

**2006 NCAA Tournament: National Championship Preview
BY MATTHEW HATFIELD**



#2 UCLA Bruins vs. #3 Florida Gators

Bruins Go For 12th Title; Florida Looking For Its First

Inside the Numbers: Florida Head Coach Billy Donovan is taking the Gators to their second National Championship game in school history. While they are 0-1, the Bruins of UCLA – with a great tradition of excellence – has gone 11-1 all-time in title games. Florida didn't make its first trip to the NCAA Tournament until 1987 under Norm Sloan. Since Donovan's arrival, they have gone to the NCAA tourney in eight consecutive years. Meanwhile, Ben Howland is leading UCLA to their first Natl. title game since 1995 when they won it under Jim Harrick. Of course, the living legend John R. Wooden guided them to their first ten.

47: Number of seconds that George Mason led Florida on Saturday night.

2-of-11: George Mason's long distance shooting against the Gators.

12-for-25: Florida's three-point shooting against the Patriots.

15.4: Average amount of turnovers per game that LSU committed. They had 15 when the evening was done, but quickly found themselves in a hole by committing ten in the first 16 minutes of the game vs. UCLA.

45: Number of points that UCLA has held both Memphis and LSU to the last two wins.

53-47: Minutes UCLA's starters played in the first half compared to their reserves.

0: Number of three-pointers the LSU Tigers made on UCLA's stifling defense.

10 & 12: Current win streaks that Florida (ten) and UCLA (12) bring into Monday night's Championship bout.

NATIONAL SEMIFINAL: MOST 3-POINTERS

YEAR	WINNER	LOSER	3'S MADE
1987	UNLV	Indiana	13
1995	Arkansas	North Carolina	12
2005	Illinois	Louisville	12
2006	Florida	George Mason	12

Florida's Keys: * Get to the Free-Throw Line** - The Gators have a distinct advantage there as they are shooting in the high 80's percentage wise. Guard Taurean Green may be their best one, having made 46 of his last 49 shots at the stripe. Even though UCLA went 8-of-10 from the line in the first half vs. LSU, they went 4-for-7 the rest of the way and have had their problems there in the past – such as against Memphis (6-of-17 in the first half) and Alabama.

***** Make Farmar Go Left** - UCLA sophomore point guard Jordan Farmar loves to go to the cup using his right. When he is forced to go left he doesn't do as well. If Florida makes him go that way then they could be able to use their shot blockers there to intimidate around the rim. If either Bruins guard Farmar or Arron Afflalo is off shooting the ball – which is possible – then that means major trouble for UCLA.

***** Quicken the Pace** - So that UCLA has to play from behind, therefore taking rushed perimeter shoots. Don't be confused though, the Bruins did score 86 points against Arizona at home and had several fast-breaking buckets against LSU. This Bruins team is a better fast-break team than given credit, but if you make it about taking outside shoots in transition, then that should favor the Gators. Also, Florida's size and length underneath gives them the edge to control the backboards.

UCLA's Keys: * Contain Noah** - Florida sophomore big man Joakim Noah isn't unstoppable. He's also not going to be completely shut down you would think. However, if UCLA can successfully keep Noah away from getting favorable post matchups, forcing him to take jump shots, it would work well on their favor. It's also worth noting that Noah has a tendency to travel when he puts the ball on the floor so if he's going to get to the tin, make him drive it there.

***** 2nd Chance Points** - The one and done killed George Mason; Villanova too. When you play Florida you've got to be able to get offensive rebounds and UCLA is no exception to this as they started 0-of-8 from the field vs. Gonzaga and 0-for-5 against Memphis. Florida will try to push the tempo and take the Bruins' stingy defense out of the equation early. Howland's guys must combat that by crashing the offensive rebounds, particularly Ryan Hollins and Luc Richard Mbah a Moute. Both can be a factor through put-backs.

***** Bench Play** - As mentioned earlier, the Bruins got 47 minutes of play from its bench in the previous game. An x-factor for them could be backup freshman guard

Darren Collison. His driving ability into the teeth of a Gators defense that has recorded 34 blocks in this tourney could open up scoring opps for himself and/or others. Another spark from big man Lorenzo Mata, who played well in the national semifinal despite a broken nose, would bode well for them too.

Also Keep An Eye On: Ben Howland. He has come accustomed to using his time-outs in times of need, but also has run out a couple times such as games vs. Bama, Zaga and Memphis. I think Howland is an under appreciated HC on a national landscape and would favor him over Donovan in this matchup. That said, he better use time-outs wisely.....

The spot-up shooting from Lee Humphrey in the second half vs. George Mason and Taurean Green's ability to dish and swish will be awfully pivotal on Monday night. Florida needs these two guys to shoot the rock well to impose its style of play on the opposition and make both Noah as well as Al Horford paint factors.....

Watch three players and their impact defensively: Florida's Corey Brewer; UCLA's Cedric Bozeman and Luc Richard Mbah a Moute. Brewer's quickness defensively bothers teams into pressure mistakes, enabling him to tally some steals and get easy scores on the other end for his team. The co-SEC Defensive POY is just as dangerous on this end as he is on the offensive side of things. Bozeman is a fine defender in his own right, while Mbah a Moute may have something to prove using his quick instincts and keen defensive anticipation. Keep in mind that teams who enter the title game with no players averaging 12PPG in the tourney are 0-4. UCLA has none.

PICK: Florida by 3. I'd be very surprised if Florida makes 12 treys on this UCLA defense. The difference down the stretch turns out to be free-throw shooting, doing in a tough, resilient Bruins bunch.



Florida Head Coach Billy Donovan hopes his second appearance in the National Championship at Indianapolis is better than the first one six years ago, which resulted in a loss to Michigan State.