

BRACKET NEWS

“Unfit news that I’ll still Print”

They Call It “The Streak”

It all started innocently enough when, in the spring of 1995, Dave Coleman, who was living in Nashville, and some high school friends decided to meet in Memphis and go to the first round games of the Men’s NCAA Basketball Tournament. Now, after twenty seven years it is a firmly established tradition. In fact, the complete history of this annual sojourn is meticulously documented at their website ncaatradition.com.

The guys go to great lengths to soak up the culture of whichever city they visit but mostly they go for the basketball, and have they seen some great games. If you use the 12-15 seeds over 5-2 seeds as a definition of real upsets (16/1 a true anomaly) this crew has witnessed twelve of these out of twenty six opportunities. That’s 46%. Since the NCAA Tournament went to a 64 team field in 1985 these upsets have occurred just 24% overall. Also, on 2014 they saw a 14/3 upset with Duke falling to Mercer. (Continued)

On to the Regionals

Well, wasn’t that fun?! The first mini-tourney is in the books on both the men’s and women’s brackets and it has been quite a ride getting down to the 16 team regionals. I have developed a crude measure, Instability of Predictability Factor (IPF), to reflect how close to “chalk” each overall bracket and regional bracket performed. This is done by adding the seed value of each team in each regional final four. A score of 10 is “chalk” because $1+2+3+4=10$. The overall IPF is determined by adding all of the remaining seed numbers and dividing by 40 then subtracting 1.0 (the index number). The closer to 0 the more stable (predictable) is the bracket. This can be done for each regional by adding seeds and dividing by 10.

So how do these numbers play out? First the eye test and bracket scores seem to indicate that the Women’s tournament has been less erratic than the Men’s. Indeed the IPF for the Women is 0.5 while the Men’s is more than double at 1.1. This is even though the Men had the only region to score a perfect 10, the West with Gonzaga, Duke, Texas Tech and Arkansas. The problem for the Men was a string of upsets in the Midwest and East Regions. In the Midwest both Iowa St and Miami (FL) won two games versus lower seeds to advance, knocking out the 3 and 2 seeds respectively in the round of 32. The Men are now guaranteed to have a double digit seed in the Elite Eight. In the East there is a Peter problem- St. Peter’s to be specific. The 15th seeded Peacocks showed some Jersey Boy moves to both Kentucky and Murray State as they rolled into the Sweet 16.

On the Women’s side there are only two double digit seeds left, both 10 seeds, South Dakota and Creighton. They are in different regions so there is no guarantee that one will make the Elite Eight. For all of its apparent stability, but for 3 or 4 possessions in last night’s Tennessee and UConn hard earned victories the Women would be just as crazy as the Men.

“Streak” (Continued)

That was the fourth time they had seen Duke and the Blue Devils had never managed to survive the first weekend. They finally got off the snide in 2019 when our intrepid March Madness Mavens watched as Duke outlasted upset minded UCF 77-76 to advance to the Sweet Sixteen.

The biggest upset they've seen was last weekends 15/2 when St. Peter's downed Kentucky in Indy.

Another notable game occurred in 2000. This was the 7/2 upset of Tulsa over Cincinnati in the round of 32. The game featured an up and coming Bill Self coaching against the well established Bob Huggins.

As is their tradition they always choose the next years site as the weekend winds down. So, 2023? It's Denver, CO- on with the show!



The Crew eating- a close second to going to the games! (DC on R)

What's in a Name

Throughout these tournaments there is a constant churn of sound bites centering around both teams and individuals, sometimes both embodied in one entity. At this early stage of the Men's tourney a lot of the spin centers around Coach K and St. Pete (may they meet soon) but from my perspective through the round of 32 there are two names that stand out, and I'll be frank- Aloysius and O'Connell.

NPR recently ran a story about the origins of Gonzaga University's name. It is well known that GU is a Jesuit institution. When the school was founded in 1887, Father Joseph Cataldo, an Italian Jesuit felt it appropriate to name the school after another Italian Jesuit, one Luigi Gonzaga. As a young man of 18 in the late 1500's Luigi Gonzaga refused his birthright title of Marquis and joined "The Order of St. Ignatus" (AKA "The Society of Jesus"; the Jesuits). This involved a vow of poverty and the Latinization of his name to Aloysius!

It seems that young Aloysius truly embodied the Jesuit mottos of "For the greater glory of God" and "Men for Others" for, while studying for the priesthood, he regularly wandered the streets of Rome caring for and administering to victims of the Plague. He contracted plague himself and died at the age of 23. This tale of the namesake of GU makes it ironic that one of the most famous and accomplished graduates of Gonzaga, John Stockton, who became the NBA's all time leader in both steals and assists, has denied the current pandemic and railed against vaccinations. He was forced by the University to relinquish his season tickets for the 2021-22 season due to noncompliance with their COVID policies.

Now - the O'Connell part. Most will think of Alex O'Connell, Creighton wing and Duke transfer, for his stellar first and second round play. He was instrumental in the Bluejays almost upset of Kansas in the round of 32. Nope, I am referring to referee Brian O'Connell, who inappropriately called a technical foul on RJ Melendez of Illinois for hanging on the rim after a breakaway dunk. The dunk pulled the Illini within 4 points of Houston and could have been a major momentum swing but for the "T".