12 (Okla. St. or Kansas). After the top three in the ACC, everyone else is 7-8 in conference play or worse. It's a slugfest.**
- 4. Kentucky - Freshman point guard Rajon Rondo is playing very, very well at this present time. But wasn't Kentucky projected to win the whole thing going into last year's tourney before bowing to UAB? Not as much experience for this year's team.**

All American Team:

Dee Brown	Illinois - Captain
Chris Paul	Wake Forest
Hakim Warrick	Syracuse
Wayne Simien	Kansas
Andrew Bogut	Utah

Honorable Mention: Ike Diogu - Arizona State

In this Bracketology special (part one of two leading up to the tourney), I am going to pinpoint what teams I think will end up where as far as seeding goes. However, it all could change once these conference tourneys get started and the upsets begin to transpire....

Chicago Regional:

- #1 Illinois - Undeafated team can take a bus all the way to the Final Four in St. Louis.
- #16 Fairleigh Dickinson - Hope to beat out Monmouth for the Northeast Conference bid.

- #8 Mississippi St. - Is one of those teams that can do some major damage w/ a big upset.
- #9 Georgia Tech - Despite a 16-10 record, nobody wants to play last year's runner-up.

- #5 Alabama - Tide are capable of getting to Elite Eight again....in another regional.

#12 New Mexico - Many, including myself, believe the committee takes another MWC.

#4 Utah - Player of the Year candidate Andrew Bogut has the Utes thinking Sweet 16.

#13 Old Dominion - Balanced Monarchs are not an easy out by no means in round one.

#6 Wisconsin - Badgers enter Saturday's play with the nation's 15th ranked RPI and SOS.

#11 Creighton - No Kyle Korver shooter from deep, however, they give teams fits.

#3 Louisville - Are Final Four material if they are in a different bracket than Illinois.

#14 Wisconsin-Milwaukee - Will give Louisville trouble... for about a half.

#7 Maryland - Terps, like the Irish, need their PG (John Gilchrist) motivated to go far.

#10 UTEP - Have only lost once in conference at home this year - to Nevada, 62-60.

#2 Kansas - Talented enough to go all the way, but also inconsistent enough to be upset.

#15 SE Louisiana - Senior center Nate Lofton leads the team in six difference categories.

Syracuse Regional:

#1 North Carolina - Arguably the most talented team in America, UNC has a lot to prove.

#16 Play in game - Monmouth, Portland State and Alabama A&M are three possibilities.

#8 Cincinnati - This team wants to show everyone they are not living off past reputation.

#9 Texas - Fr. Daniel Gibson has stepped up in the absence of Aldridge and Tucker.

#5 Oklahoma - Beat Connecticut, Okla. St. and KU; lost to Iowa State and Missouri.

#12 Northern Iowa - Ben Jacobsen (18.1PPG) leads the third best MO Valley team.

#4 Connecticut - Very promising group that will miss Okafor, Gordon and Taliek Brown.

#13 St. Joseph's - Don't have Jameer Nelson or Delonte West; rely on Pat Carroll's shot.

#6 Charlotte - The 49ers (21-5) have won 20+ games for the second consecutive season.

#11 Buffalo - There's about five or six MAC teams that could be here so just pick one.

#3 Michigan St. - Tom Izzo's team could use Mateen Cleaves or Magic Johnson at PG.

#14 Louisiana Lafayette - It could come down to them and Denver (18-9) in the Sun Belt.

#7 Pacific - International frontcourt; experience of beating Providence in 2004 tourney.

#10 UCLA - Do have the talent, just not the experienced returning players Pacific has.

#2 Boston College - Eagles nab label of overrated if they lose quick & early in this thing.

#15 Niagara - Purple Eagles can establish a lead for a half before running out of has.

Albuquerque Regional:

#1 Kentucky - Young cats have this spot locked up provided they win the SEC tourney.

#16 Portland St. - The Big Sky conference is simply theirs for the taking.

- #8 Texas Tech - Not a good draw for Bob Knight and company if they get Stanford.
#9 Stanford - Need to have a solid assist to turnover ration going into the tourney.
- #5 Villanova - Fraser, Nardi, Ray, Sumpter and Foye make up an excellent starting five.
#12 Indiana - With a better Big 10 tourney than Minny projected, Hoosiers get in.
- #4 Arizona - Are a terror on offense, but get terrorized by others when trying to play d'.
#13 St. Mary's - Could be as high as a ten seed (more likely) or as low as a #14 seed.
- #6 So. Illinois - Solukis have one of the most unheralded guards around - Darren Brooks.
#11 George Washington - After a 17-5 start, Auerbach's old team has gone 1-2.
- #3 Washington - This guard oriented team (not Stanford or Zona) is the Pac-10's best.
#14 Oral Roberts - Expect 22-6 Oral Roberts to be playing as a #14 or #13 seed.
- #7 Nevada - Difference between them and WVA is the Pack have Nick Fazekas.
#10 West Virginia - Like Nevada, WVA lost key ingredients including Drew Schifino.
- #2 Duke - In my opinion, this Duke version is vastly overrated in desperate need of depth.
#15 Winthrop - At 26-5 (15-1) the Eagles have a firm handle on the Big South.

Austin Regional:

- #1 Wake Forest - Demon Deacons will go as far as Chris Paul can them right?
#16 Eastern Kentucky - My prediction is Eastern Kentucky beats out Tenn. Tech here.
- #8 Notre Dame - Point guard Chris Thomas is the key for the Irish, who can catch fire.
#9 De Paul - Shot horribly from the foul line in their tourney game with Dayton last year.
- #5 Pittsburgh - Love the trio of Chevy Troutman, Carl Krauser and Chris Taft.
#12 Davidson - 5-7 outside the conf. is notwithstanding when you consider 16-0 in it.
- #4 Gonzaga - Usually a tournament sleeper team, for 2nd year in a row Zags are no more.
#13 Penn - Led by G Tim Begley, Penn won the Ivy league title, 80-72 over Columbia.
- #6 Florida - Gators hope to avoid the first round upset, something they failed to do in '04.
#11 Vermont - Last year it was Manhattan... could Coppenrath and co. shock Florida?
- #3 Syracuse - Inside-outside of Gerry McNamara and Hakim Warrick is among the best.
#14 Holy Cross - Patriot conference has only three above .500 so Cuse could romp 'em.
- #7 LSU - Strange team you do not want to play a close game with or they can beat you.
#10 Iowa State - Sophomores Curtis Vinson and Will Blalock are the center pieces.
- #2 Oklahoma St. - Are deep and coached extremely well, yet could miss Tony Allen.
#15 UCF - Balanced offense for UCF, whose top scorer hovers around 13.5PPG.