

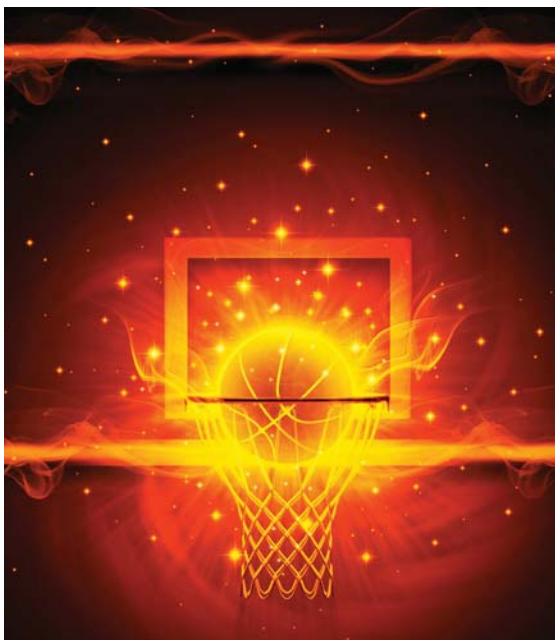
Volume 36, Issue 11-12

March 18-April 5, 2021

**SPECIAL EXPANDED DOUBLE-ISSUE!**

# MARCH MADNESS TOURNAMENT GUIDE!

**NCAA, NIT AND CBI TOURNAMENTS INSIDE**



- *Picks on Opening Round Games*
- *NCAA Tourney Best Bets*
- *NCAA Incredible Stat*
- *Round By Round History*
- *Offensive & Defensive Team Stats*



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**GET EVERY EDGE IMAGINABLE**

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## 2021 MEN'S NCAA BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP March 18 - April 5

Once again, 68 participants celebrate an invitation to the most festive 'Party' of the year – the **2021 NCAA Men's Basketball Championship**. The lines are out, our homework is done, and we invite you to peruse our biggest PLAYBOOK Basketball Newsletter of the season. Next week we'll return with a look at the Sweet Sixteen matchups and subsequent rounds leading up to the National Championship game in Indianapolis, Indiana on April 5.

**This year's tournament will be held entirely in Indiana because of the pandemic.** There are some slight changes to how the bracket will be seeded. The top four seeds will be handled the same and so will the First Four. The changes will come in how the rest of the bracket is completed. Teams will be placed in the bracket based on rankings without the usual considerations for geography. This is called using the "S-curve" to fill the bracket. There will be 37 at-large selections (one more than normal) and 31 automatic qualifiers (one fewer than normal). The Selection Committee will still follow its bracketing principles, like not matching teams from the same conference against each other in early rounds.

### TOURNAMENT INCREDIBLE STAT

*Wallethub says your chance of filling out a perfect NCAA bracket is – wait for it – 1 in 92.6 quintillion.*

### TOURNAMENT AWESOME ANGLE

PLAY AGAINST any No. 2 seed as a favorite of 16 or more points in the first round of the NCAA tournament if both teams are coming off a win.

### 2 FOR THE MONEY

ATS W-L Record Since 1991:  
**15-1-1**  
(94%)

**Play Against: Alabama, Houston & Ohio State**

## LET THE GAMES BEGIN!

Included in this chart are each team's overall Straight Up (SU) and Against the Spread (ATS) marks in all games for the season, along with their respective records versus fellow NCAA Tournament Teams (TT). ALL ATS UNLESS NOTED.

TEAM	SU	ATS	SU/TT	ATS/TT
ALABAMA	24-6	16-12-2	7-4	6-5
APPALACHIAN ST	17-11	12-10-2	0-1	0-1
ARKANSAS	22-6	17-9-1	6-6	6-5-1
BAYLOR	22-2	15-9	9-2	7-4
BYU	20-6	14-8-3	2-4	3-1-2
CLEMSON	16-7	12-11	7-5	6-6
CLEVELAND ST	19-7	20-6	0-2	1-1
COLORADO	22-8	16-13-1	7-4	5-5-1
CONNECTICUT	15-7	16-6	3-4	5-2
CREIGHTON	20-8	13-15	5-4	4-5
DRAKE	25-4	20-6-1	1-2	1-2
DREXEL	12-7	13-5-1	0-0	0-0
FLORIDA	14-9	10-13	3-6	3-6
FLORIDA ST	16-6	11-9-2	6-4	5-4-1
GEORGETOWN	13-12	16-9	3-7	6-4
GEORGIA TECH	17-8	15-10	6-4	8-2
GONZAGA	26-0	12-12-2	7-0	3-2-2
HOUSTON	24-3	18-8	2-1	1-2
ILLINOIS	23-6	19-10	10-6	8-8
IOWA	21-8	17-12	11-5	8-8
KANSAS	20-8	14-12-1	8-8	7-8-1
LOYOLA CHI	24-4	16-9-1	3-2	3-2
LSU	18-9	14-13	4-6	5-5
MARYLAND	16-13	12-16	6-9	6-9
MICHIGAN	20-4	16-7-1	10-3	9-4
MICHIGAN ST	15-12	8-19	4-10	5-9
MISSOURI	16-9	12-12-1	7-4	7-3-1
N CAROLINA	18-10	13-13-2	3-8	3-7-1
N TEXAS	17-9	16-9	0-3	1-2
OHIO U	15-7	13-7	1-1	2-0
OHIO ST	21-9	18-11-1	11-7	12-6
OKLAHOMA	15-10	12-12-1	5-8	7-5-1
OKLAHOMA ST	20-8	17-10-1	11-6	12-4-1
OREGON	20-6	14-12	3-5	3-5
OREGON ST	17-12	18-9-1	5-5	7-3
PURDUE	18-9	14-13	6-7	5-8
RUTGERS	15-11	13-13	5-9	7-7
SAN DIEGO ST	23-4	13-12-1	2-3	2-3
ST BONAVENTURE	16-4	13-6-1	2-1	2-0-1
SYRACUSE	16-9	12-13	4-6	4-6
TENNESSEE	18-8	14-12	7-5	6-6
TEXAS	19-7	12-13-1	8-7	6-8-1
TEXAS TECH	17-10	10-16-1	5-10	3-11-1
UCLA	17-9	12-14	2-7	2-7
UCSB	21-4	14-10	0-0	0-0
USC	22-7	16-12-1	5-5	4-5-1
UTAH ST	19-8	15-11	2-3	2-3
VCU	19-7	14-11-1	2-3	1-3-1
VILLANOVA	16-6	12-10	5-3	4-4
VIRGINIA	18-6	11-12-1	6-3	4-5
VIRGINIA TECH	15-6	12-9	3-3	3-3
W VIRGINIA	18-9	13-14	8-9	7-10
WICHITA ST	16-5	9-9-1	1-3	2-1-1
WISCONSIN	17-12	14-15	4-10	5-9

# TOP 25 TEAMS ACCORDING TO NATIONAL RATINGS SYSTEMS

KENPOM			NCAA NET			RPI			SAGARIN		
Ratings by college basketball stat wizard Ken Pomeroy			See below right for explanation of how NET Rankings are determined			Power ratings derived from game results versus Division I teams only			College basketball computer ratings from Jeff Sagarin (USA Today Sports)		
1	GONZAGA	+38.05	1	GONZAGA		1	GONZAGA	.667	1	GONZAGA	96.05
2	MICHIGAN	+32.22	2	BAYLOR		2	ALABAMA	.638	2	BAYLOR	93.23
3	ILLINOIS	+32.04	3	ILLINOIS		3	HOUSTON	.633	3	ILLINOIS	92.93
4	BAYLOR	+30.93	4	MICHIGAN		4	BAYLOR	.633	4	MICHIGAN	91.92
5	IOWA	+30.33	5	HOUSTON		5	MICHIGAN	.628	5	IOWA	91.77
6	HOUSTON	+30.25	6	IOWA		6	SAN DIEGO STATE	.627	6	HOUSTON	90.64
7	OHIO STATE	+26.85	7	ALABAMA		7	BYU	.626	7	OHIO STATE	89.25
8	ALABAMA	+26.42	8	OHIO STATE		8	OKLAHOMA STATE	.626	8	VIRGINIA	88.82
9	LOYOLA CHICAGO	+25.18	9	LOYOLA CHICAGO		9	ILLINOIS	.619	9	ALABAMA	88.74
10	VIRGINIA	+24.08	10	KANSAS		10	ST. BONAVENTURE	.619	10	KANSAS	88.20
11	WISCONSIN	+24.08	11	VIRGINIA		11	ARKANSAS	.614	11	VILLANOVA	88.15
12	VILLANOVA	+24.05	12	TENNESSEE		12	KANSAS	.608	12	FLORIDA STATE	87.83
13	PURDUE	+23.70	13	ARKANSAS		13	WEST VIRGINIA	.607	13	WISCONSIN	87.33
14	USC	+23.65	14	COLORADO		14	OHIO STATE	.606	14	CREIGHTON	87.23
15	FLORIDA STATE	+23.50	15	TEXAS TECH		15	USC	.606	15	ARKANSAS	87.19
16	CONNECTICUT	+23.33	16	VILLANOVA		16	TEXAS	.606	16	PURDUE	87.15
17	COLORADO	+23.11	17	SAN DIEGO STATE		17	LOYOLA CHICAGO	.605	17	TENNESSEE	87.07
18	ARKANSAS	+22.96	18	USC		18	LSU	.604	18	TEXAS	86.98
19	CREIGHTON	+22.73	19	BYU		19	VCU	.602	19	NORTH CAROLINA	86.81
20	SAN DIEGO STATE	+22.72	20	TEXAS		20	CLEMSON	.600	20	SAN DIEGO STATE	86.36
21	TENNESSEE	+22.49	21	PURDUE		21	VIRGINIA	.599	21	TEXAS TECH	86.27
22	KANSAS	+22.46	22	ST. BONAVENTURE		22	VILLANOVA	.599	22	CONNECTICUT	86.24
23	TEXAS TECH	+22.38	23	WEST VIRGINIA		23	COLORADO	.598	23	COLORADO	85.98
24	BYU	+22.37	24	FLORIDA STATE		24	MISSOURI	.597	24	BYU	85.90
25	ST. BONAVENTURE	+22.25	25	CREIGHTON		25	WICHITA STATE	.596	25	OKLAHOMA STATE	85.86

## The 8 Elite Elements

17 OF THE LAST 18 NCAA champions each possessed these attributes:

- 1) A 1, 2 or 3 seed from a major conference
- 2) Averaged > 73 PPG
- 3) Allowed < 73 PPG
- 4) Owned an average scoring margin of 7 > PPG
- 5) Faced a Top 75 schedule
- 6) Had a coach with 6 or more NCAA tourney appearances and at least one Elite 8 game
- 7) Either in NCAA tourney LY or
- 8) Have an All-American player

This year's qualifying teams include:

**Baylor, Gonzaga & Kansas**  
(only loss 7 years ago when UConn won)

## WHAT ARE THE NCAA NET RANKINGS?

The **NET Rankings** are a sorting tool the NCAA used to evaluate teams in contention for at-large bids into the NCAA Tournament. The rankings relied on five factors – **team value index, net efficiency, winning percentage, adjusted win percentage and scoring margin.**

1. **TEAM VALUE INDEX** – An algorithm developed to reward teams who beat good teams. It takes into account three factors: opponent, location and winner.
2. **NET EFFICIENCY** – A team's offensive efficiency minus its defense efficiency.
3. **WINNING PERCENTAGE** – Calculated by dividing a team's wins by its total games played.
4. **ADJUSTED WIN PERCENTAGE** – This metric is a winning percentage that is weighted based on location and result. Here is the breakdown: Road win = + 1.4 / Neutral win = + 1 / Home win = +.6 / Road loss = -.6 / Neutral loss = -1 / Home loss = -1.4
5. **SCORING MARGIN** – A team's total points minus its opponent's points. The winning margin was capped at 10 PPG "to prevent rankings from encouraging unsportsmanlike play," according to the NCAA.

**NCAA quadrant system (all numbers refer to the NET ranking of opponents played):**

- Quadrant 1:** Home 1-30; Neutral 1-50; Away 1-75.
- Quadrant 2:** Home 31-75; Neutral 51-100; Away 76-135.
- Quadrant 3:** Home 76-160; Neutral 101-200; Away 136-240.
- Quadrant 4:** Home 161-plus; Neutral 201-plus; Away 241-plus.

## NCAA TOURNAMENT SUPER 16 COACHES

Top 16 overall records accrued in NCAA Tournament games by selected coaches participating in the 2021 NCAA Tournament. All results are since 1990 and appear in SU and ATS sequence. Play-in Round included with Round One.

COACH	TEAM	ALL GAMES	ROUND 1	ROUND 2	ROUND 3	ROUND 4	ROUND 5	ROUND 6	OPTIMAL MRT ATS ROLES
ALTMAN	Oregon	15-14 / 18-11	8-6 / 8-6	4-4 / 4-4	2-2 / 4-0	1-1 / 1-1	0-1 / 1-0	0-0 / 0-0	5-0 ATS vs. No. 1 seeds
BENNETT	Virginia	16-8 / 10-14	7-2 / 3-6	4-3 / 3-4	2-2 / 2-2	1-1 / 1-1	1-0 / 0-1	1-0 / 1-0	2-8 ATS off ATS win
BEARD	Texas Tech	9-3 / 8-4	3-0 / 12-1	2-1 / 2-1	2-0 / 2-0	1-1 / 1-1	1-0 / 1-0	0-1 / 0-1	4-0 SUATS vs. foe off win of 14 > pts
BOEHEIM	Syracuse	42-21 / 36-25-2	18-5 / 14-9	12-5 / 10-6-1	5-7 / 4-7-1	4-1 / 4-1	2-2 / 2-2	1-1 / 2-0	10-0-1 ATS dog of 3-6 points
DREW	Baylor	11-8 / 8-10-1	5-3 / 3-4-1	4-1 / 4-1	2-2 / 1-3	0-2 / 0-2	0-0 / 0-0	0-0 / 0-0	2-4 SU and 1-5 ATS off BB wins
FEW	Gonzaga	31-20 / 22-28-1	17-3 / 11-10-10	9-8 / 8-9	3-6 / 3-5-1	1-2 / 1-2	1-0 / 0-1	0-1 / 0-1	0-7 SU and 1-6 ATS vs. No. 1 seeds
HAMILTON	Florida St	12-10 / 11-11	7-3 / 5-5	4-3 / 4-3	1-3 / 1-3	0-1 / 1-0	0-1 / 1-0	0-0 / 0-0	1-6 ATS favorite > 4 pts
HOLTMANN	Ohio St	6-5 / 17-3-1	5-0 / 4-0-1	1-4 / 3-2	0-1 / 0-1	0-0 / 0-0	0-0 / 0-0	0-0 / 0-0	5-0-1 ATS vs. No. 14 or lower seeds
HUGGINS	W Virginia	33-23 / 27-27-2	18-5 / 13-9-1	9-9 / 9-9	4-5 / 3-5-1	2-2 / 2-2	0-2 / 0-2	0-0 / 0-0	0-5 ATS dog off a double-digit ATS win
IZZO	Michigan St	52-21 / 40-31-2	17-5 / 11-10-1	14-3 / 10-7	10-4 / 8-6	8-2 / 7-2-1	2-6 / 3-5	1-1 / 1-1	4-0 SUATS vs. Big Ten opponents
PAINTER	Purdue	15-12 / 17-10	9-3 / 10-2	5-4 / 6-3	1-4 / 1-4	0-1 / 0-1	0-0 / 0-0	0-0 / 0-0	10-0 ATS off a SUATS loss
PITINO	Iona	50-17 / 37-27-2	16-3 / 9-9-1	12-4 / 9-6-1	11-1 / 10-2	6-5 / 6-4-1	3-3 / 2-4	2-1 / 1-2	6-0 SUATS vs. No. 5 seeds
SELF	Kansas	48-20 / 38-30	19-2 / 14-7	13-5 / 11-7	10-3 / 8-5	3-7 / 2-8	2-1 / 2-1	1-1 / 1-1	6-0 ATS vs. opponent with revenge
SMART	Texas	7-7 / 9-5	4-4 / 5-3	1-2 / 1-1	1-0 / 1-1	1-0 / 1-0	0-1 / 0-1	0-0 / 0-0	0-1 ATS dog of 4 > pts
WILLIAMS	N Carolina	78-25 / 55-46-2	29-0 / 14-13-1	19-9 / 17-11	13-6 / 9-10	9-4 / 7-5-1	6-3 / 5-4	3-3 / 3-3	10-1 SUATS vs. No. 9 and No. 10 seeds
WRIGHT	Villanova	28-14 / 23-19	11-5 / 7-9	6-5 / 5-6	4-2 / 4-2	3-1 / 3-1	2-1 / 2-1	2-0 / 2-0	1-5 SU and 0-6 ATS vs. No. 8 seeds

# ROUND-BY-ROUND NCAA TOURNAMENT HISTORY

## NCAA TOURNEY - Any Round:

- #1 Seeds are 115-1 SU (62-53-1 ATS) vs #16 Seeds
- #2 Seeds are 108-8 SU (51-60-5 ATS) vs #15 Seeds
- Only 4 times s'88 has a #12 Seed failed to beat a #5 Seed (19-26 SU & 27-15-3 ATS L11Y)
- Favs of 21 > pts are 3-9-1 ATS vs a foe off a DD SU win
- Favs of 4 > pts are 4-16 ATS off 3+ ATS losses
- Favs of > 7 pts who scored 100 > pts in last Tourney game are 15-3 ATS
- Dogs of 6 > pts playing off a SU Tourney win as a dog of 6 > pts are 10-27-1 ATS last 20 years
- Dogs of 18 > pts off a DD ATS win are 13-2 ATS
- Dogs of 5 > pts off a SU win (allowed 80 > pts) are 4-16 ATS

## NCAA 1st Round Notes

- #1 Seed favs of < 22 pts are 2-8 ATS L8Y
- #2 Seed favs > 18 pts are 3-14-1 ATS L14Y
- #3 Seeds off a SU favorite loss are 33-12-1 ATS
- #4 Seeds off a DD ATS win are 1-10-1 ATS
- #5 Seeds are 5-19-2 ATS off a SU loss L9Y
- #7 Seeds are 2-10 ATS vs foes off BB SU losses
- #8 Seed favs of < 5 pts are 3-15 ATS L10Y
- #9 Seeds are 9-3 ATS vs an opp off BB SU losses

### Conference Tournament Champs in this round

**AAC:** 2-4 ATS, **ACC:** 1-5 ATS, **A-10:** 6-3 ATS, **Big 10:** 1-4 ATS, **Big 12:** 3-1 ATS, **Big East:** 8-2 ATS, **Big West:** 5-1 ATS, **Colonial:** 6-1-1 ATS, **CUSA:** 4-1 ATS, **Horizon:** 2-6 ATS, **MAC:** 4-0 ATS, **Miss Valley:** 6-1 ATS, **Mountain West:** 1-6 ATS, **Pac 12:** 5-2-1 ATS, **Sun Belt:** 0-3 ATS, **SEC:** 2-4 ATS, **West Coast:** 1-4 ATS.

### Best Team SU records in this round

N Carolina 17-0, Kansas, Gonzaga 11-0, Kentucky 9-0, Florida 7-0, Oregon, Villanova 6-0, Florida St 5-0, Maryland 13-1, Purdue 17-2, Xavier 9-1, Syracuse, UCLA 8-1, Ohio St 7-1.

### Worst Team SU records in this round

Utah ST 0-7, Oklahoma St 0-5, Missouri 0-4, Colorado, St Bonaventure, St Johns 0-3, BYU 2-9, Seton Hall, Texas, VCU 1-4.

### Best Team ATS records in this round

Oregon 6-0, Kansas, W Kentucky 5-0, Purdue 7-1, Michigan, St Louis, Villanova 5-1, Xavier 10-2, UConn, USC 4-1, Illinois 11-3, Syracuse 7-2, VCU 8-3.

### Worst Team ATS records in this round

Texas 0-7, Louisville, Maryland, Missouri, St Johns 0-4, Creighton, Virginia 1-6, Clemson, N Carolina, Oklahoma, Utah St 1-5, Colorado, Okla St 1-4, BYU 2-8, Tennessee 3-8.

### Best Conference ATS records in this round

**Miss Valley:** 5-0, **Colonial, Conf USA:** 5-1, **A-10:** 5-1 as favs, **Big 12:** 4-1 as dogs, **Big 10:** 11-3 as dogs, **Sunbelt:** 5-2..

### Worst Conference ATS records in this round

**Big East:** 1-7 as pick or dogs, **Horizon:** 1-5, **A-10:** 2-7 as dogs, **ACC:** 10-30-1, **MWC:** 12-24-1.

## NCAA 2nd Round Notes

- #1 Seeds are 2-16 ATS off 3+ SU & ATS wins
- #4 Seed favs 13-4 ATS L6Y
- #5 Seed dogs are 2-10 ATS L9Y
- #6 Seed dogs 4 > pts are 1-6 ATS
- #7 Seed dogs of 3 > pts are 6-17 ATS vs opponent off BB SU wins
- #8 Seed dogs 14 > pts are 6-1 ATS
- #9 Seed dogs off a SU dog win are 9-22 ATS
- #10 Seed or worse favs are 17-5 ATS
- #13 or worse Seeds are 7-41 SU & 13-34-1 ATS

### Best Team SU records in this round

Florida 7-0, Wisconsin 6-0, Gonzaga, Michigan 5-0, Oregon, Purdue, UCLA 3-0, Kentucky, W Virginia 8-1, Louisville 6-1, Tennessee 5-1, Baylor, N Carolina, Texas Tech 4-1, Syracuse 8-2, Kansas, LSU 3-1.

### Worst Team SU records in this round

Creighton 0-6, Arkansas 0-5, Illinois, Ohio St, Texas 0-3, Iowa 1-9, Maryland 1-6, BYU 1-3.

### Best Team ATS records in this round

Texas Tech 5-0, W Kentucky 4-0, UCLA 3-0, W Virginia 8-1, Oklahoma St 7-1, Michigan, Wisconsin 5-1, Baylor, VCU 4-1, Xavier 8-2, Kentucky 6-2, Florida, Missouri, Purdue 5-2, Syracuse 7-3..

### Worst Team ATS records in this round

Ohio St 0-5, LSU 0-3, Creighton 1-5, Arkansas, Texas 1-4, BYU 1-3, Virginia 2-6, Alabama, Maryland, Villanova 2-5, Iowa 3-7.

### Best Conference ATS records in this round

**Big East:** 5-0 as DD favs, **Miss Valley:** 5-1 L13Y, **A-10:** 9-2 as dogs < 8 pts, **Big 10:** 7-2 as favs 7 < pts, **Pac-12:** 14-5 L7Y, **Big 12:** 32-11 as favs.

### Worst Conference ATS records in this round

**CUSA:** 0-5 L10Y, **AAC:** 1-4 as favs, **MAC:** 1-4 L15Y, **Mountain West:** 3-12 as dogs, **ACC:** 7-18 as favs < 5 pts.

## NCAA Sweet 16 Round Notes

- #1 Seeds are 22-8 ATS off BB SUATS wins
- #2 Seeds are 12-4 ATS off a DD ATS win
- #3 Seed favs are 1-5 ATS L8Y
- #4 Seeds are 2-10 ATS L6Y
- #5 Seed dogs > 9 pts are 7-1-1 ATS
- #6 Seeds off a DD ATS win are 2-9 ATS
- #8 Seed dogs are 5-1-1 ATS
- #10 or worse Seed dogs > 4 pts are 9-1 ATS L8Y
- Favorites of 4 < pts off a DD ATS win are 12-5-1 ATS L16Y
- Favorites of 11 > pts are 3-11 ATS L19Y
- Underdogs off a SU win of 3 < pts are 11-3-1 ATS L8Y

### Best Team ATS records in this round

Xavier 6-0-1, Oregon 5-0, UConn 4-0-1, Missouri, Syracuse, Villanova 3-0, Memphis, Oklahoma 5-1, Louisville 7-2, Illinois, Virginia, Wisconsin 3-1, Florida 5-2, N Carolina 8-4.

### Worst Team ATS records in this round

UCLA 0-4, Baylor 0-3, Arkansas. Maryland 0-2, Florida St, Ohio St, Purdue, W Virginia 1-4, Gonzaga 2-5, Kansas 6-11.

# ROUND-BY-ROUND NCAA TOURNAMENT HISTORY

## Best Conference ATS records in this round

**Big East:** 14-3 L10Y, **Atlantic 10:** 8-4, **SEC:** 16-4-2 off ATS win, **CUSA:** 3-1.

## Worst Conference ATS records in this round

**Pac-12:** 1-8 off ATS win, **Big 12:** 1-5 as dogs > 2 pts, **MWC:** 1-4-1, **WCC:** 2-7, **Big 10:** 11-21-2 L15Y.

## NCAA Elite 8 Round Notes

- #1 Seed favs > 7 pts are 3-10-1 ATS
- #2 Seeds are 0-7 ATS vs #4 or worse seeds
- #3 Seeds are 4-12 ATS
- #4 Seeds are 11-4 ATS
- #5 Seeds are 8-0 ATS
- #6 Seeds are 2-6 ATS
- #7 Seeds are 4-1-1 ATS
- #8 Seeds are 5-1 ATS
- Dogs that scored 80 > pts in Sweet 16 are 8-1-2 ATS
- Dogs off a SU dog win are 14-4-2 ATS
- Teams off 3+ ATS wins are 14-5-1 ATS
- Teams with Revenge are 18-8-2 ATS
- Favos of 10 > pts are 1-6-1 ATS

## Best Conference ATS records in this round

**Big East:** 5-0 as dogs 4 < pts, **Pac-12:** 5-1 as dogs, **SEC:** 5-1-1 as favs 7 > pts, **Big 10:** 7-2 as dogs.

## Worst Conference ATS records in this round

**Pac-12:** 1-5 as favs, **ACC:** 1-4-1 as favs > 7 pts, **SEC:** 2-8 as favs < 7 pts, **Big 12:** 5-15.

## NCAA Final 4 Round Notes

- #1 Seed dogs pts are 8-4 ATS
- #2 Seed favs 3 > pts are 1-5 ATS
- #3 Seeds are 7-1 ATS
- #4 Seeds are 2-5 ATS
- Dogs off an ATS loss are 6-0 ATS
- Favos off a SU dog win are 4-1 ATS
- Teams off 4+ ATS wins are 10-3-2 ATS
- Teams who scored 65 < pts in Elite 8 round are 8-2-1 ATS
- Dogs off BB DD SU wins are 0-4 ATS
- Teams with Revenge are 5-12 ATS
- Big East dogs are 6-0 ATS L10Y
- Big 10 favs of > 1 pt are 5-1 ATS
- Pac 12 teams are 7-2 ATS
- SEC favs of > 3 pts are 3-7 ATS
- Big 12 favs are 1-4 ATS

## NCAA Championship Notes

- #1 Seed favs > 2 pts are 8-1 ATS
- #2 Seeds are 2-5 ATS
- #3 Seed dogs are 1-5 ATS
- #5 or worse seeds are 1-6 SU & 2-5 ATS
- Favorites are 5-0 ATS vs an opponent w/ revenge
- Favorites of 5 < pts are 13-4 ATS
- Teams who scored 80 > pts in the Final 4 round are 7-3 ATS
- Teams with a win percentage of .850 > are 9-3 ATS
- Teams with a win percentage of .810 < are 2-6 ATS
- Dogs of 3 > pts off a SU dog win are 0-4 ATS
- Big East teams are 7-1 ATS
- ACC teams are 13-4
- SEC teams are 3-1 ATS
- Big 10 teams are 0-6 ATS
- Big 12 teams are 1-4 ATS

Next week the **PLAYBOOK** Basketball Newsletter will provide an in-depth examination of the 16 remaining teams still in contention for the national championship all the way through the title game on April 5. This issue will be available after 9:00 PM ET on Tuesday, March 23. Good luck and have a great rest of the season!

## OVERALL TOURNAMENT SU RECORD OF #1-16 SEEDS

The NCAA tournament tips off this week and with it the madness begins. Here's a look at how No. 1-8 seeds have fared overall versus other seeds throughout the tournament as reported by [mcubed.net](http://mcubed.net). To determine the win-loss records of seeds 9-16, simply refer to Seeds 1-8 below and reverse the findings. Good luck!

Overall tournament record of #1 seeds: (503-137) 78.6%			Overall tournament record of #2 seeds: (357-153) 70.0%			Overall tournament record of #3 seeds: (273-155) 63.8%			Overall tournament record of #4 seeds: (231-158) 59.4%			Overall tournament record of #5 seeds: (180-160) 52.9%			Overall tournament record of #6 seeds: (182-158) 53.5%			Overall tournament record of #7 seeds: (146-159) 47.9%			Overall tournament record of #8 seeds: (122-159) 43.4%		
Vs.	W-L	PCT.	Vs.	W-L	PCT.	Vs.	W-L	PCT.	Vs.	W-L	PCT.	Vs.	W-L	PCT.	Vs.	W-L	PCT.	Vs.	W-L	PCT.	Vs.	W-L	PCT.
#1	(23-23)	50	#1	(35-40)	46.7	#1	(15-25)	37.5	#1	(22-53)	29.3	#1	(9-45)	16.7	#1	(5-11)	31.3	#1	(1-6)	14.3	#1	(17-69)	19.8
#2	(40-35)	53.3	#2	(3-3)	50	#2	(27-41)	39.7	#2	(5-4)	55.6	#2	(5-1)	83.3	#2	(10-26)	27.8	#2	(29-68)	29.9	#2	(5-4)	55.6
#3	(25-15)	62.5	#3	(41-27)	60.3	#3	(1-1)	50	#3	(3-5)	37.5	#3	(2-2)	50	#3	(38-52)	42.2	#3	(7-11)	38.9	#3	(0-2)	0.0
#4	(53-22)	70.0	#4	(4-5)	44.4	#4	(5-3)	62.5	#4	(1-1)	50	#4	(42-53)	44.2	#4	(4-2)	66.7	#4	(4-2)	66.7	#4	(7-4)	63.6
#5	(45-9)	83.3	#5	(1-5)	16.7	#5	(2-2)	50	#5	(53-42)	55.8	#5	(1-1)	50	#5	(0-1)	0.0	#5	(0-0)	0.0	#5	(3-1)	75
#6	(11-5)	68.8	#6	(26-10)	72.2	#6	(52-38)	57.8	#6	(2-4)	33.3	#6	(1-0)	100	#6	(0-0)	0.0	#6	(3-5)	37.5	#6	(3-1)	75
#7	(6-1)	85.7	#7	(68-29)	70.1	#7	(11-7)	61.1	#7	(2-4)	33.3	#7	(0-0)	0.0	#7	(5-3)	62.5	#7	(0-0)	0.0	#7	(1-1)	50
#8	(69-17)	80.2	#8	(4-5)	44.4	#8	(2-0)	100	#8	(4-7)	36.4	#8	(1-3)	25	#8	(1-3)	25	#8	(1-1)	50	#8	(0-0)	0.0
#9	(72-8)	90	#9	(1-1)	50	#9	(3-0)	100	#9	(2-2)	50	#9	(1-3)	25	#9	(0-0)	0.0	#9	(0-0)	0.0	#9	(84-80)	51.2
#10	(6-1)	85.7	#10	(38-22)	63.3	#10	(9-4)	69.2	#10	(2-0)	100	#10	(1-0)	100	#10	(6-4)	60	#10	(99-65)	60.4	#10	(0-0)	0.0
#11	(4-3)	57.1	#11	(14-2)	87.5	#11	(38-17)	69.1	#11	(0-0)	0.0	#11	(0-0)	0.0	#11	(102-58)	63.8	#11	(0-4)	0.0	#11	(1-0)	100
#12	(20-0)	100	#12	(1-0)	100	#12	(0-0)	0.0	#12	(29-12)	70.7	#12	(107-53)	66.9	#12	(0-0)	0.0	#12	(0-0)	0.0	#12	(0-1)	0.0
#13	(4-0)	100	#13	(0-0)	0.0	#13	(0-0)	0.0	#13	(111-28)	79.9	#13	(14-3)	82.4	#13	(0-0)	0.0	#13	(0-0)	0.0	#13	(1-0)	100
#14	(0-0)	0.0	#14	(0-0)	0.0	#14	(119-21)	85	#14	(0-0)	0.0	#14	(0-0)	0.0	#14	(14-2)	87.5	#14	(1-0)	100	#14	(0-0)	0.0
#15	(0-0)	0.0	#15	(132-8)	94.3	#15	(1-0)	100	#15	(0-0)	0.0	#15	(0-0)	0.0	#15	(0-0)	0.0	#15	(2-1)	66.7	#15	(0-0)	0.0
#16	(139-1)	99.3	#16	(0-0)	0.0	#16	(0-0)	0.0	#16	(0-0)	0.0	#16	(0-0)	0.0	#16	(0-0)	0.0	#16	(0-0)	0.0	#16	(0-0)	0.0

# CURRENT OFFENSIVE & DEFENSIVE TEAM STATS

BEST ★ WORST X	TEAM	Ret Starters	Offensive PPG	Defensive PPG	Scoring Margin	Offensive FG %	Defensive FG %	FG % Margin	Rebound Margin	Free Throw %
	ABILENE CHRISTIAN	4	77.6	60.5	17.1	46.0	40.0	6.0	2.5	67.3
	ALABAMA	4	79.6	69.8	9.8	43.1	40.5	2.6	1.6	72.0
	APPALACHIAN ST	3	70.9	64.5	6.4	41.5	42.1	-0.6	0.8	73.7
	ARKANSAS	1	82.4	70.7	11.7	45.5	41.5	4.0	4.3	73.7
	BAYLOR	4	84.4	66.4	18.0	49.3	43.4	5.9	4.5	69.7
	BYU	2	78.7	68.5	10.2	48.2	40.9	7.3	6.8	73.1
	CAL SANTA BARBARA	4	74.6	63.2	11.4	47.5	42.4	5.1	5.5	75.6
	CLEMSON	4	65.3	62.0	3.3	42.8	41.9	0.9	0.3	76.5
	CLEVELAND ST	3	71.5	70.6	0.9	45.1	42.3	2.8	-0.3	66.9
	COLGATE	3	86.3	68.6	17.7	49.9	40.8	9.1	4.7	73.1
	COLORADO	3	73.0	63.3	9.7	45.4	41.9	3.5	4.2	82.2
	CONNECTICUT	4	72.5	64.6	7.9	43.9	41.0	2.9	4.8	73.1
	CREIGHTON	4	77.0	68.3	8.7	47.6	40.6	7.0	-0.4	64.2X
	DRAKE	3	77.4	64.7	12.7	49.4	42.2	7.2	5.1	71.3
	DREXEL	4	71.5	66.8	4.7	47.7	44.1	3.6	4.6	77.7
	E WASHINGTON	4	78.0	69.4	8.6	46.7	41.4	5.3	1.2	78.7
	FLORIDA	3	74.0	69.8	4.2	46.4	42.1	4.3	1.2	75.7
	FLORIDA ST	3	78.9	70.3	8.6	47.4	39.8	7.6	4.6	73.8
	GEORGETOWN	1	71.4	70.7	0.7	42.4	41.5	0.9	5.1	75.4
	GEORGIA TECH	4	75.5	70.0	5.5	47.4	45.9X	1.5	-3.6X	72.7
	GONZAGA	2	92.1★	69.1	23.0★	55.1★	41.9	13.2★	7.3	72.6
	GRAND CANYON	2	75.6	61.1	14.5	49.4	37.9	11.5	9.7	68.6
	HARTFORD	3	65.9	63.3	2.6	43.4	41.8	1.6	-1.5	71.2
	HOUSTON	3	77.6	57.9	19.7	44.4	37.0★	7.4	9.1	74.1
	ILLINOIS	4	81.4	69.2	12.2	49.9	41.2	8.7	10.1	69.1
	IONA	2	72.2	65.9	6.3	43.4	39.9	3.5	6.1	74.3
	IOWA	5	83.8	71.9	11.9	46.9	41.4	5.5	3.0	71.3
	KANSAS	3	73.1	65.7	7.4	45.9	40.6	5.3	3.6	71.4
	LIBERTY	2	74.9	59.6	15.3	49.2	41.0	8.2	3.8	77.7
	LOYOLA CHICAGO	5	71.5	55.5★	16.0	50.5	40.7	9.8	4.9	72.3
	LSU	2	82.1	75.3	6.8	46.3	41.9	4.4	0.2	74.7
	MARYLAND	3	68.8	65.0	3.8	45.6	40.9	4.7	-0.1	70.3
	MICHIGAN	3	76.2	65.4	10.8	48.3	39.4	8.9	6.2	77.8
	MICHIGAN ST	3	69.0	70.6	-1.6X	42.4	42.5	-0.1	3.3	72.1
	MISSOURI	4	73.6	71.9	1.7	44.9	43.1	1.8	0.3	69.8
	MOREHEAD ST	2	68.8	63.4	5.4	46.1	40.4	5.7	6.6	68.2
	MOUNT ST. MARY'S	4	63.7X	62.3	1.4	42.6	40.5	2.1	5.4	67.8
	NORFOLK ST	3	75.2	69.2	6.0	43.6	40.3	3.3	0.9	70.6
	NORTH CAROLINA	3	75.7	69.4	6.3	44.1	42.1	2.0	10.9★	66.8
	NORTH TEXAS	3	69.8	61.2	8.6	47.5	40.9	6.6	2.5	73.4
	OHIO	3	80.9	73.3	7.6	48.9	44.4	4.5	1.2	70.1
	OHIO STATE	2	77.3	71.0	6.3	46.0	42.4	3.6	2.5	76.3
	OKLAHOMA	3	74.8	69.2	5.6	44.2	42.1	2.1	0.0	74.4
	OKLAHOMA ST	1	77.1	72.9	4.2	46.8	41.2	5.6	3.1	71.3
	ORAL ROBERTS	2	81.8	75.8X	6.0	45.4	43.2	2.2	3.1	82.4★
	OREGON	2	74.4	67.4	7.0	47.2	43.5	3.7	1.0	70.4
	OREGON ST	3	70.7	68.3	2.4	43.5	43.9	-0.4	0.3	75.8
	PURDUE	3	71.1	66.3	4.8	45.1	41.4	3.7	6.2	71.1
	RUTGERS	4	70.0	68.2	1.8	45.1	42.0	3.1	-1.2	73.2
	SAN DIEGO ST	2	74.1	60.6	13.5	45.5	38.7	6.8	4.0	72.3
	ST. BONAVENTURE	5	70.5	60.3	10.2	44.9	38.9	6.0	3.8	73.4
	SYRACUSE	4	75.8	70.7	5.1	44.1	41.5	2.6	-2.0	78.5
	TENNESSEE	4	72.5	63.2	9.3	44.3	39.8	4.5	2.2	74.6
	TEXAS	5	75.2	68.8	6.4	45.4	41.3	4.1	4.5	70.8
	TEXAS SOUTHERN	2	74.8	69.6	5.2	45.0	39.8	5.2	6.1	70.1
	TEXAS TECH	2	73.0	63.4	9.6	44.3	41.1	3.2	2.1	71.1
	UCLA	5	72.8	68.5	4.3	46.2	43.9	2.3	4.5	72.1
	UNC GREENSBORO	2	73.6	67.4	6.2	42.4	41.4	1.0	3.1	68.3
	USC	1	74.8	65.1	9.7	46.7	39.4	7.3	7.2	64.7
	UTAH ST	3	73.3	62.2	11.1	44.6	38.9	5.7	10.3	72.6
	VCU	1	71.7	65.2	6.5	45.1	40.5	4.6	-0.7	76.1
	VILLANOVA	4	75.5	67.1	8.4	45.0	44.6	0.4	1.5	76.5
	VIRGINIA	3	68.6	60.5	8.1	48.0	41.6	6.4	2.7	81.7
	VIRGINIA TECH	3	72.1	65.5	6.6	45.1	41.9	3.2	3.1	69.7
	WEST VIRGINIA	4	77.3	72.1	5.2	42.8	44.2	-1.4X	2.6	71.7
	WICHITA ST	3	72.4	67.4	5.0	40.8X	40.3	0.5	-1.5	68.9
	WINTHROP	3	79.5	66.8	12.7	46.1	43.1	3.0	8.9	68.6
	WISCONSIN	4	69.6	64.3	5.3	42.1	42.3	-0.2	-1.6	76.7

## ROUND, DATES & LOCATIONS

- 1ST FOUR** Thursday, March 18 • Mackey Arena (Purdue), Simon Skjodt Assembly Hall (Indiana)
- 1ST ROUND** Friday, March 19 and Saturday, March 20 • Mackey Arena, Simon Skjodt Assembly Hall, Bankers Life Fieldhouse, Hinkle Fieldhouse (Butler), Indiana Farmers Coliseum, Lucas Oil Stadium
- 2ND ROUND** Sunday, March 21 and Monday, March 22 • Bankers Life Fieldhouse, Hinkle Fieldhouse, Indiana Farmers Coliseum, Lucas Oil Stadium
- SWEET 16** Saturday, March 27 and Sunday, March 28 • Bankers Life Fieldhouse, Hinkle Fieldhouse
- ELITE EIGHT** Monday, March 29 and Tuesday, March 30 • Lucas Oil Stadium
- FINAL FOUR** Saturday, April 3 and Monday, April 5 • Lucas Oil Stadium

## FINAL 2021 COLLEGE BASKETBALL POWER RATINGS FOR NCAA TOURNAMENT TEAMS

<p><b>AAC</b></p> <p>HOUSTON 98</p> <p>MEMPHIS 89</p> <p>WICHITA STATE 83</p> <p><b>ACC</b></p> <p>CLEMSON 86</p> <p>FLORIDA STATE 91</p> <p>GEORGIA TECH 90</p> <p>NORTH CAROLINA 94</p> <p>SYRACUSE 88</p> <p>VIRGINIA 90</p> <p>VIRGINIA TECH 86</p> <p><b>AMERICAN EAST</b></p> <p>HARTFORD 75</p> <p><b>ATLANTIC SUN</b></p> <p>LIBERTY 81</p> <p><b>ATLANTIC 10</b></p> <p>ST. BONAVENTURE 89</p> <p>VCU 85</p>	<p><b>BIG EAST</b></p> <p>CONNECTICUT 93</p> <p>CREIGHTON 91</p> <p>GEORGETOWN 90</p> <p>VILLANOVA 92</p> <p><b>BIG SKY</b></p> <p>E WASHINGTON 82</p> <p><b>BIG SOUTH</b></p> <p>WINTHROP 82</p> <p><b>BIG TEN</b></p> <p>ILLINOIS 99</p> <p>IOWA 95</p> <p>MARYLAND 88</p> <p>MICHIGAN 96</p> <p>MICHIGAN STATE 86</p> <p>OHIO STATE 92</p> <p>PURDUE 91</p> <p>RUTGERS 87</p> <p>WISCONSIN 90</p> <p><b>BIG 12</b></p> <p>BAYLOR 94</p>	<p>KANSAS 91</p> <p>OKLAHOMA 87</p> <p>OKLAHOMA STATE 89</p> <p>TEXAS 89</p> <p>TEXAS TECH 91</p> <p>WEST VIRGINIA 89</p> <p><b>BIG WEST</b></p> <p>CAL SANTA BARB 82</p> <p><b>COLONIAL</b></p> <p>DREXEL 78</p> <p><b>C-USA</b></p> <p>NORTH TEXAS 82</p> <p><b>HORIZON</b></p> <p>CLEVELAND STATE 73</p> <p><b>METRO ATLANTIC</b></p> <p>IONA 76</p> <p><b>MID-AMERICAN</b></p> <p>OHIO 83</p> <p><b>MID-EASTERN</b></p> <p>NORFOLK ST 72</p>	<p><b>MISSOURI VALLEY</b></p> <p>DRAKE 83</p> <p>LOYOLA CHICAGO 89</p> <p><b>MOUNTAIN WEST</b></p> <p>SAN DIEGO STATE 89</p> <p>UTAH STATE 89</p> <p><b>NORTHEAST</b></p> <p>MOUNT ST. MARY'S 73</p> <p><b>OHIO VALLEY</b></p> <p>MOREHEAD STATE 82</p> <p><b>PAC-12</b></p> <p>COLORADO 89</p> <p>OREGON 88</p> <p>OREGON STATE 85</p> <p>UCLA 85</p> <p>USC 90</p> <p><b>PATRIOT</b></p> <p>COLGATE 82</p> <p><b>SOUTHEASTERN</b></p> <p>ALABAMA 96</p>	<p>ARKANSAS 91</p> <p>FLORIDA 86</p> <p>LSU 90</p> <p>TENNESSEE 90</p> <p><b>SOUTHERN</b></p> <p>UNC-GREENSBORO 83</p> <p><b>SOUTHLAND</b></p> <p>ABILENE CHRSTN 85</p> <p><b>SUMMIT</b></p> <p>ORAL ROBERTS 78</p> <p><b>SUN BELT</b></p> <p>APPALACHIAN STATE 78</p> <p><b>SWAC</b></p> <p>TEXAS SOUTHERN 73</p> <p><b>WAC</b></p> <p>GRAND CANYON 83</p> <p><b>WEST COAST</b></p> <p>BYU 89</p> <p>GONZAGA 99</p>
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# 2021 NCAA COLLEGE BASKETBALL

## WEST BRACKET

ROUND 1 • March 20

ROUND 2 • March 22

SWEET 16 / ELITE 8 • March 27-30

		OPEN	CLOSE	FINAL
3/20	1 Gonzaga			
	16 NORF/ASU			
3/20	8 Oklahoma	2		
	9 Missouri			
3/20	5 Creighton	8		
	12 UCSB			
3/20	4 Virginia	10		
	13 Ohio			
3/20	6 USC			
	11 WSU/DRAKE			
3/20	3 Kansas	11'		
	14 E Wash			
3/20	7 Oregon	5'		
	10 VCU			
3/20	2 Iowa	15'		
	15 G Canyon			

★ WEST VS EAST WINNER:

	OPEN	CLOSE	FINAL

3/22

	OPEN	CLOSE	FINAL

3/22

	OPEN	CLOSE	FINAL

	OPEN	CLOSE	FINAL

	OPEN	CLOSE	FINAL

3/22

	OPEN	CLOSE	FINAL

3/22

	OPEN	CLOSE	FINAL

**FINAL FOUR**  
Indianapolis, IN • APRIL 5

Norfolk St vs Appalachian St • March 18 (Dayton, OH)

Winner To Play No. 1 Gonzaga (West Bracket)

## EAST BRACKET

ROUND 1 • March 20

ROUND 2 • March 22

SWEET 16 / ELITE 8 • March 27-30

		OPEN	CLOSE	FINAL
3/20	1 Michigan			
	16 MTSM/TXSO			
3/20	8 LSU	1		
	9 St. Bona			
3/20	5 Colorado	5'		
	12 Georgetown			
3/20	4 Florida St	11		
	13 UNCG			
3/20	6 BYU			
	11 MSU/UCLA			
3/20	3 Texas	8'		
	14 Abilene Chr			
3/20	7 UConn	2		
	10 Maryland			
3/20	2 Alabama	17'		
	15 Iona			

All lines shown are opening lines.  
FINAL FOUR at Lucas Oil Stadium.

	OPEN	CLOSE	FINAL

3/22

	OPEN	CLOSE	FINAL

3/22

	OPEN	CLOSE	FINAL

	OPEN	CLOSE	FINAL

	OPEN	CLOSE	FINAL

3/22

	OPEN	CLOSE	FINAL

3/22

	OPEN	CLOSE	FINAL

**FINAL FOUR**  
Indianapolis, IN • APRIL 5

Mt. St. Mary's vs Texas Southern • March 18 (Dayton, OH)

Winner To Play No. 1 Michigan (East Bracket)



# DIVISION 1 MEN'S BRACKETS

## SOUTH BRACKET

**ROUND 1 • March 19**

**ROUND 2 • March 21**

**SWEET 16 / ELITE 8 • March 27-30**

		OPEN	CLOSE	FINAL
3/19	1 Baylor	25'		
	16 Hartford			
3/19	8 N Carolina	2		
	9 Wisconsin			
3/19	5 Villanova	6'		
	12 Winthrop			
3/19	4 Purdue	8		
	13 North Texas			
3/19	6 Texas Tech	4'		
	11 Utah St			
3/19	3 Arkansas	9'		
	14 Colgate			
3/19	7 Florida	1		
	10 Va Tech			
3/19	2 Ohio St	17		
	15 Oral Roberts			

OPEN	CLOSE	FINAL

3/21

OPEN	CLOSE	FINAL

3/21

OPEN	CLOSE	FINAL

OPEN	CLOSE	FINAL

3/21

OPEN	CLOSE	FINAL

3/21

OPEN	CLOSE	FINAL

3/21

★ SOUTH VS MIDWEST WINNER:

FINAL FOUR  
Indianapolis, IN • APRIL 3-5

Wichitan St vs Drake • March 18 (Dayton, OH)

Winner To Play No. 6 USC (West Bracket)

## MIDWEST BRACKET

**ROUND 1 • March 19**

**ROUND 2 • March 21**

**SWEET 16 / ELITE 8 • March 27-30**

		OPEN	CLOSE	FINAL
3/19	1 Illinois	22'		
	16 Drexel			
3/19	8 Loyola Chi	2'		
	9 Ga Tech			
3/19	5 Tennessee	8'		
	12 Oregon St			
3/19	4 Oklahoma St	9'		
	13 Liberty			
3/19	6 San Diego St	2		
	11 Syracuse			
3/19	3 W Virginia	12		
	14 Morehead St			
3/19	7 Clemson			
	10 Rutgers	1		
3/19	2 Houston	19'		
	15 Cleveland St			

OPEN	CLOSE	FINAL

3/21

OPEN	CLOSE	FINAL

3/21

OPEN	CLOSE	FINAL

OPEN	CLOSE	FINAL

3/21

OPEN	CLOSE	FINAL

3/21

OPEN	CLOSE	FINAL

★ NATIONAL CHAMPION • APRIL 5

FINAL FOUR  
Indianapolis, IN • APRIL 3-5

Michigan St vs UCLA • March 18 (Dayton, OH)

Winner To Play No. 6 BYU (East Bracket)

# 2021 NCAA MEN'S BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

## FIRST FOUR Play-In Games – THURSDAY, MARCH 18

### (16) Norfolk St over (16) Appalachian St over by 2

One thing we know for sure this March Madness: Things will be different in 2021 because of the pandemic. With every game taking place in the Indianapolis area in this year's event, the First Four will not be held in Dayton for the first time since its inception in 2001. The First Four is the official start to March Madness: four games traditionally played on the first Tuesday and Wednesday of the NCAA tournament. This year, however, to better accommodate the virus, the games will take place on Thursday. Until the most recent NCAA tourney in 2019, in each of the previous eight years, at least one First Four team had survived until the Round of 32. But no team has managed to match the success of VCU in 2011. The Rams knocked off 11-seed USC in the First Four, and then preceded to take down 6-seed Georgetown, 3-seed Purdue, 10-seed Florida State, and 1-seed Kansas to reach the Final Four, where they finally fell to 8-seed Butler. VCU is still the only team to have made the Final Four from the First Four – but we don't see that happening with this year's edition. Meanwhile, the last time Norfolk State was in the Big Dance it knocked off No. 2 seed Missouri in 2012 as a 21-point underdog. The Spartans' best win this season, though, may have come at George Mason where they upset the Pirates as 11-point underdogs. Appalachian State was struggling heading into the Sun Belt tourney, riding a 1-6 SUATS losing skid before they closed liked a bull in a china shop. The Mountaineers were crushed by Ohio State, 87-61, in their only NCAA appearance in 2000. With No. 16 seed favorites of 4 or fewer points just **6-11-2 ATS** in these play-in games, a take is in order here.

### (11) Drake over (11) Wichita St by 6

After having played each other for decades in their early days in the Missouri Valley, these two programs know each other's DNA like cousins. The history book shows the Shockers are 14-4 SU and 13-5-1 ATS in the last nineteen games in this series. In addition, they are also 9-3 ATS in games in which the Bulldogs sport the better record, including **6-0 ATS** when the Shockers are coming off a loss. Under former interim and new head coach Isaac Brown, Witchy won eight of its final nine games to capture this bid. Brown took over a roster that included seven newcomers, replacing seven Shockers who had transferred and leading scorer Jaime Echenique, who graduated. Wichita State was picked to finish seventh in the AAC, and that was when Gregg Marshall was still the coach. The Shockers have been a good dog (5-0 ATS) and a lousy favorite (3-7 ATS) in the NCAA tourney dating back to 2012. Enter Drake, who has won six of its last ten games after opening the campaign on fire when they started 15-0. The Bulldogs are **10-0 SU and 8-2 ATS** this season when playing with 3 or more days of rest. They were edged, 101-99

in overtime, by Western Kentucky in their most recent NCAA appearance in 2008, dropping to 50-4 all-time in this event – with the four losses coming by an average 4 points per game. FYI: Drake's .862 win percentage is the highest ever of any 11 seed in the First Four contest.

### (16) Mount St. Mary's over (16) Texas Southern by 2

At the very least, the Tigers of TSU know what March Madness is all about. They played in eight NCAA tourney games since 1996, going 1-7 SU and 5-3 ATS. The sole victory came in the 2018 First Four round as a 16 seed. Texas Southern shook off a 2-7 start to snag this bid, taking a 9-game win skein into the contest. Their best win this season was back in November at Wyoming when they lassoed the Cowboys, 76-74, as 10-point underdogs. On the flip side, Mount St. Mary's is 2-5 in its five previous trips to the NCAA postseason with both wins occurring in the First Four round where they stand 2-1 SUATS overall. "We are locking in on Texas Southern," said coach Dan Engelstad. "We love this. We love to find out ways that we can win a game against another champion. We are excited for this incredible opportunity, but we're not satisfied, and that's the message." Once again we defer to the well-oiled machine as it reminds us that No. 16 seed favorites of 4 or fewer points are just **6-11-2 ATS** in Final Four games.

### (11) Michigan St over (11) UCLA by 6

And now we finally have a real First Four fist fight between two teams that were each AP preseason Top 25 teams before this pandemic-season tipped. While things did not work out that well for either squad, the fact of the matter is there is more talent on the floor in this contest than with the other six First Four teams combined. UCLA, primarily a guard-oriented team, welcomed five starters from last year's 19-win squad. After winning 17 of its first 21 games, the Bruins went into late hibernation when they dropped their last four games of the season. In the end, Mick Cronin's troops were underachievers, going just 2-7 SUATS against fellow NCAA tournament teams, including **0-4 ATS** versus sub .750 tourney foes. Meanwhile, Cronin packs a soft 6-11 SU and 7-10 ATS log in Big Dance contests. And then there is Tom Izzo and his 32-8 SU mark during the first two rounds of this tournament. The Wizard of Iz is also 5-1 SU and 4-1-1 ATS in his last six scuffles against Pac-12 opponents. It's important to remember that the Spartans were wallcopped by COVID early on in January. They've got their sea legs back and they're embarrassed at not only having to "play-in" to this event but also being saddled with the lowest seed in Izzo's career. At 22-7 SU and 19-9-1 ATS in his NCAA tourney career as a pick or favorite of 8 or fewer points, we're going Spartan here.

## FIRST ROUND Games – FRIDAY, MARCH 19

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### (1) Baylor over Hartford (16) by 31

We know a couple whose son is currently enrolled at Hartford College and they were absolutely ecstatic on Saturday when the Hawks beat UMass Lowell for the American East title and punched a ticket to the program's first-ever trip to the Big Dance. Needless to say, the excitement meter took a steep drop the next day when the Selection Sunday crew announced that Hartford's NCAA Tournament opponent would be none other than No. 1 seed Baylor. Gulp. The Bears started the season 18-0 and won every game by at least 8 points before a three-week gap between games due to COVID-19 issues (since returning, Baylor is 5-2 with three close wins and a 2-5 record against the spread). And speaking of 18-0, Scott Drew's crew is 18-0 SU and 12-6 ATS as a favorite of 20 or more points. Hartford also has the misfortune of catching the Bears off a bitter loss to Oklahoma State in the Big 12 Tourney title contest. John Gallagher's Hawks play a stingy brand of defense allowing just 63.3 PPG (No. 24 in the nation), but the problem here is an anemic offense that averages just 65.9 PPG, No. 286 overall in the country. That won't cut the mustard against an angry pack of Bears who we think will be cutting down the nets on the first Monday in April. Yes, we realize that the Big 12 has just one championship in its history, especially considering the conference has had at least one top-two seed in 22 of the last 24 tournaments. But the last time Baylor won a regular-season conference title – as the Bears did this season in the Big 12 – is also the last time they reached the Final Four. Now that the virus is in the rear-view mirror for BU, we look for nothing but strong performances the rest of the way... starting here.

PLAYBOOK selection is **Underlined and Bold**. Should we pass or not have a strong opinion on a game, neither team will be bolded.

### (8) North Carolina over (9) Wisconsin by 7

Recently, North Carolina head coach Roy Williams became the fastest men's basketball coach to reach 900 career wins. Communicating with this year's inconsistent group of Tar Heels, though, has become such an exasperating task for Williams that he probably feels like he's been involved in 100 games instead of the 28 UNC has played before today's match-up with Wisconsin. To which we say take a chill pill, Roy. Carolina has gone 4-2 SU and 4-1-1 ATS in its last six games, and the two losses came by 2 points to Syracuse and 3 points to Florida State. That's way better than the Badgers' 1-4 SU stumble to the finish line in a season where they won back-to-back games only once. The Heels also have a ton of history in their favor. Since seeding began in 1979, North Carolina has been seeded first in a region 17 times, more than any other school. The Tar Heels have also played in 20 "Final Fours," more than any other school. And don't forget: the ACC has had at least one Sweet 16 team in all 35 years of this tourney, and at least one Elite Eight team in 32 of 35 years. Despite their No. 8 seeding, we feel that Carolina stands the best chance of all ACC teams in this year's championship to extend those numbers. But as Yoda might say, Easy it won't be. Dating back to 2011, the Badgers have advanced to the second week of play in six of their past eight appearances, including as a No. 7 and 8 seed in 2016 and 2017, respectively. Nonetheless, we'll jump on Williams' **29-0 SU** log in the first round of this tourney versus a Wisconsin squad that's on an **0-5 ATS** slide as pick or dog against the ACC.

### (5) Villanova over (12) Winthrop by 3

Normally, Villanova arrives at the Big Dance as a formidable foe regardless of the opponent, but this year? Not so much. Jay Wright's Wildcats are crippled at the guard position right now and just 1-3 SUATS in the last four games – not exactly peaking at the right time as we've come to expect. Meanwhile, the internet is abuzz that Winthrop's players and coaches will take the floor here wearing face masks emblazoned with a head shot of the late comedian Rodney Dangerfield. That's right, this year's Big South champions got ZERO respect from the selection committee: Despite going 23-1, the Eagles officially became the first one-loss team to receive a double-digit seed in NCAA tournament history. Ouch! We know it's because they played just four non-conference games this season, all against sisters of the poor, but Pat Kelsey's team is deep and talented and should not be taken lightly. Nova ain't exactly a lock when it comes to Big Dance lid-lifters, either. In nine tournament appearances since 2010, the Wildcats have won the championship twice (both in the past four tournaments) and failed to escape the first weekend each of the other seven times. And coach Wright can't be super confident knowing that only three No. 5 seeds have ever reached the title game – Butler (2010), Indiana (2002) and Florida (2000) – and all lost to No. 1 seeds. With Winthrop still smarting from the biggest snub since 2001: A Space Odyssey wasn't even nominated for a Best Picture Oscar in 1968, look for the hot-under-the-collar Eagles to take advantage of Villanova's weak 7-11 ATS record versus a No. 8 or worse opponent in this tournament and fly home to Rock Hill with cash in hand.

### (4) Purdue over (13) North Texas by 7

Despite finishing 4th during the regular season in what most agree is the toughest conference in the land this year, Purdue's overtime loss to Ohio State in the Big Ten Tournament has pushed the Boilermakers out of the championship conversation. Why? Per ESPN, no team has ever won a national championship after losing its first game in the conference tournament. (This year, No. 3 West Virginia and No. 4 Purdue are the only top-four seeds that lost their first conference tourney contest.) Regardless of their long-shot odds, head coach Matt Painter has Purdue gunning for a school-record fourth straight Sweet 16 appearance. And when it comes to winning first-round games, the Boilers have claimed 17 of their past 19, dating back to 1994. North Texas got here by applying some serious 'D' to its foes, surrendering a mere 58 PPG en route to capturing the Conference-USA title. The Mean Green also have momentum on their side as they're on a 4-0 SUATS run after losing their last three regular season games. And besides going 12-3 SUATS versus .705 or less opponents this season, UNT is one of only eight teams in the Top 10 in overall Scoring Defense in this tourney. We realize this is the powerful Big Ten against an overmatched opponent – and that CUSA teams are just 3-21 SU and 9-14-1 ATS against the Big Ten in this event – but the warning signs are there and we must oblige. Hold your nose and grab the points.

### (6) Texas Tech over (11) Utah St by 1

Believe it or not, a coach with a beard has never won the NCAA national championship. That's good news for Texas Tech head coach Chris Beard, who does not sport facial hair of any kind, in his quest to win it all. Still, as good as the Red Raiders were in Vegas' eyes this season, they simply didn't live up to expectations at the cash register, going 3-11-1 ATS. Thus, they became the most over-priced commodity of all ranked teams this season. And given Chris Beard's reputation in this event (5-1 SUATS in 2019, losing to Villanova in the title game), we expect more of the same. Yes, he has led TTRR to eight NCAA tournament wins in the past two tournaments – which equals the number of tourney wins Texas Tech had in its history before Beard arrived –

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but after being a 3-seed each of the past two trips, the Year of COVID finds the Red Raiders downgraded to a No. 6 seed. Frankly, we think a No. 11 seed is somewhat dismissive of the Aggies' 20-win season: If they had beaten San Diego State in the MWC Tourney final, they would have beaten the Aztecs in all three series meetings. The boys from Logan show up here as the No. 2 ranked team in the nation in Rebound Margin, and No. 9 in Defensive Field Goal Percentage (38.9). That's a lethal combination in events like this, though USU has persistently come up short on the Big Dance scoreboard. In fact, the Aggies fell to **1-16** over the past 50 years in this tournament when they lost to Washington in 2019. FYI: This is the 20th anniversary of that one victory, in overtime against Ohio State as a No. 12 seed. With impetus like that, we look for star 7-foot center Neemias Queta (15.1 PPG and 10.0 RPG) to make some noise for Utah State today. Grab the points.

### (3) Arkansas over (14) Colgate by 3

We wonder how many viewers got down on the 'Over' in this game right after the Selection Sunday crew proclaimed the contest to be a "track meet"? Not that many, it seems, as the Total opened up at 162.5 and has been holding steady since. Great story at Arkansas this season with second-year head coach Eric Musselman building on last year's 20-12 debut with a 22-6 effort that almost resulted in an SEC regular season championship (Hogs finished second to Alabama). Yes, the Razorbacks were bacon makers this season (17-9-1 ATS), and they closed the season much like they opened it (9-0 start and 9-1 finish), but they had better bring their 'A' game against the Patriots today. That's because Colgate fills the stat rankings board in three critical categories, namely No. 2 in Assists To Turnover ratio (+1.75), No. 3 in Defensive Rebounds Per Game (30.0) and No. 4 in Fewest Turnovers. Don't be fooled by the fact that Patriot League teams haven't won a first-round game in nine years and have just three such wins ever. The past three tours tell a different tale. In 2019, No. 15 seed Colgate hung tough with Tennessee before losing by 7. The two years before that, Bucknell lost to Michigan State and West Virginia by 4 and 6 points, respectively. Colgate is back again this year, riding a 13-game win streak, and are capable of posing major problems for higher seeds. The Razorbacks' 82-PPG offense was held in check in both SEC Tourney games (scored 70 and 71 points) but their current 9-1 SU streak keeps us from calling for the outright upset. Still a solid take.

### (7) Florida over (10) Virginia Tech by 5

These two might not have backed their way into this year's Big Dance but they were certainly going sideways at season's end: Florida closed 1-3 SU and 0-4 ATS while Virginia Tech finished on a 2-3 SU and 1-4 ATS slide. The Hokies' effort was especially disappointing considering they had come out of the gates at 13-3 before hitting the wall. Plus, we must acknowledge Va Tech's past failures in this event. In 2019, the Hokies won two games in a tournament for just the second time in school history (the first was in 1967) and came up just short of beating Duke in a great Sweet 16 game. This year, Virginia Tech is a No. 10 seed. In the modern tournament era, the Hokies have just one win when seeded worse than fifth (1996 vs. Green Bay, as a No. 9 seed). Tech head coach Mike Young does have plenty of experience as a lesser seed in the tourney from his five trips at Wofford. (His teams put a scare into a few squads during the 2010s before finally notching a win in 2019 against Seton Hall, and hanging tough with Kentucky in the second round.) However, back in the here and now, the Hokies are 0-3 SUATS in postseason play against the SEC, and just 4-11 SU and 6-9 ATS against this conference dating back to 1995. Yikes. As for Florida, history is certainly on

(continued on next page)

# Marc Lawrence's MARCH MADNESS EXTRAVAGANZA!

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the side of the Gators. They've won seven straight first-round games and 10 of their past 11, the only loss coming in double overtime to Jimmer Fredette and BYU in 2010. Keep an eye on the line as VT opened as a 1-point dog and has moved to 1-point chalk. Wherever it lands, we'll be taking the Gators to move on to another game on Sunday.

## (2) Ohio St over (15) Oral Roberts by 10

How good was the Big Ten this season? ESPN notes the conference landed a pair of No. 1 seeds (Illinois, Michigan) and a pair of No. 2 seeds (Ohio State, Iowa) for the Big Dance. It is also the first time a conference has earned four top-two seeds in a single NCAA tournament. So the question is this: Can Ohio State maintain its intensity coming off four draining games against Minnesota, Purdue, Michigan and Illinois in tournament that looked more like hand-to-hand combat than basketball? It could be tough against a school that's known more for its evangelical Christian curriculum than success at the highest levels of college basketball. That's a perception ORU will try to dismantle today against the Buckeyes. The fact is the Golden Eagles are tops in the nation in Free Throw Shooting Percentage (82.35), and guard Max Abmas (pronounced: ACE-muss) is the country's leading scorer at 24.2 PPG. It's also a fact that Oral Roberts will be making its first tourney appearance since 2008, and their only two NCAA tournament wins came way back in 1974 when they reached the Elite Eight. We'd love to get back OSU head coach Chris Holtmann and the highest-seeded team he's coached in this tournament, but the Buckeyes own a disturbing 3-9-1 ATS record as favorites of 3 or more points in this event against foes coming off consecutive wins. They've also given supporters whiplash: Since going on a 0-4 SUATS losing skid to conclude the season, the Buckeyes awoke just in time during the Big Ten tourney, losing only in overtime in the championship game to Illinois. After swallowing that bitter pill, look for a letdown here.

## (1) Illinois over (16) Drexel by 18

FYI: before we go any further, the term March Madness was first used in 1939 by an Illinois high school official, Henry Porter. It became a household word in 1982 when former Illinois sportswriter Brent Musberger covered the tournament for CBS and used the phrase. As a result, both the NCAA Tournament and the Illinois High School Boys Basketball Championships were each granted its own separate rights to the "dual use trademark." Back to the action, if you're searching for a team that has a legitimate shot at beating No. 1 Gonzaga for this year's NCAA Championship, look no further than the Fighting Illini. Brad Underwood's boys bring three attributes to the Dance that we look for – 1) they rank No. 4 in the nation in **Rebound Margin**, 2) No. 6 in **Offensive Field Goal Percentage** (49.9) and 3) No. 7 in **Defensive Rebounds Per Game** (29.6). Then there's spark plug guard Ayo Dosunmu, who chips in with 20.7 PPG, 6.3 rebound and 5.3 assists while directing the team to 81.4 PPG. However, if you're looking for a No. 1 seed to completely destroy its opening-round opponent, this may not be the spot. Yes, Big Ten champs are 20-2 SU recently but they are only 10-11-1 ATS all-time in the first round of the tournament, including **0-3 ATS** if they tallied 80-plus points in the title game (Illini scored 91 in win over OSU). While the

Dragon failed to take on a team in this year's tourney this season, it is the 25th anniversary of Drexel's only NCAA tournament victory, when Malik Rose led the 12th-seeded Dragons to a 12-point decision over Memphis. **Thanks to a 14-1 SU and 11-4 ATS skein in their final fifteen games of the season**, Illinois is a No. 1 seed for the first time since 2005 when they lost to North Carolina in the title game. We call for a second straight case of post-Big Ten championship let-down by the big chalk.

## 3★ BEST BET

### (8) Loyola Chicago over (9) Georgia Tech by 13

If you're still trying to figure out how Georgia Tech won the ACC Tournament title, let's break it down. Sure, four straight wins in a do-or-die setting to claim the crown was impressive but a closer look shows how it was possible: wins over a COVID-decimated Duke team, a 6-15 Wake Forest squad, a 10-16 Miami Florida bunch and a Florida State unit that was worn down by previous games against Notre Dame and North Carolina. The Wreck is the lowest ranking team (274) in this year's tourney in the vitally important Defensive Field Goal Percentage category, allowing 45.86% from the field – or nearly 9% worse than top-rated Houston. This is also the Yellow Jackets' first tourney trip since 2010, and head coach Josh Pastner's first since 2014 with Memphis. The last time the Jackets won more than one game in a single tournament, they went all the way to the title game in 2004, losing to UConn. Pastner, on the other hand, will be looking to advance past the second round for the first time as a head coach. We'd rather run with a Loyola squad that's currently on a 17-1 SU win skein, especially when the Ramblers lead the nation in scoring defense (55.5). And don't forget about Sister Jean! The 101-year-old five-footer, the team's good luck charm during a Final Four run in 2018, has been vaccinated and will travel to Indianapolis as the team chaplain. The current Loyola lineup has the look of that 2018 squad, which won its first three matchups by a total of just 4 points. For what it's worth, No. 8 seeds stand 57-59 SU and 55-59-2 ATS overall versus No. 9 seeds in this tourney since 1991, but just 1-7 SUATS the last two years. However, the feeling here is the Ramblers are strong enough to bring those numbers back to the norm. Remember, if Sister Jean somehow gets sidelined, there's always **THE CLINCHER: Loyola is 9-1 SUATS in the post season under head coach Porter Moser with a win percentage of .835 or greater, including 8-0 SUATS versus sub .820 opponents.**

### (5) Tennessee over (12) Oregon St by 3

Like a good wine that's been uncorked too long, the fallacy of No. 12 seeds' domination over No. 5 seeds suddenly went flat. These one-time reliable 12 seeds went on a 13-11 SU and 16-7-1 ATS run over a six-year period from 2009-14. Then along came the law of averages and they tumbled – hard – over the next four years while producing a bleak 3-13 SU and 7-7-2 ATS record thru the 2018 tourney. So just when we thought we were about to officially put an end to something good that went bad, up pops the 2019 NCAA tournament in which these long-fabled 12 seeds reared their head and said 'enough is enough' when they won three of the four contests against 5 seeds, while going 4-0 ATS in the process! The problem for the streaky Vols today, though, is head coach Rick Barnes' teams aren't known for overachieving in the Big Dance. He has just one career win against a team seeded higher than his (2002 when No. 6 Texas defeated No. 3 Mississippi State in the second round). ESPN notes that of the 57 coaches who have at least 10 NCAA tournament games against higher-seeded teams, Barnes has the worst winning percentage going 1-11 for a win percentage of .083. WTF? He's also 4-11 in the first round as a No. 5 seed or worse, with 10 of the 11 losses coming by single digits. Since 2007, six of Tennessee's eight losses in the tournament have come by 1 or 2 points, or in overtime. Talk about nerve-wracking. Considering the **Pac-12 champion Beavers'** last NCAA tournament win was in 1982 – and that they are 0-6 in tourney play since – each of those losses came by single digits, which fits here. We wrap it up with this nugget from our well-oiled machine: Pac-12 tournament champions are **16-2 SU** in the first round of the NCAA tourney, including **4-0 SUATS** as underdogs. Oregon State was a surprising 7-3 ATS against fellow tourney teams this season, so don't be shocked to see a close one here.

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## UPSET TOURNAMENT GAME UPSET

### (13) Liberty over (4) Oklahoma St over by 3

Liberty University sure knows how to deep-six a summer scandal, don't they? First, they fielded a 9-1 juggernaut of a football team that blasted foes by over 17 PPG, then the basketball squad crushed all comers to go 23-5 overall and 14-2 in the conference. Winning is the biggest cure-all, so let's set the table here. For openers, we LOVE underdogs in the first round of the NCAA tourney that are "double champions" taking on non-champions (these teams are 20-12 ATS on the blind the last six tourneys). And besides riding a 12-game SU win streak, the Flames rank No. 3 in the land in overall Scoring Defense (59.6), No. 4 in Assist-To-Turnover Ratio, No. 4 in 3-Point Field Goals Made, and No. 5 in Fewest Turnover Per game (9.7). That's strong enough to make Keanu Reeves go "Whoa!" in one of the Bill & Ted movies. Thanks to a glossy 17-10-1 ATS overall mark this season, the Cowboys won a lot of love from the oddsmakers, which brings plenty of value to this game. For added emphasis, Oklahoma State knocked off mighty Baylor in the Big 12 Conference tourney before falling to Texas in the championship game. The cold, hard truth is OSU hasn't won an NCAA tournament game since 2009 and last advanced to the second week of play in 2005. Not so for the Flames, who pulled an upset as a No. 12 seed the last time we had a tournament in 2019, beating Mississippi State in the first round. It was their first NCAA tournament victory and they are hungry for more. The Cowboys' five straight losses in first-round games leads us straight to **THE CLINCHER: The Cowboys are 4-12 ATS as a favorite of 3 or more points versus greater than .555 foes under head coach Mike Boynton, including 0-5 SUATS the last five games.**

### (11) Syracuse over (6) San Diego St over by 3

From the Ripley's NCAA Tournament vault: No head coach past the age of 70 has ever won a national championship. While that's not good news for 76-year old Jim Boeheim and his Syracuse squad, the fact is Jimmy's outfit wasn't expected to be a legit contender, not with a 16-9 record and a No. 11 seed. But a look at the smaller picture tells us the Orange are more than capable of causing trouble: in 2018, the Cuse went from the First Four to the Sweet 16 as an 11-seed. Yes, San Diego State is on a ridiculous 14-game win streak thanks to a sticky defense that ranks No. 8 nationally in Scoring Defense at 60.6 PPG. But the Aztecs are just 6-12 all time in the NCAA tournament and have never won more than two games in a single tourney. Compare that to Syracuse's 8-2 ATS skein in this tourney since 2016, or Boeheim's 17-4 SU mark in the first round of this tourney since 1992. The bottom line is it's hard knocking down a Hall of Fame coach in this event that wins just about two-thirds of his games with a team that's won just one-third of its Big Dance contests. Grab the points as the Mountain West Conference has gone a money-burning 12-24-1 ATS in this round.

### (3) West Virginia over (14) Morehead St by 16

We've seen West Virginia head coach Bob Huggins get mad enough to fry an egg on his forehead in the past, but his noggin came dangerously close to exploding in an opening-round loss to Oklahoma State in the Big 12 Tourney. There was Huggy Bear, resplendent as always on the sidelines in his trademark track suit, his flowing locks now complimented by a silver-streaked beard, watching his team fight back from a 10-point deficit to take the lead with one minute to play. Then the wheels fell off as the Mountaineers gave up 4 straight points to trail by 3 with 16 seconds to play, and saw their 3-pointer to tie at the buzzer swatted away. Fortunately, Huggins regained control before the paramedics arrived when an assistant reminded him that West Virginia still held the honor of being the ONLY team this season to not lose to Gonzaga by a double-digit margin. Since coming to Morgantown, Huggy has led the Mountaineers to a top-four seed three times. Those trips ended in a Final Four (2010 as a No. 2), a first-round loss (2016 as a No. 3) and a Sweet 16 (as a No. 1). FYI: Huggy Bear just misses our Elite 8 Elements as outlined on page 3 as his troops just don't win games by a wide enough margin this season. Still, WVU is a safe 12-1 and 11-2 ATS when laying points to an opponent coming off a win in the Big Dance. After upsetting Belmont to win the Ohio Valley title, Morehead State is riding a 7-game win skein, and has actually gone 2-2 SU and 3-1 ATS in this tournament since 2009. However, there aren't many notches in their belt this season with four losses to 'lined' teams by margins of 36 to Kentucky, 33 to Ohio State, 18 to Richmond and 15 to Clemson. You know the Eagles will be psyched since it's the 10th anniversary of the their first-round upset of Louisville, when Demonte Harper drilled a 3-pointer with 4.2 seconds left for a 62-61 victory, their only round-of-64 win in school history. There will be no feel-good memories left for MSU after this one, though. Not when Huggy's next anger management meeting is sometime in April.

PLAYBOOK selection is **Underlined and Bold**. Should we pass or not have a strong opinion on a game, neither team will be bolded.

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### (7) Clemson over (10) Rutgers by 4

The Tigers roared through February with a 5-0 win streak but went 1-2 thereafter, with one of the losses being an embarrassing defeat at the hands of Miami Florida. Well, Clemson fans, it's time to turn that frown upside down. From the well-oiled machine: dogs in the first round of the NCAA tourney seeded No. 7 or better are 12-6-1 ATS since 1991 when not coming off a loss of 7 or more points, including **6-1-1 ATS** when facing a foe coming off an ATS loss. That's good news for the Tigers, provided you're able to take points with them on game day (still a 1-point dog to Rutgers at press time). If they are, they become a higher-seeded dog, and our tireless database jumps all over as it notes: No. 10 or higher seed dogs with a win percentage of .636 or greater coming off a SU favorite loss are 13-3 ATS in the first round of this tourney when facing sub .636 foes. The Scarlet Knights are pretty much newcomers to the Big Dance experience, making their first NCAA appearance since 1991 and looking for their first win since 1983. However, Rutgers stands just 4-16 SU against the ACC since 2016, and is an ugly 22-45 SU against opponents sporting a better record under head coach Steve Pikiell. Take the points with the better team.

### (2) Houston over (15) Cleveland St by 19

It's safe to say that Houston is everybody's "wise guy" pick in the tourney as the Westgate Super Book makes the Cougars the 5th choice to win the tournament at +1800 (just behind all four of the No. 1 seeds) – strange for a team that was the No. 2 seed in its conference tourney. The down side to taking Houie these days is you never know which team will show up. Will it be the one that dropped 91 points on Cincinnati in the ACC Conference Tourney title game? Or the one that scored 63 points in a loss to Wichita State a month ago? If you're still thinking about an upset in this game, we'd defer to Meatloaf when he so famously sang "Stop Right There Before You Go Any Further". Since 1985, there have been eight No. 15 seeds that have defeated a No. 2 seed, a winning percentage of .059. The most recent occurred in 2016 when Middle Tennessee defeated Michigan State. In 2013, Florida Gulf Coast became the only No. 15 seed to win two games and advance to the "Sweet 16" before getting eliminated. Our concern is that the Cougars took on only three fellow tourney teams this season, losing once and dropping the money twice. That and the fact that they are 0-3 SU and 1-2 ATS in the Big Dance against .730 or greater opposition. Much to our initial dismay, Horizon League teams are riding a 0-10 SU and 2-8 ATS mark in this event when coming off a win. But with the Cougars living inside Marc's **AWESOME ANGLE** on page 2, we are powerless to get off the Vikings. Remember, Cleveland State upset Wake Forest, 84-69 as an 8-point dog, in the first round of this tournament in its last appearance in 2009. However, since Houston tops the nation in Defensive Field Goal Percentage, and ranks No. 2 overall in Scoring Defense (57.9), we'll remind you once more about the futility of a money-line play and steer you towards an ATS outcome favoring CSU.

(continued on next page)

## (1) Gonzaga over (16) Norfolk St/Appalachian St by 31

We could write a litany of eyebrow-raising information on the Zags, but space permits us only so many words, so we'll choose them wisely. For openers, the Bulldogs went 26-0 this regular season, with 25 double-digit wins – including 23 in a row. In doing so, they are the only Division-1 team over the last 60 seasons to win 23 games in a row by 10 or more points. They are also the 5th team to enter the tourney undefeated, the first since Kentucky in 2014-15. There have been a total of seven undefeated national champions since 1939 (UCLA four times), with Indiana being the most recent in 1975-76. "COVID is the only thing that stops them. Or an injury," insists Syracuse coach Jim Boeheim. Gonzaga went 31-2 last year during the shortened season. They have three players that are finalists for the John Wooden award for most outstanding player, two of whom (Corey Kispert and Jalen Suggs) are NBA lottery picks. And for what it's worth, the Zags have already played the West's No. 2, 3, and 4 seeds in neutral-site games this season, and beat them all handily – each by double-digits. However, forewarned is forearmed – the Bulldogs have NEVER beaten a No. 1 seed in this event, going **0-7 SU and 1-6 ATS** – including 0-5 SUATS the last five – by an average loss of 13.3 PPG. Should the Bulldogs cut down the nets, they'll join the company of NCCA champs who collectively have gone 132-40-2 ATS throughout the tourney since 1991 (30-5-1 ATS since 2014), including 50-2-1 ATS when not favored by more than 4 points, and 16-1-1 ATS versus .897 or greater foes. In addition, Gonzaga is the first wire-to-wire No. 1 team since Kentucky in 2014-15. The Zags are **0-10 SU and 2-8 ATS** versus .820 or greater foes in this tourney. Meanwhile, Appalachian State is 8-5 straight up as an underdog, including three straight wins as the dog in the Sun Belt Conference tournament. And the last time Norfolk State was in the Big Dance, it knocked off No. 2 seed Missouri in 2012 as a 21-point underdog. Just saying. In closing, it has been six years since the last time the No. 1 overall seed reached the Final Four, and eight years since it won the championship. We won't be surprised one iota if that skein doesn't reach seven years this season.

## (9) Missouri over (8) Oklahoma by 3

We feature yet another 8 vs. 9 matchup in which the 8 seed has blown a tire the past two Dances, going **1-7 SUATS**. And we see more of it here today. To start, of the 15 times Oklahoma has been seeded fourth or worse, the Sooners are 5-10 in the first round and managed to reach the Sweet 16 just twice (1987 as a 6-seed, 1999 as a 13-seed). From the well-oiled machine: Big 12 teams with a win percentage of .636 or fewer, coming off one loss-exact, are **1-11 SUATS** in the first round of this event since 1991. In addition, the Sooners bring a sorry 22-32-2 ATS overall mark in this tourney since 1991 into the fray, including 6-14 ATS in first-round affairs. On the other side of the coin, no team in the SEC at the beginning of this season was more experienced and talented than the Tigers. A 3-6 speed bump slowed them down the stretch, but the talent remains. Our history book shows the Tigers haven't won a first-round game since 2010 (four straight up and ATS losses). However, this is Cuonzo Martin's fourth trip to The Dance as a head coach (second with Mizzou). All three of his career wins came in his first appearance, when he led 11th-seeded Tennessee from the First Four to the Sweet 16 in 2014. The Tigers went 7-3-1 ATS against tourney foes this season and 7-2 SU and 8-1 ATS as non-conference dogs of late. Much like the common sense devotion that its people show, Missouri has shown us they belong in this tourney.

## (5) Creighton over (12) UC Santa Barbara by 11

This is yet another 12 seed that we are not biting in this tournament. Today will mark UCSB's first appearance in the Dance in 10 years. After a 3-3 start to the season, Barbie finished the campaign on an 18-1 skein and eventually captured the Big West crown en route to this invite. They've now won 21 or more games each of the past four seasons. For it, they are a No. 12 seed, which is the Gauchos' highest since 1990, when they recorded their only NCAA tournament victory as a No. 9 seed. But don't expect an upset here. The Gauchos are just 3-21 SU and 9-15 ATS as non-conference dogs of 7 or more points. And besides, they don't leave the neighborhood all that often. In fact, Creighton will be the first tourney team that USCBB will take on this season. From a viewing perspective, Santa Barbara guard JaQuori McLaughlin, an Oregon State transfer, leads the team in scoring (16.2) and assists (5.2) and is worth watching. Enter Creighton who, in the modern tournament era, has never advanced past the second round. They are a No. 5 seed this year, only the second time they've been seeded better than sixth. The other time was in 2014 when they were a No. 3 seed but lost by 30 to Baylor in the second round, the third-worst loss by a No. 3 seed in the round of 32. That certainly appears to be an ominous weather report but we'll never let stats like that rain on our parade. Not when Big East chalk in this event stands 16-3 SU and 12-7 ATS, including **6-0 SU and 5-1 ATS** versus No. 12 or worse seeds against foes with a better record. And not when a deeply experienced Bluejays unit brought 4 starters back from last year's 24-win squad and stands 22-6 SU and 20-8 ATS as a favorite when coming off a double-digit loss under head coach

Greg McDermott. There is a reason Creighton is favored in this contest, and now you know why.

## (4) Virginia over (13) Ohio U by 4

Before you dive into this game off the high board, it pays to know this: Evan Miyakawa, who owns a statistics PHD from Baylor, has proved a disadvantage for a team coming off of a COVID pause (Virginia in this case) – opponent scoring has risen by 2.9 PPG on average in a normal tempo game. It also pays to know this eye-opening stat from ESPN: There hasn't been a repeat champion since Florida in 2006-07. (Virginia is technically the defending champion from its 2019 win). The Cavaliers can forget about repeating, as it's been hard enough for defending champs to win more than a game or two. Think not? Since Florida's repeat 14 years ago, no defending champion has advanced past the Sweet 16. And for just the second time in the past seven tourneys, UVA is not a top-two seed. That fits lit a glove knowing that the last time the Cavaliers made it past the first weekend when they weren't a No. 1 seed was 1995, when they were a No. 4 and advanced to the Elite Eight. And speaking of last times, the last occasion the Bobcats made the NCAA tournament, they made a run to the Sweet 16 as a No. 13 seed in 2012. Ohio guard Jason Preston has averaged over 16.5 PPG each of the past two seasons and was the main catalyst in the Bobbies' surprise run through the MAC tourney last month. This is a team that concluded the year on an **8-1 SUATS** winning run after opening the 2020 season 7-6 SU and 5-6 ATS. With MAC Dancers 8-4 ATS against the ACC in this tourney, and OU sporting a 5-1 ATS record in its last six NCAA tournament matches, you know what to do.

## (6) USC over (11) Drake/Wichita St by 1

Since Andy Enfeld came to USC, both of his first-round games have been decided by one point. Meanwhile, the Trojans last advanced to the second week of the tournament in 2007 as a No. 5 seed. The University of Spoiled Children (USC) is 11-5 ATS in its last sixteen games in this tournament, but only 1-3 SUATS as a favorite in these contests. They will have their hands full today, however, as the winner of the First Four play-in will arrive with confidence and a driving desire to erase recent memories of the past. If it's Drake, then this tournament will mark just the second appearance for Bulldogs since they last won an NCAA tournament game in 1971. In 2008, Drake earned a No. 5 seed, only to see its magical season come to an end in heartbreaking fashion when No. 12 seed Western Kentucky pulled the first-round upset on a buzzer-beating 3-pointer. Meanwhile, Wichita State has had trouble getting past the first weekend, despite being a top-four seed twice in its past five appearances. The last time the Shockers made it past the opening weekend, they were tripped up in the Sweet 16 round by Notre Dame. Regardless, this contest figures to go right down to the wire.

## (3) Kansas over (14) E Washington by 13

The feeling here is the much-dissed Jayhawks enter this year's Dance with a chip on their shoulder. If they can get past the COVID related issues that took them out of the Big 12 tourney, and we feel they will, a run to the Elite 8 would not surprise. Including the last tournament in 2019, Kansas has appeared in every NCAA tournament since 1990, and at thirty years it's the longest streak of any school. Head coach Bill Self's teams at Kansas have earned a top-four seed in all 17 of his seasons there. That's about as impressive as it gets. As a result, KU simply out-recruits everyone in the Midwest, meaning this year's roster is once again stockpiled with blue-chip players. Incidentally, the Jayhawks bring a bawdy 11-3 ATS record into this tiff in first round games in this event when not favored by 14 or more points, including **8-1 ATS** when facing foes coming off a win. The Eagles of EWU are led by Shantay Legans, who will attempt to lead his birds to their first tournament victory (0-2 SUATS all-time). Legans, making his NCAA tournament debut as a head coach, knows what Kansas is going through. Before EWU got rolling in the Big Sky Conference, it had to pause basketball activities twice, and had situations where an opponent wasn't available to play. With their longest pause coming around the holiday break too, the Eagles went a stretch of 26 days without a game. Look for Kansas to shake off the rust by the end of the game.

## (7) Oregon over (10) VCU by 10

An interesting matchup between two teams that pretty much dominated their conference this season. The Ducks won the regular season portion of the Pac-12 before losing a stunner to Oregon State in a semifinal game. To their credit, Dana Altman's crew was 7-3 SUATS in games against foes sporting a .625 or greater win percentage this season. Oregon is 6-0 in first-round games under Altman. They are also 13-6 SU and 15-4 ATS in this tourney since 2013, including **5-0 SUATS** versus foes coming off a loss. The Rams haven't survived the first weekend since their incredible First Four-to-the-Final Four journey in 2011. In their past six appearances, they are 1-5 in the first round. A major concern is that the Rams were just 1-3-1 ATS against tourney foes this campaign. Remember, Oregon was ranked No. 20 in the AP preseason poll. They advance here.

# THIS WEEK'S BEST BETS

OPENING WEEK OF 2021 NCAA TOURNAMENT THURSDAY-MONDAY, MARCH 18-22	3★ BEST BET	4★ BEST BET	5★ BEST BET
	LOYOLA CHICAGO (Friday 3/19)	COLORADO (Saturday 3/20)	ST. BONAVENTURE (Saturday 3/20)



## (2) Iowa over (15) Grand Canyon by 10

If there is a sleeper team to cut down the nets in Indianapolis it may be Iowa. Led by the best player in the nation in 6'11 Luka Garza (24.9 PPG and 9.4 RPG), the 5-returning starter Hawkeyes have just the right makeup. Don't forget, Iowa has ranked No. 5 in the AP preseason poll. The problem is the Hawkeyes haven't been to the Sweet 16 since 1999, which is the only time they've gotten that far in the past three decades. Iowa has just four NCAA tournament wins since 2000, but has the talent to match or exceed that total in this year's tourney. The Grand Canyon Antelopes played seven fewer games this season than last, yet improved their win total by 4 games under the direction of savvy first-year head coach Bryce Drew, formerly the head man at Valparaiso and Vanderbilt. The younger brother of Baylor boss Scot Drew has led three teams to the Big Dance, going 0-3 but the average loss margin in those games was just over 5 PPG while holding all three foes to 68 or fewer points. He's also 10-4-1 ATS as a dog of more than 10 points. The Lopes are the No. 2 overall team in the nation in Defensive field Goal Percentage (37.6) and No. 5 in Rebound Margin. Yes, they can play. This could be tighter than last year's pre-COVID sweater hanging in your closet.

## (1) Michigan over (11) Mt St Mary's/Tex Southern by 28

Juwan Howard filled some mighty big shoes when he replaced John Beilein at Michigan. The Wolverines were 20-9 SU and 17-11-1 ATS in this tourney under Beilein's guide, making it to the championship game two times. Under Howard, UM has gone 40-16 SU and 34-21-1 ATS in his two seasons, including 28-14-1 ATS as a favorite. Per ESPN, in his three years as a player at Michigan, Howard played in the title game as a freshman and sophomore and reached the Elite Eight in his junior season. All three years, Michigan lost to a No. 1 seed. The last time the Wolverines were a No. 1 seed was in 1993, when they lost in the title game to North Carolina in the Chris Webber fiasco. However, the loss of senior forward Isaiah Livers to a stress fracture to his right foot crippled the Wolves in the Big Ten tourney. Check his status before making a move here. If Texas Southern arrives here, they will do so carrying the lowest power rating of all teams in this tourney according to the Ken Pom rankings. If it's Mount St. Mary's, they own the second-worst ranking according to Pom. Either way, this could have roast written all over it.

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## 5★ BEST BET

### (9) St. Bonaventure over (8) LSU by 11

The Bonnies are for real, that's for sure. This is head coach Mark Schmidt's third trip to the Dance with St. Bonaventure, most by any coach in school history. It's also the first time the Bonnies are a single-digit seed. It all started last year when Schmidt's troops won 19 games in the COVID-shortened season. He welcomed all 5 starters back from that unit and they certainly rose to the occasion, winning the Atlantic-10 Conference tourney as the top-seed. For their effort this season, Schmidt's squad ranked No. 5 in the nation in Scoring Defense, and went 2-0-1 ATS against fellow tournament teams. In addition, St. Bonaventure is 9-3 ATS with 3 or more days of rest in the postseason, including **3-0 ATS** as a dog. On the opposite side of the court, LSU brings a lousy 3-9 ATS record as a favorite in the tourney into this contest, including **1-8 ATS** when laying 5 or fewer points. The Tigers also enter off a heartbreaking 80-79 loss to Alabama in the title game of the SEC tourney knowing they are **0-5 ATS** against non-conference foes when coming off a one-point defeat. All of which sets up **THE CLINCHER: Teams in the NCAA tourney coming off a one-point loss are 2-7-1 ATS against foes coming off a win, including 0-5-1 ATS versus .636 or greater opponents.**

## 4★ BEST BET

### (5) Colorado over (12) Georgetown by 15

Let's quickly set the table here: A No. 12 seed or worse has never reached the Final Four and we don't see that happening with the Hoyas this year. In fact, the remarkable streak of six straight NCAA tournaments in which at least one team seeded seventh or worse and reached the Final Four came to an end in 2019. But we've still had at least one Final Four participant seeded fifth or worse in each of the past 10 tournaments (think Colorado). In a tale of the tape, it's pretty much all Buffaloes in this matchup, including perhaps the most vital: Points Per Game Differential +9 net to Colorado. Georgetown was 3-7 SU against tournament teams this season and the Hoyas will need to overcome some nasty history today as Colorado is a No. 5 seed, its highest in school history (previous best was 8). In fact, the only time the Buffs won more than one game in a single NCAA tournament was 1955. That was then, though, and if there is one thing CU head coach Tad Boyle despises, it's having the rug pulled out from under him. That's confirmed by the fact that Boyle's Buffaloes are 24-13-1 ATS under his lead after losing SU as a favorite, including 10-2 SU and 8-1-1 ATS against non-conference opponents. So then, how do you spell c-r-u-s-h in the NCAA tournament? With that we reach out to **THE CLINCHER: No. 10 or worse seeded dogs in the NCAA tournament, coming off consecutive SU underdog wins, are 2-37 SU and 13-24-2 ATS in this role since 1991, including 1-14 SU and 2-12-1 ATS as a dog of 11 or fewer points.**

### (4) Florida St over (13) UNC Greensboro by 7

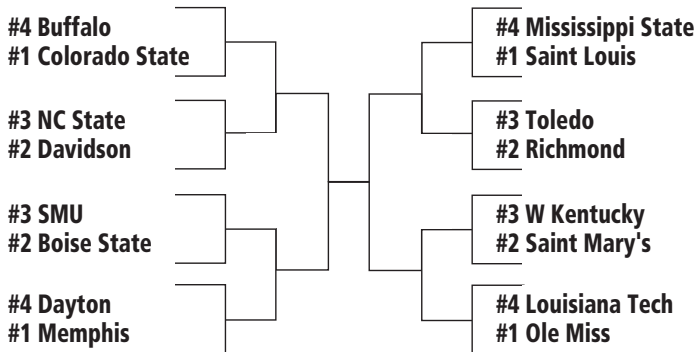
Bad news for FSU's Leonard Hamilton: Like Jim Boeheim, no coach past the age of 70 has ever won a national championship. And we don't see that in the cards for the Seminoles anytime soon, either. Although the Noles have advanced to the Sweet 16 in back-to-back tournaments for the second time in school history (also 1992-93), they will be expected to make it three years in a row as a No. 4 seed this year. But unless Hamilton finds a way to improve on his horrid **1-6 ATS** record as a favorite of more than 4 points in this event, it won't be with our blessing. In fact, Hamilton is just 14-23-2 ATS during the postseason, including 6-17-2 ATS against opponents coming off a win. On the other side of the coin, Wes Miller now has his Spartans in the NCAAs for the second time in the past three tournaments. In 2018 as a 13-seed, they proved to be a handful for Gonzaga before falling 68-64. Six-foot senior guard Isaiah Miller is tough to slow down and impacts the game at both ends. An upset would be no surprise here.

(continued on page 17)

# 2021 NATIONAL INVITATIONAL TOURNAMENT

The 2021 National Invitation Tournament will feature 16 teams with all games being played in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex. Conference USA and the University of North Texas will serve as hosts for the 83rd NIT, and specific venues for each round are being finalized. Games will be played at Comerica Center in Frisco, Texas and at UNT Coliseum on the campus of North Texas in Denton, Texas. 2021 also will feature a third-place game Sunday, March 28, which hasn't been played at the NIT since 2003. **All 16 games of the 2021 NIT will be televised on ESPN or ESPN2.**

## 2021 NIT SCHEDULE



**First Round (All times ET • Lines are opening lines)**

### Wednesday, March 17

#3 Toledo (21-8) vs. #2 Richmond (-2.5/13-8), 7:00 pm  
 #3 W Kentucky (20-7) vs. #2 Saint Mary's (-1.5/14-9), 9:00 pm

### Thursday, March 18

#3 NC State (13-10) vs. #2 Davidson (-2.5/13-8), 7:00 pm  
 #3 SMU (11-5) vs. #2 Boise State (-1/18-8), 9:00 pm

### Friday, March 19

#4 Buffalo (16-8) vs. #1 Colorado State (PK/18-6), 7:00 pm  
 #4 Louisiana Tech (21-7) vs. #1 Ole Miss (-6/16-11), 9:00 pm

### Saturday, March 20

#4 Dayton (14-9) vs. #1 Memphis (-3.5/16-8), 12:00 noon  
 #4 Miss State (15-14) vs. #1 Saint Louis (-3.5/14-6), 5:00 pm

**Quarterfinals • Thursday, March 25**

**Semifinals • Saturday, March 27**

**Third-place game • Sunday, March 28**

**Championship • Sunday, March 28**

## 2021 NIT TEAM POWER RATINGS

<b>BOISE STATE</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>MISS STATE</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>BUFFALO</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>NC STATE</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>COLORADO STATE</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>RICHMOND</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>DAVIDSON</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>SAINT LOUIS</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>DAYTON</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>SAINT MARY'S</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>LOUISIANA TECH</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>SMU</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>MEMPHIS</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>TOLEDO</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>MISSISSIPPI</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>W KENTUCKY</b>	<b>81</b>

## NIT TOURNAMENT NOTES

### ALL GAMES:

- Favs in same-conference games are 12-3 ATS L15Y
- Teams off a SU NIT win in which they allowed 50 < pts are 9-3-2 ATS
- .750 or greater teams off BB SU wins are 7-23-2 ATS

### FIRST ROUND:

- DD dogs are 6-1 ATS vs opp off SU win
- Favs are 18-6 ATS off BB SU losses
- #1 Seeds are 9-3 ATS last 3 years
- #3 Seed home teams are 16-7-2 ATS L7Y

### Best & Worst Conferences in this round

**Colonial:** 7-2 ATS, **SEC:** 14-4 ATS, **MWC:** 14-5 ATS, **CUSA:** 1-7-1 ATS as dogs, **Pac-12:** 2-14 ATS away, **Sun Belt:** 1-6 ATS, **A-10:** 3-11 ATS.

### QUARTERFINALS:

- Teams off BB SU dog wins are 12-5 SU / 14-3 ATS
- Favs of < 5 pts are 6-1 ATS off an ATS loss
- Favs are 4-12 ATS off BB ATS wins

### Best & Worst Conferences in this round

**Big 12:** 6-1 ATS, **Big 10:** 13-3 ATS, **A-10:** 5-2 ATS, **ACC:** 0-5-1 ATS as favs, **Big East:** 0-4 ATS, **Pac-12:** 1-6-1 ATS as favs, **SEC:** 1-5 ATS as favs, **MVC:** 1-5 ATS.

### SEMIFINALS:

- Favs of > 2 pts are 7-1 ATS off an ATS loss
- Dogs off a DD SU win are 0-6 ATS
- Teams off 3+ ATS wins are 8-19 ATS

### Best & Worst Conferences in this round

**Big 10:** 8-0 ATS, **Big 12:** 5-1 ATS, **A-10:** 5-1 ATS as dogs, **SEC:** 0-6 ATS, **MWC:** 0-4 ATS, **CUSA:** 0-3 ATS.

### CHAMPIONSHIP:

- Favs off DD ATS wins are 8-1 ATS
- Teams who allowed < 60 pts in Semifinal round are 6-1 ATS
- Teams off BB dog wins are 1-5 ATS

### Best & Worst Conferences in this round

**Big 10:** 5-1 ATS as favs, **Big 12:** 3-1 ATS, **ACC:** 2-6 ATS, **SEC:** 2-4 ATS

NEXT WEEK: The PLAYBOOK Basketball Newsletter Sweet 16 Tourney Guide.

This issue will be available after 9:00 PM ET on Tuesday, March 23. Good luck and have a great rest of the season!



# 2021 COLLEGE BASKETBALL INVITATIONAL TOURNAMENT

## 2021 CBI TEAM POWER RATINGS

ARMY	71	COASTAL CAROLINA	80
BELLARMINE	76	LONGWOOD	70
BOWLING GREEN	79	PEPPERDINE	78
BRYANT	76	STETSON	74

## CBI TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE

All games played at Ocean Center, Daytona Beach FL

### QUARTERFINALS • Monday, March 22

Stetson (11-14) vs. Bowling Green (-8.5/14-11), 11:30 am  
Coastal Carolina (16-7) vs. Bryant (-1/15-6), 2:30 pm

Longwood (12-16) vs. Pepperdine (-10/12-12), 5:30 am  
Bellarmine (13-7) vs. Army (PK/12-9), 8:30 pm

**SEMIFINALS • Tuesday, March 23**

**FINALS • Wednesday, March 24**

### PREVIOUS CHAMPIONS

• 2019 South Florida • 2018 North Texas • 2017 Wyoming • 2016 Nevada • 2015 Loyola-Chicago • 2014 Siena • 2013 Santa Clara • 2012 Pittsburgh • 2011 Oregon • 2010 VCU • 2009 Oregon State

### NOTES

• Double-Digit favorites are 1-9 ATS L6 years  
• ROUND 1 dogs off BB SU losses are 15-3-1 ATS

(continued from page 15)

### (11) Michigan St/UCLA over (6) BYU by 4

Buyer beware: No. 12 seeds used to be the upset darlings picked to win a couple of games, but no more. In the First Four era, No. 11 seeds have made 10 Sweet 16 appearances, the same number as all other double-digit seeds combined. With it, for the first time ever, zero No. 6 seeds have reached the Sweet 16 in three consecutive tournaments. That raises the all-in ante for either the Spartans or the Bruins in this battle. While MSU has never won a game as a double-digit seed (0-3), nor advanced past the second round when worse than a No. 7 seed, this team was ranked No. 13 in the AP preseason poll. In addition, should the Spartans advance, Tom Izzo would be 32-8 SU in his first two games of this tourney. Meanwhile, UCLA is 21-3 SU when coming off a tournament win and facing No. 3 or worse foes. Hence, either team is the side in this contest, given the fact that the Cougars are 2-9 SU and 2-8-1 ATS in the first round since 1995, including **0-9 SU and 1-7-1 ATS** in games in which BYU sports a sub .800 record. Thus, with the Mormons 2-4 SU in its six games against fellow tournament teams this season, they become a one-and-done today.

### (3) Texas over (14) Abilene Christian by 6

We remember well when Shaka Smart took VCU from the First Four to the Final Four back in 2011, winning five games along the way. Since then, Smart has just two tournament victories in six appearances. Between VCU and Texas, his teams have lost four straight first-round games, as No. 5, 6, 7 and 10 seeds. In fact, Texas hasn't won a first-round game since 2014. Still, riding a 5-0 win skein along the way to winning the Big 12 championship, there are a lot of people on the Texas bandwagon in this tournament, especially with 5 starters back from last year's 19-win team. But they'd better not fall asleep at the wheel against the Wildcats here. Abilene won 20 games last season and returned 4 starters en route to a 23-4 effort this season. And they bring cred into this battle, holding down the No. 1 ranking in Turnover Margin (+6.4). Rest assured, they'll be anxious to remove the stain left after being waxed by Kentucky, 77-49, in this tourney in 2019. Remember, Texas was just 7-11-1 ATS laying points this season and they could still be on champagne high. Be careful here.

### (7) Connecticut over (10) Maryland by 6

The Terrapins have won 13 of their past 14 first-round games, but have lost six of their past seven in the second round. Their head coach, Mark Turgeon, has had a similar tournament experience in his career as in his previous nine tournament appearances at Wichita State, Texas A&M and Maryland, his teams are 7-2 in the first round, but just 2-5 in the second round. However, the truth of the matter is we simply weren't impressed with the Terps' nonchalant ways this season, especially when taking points (4-10 SU and 5-9 ATS, including **0-5 SUATS** as a dog of 4 or fewer points). The turtles are also riding a slow path to the poor house in this event, going 2-7 ATS in their last nine games. UConn was a different team with guard James Bouknight in the lineup this season. Check his status as he's been known to cramp up too frequently. He is the Huskies' leading scorer (19.0 PPG). We may be about

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With **MARC LAWRENCE**  
America's Favorite Handicapper

Join Marc, Victor and Andy for special edition March Madness **AGAINST THE SPREAD** podcasts. Available Wednesday March 17 and 24!

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to find out if seven is indeed UConn's lucky number as its only other time as a 7-seed culminated in the Huskies' fourth national championship back in 2014, led by Shabazz Napier. UConn cashed in 5 of 7 games versus tourney teams this season and with its **17-3 SU and 16-4 ATS** mark in this tourney since 2009, should be considered dangerous.

### (2) Alabama over (15) Iona by 10

Like its football brethren, the Tide captured the SEC championship this season. And in fact, 7 football powerhouses – **Alabama, Clemson, Miami Florida, Nebraska, Notre Dame, Texas, and USC** – have won 39 football titles, but none of them has ever made it to a national championship game appearance. ESPN notes that Alabama is the only team in this year's tournament field to be a top-two seed and reside in the Top 10 of the AP poll after entering the season unranked. And even more bewildering, the struggles of No. 2 seeds in this category are quite alarming, as exactly two-thirds of them (14 of 21) didn't make it out of the first weekend. Gulp. So does this game have "letdown" written all over it for Nate Oats' troops? You better believe it does. Bama is 2-3 SU and **0-5 ATS** in its last five games as a favorite in this tournament. In addition, the last twelve SEC tourney champions are just 4-8 ATS in NCAA openers when favored against foes coming off win, including **1-7 ATS** as double-digit chalk. This is the fifth straight NCAA tournament appearance for the Gaels. And look who's coming to dinner this year – none other than Rick Pitino, and his 54 NCAA tournament games as a coach. Iona has just one win. Pitino's edge on the sidelines yields a winning ticket.

**NEXT WEEK: The PLAYBOOK Basketball Newsletter Sweet 16 Tourney Guide.**  
This issue will be available after 9:00 PM ET on Tuesday, March 23. Good luck and have a great rest of the season!