



e-Zine
March 2005

by Mel Greenberg

INSIDE SCOOP™...Tournament Time

It's March, which means the **Madness is about to begin.**

And in this particular season, the women's collegiate basketball scene is extraordinarily crazy.

The three-year Connecticut reign as NCAA champions is in extreme danger of coming to an end.

Other than LSU's ability to hold the No. 1 position in the weekly rankings most of the season, there have been very few occurrences for reliance.

Conference tournaments are about to begin and there's much to wrangle over.

"I imagine there might be a few coin flips before we have it all in place," NCAA women's basketball tournament committee chair Lynn Parkes said of producing the 64-team draw.

This is the first season in which a pod system, same as the men's tournament, will be used. There will be eight teams at first and second round sites. The two

groups of four may not all be competing in the same region, either.

But before the committee gets to that point, the members will have to wait for the 31 automatic bids to be determined.

Here's a glance at the conference tournament picture and what's at stake. Fortunately, we'll be back right before the Final Four in Indy to see how it all worked out. In sizing up fields, when we use the phrase "one team" it means that's all that's likely to gain NCAA access from a particular league playoff.

In the **Atlantic Coast Conference**, North Carolina and Duke finished in a first-place tie with the Tar Heels gaining the top seed through a sweep of the Blue Devils. Both are assured of NCAA berths with a good chance that one of the two could get an NCAA Top seed by winning the conference tournament.

North Carolina State, Florida State, and Virginia are likely to

also make the NCAA field, and Maryland, who is a first and second round host, may squeeze in, also.

Virginia Tech has a good RPI, but even though the ACC has measured as the top conference this season, the Hokies will probably need an upset or two to get to the Big Dance.

In the America East, Maine has been the clear season leader, but the Bears' profile isn't good enough for a rescue if they fail to win their conference tournament.

The story in the Atlantic Ten has been the astounding work done by Temple coach Dawn Staley in leading the Owls to their first national ranking and a 21-game win streak that's alive going into the tournament.

Temple is playing for a seed with the idea of making it back to the Owls' arena in Philadelphia, the site of one of the regional finals. George Washington is also likely to earn an NCAA bid. Richmond had been a cinch, but the Spiders

have stumbled as of late. Xavier has been a surprise, but the RPI isn't quite there so a few upsets will be needed.

The Atlantic Sun will be a one-team conference in the NCAA race. Central Florida has been the regular season leader.

The Big 12 will be intriguing. Baylor has the best chance for a No. 1 NCAA seed, but Texas and Texas Tech could fight their way up for a better spot in the field. Iowa State and Kansas State are also likely to be Big Dance bound also.

The Big East, ah, the Big East. Conference seeds still have to be finalized, but Rutgers has a chance for an NCAA top seed by winning the tournament. Connecticut and Notre Dame will also be in the top 16, with the Irish having a shot at a No. 2 seed with a Big East title. Villanova is on the bubble. Boston College may have fought back with its recent upset of the Huskies.

The Big Sky will be a one-team affair, although that one spot



Spread the word - Annual TEAM REAL SPORTS memberships available for just \$14.99 and it includes the exclusive members only T-Shirt. Call 800-650-0122.

looks to be contested between Montana and Weber State.

Liberty is again dominating the **Big South**, another one-team league.

Keep an eye on the **Big Ten**. Top conference seed Ohio State and No. 2 Michigan State both have shots at NCAA No. 1 seeds. Penn State and Minnesota appear in, but Purdue is on the bubble. Iowa might slide into the Big Dance with some upsets.

The **Big West** is another one-team affair in terms of not getting at-large berths for the runner-up. UC Santa Barbara, the regular season leader, has a weak RPI.

The **Colonial** is interesting with the emergence of Delaware who swept Old Dominion during the season. However, the Blue Hens need to win the tournament. The Lady Monarchs have more going for them to get an at-large berth. Drexel has been a surprise in third place after being picked for ninth.

First-place DePaul is a lock out of **Conference USA**. Louisville, Houston, and TCU should also make the field.

Wisconsin-Green Bay has dominated the **Horizon League** and has an outside shot to be

saved if it doesn't win the conference.

Dartmouth and Harvard are battling for the one spot in the **Ivy League**, which doesn't hold a postseason tournament, but might need a playoff to break a tie.

In the **Metro Atlantic**, Marist edged Canisius by a game in the regular season for first place, but a Cinderella could come out of here. Again, RPI figures are too horrendous for more than one team to the NCAAs.

The same goes in the **Mid-American Conference** which might be anyone's to win among Kent State, Marshall, Bowling Green, and Eastern Michigan.

Western Illinois is the favorite in the one-team **Mid-Continent** tournament.

Coppin State and Hampton are currently tied for first in what will be a one-team **Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference** representation,

The **Missouri Valley**, which has seen better days, might gain two teams if frontrunner Southwest Missouri falters. There are no guarantees, however.

New Mexico and Utah are tied in the **Mountain West** and both are likely NCAA-bound, but no more.

St. Francis of Pennsylvania, a perennial conference champion, is again the frontrunner in the one-team **Northeast Conference**.

In the **Ohio Valley**, a battle for one NCAA berth will occur among Eastern Kentucky, Southeast Missouri, and Tennessee Tech.

In the mysterious **PAC-10** where RPI numbers and standings don't correlate, Stanford gets a No. 1 NCAA berth by winning the title. Oregon and Arizona State have the next best chances, while Arizona, Southern Cal, and UCLA will try to catch the NCAA committee's eye.

Holy Cross is the likely winner in the one-team **Patriot League**.

The **Southeastern Conference** isn't what it used to be this season, but LSU has a No. 1 seed in the NCAA wrapped up, and Tennessee is likely to earn a No. 2. Vanderbilt and Georgia are likely to be the other two representatives.

Alcorn State is the favorite to be the one team out of the **South-western Athletic Conference**.

Chattanooga is the clear frontrunner in the **Southern Conference**, but can't afford an upset.

The one-team **Southland** looks to be contested by Louisiana-Monroe and Texas-Arlington.

RPI numbers are not good in the **Sun Belt**. The favorite is Western Kentucky, with a challenge from Middle Tennessee or Arkansas State.

Louisiana Tech (remember them?) is the favorite in the **Western Athletic Conference**. Rice has an outside shot at an at-large bid by getting to the league title game. The Techsters will be saved if they stumble.

Because the number of adjustments for wrong winners is likely to be quite low, Gonzaga might be saved if the Zags don't win the **West Coast Conference**.



Check out
REAL SPORTS
Apparel at
www.realsportsmag.com

Here and there.

Van Chancellor, the WNBA's Houston Comets coach who led the U.S. to a gold medal last summer and his own team to the first four WNBA titles is a finalist for the Naismith Hall of Fame, as is former LSU coach Sue Gunter. Remember, the top-ranked Tigers' roster was built by her before her resignation after last season because of failing health.

In the WNBA world, assistant Washington Mystics coach Linda Hargrove has been named the team's general manager. Keep an eye on this move because it might be the first in a series of actions involving Chamique Holdsclaw, who left the team at midseason because of depression but is no honing her game in Spain. [RS]

real Collector's Edition
SPORTS e-Zine
The Authority in Women's Sports™



On-line Edition now available
With out a pass code. Visit
www.realsportsmag.com

Receive Your Own Most
Important Moments In Sports
Editorial Poster when you Join
TEAM REAL SPORTS.
Call 800-650-0122 or go online.