



e-Zine March 2007

Your *Inside Scoop* (TM)

MADNESS REIGNS

March Madness has arrived more maddening than ever, especially when it comes to projecting the field of 64 in the NCAA Women's Tournament.

In one sense, this is a season in which a 16-team field would have been just right, not because there are 16 teams that have the strongest shots at winning the trophy, but because that might accommodate the 10 or so teams with the best chances to claim the national title.

Never before has our list been so low in terms of teams with "locks" at winning the championship. This means the committee might have a real hard time next Sunday wrapping everything up for Selection Monday. On the other hand, everything might drop into place through the next set of regular season brains.

The power No. 1 regional seeds on the NCAA bracket will go to at least two Atlantic Coast Conference schools – Duke with the overall top pick and North Carolina, although a month ago a third school was up there until the defending NCAA champion Maryland Terrapins stumbled against Georgia Tech.

Connecticut is likely to earn a No. 1 seed by winning the Big East title, while Tennessee has the other No. 1 wrapped up no matter what its fate is in this season's Southeastern Conference tournament.

Unless Middle Tennessee stumbles in the Sun Belt, no conference champion in a slew of one-team only projected groups has much of a chance to be rescued for the at-large bid.

BY LOOKING CONFERENCE-BY-CONFERENCE, HERE'S WHAT WE GOT:

The America East, Atlantic Sun, Big Sky, Big South, Big West, Conference USA, Horizon, Ivy (Harvard has clinched), Metro Atlantic, Mid-American, Mid-Continent, MEAC, Missouri Valley, Northeast, Ohio Valley, Patriot, Southern, Southland, SWAC, Western Athletic, and the Sun Belt conferences will not have to feel bad about the lack of teams from these groups to advocate to the NCAA committee.

Elsewhere, the Atlantic Coast brought an upset with North Carolina beating North Carolina State 60-54, but Duke and Maryland are still locks with Florida State having a good chance to also be asked to dance.

The Atlantic Ten, also under way, is looking at George Washington, Temple, and Xavier, the host of the A-10 affair, as teams that are NCAA worthy – but St. Joseph's upset of top-seeded George Washington could leave Temple out of the party.

The Big 12, which has yet to begin, seems likely to supply Oklahoma, Texas A&M, Baylor, Nebraska, and Iowa State to the NCAA.

The Big East also is deep in numbers, but just how deep will be determined next weekend. Coach Geno Auriemma and his Huskies are likely to win the Big East, which is just getting under way. Rutgers, Marquette, and, maybe, West Virginia are enjoying "lock" status. Pittsburgh, Notre Dame, and South Florida are also strongly in the hunt.

The Big10, which played this weekend, is limited to Ohio State, Purdue and Michigan State, with the first two in the final tonight. The Colonial Athletic Association is being spoken of fondly as a conference that will benefit from the shortfalls. The non-conference champion in the CAA among Old Dominion, Delaware, and James Madison will probably be offered one or two slots.

Bowling Green could be rescued if it doesn't win the MAC, but only if there's still room.

The PAC-10 champion will be determined tonight with Arizona State and Stanford competing tonight for the title with Cal and perhaps Washington and USC looking for an at-large team bid.

Tennessee, Georgia, LSU, and Vanderbilt will all be in the NCAAs with nice seeds or great seeds. Mississippi will be in the field, also, but that's it the way the season has played itself out.

And that's the way it is, but we may be back in a week or so after Selection Monday to take our medicine if we're wrong.

Exclusive to REAL SPORTS
By Mel Greenberg