



e-Zine
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Inside Scoop™

by Mel Greenberg

Dance Cards – Hoops Action in the NCAA

With the passing of the 2003 part of the 2003-04 schedule, the first opportunity has expired for the most part to enhance profiles for NCAA women's basketball tournament at-large consideration.

That's what non-conference competition is all about, although there are numerous quality records out there at the moment that are meaningless because non-league opponents are definitely not all equal.

The best way to lock a spot on the Big Dance floor will be through the 31 conference championships that lead to automatic bids. That's where the emphasis shifts on the '04 part of the schedule, although a few non-league dandys lie ahead such as Duke-Connecticut, Saturday, in Hartford, Duke-Tennessee later this month, and Tennessee-Connecticut in February.

Since the opening tip in November, few notions have changed involving the super powers. Most losses have been to each other.

Penn State made a big move to joining the club when the Nittany Lions beat Texas, but then they faltered with losses

to Louisiana Tech and North Carolina. In the middle of it all, coach Rene Portland managed to break a leg when she slipped on the ice outside the Bryce Jordan arena after a practice.

Still, unless it collapses in the Big Ten, Penn State is heading for a Top 16 seed in the 64-team NCAA field. Other sure shots who, by the way, are no surprises, are Connecticut, Texas Tech, Texas, Duke, Tennessee, Minnesota, Purdue, Louisiana Tech, Stanford, Kansas State, and Georgia.

There is another crowd fighting to fill the rest of the best seeds that includes Colorado, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Virginia Tech, LSU, Ohio State, and Rutgers, among others.

Most of all this will be decided in league battles in the Pac-10, Big East, Big 12, Big Ten, and SEC.

Some things you might have noticed so far is the rise to prominence of DePaul, which lost to Tennessee in overtime. The Vols also had an OT escape at Stanford until falling to Texas in Knoxville.

Longhorns coach Jody Conradt, along with former Louisiana Tech coach Leon



Hoop Action – NCAA and WNBA ... Continued

Barmore and Connecticut coach Geno Auriemma are among the very few to experience victories in the Vols' arena. Conrath has been right there with Tennessee coach Pat Summitt in terms of all-time career wins.

Miami is also a team of curiosity after beating Vanderbilt. Villanova, last year's Cinderella story, has continued to win 10 straight at the end of the year – but the Wildcats will be tested early in the Big East against Boston College, Miami, Rutgers, and Virginia Tech,

Temple coach Dawn Staley took her Owls back to her collegiate roots in facing Virginia in Charlottesville in the first round of the Cavaliers' tournament and almost pulled a startling upset, losing 71-70, to her former coach Debbie Ryan.

“It felt weird sitting there in the arena until the game started,” said Staley, who took her alma mater to three Final Fours in the early 1990s.

Connecticut is now the all-time leader in No. 1 rankings in the Associated Press poll with 93, surpassing Tennessee several weeks ago. Consider this: When the Huskies met the Vols in that famous January game in 1995, the Tennessee ratio in No. 1 rankings to Connecticut was 63-0.

Following the upset until right now, the total has shifted to the Huskies, 93-27. Still, remember that Summitt's group did manage to win three straight NCAA titles in that span (1996-98).

Of course, the Huskies have won three of the last four and have a chance to single-handedly snap a tie with Tennessee in terms of an NCAA record home win streak that is now at 69.

But Duke will be somewhat of a barrier, especially in seeking revenge for last season's loss in Durham, N.C.

It's a matchup that will be noticed by Phoenix, with the No. 1 pick in the WNBA draft, and Washington, which has No. 2. That's because Connecticut's Diana Taurasi and Duke's Alana Beard are likely to be the top two choices.

Speaking of the WNBA, the league announced the official demise of the Cleveland Rockers with its talented roster to be dispersed, Jan. 6. That will make the other 13 teams stronger as it did a year ago when Portland and Miami were dispersed.

For outsiders, particularly those playing in Europe, the January Rockers and April collegiate/general draft will make it more difficult to secure a roster spot. **[RS]**



Authority in Women's Sports™ by Brian Straus

To Be or Not To Be – WUSA's Future

Being an *Authority*, doesn't necessarily mean there is an answer. We were supposed to know something soon after the Women's World Cup. Rumors circulated about an announcement in early November or one to coincide with the NCAA College Cup. Surely there would have been some news by the time the holidays rolled around – more than three months after the dissolution of the WUSA. Instead, publicly there has been nothing concerning the resurrection of women's professional soccer but silence, save the occasional proclamation by a league insider or the attorney for the players association that the big news was just around the corner.

All indications suggest that the committee headed by the talented former Boston Breakers General Manager Joe Cummings is still at work, negotiating with potential sponsors and trying to find a way to keep the WUSA brand alive at least through 2004 – there does not seem

to be much sentiment for taking the year off entirely. The league still needs an annual sponsorship commitment of \$20 million in order to return. Not a single agreement has been announced, and the momentum created by the Women's World Cup (which generated a \$6 million profit for FIFA and the U.S. Soccer Federation) has past. We are told that several companies have expressed interest, but their identities remain a mystery.

What REAL SPORTS does know is that the WUSA players are as bewildered as the rest of us. They receive occasional emails from their attorneys containing the same information that is fed to the papers, but have nothing concrete on which to plan their lives. There is next to no communication.

Should the WUSA go ahead with their plan to stage several doubleheader "festivals" around the country next year (there is talk of staging them in cities that did not



To Be or Not To Be –
WUSA's Future ...
Continued

have WUSA teams or scheduling them around the national team's Olympic preparation), the league will be forced to rely on American and Canadian players who opted to wait out this period of uncertainty.

So, as to whether the WUSA will BE or NOT, is unknown. As an *Authority*, you now know the facts – even if those facts are yet to yield any definitive answers. **[RS]**

AMY LOVE – PUBLISHER'S NOTE:

As the founder of REAL SPORTS magazine, I was supporting the league's efforts to find additional corporate sponsorship by presenting white papers to a select group of corporate leaders regarding the business justification for women's sports involvement, including in particular, the benefits of the WUSA. However, the timing of the league materials and business plans did not coincide with the presentation timing for the white papers. Thus, REAL SPORTS is currently not involved with presenting business justification strategies to corporate entities.

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