

## Today in College Basketball - Friday, March 11, 2005 BY MATTHEW HATFIELD

It simply mind boggles me. That is how a team that's just three years removed from winning a National Championship is on the outside looking in to make the tourney. That team? The Maryland Terrapins, who under Gary Williams have now dropped all three meetings in 2005 to Oliver Purnell's Clemson Tigers. Coming into Thursday's ACC Tournament game I believe Clemson was 1-7 all-time vs. Maryland in the tourney. That did not slow them down as Purnell and co. completed the sweep with an 84-72 victory. Leading the way was 6-2 170 pound junior guard Shawan Robinson with 24 points. Robinson, who averaged 10.8PPG in 2003-04, got help from senior Sharrod Ford, a forward that was one block shy from recording a triple-double in the February 22<sup>nd</sup> tilt. Ford was only 1-7 from the floor scoring six points and committing four fouls. However, he had a larger impact than the Terps' top playmaker - point guard John Gilchrist. On the afternoon Gilchrist, last season's ACC Tournament MVP, was just 1-7 from the field as well and had four points.

One upset that I did project was West Virginia knocking off Boston College, the Big East's most overrated team in my opinion. Yes, Al Skinner deserves National Coach of the Year for the excellent job he did with this bunch throughout the regular season. Having that said, WVA really took it to the Eagles and could've won by more than the 78-72 final score. Mike Gansy, the high man for West Virginia, had 21 points, including eight of the team's first ten. Three other Mountaineers scored in double figures: Kevin Pittsnogle, one kid named Young and another kid with the last name Young. Rebounding was a key as it was expected to be. WVA out-rebounded BC on the defensive glass 19-17. In a losing effort it was Craig Smith leading the charge for Skinner and the crew. His 20 points and 9-9 shooting got them somewhat within striking distance late. Still, Smith was the only real productive player since everyone else shot under 50% against a West Virginia team that shot 55% for the game.

Oregon State beating UCLA, Ole Miss outlasting South Carolina, South Florida defeating Cincinnati 80-68 and Memphis knocking off a ranked Charlotte team by 14 points all categorized as upsets. One of the games we nearly saw an upset in was the Washington-Arizona State matchup. The game went to OT where Nate Robinson won it for the Huskies thanks to 29 points via the small point guard. Ike Diogu scored 21, but it simply was not enough. **Best Finish of the Day: Easily UAB-DePaul. Trailing 26-24 at intermission, the Blazers, who reached the Sweet 16 last season after upending Kentucky, made a furious run in the second half. Tied at 56-all, UAB's Demario Eddins hit a three-pointer with less than a second left on the clock.**

### What to Watch for on Friday:

**Northwestern - Illinois:** Okay so why should we be keeping such a close eye on this game? Because this is the first game for the Fighting Illini since dropping their inaugural loss on the 2004-05 season, a heartbreaker at Ohio State. Northwestern does have a 4-7 Big Ten Tournament record and have won each of the last three years in the

conference tourney. However, don't even think about an upset taking place here. Just because the Wildcats beat Michigan, a team that had a comfortable against Illinois before losing, does not mean NW can keep pace. Take Dee Brown and the gang here.



**Illinois' Deron Williams is one-third of the dangerous three-guard attack Bruce Weber uses.**

**Syracuse - Connecticut:** Yesterday's only game featuring two ranked teams was in the Big East between Pittsburgh and Villanova. Same case today as a re-match from last Saturday gets under way between Jim Boeheim's Orange and Jim Calhoun's Huskies. UCONN is clicking on all cylinders, especially with the improved play of one Marcus Williams. Charlie Villanueva needs to step it up a notch or two for Connecticut to beat Syracuse tonight. Freshman small forward scored 17 points in the team's Thursday win over Rutgers. He will be counted upon to help the Huskies improve shooting the basketball from deep and not turning it over. Big East Player of the Year Hakim Warrick and guard Gerry McNamara, a three-point threat that had 25 opposite Rutgers, will show up. Who else will for Syracuse? I believe today is the time for two sophomores - Terrence Roberts (7.2PPG) and the Darryl Watkins (Syracuse's block leader) - to pick up the slack.

**Missouri - Oklahoma:** Quin Snyder's Tigers come into Friday's game with Oklahoma at 16-15 overall. Mizzou is led by sophomore big man Linas Kleiza (15.3PPG and 7.6RPG). Kleiza has the tough task of having to deal with 14.7PPG scorer Tahj Gray, an inside force that muscled his way in for two on the low block. Drew Lavender and Sooners defense will be the difference in this game.

**Iowa - Michigan State:** Pierre Pierce, averaging nearly 18 points per contest, is the Hawkeyes heart and soul. Unless MSU comes out completely uninspired, they should win this one by about 8-13 points.

**Stanford - Washington:** If Stanford is to win it is going to with three-point shooting early on and pounding the ball inside late in the second half. We all know that if there's a weakness for Washington it is inside play since they are so small. Still, I think

Washington will be able to push the ball up the floor quick enough with Robinson and underrated senior scorer Tre Simmons (16.8PPG).

**Georgia Tech - Virginia Tech:** The Hokies absolutely have to win this game in my mind, thus getting an NCAA bid potentially. They can do it as they proved when VT went to Ga. Tech on January 22<sup>nd</sup> and won. This is a pretty good coaching matchup as you've got Paul Hewitt of Georgia Tech taking on the Hokies' Seth Greenberg. Yellow Jackets have probably clinched a birth whether they win or lose. Part of me leans with Va. Tech just because of that --- it means more for them in all likelihood. Jarrett Jack is the key to a Ga. Tech victory, he's averaged more than 12 points and four assists the past two seasons.

**Tennessee - Kentucky:** Buzz Peterson's job may be on the line today as the Tennessee Volunteers face Tubby Smith's Lexington gang at 7:30PM ET. Tennessee has to free up guys on the perimeter by running some screen plays at the elbow area. Don't see a Vols win here, but I do see a Kentucky team getting a #1 seed.

**NC State - Wake Forest:** Julius Hodge v. Chris Paul. This has become a rivalry after the incident between the two where Paul took a shot at Hodge below the belt. Whichever player has the bigger game could see his team win. Having that said, it's Hodge that has to have the bigger game for his team to have any chance of winning.

**UAB - Louisville:** Blazers looked real good in their win on Thursday. Louisville also has been playing rather well as of late. Notwithstanding is the fact that the Cardinals got waxed by Memphis about a month ago. UAB is capable of keeping it close. There are some veterans players on this team so beware of a surprise win.

**Iowa State - Texas Tech:** 18-9 Texas Tech faces an 18-10 Iowa State team that began the season awful. However, the Cyclones turned it around and got some big wins over Kansas and at Nebraska. Look for the Cyclones to get by Bob Knight's Red Raiders in what should be a pretty tight defensive basketball game.