



# 2017 MARCH MADNESS TEAM PREVIEWS

topbet





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# Villanova Wildcats (Overall: 28-3, Conf: 15-3)

## Team Strengths:

The reigning national champions Wildcats, who are +850 to repeat, enter the championship week operating one of the most efficient offenses in college basketball. Jay Wright's Wildcats are seventh in Division I ball in field goal shooting percentage (49.6%). They shoot a lot of threes (23.7 attempts per game) and makes 8.7.

Their ability to spread opposing defenses have given Josh Hart and company wider lanes towards the basket, as evidenced by Villanova's 72.8 shooting percentage at the rim. Although guys like Ryan Arcidiacono and Daniel Ochefu are gone, there remains a ton of experience for the Wildcats with players like Hart, Jalen Brunson, and Kris Jenkins no strangers to going deep in the Big Dance.

## Team Weaknesses:

Villanova's key players can't have off nights in the tournament. The team has a shallow bench with five players averaging 0.5 PPG or fewer riding it. The Wildcats have a short rotation and as noted by The Ringer's Mark Titus, reaches just "six guys deep". While the Wildcats are 20th in the nation in scoring defense, allowing just 63.1 PPG, it belies the team's soft interior defense. The Wildcats average just 3.0 blocks per contest and swat away only 11.9% of their opponents' shots at the rim.

The team truly misses Daniel Ochefu and the rim protection he brought last season, which hasn't been replicated by any one on the Wildcats team.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	77.5	63
Rebounds Per Game	33.4	270
Blocks Per Game	3.0	199
3-Point Percentage	36.8%	91
Free Throw Percentage	79.8%	2

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Kris Jenkins	13.4
F	Darryl Reynolds	5.1
G	Josh Hart	18.7
G	Mikal Bridges	10.6
G	Jalen Brunson	14.8



# Duke Blue Devils (Overall: 23-8, Conf: 11-7)

## Team Strengths:

Despite a struggle late in the regular season in which they went 1-3 and averaged 10 points fewer than its season output in the last four games before the ACC Tournament, it'd be criminally premature to say that the Blue Devils' offense has officially gone sour.

This is a team laden with elite talent from top to bottom. The offense could grope for form at times but with players like Luke Kennard and Grayson Allen—not to mention Jayson Tatum—the Blue Devils could explode on any given game and show why they're 28th in the nation in scoring (80.5 PPG) and 33rd in field goal percentage (47.3). Duke has five players averaging at least 10.4 PPG, led by Kennard who puts up 20.1 per contest.

## Team Weaknesses:

Okay, we know Duke could score. But how about its defense? Coach K's Blue Devils, on paper, have the look of a solid defensive team. Duke allows just 69.1 PPG. Opponents struggle to drain three-pointers against the Blue Devils, who give up just 5.0 per game.

That said, they've been soft around the rim, especially when Amile Jefferson is on the bench. Duke absorbs 47.7 shots at the rim from opponents, who make 61.4% of them.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	80.5	26
Rebounds Per Game	36.8	99
Blocks Per Game	4.4	58
3-Point Percentage	37.5%	65
Free Throw Percentage	75.4%	36

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Amile Jefferson	11.2
F	Jayson Tatum	16.0
F	Matt Jones	7.4
G	Grayson Allen	14.5
G	Luke Kennard	20.1





# Baylor Bears (Overall: 25-6, Conf: 12-6)

## Team Strengths:

An elite defense could take any team with it far in the tournament. Baylor is one of those squads hoping that slowing down the game's tempo and playing chokehold defense would bring the national title along with it back to Waco.

The Bears gave up just 62.5 points per game back in the regular season, during which they also ranked 338th in KenPom's adjusted tempo. They're as great in defending around the rim just as they close out on outside shooters, as the team registers 4.9 blocks per game and limits opponents to a mere 31.2 percent shooting from beyond the arc.

## Team Weaknesses:

You couldn't tell that the Bears once committed close to 30 turnovers in a game while also ranked No. 1 in the nation. The Bears have plenty of trouble taking care of the leather this season and that was put on display when they committed 29 miscues in their 89-68 loss to West Virginia on Jan. 10.

For the record, Baylor is 214th in the nation in turnovers with game with 13.5.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	71.9	196
Rebounds Per Game	37.7	56
Blocks Per Game	4.9	25
3-Point Percentage	35.2%	166
Free Throw Percentage	71.6%	128

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Johnathan Motley	17.5
F	Manu Lecomte	12.4
F	Al Freeman	9.3
G	Jo Lual0Acuil Jr	9.2
G	Ishmail Wainright	5.5



# Florida Gators (Overall: 24-7, Conf: 14-4)

## Team Strengths:

Defense is what the Gators preach. It's where they generate and create rhythm for their offense. They have a handful of aggressive defenders that will pester, get the ball, and then outrun you to the other side for a score.

Through speedsters Kevaughn Allen, Kasey Hill, Devin Robinson, and Chris Chiozza, who all have a nose for the ball and average at least one steal per contest, Florida finished the regular season ranking 39th in the nation in steals.

It's also good that their main options can collectively contribute from anywhere on the floor, particularly Allen and Robinson, as both possess a threat when driving to the hoop or stepping out for a jumper.

## Team Weaknesses:

Rim protection. Period. John Egbunu's knee injury was simply frustrating. The junior was arguably one of the best defensive bigs in the SEC, so him not being there is leaving a huge hole. Although they still have Kevarrius Hayes, who can be really good when he's on (1.6 BPG in just 16.4 MPG), he obviously won't be enough to counter the premiere low post players down the line.

In four of the five games after Egbunu went down, the Gators had problems containing players who mostly played inside. Sidnarius Thornwell, Bam Adebayo, Moses Kingsley, and Luke Kornet all had an easy day operating in the paint, and their production equated to 20.5 points and 10 rebounds.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	78.8	57
Rebounds Per Game	37.1	114
Blocks Per Game	4.7	42
3-Point Percentage	36.6%	111
Free Throw Percentage	72.7%	97

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Kevarrius Hayes	6.1
F	Justin Leon	7.1
F	Devin Robinson	10.9
G	Kasey Hill	9.6
G	Kevaughn Allen	13.9



# Virginia Cavaliers (Overall: 22-9, Conf: 11-7)

## Team Strengths:

Defense, defense, and some more defense. It's where the Hoos begin and end. They do a good job of containing attacks and slowing down the pace of the game, which is a big component to their offensive scheme that prefers to operate more on the half court.

Whenever the execution is done well, such abilities become extra good against teams that like to keep running the floor and get the fastest shot possible, as it messes with their momentum and rhythm.

Kenpom.com currently rates Virginia as the number one defense in the country, thanks to allowing the fewest points in all of Big 12 and college basketball (55.1 PPG). Additionally, through the pesky D, they also limit opponents' ball movement by only giving up 9.6 APG, sixth fewest overall.

## Team Weaknesses:

The problem with this group is that they are the classic "great defense, no offense" kind of team, so much so that they put up the lowest PPG average among all ranked teams (66.9).

London Perrantes, who only nets 12.8 PPG on a mediocre 42.1 percent shooting, is their best and most reliable scorer. In fact, he's the lone Cavalier to average double-digit points this season.

Another thing that causes concern is their tendency to collapse in the latter parts of the game, which was highlighted in early February when they had a string of such performances. Among them was giving up 44, 44, and 40 second half points to Syracuse, Virginia Tech, and Duke, respectively, after a strong opening half. Against Miami, they fell in OT, 54-48, despite being in control for much of the contest. They were held without a field goal in the extra frame's last four minutes.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	66.9	309
Rebounds Per Game	32.9	295
Blocks Per Game	4.1	76
3-Point Percentage	39.4%	23
Free Throw Percentage	71.2	134

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
C	Jack Salt	3.7
F	Isaiah Wilkins	7.2
F	Marial Shayok	8.5
G	Devon Hall	8.6
G	London Perrantes	12.8





# SMU Mustangs (Overall: 27-4, Conf: 17-1)

## Team Strengths:

Like Louisville, Larry Brown and his boys were banned from postseason action by orders of the NCAA board in 2016. That's not the situation this year, as they're expected to make some serious noise in the Big Dance.

SMU prides itself on defense, where it ranks third across the nation in points conceded (59.4). Partner that with an offense that's headlined by four double-digit scorers in Semi Ojeleye (18.5), Shake Milton (13.3), Sterling Brown (12.8) and Ben Moore (11.8). No team would be happy about a matchup with the Mustangs, who are priced at +135 to reclaim the AAC championship and have won their last 13 games.

## Team Weaknesses:

The best or, arguably, the only way to stop the Mustangs from getting their way is to foul and force them make their free throws. They've been struggling in that area all season long, shooting just 69.3% as a team from the charity stripe, which ranks 208th in the country per teamrankings.com.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	74.6	132
Rebounds Per Game	39.0	30
Blocks Per Game	3.4	149
3-Point Percentage	40.3%	10
Free Throw Percentage	69.3%	208

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Ben Moore	11.8
F	Semi Ojeleye	18.5
G	Jarrey Foster	9.9
G	Shake Milton	13.3
G	Sterling Brown	11.8



# South Carolina Gamecocks (Overall: 22-10, Conf: 12-6)

## Team Strengths:

For the first time since 2004, South Carolina is going to the Big Dance. The Gamecocks secured that coveted berth in the national tournament thanks mainly to their exceptional defense. They are 29th in the nation in scoring defense, allowing just 64.5 points per game this season. The Gamecocks are even better when it comes to adjusted defensive efficiency with South Carolina surrendering just 88.5 points per 100 possessions. That's third-best in the NCAA this campaign.

The Gamecocks (+20,000) will need that defense to shine through if they are to win their first NCAA Tournament game since 1973.

## Team Weaknesses:

South Carolina's defense may be excellent but the same can't be said about the Gamecocks' floundering offense. They're averaging just 72.1 points per game this season, 201st in the entire nation. Their shooting percentages have been among the lowest in the NCAA with the Gamecocks nailing just 33.8 percent of their outside attempts and 69.0 percent of their free throws.

Much of the burden when it comes to scoring lies with guard Sindarius Thornwell. The senior guard has been phenomenal for South Carolina, averaging 21.0 points and 7.2 rebounds per game this season.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	72.1	201
Rebounds Per Game	36.3	145
Blocks Per Game	3.7	119
3-Point Percentage	33.8%	237
Free Throw Percentage	69.0%	215

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Chris Silva	9.8
F	Duane Notice	10.1
F	Sindarius Thornwell	21.0
G	Hassni Gravett	3.6
G	PJ Dozier	13.6



# Wisconsin Badgers (Overall: 25-9, Conf: 12-6)



## Team Strengths:

The Badgers are armed with one of the stingiest defense in the nation. They are seventh in Division I ball with only 61.1 points allowed per game, which is mainly a product of a deliberate tactic to slow the game down in order to limit their opponents' possessions.

Per KenPom.com, the Badgers are 333rd overall in adjusted tempo. While Wisconsin doesn't have a single imposing rim protector, the Badgers are merciless against their opponents' two-point jumpers, which they hold down to only 32.8 shooting percentage.

## Team Weaknesses:

The Badgers can't shoot free throws. The team shoots just 64.3% from the foul line, 336th in the nation. Apart from their performance from the charity stripe, the Badgers are also not known for their efficient outside sniping, as they are 148th in three-point percentage (35.5) and 143rd in threes per game (7.6).

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	72.4	180
Rebounds Per Game	37.5	67
Blocks Per Game	3.5	138
3-Point Percentage	35.5%	148
Free Throw Percentage	64.3%	336

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Ethan Happ	13.9
F	Nigel Hayes	13.5
F	Vitto Brown	6.8
G	Bronson Koenig	14.0
G	Zak Showalter	8.3



# Virginia Tech Hokies

## (Overall: 22-10, Conf: 10-8)

### Team Strengths:

You can certainly count on the Hokies to score a ton of points, and in a very efficient way at that. They ranked ninth in both field-goal and three-point shooting percentages during the season, with five players having averaged double-digit scoring outputs – six if you count Chris Clarke (who we'll get into further detail in the next segment).

Victories over Duke and inter-state rival Virginia from the regular season are also encouraging signs that Virginia Tech can slay some more beasts along its path in the Big Dance, which makes the team's +20,000 odds of winning the national title this season all the more appealing.

### Team Weaknesses:

As a team filled with upperclassmen, it's quite ironic that the loss of sophomore guard Chris Clarke might very well unravel the Hokies. Clarke suffered a torn ACL in mid-February, and his services as the team's top rebounder (7.3 boards per game this season before the injury) will sorely be missed.

Virginia Tech has a good number of veterans on its squad, but none of them have big-game experience in March Madness seeing that this is the team's first trip to the NCAA Tournament in a decade. They got a bad draw from Selection Sunday by being pitted with eighth-seeded Wisconsin, which has four players that appeared in three Sweet 16 and two Final Four appearances over the last three seasons.

### Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	79.2	39
Rebounds Per Game	32.6	303
Blocks Per Game	2.8	234
3-Point Percentage	40.3%	9
Free Throw Percentage	73.4	78

### Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Zach LeDay	16.3
G	Justin Bibbs	9.5
G	Seth Allen	13.1
G	Ahmed Hill	11.7
G	Justin Robinson	10.3



# Marquette Golden Eagles

## (Overall: 19-12, Conf: 10-8)

### Team Strengths:

For the first time under the tutelage of Steve Wojciechowski, Marquette is going to the Big Dance. The Golden Eagles nabbed a spot in the national tournament thanks mainly to their outstanding offense. They are 17th in the nation in scoring, averaging 82.5 points per game this season. The Golden Eagles are even better when it comes to adjusted offensive efficiency with Marquette scoring 121.0 points per 100 possessions. That's seventh-best in the NCAA this campaign.

Marquette leads the nation in 3-point shooting at 43 percent, with 6-foot-11 center Luke Fischer (11.0 PPG) anchoring things down low. Fisher is one of five players scoring in double figures for the Golden Eagles who are also seventh in the nation in free throw percentage. Marquette's odds of winning the national championship are currently priced at +30,000.

### Team Weaknesses:

The biggest issue for Marquette this season has been its pedestrian defense. The Golden Eagles are ranked 216th in field goal defense and 279th in 3-point defense this season. The Golden Eagles, who surrendered a whopping 75.0 points per game this season, had trouble protecting the glass as well. Marquette managed to corral just 33.3 rebounds per contest (293rd in Division I) this campaign.

### Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	82.5	17
Rebounds Per Game	33.3	293
Blocks Per Game	3.6	128
3-Point Percentage	43.0%	1
Free Throw Percentage	77.9%	7

### Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Matt Heldt	2.4
F	Andrew Rowsey	11.5
F	Duane Wilson	4.8
G	Sam Hauser	8.7
G	Markus Howard	13.2





# USC Trojans

## (Overall: 24-9, Conf: 10-8)

### Team Strengths

This is USC's second-straight trip to the Big Dance, and its sixth berth in the last 11 years. The Trojans create trouble solely on scoring and more scoring, averaging nearly 80 points per game while shooting above 50 percent from the floor. There are four players scoring in double figures for this team this season—with Bennie Boatwright and Chimezie Metu leading the way with at least 14 points per outing.

USC is a +30,000 long shot in this year's NCAA Tournament.

### Team Weaknesses

While the offense causes chaos for opponents, the defense does the opposite. The Trojans rank 194th in the nation in points given up (73.2) and allow close to 30 field goals made per game, including 8.4 threes, both also among the worst this season.

### Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	78.7	44
Rebounds Per Game	36.2	131
Blocks Per Game	5.4	11
3-Point Percentage	36.3%	110
Free Throw Percentage	73.9%	65

### Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Bennie Boatwright	14.6
F	Chimezie Metu	14.5
F	Jordan McLaughlin	13.1
G	Shaquan Aaron	12.4
G	DeAnthony Melton	11.1



# Providence Friars (Overall: 20-12, Conf: 10-8)

## Team Strengths:

If their six-straight wins to close out the regular season is any indication, the Providence Friars – priced at a rather distant +30,000 to win the national title – can certainly gain steam as unexpectedly as any team in the tournament. They came out flat in the opening-round loss to Creighton at the Big East tournament, but they also beat the Bluejays during said six-game win streak along with victories against the conference's more notable schools like Butler and Xavier.

Forward Rodney Bullock is an NBA star in the making, but a ton of credit has to go to guard Kyron Cartwright as well. The Compton-born junior ranked fourth in the nation in assists per game (6.81), serving as the focal point of Providence's offense that has led the school to its fourth-consecutive trip to the Big Dance under head coach Ed Cooley.

## Team Weaknesses:

Bullock's hustle despite his lack of size is undeniable, but the rest of his team suffers from the same vertical requirement needed in the post game. No player on Providence's roster towers over 6'9" in height, and the team's lack of board-crashers is evident in their paltry average of 33.6 rebounds per contest.

The tournament will showcase a ton of skyscrapers grabbing loose balls for extra possessions, and the Friars' inability at doing just that this current season with their mid-sized forwards could very well be their undoing.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	70.2	229
Rebounds Per Game	33.6	268
Blocks Per Game	3.0	198
3-Point Percentage	36.8%	88
Free Throw Percentage	69.1%	219

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Rodney Bullock	15.7
F	Emmitt Holt	12.4
G	Kyron Cartwright	11.4
G	Jalen Lindsey	10.5
G	Alpha Diallo	5.7





# UNC-Wilmington Seahawks (Overall: 29-5, Conf: 15-3)

## Team Strengths:

After recording the best regular season in the school's NCAA basketball history, the Seahawks are back on the tournament. They gave Duke a good scare last year before falling a few plays short, and it is sure to give them an added experience overall.

The team will again bring in a strong offense that has four guys netting over 12 a game. CJ Bryce's 17.6 points and scoring ability leads the pack, followed by inside-out guy Chris Flemmings (15.8), shooter and floor general Denzel Ingram (14.5 PPG, 5.4 APG), and the very efficient Devontae Cacok (12.3 PPG, 9.3 RPG).

Cacok, a sophomore center, is a defensive specialist (1.1 SPG, 1.8 BPG) who also shoots an eye-popping 79.9 percent from the field, which is high, even for a big man.

All of their offense has the Seahawks posting 85.2 points, 16.1 assists, and 9.5 threes per contest (all are top 18 in the country). Such potency on O, of course, could be a key to beating their opponents for the first round - the offensively-challenged Virginia Cavaliers.

## Team Weaknesses:

More than half of the time, an offense-focused team displays almost zero defense... and that's what you'll get from UNC-Wilmington. They give up 74.9 points, allow opponents to shoot 47.7 percent, which are both one of the worst among all of this year's tournament participants.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	85.2	10
Rebounds Per Game	35.9	86
Blocks Per Game	3.3	163
3-Point Percentage	36.6%	104
Free Throw Percentage	69.2%	208

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Devontae Cacok	12.3
F	Chris Flemmings	15.8
G	CJ Bryce	17.6
G	Ambrose Mosley	8.1
G	Denzel Ingram	14.5



# East Tennessee State Buccaneers

## (Overall: 27-7, Conf: 14-4)

### Team Strengths:

This will be the Buccaneers' first trip to the dance in seven years. They will be parading an attack that puts up 79.9 PPG (41st overall), led by their all-around offensive weapon, TJ Cromer (19.1 PPG), who can relentlessly get to the hoop and also step out for a trey (3.1 threes per game). He'll be a challenging matchup against any defender in the tourney.

Alongside Cromer are quick guards Desonta Bradford and AJ Meriweather, and they form an aggressive trio in defending the passing lanes. The three power the Bucs to record 8.3 steals per game, which ranks 10th in the nation.

Collectively, ETSU is also efficient in their shots 49.1 percent, 10th in the nation - and a good part of it is due to their three key rotation players - Meriweather, Tevin Glass, and Hanner-Mosquera - shooting a combined 55 percent from the floor.

### Team Weaknesses:

The Bucs cannot take good care of the ball. Period.

There is no doubt that they are one of the worst (if not the worst) in ball handling. The 14.7 turnovers they record every game is 11th-most in the entire country, and it is the most by any team in the tournament. Against a pesky Florida defense (their opponents for the first round), such carelessness will definitely be a big problem.

Adding to that is the thin front line and poor inside presence, which would've been a key to edging the the depleted interior defense of the Gators.

### Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	79.9	41
Rebounds Per Game	36.3	72
Blocks Per Game	4.9	26
3-Point Percentage	38.3%	45
Free Throw Percentage	70.4%	165

### Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Hanner-Mosquera	8.4
F	Tevin Glass	8.9
G	Desonta Bradford	10.6
G	TJ Cromer	19.1
G	AJ Meriweather	8.6



# New Mexico State Aggies (Overall: 17-13, Conf: 10-8)

## Team Strengths:

It would be foolish for opponents to take New Mexico State easy just because the Aggies are a mid-major program. For one, the Aggies can light it up on offense. Unafraid to take shots, the Aggies are 63rd in the nation in scoring with 77.4 points per game on 46.3 percent shooting. The Aggies get to the free throw line a lot mostly because they like to take shots around the basket. They are 14th overall in free throws per game and 23rd in free throws made.

On the other side of the ball, the Aggies are as pesky as any team in taking away their opponents' three-point shot. New Mexico State's opponents shoot just 30.1% from deep, making just 18.9 per contest.

New Mexico State is a +100,000 underdog to win it all.

## Team Weaknesses:

Overeagerness on offense often results to errors for the Aggies, who commit 13.7 turnovers per game. How they'll fare offensively against tougher opponents in the NCAA Tournament is also something of an unknown for this team, which didn't play against a single top 50 RPI team in the regular season.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	77.4	63
Rebounds Per Game	38.9	29
Blocks Per Game	3.5	145
3-Point Percentage	33.4%	244
Free Throw Percentage	70.9%	150

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Eli Chuba	12.4
F	Johnathon Wilkins	5.5
F	Ian Baker	16.6
G	Braxton Huggins	13.6
G	Matt Taylor	6.6



# Troy Trojans (Overall: 18-14, Conf: 10-8)

## Team Strengths:

As champions of the Sun Belt conference, the Trojans have some pride to wield entering the national tourney. But aside from that, the Trojans will be drawing confidence from their ability to hit from distance.

The Trojans led Sun Belt in the regular season with 305 threes. Their lineup is littered with J.R. Smith wannabes in Wesley Person Jr., Kevin Baker, and Jeremy Hollimon. All three have combined for 209 treys in the regular season.

## Team Weaknesses:

Troy hasn't seen much action against national tournament teams this season, which could work against the team in the Big Dance. The Trojans have battled just one team that made the tourney and their inexperience against big time programs could very well show up right in the first round, where they'll face a team called Duke.

As for the tangibles, the Trojans' defense doesn't look solid enough to whether elite offenses. They give up 72.1 PPG and are ranked 225th in the nation in KenPom's adjusted defense efficiency.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	75.7	98
Rebounds Per Game	35.6	163
Blocks Per Game	3.4	157
3-Point Percentage	35.5%	149
Free Throw Percentage	72.3%	108

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Jordan Varnado	16.5
F	DeVon Walker	7.9
F	Jeremy Hollimon	12.1
G	Kevin Baker	8.2
G	Wesley Person	14.8





# New Orleans Privateers

## (Overall: 20-11, Conf: 13-5)

### Team Strengths:

Four of New Orleans' starting seniors are playing some very sound basketball together in their final year with the school, with Southland Conference Player of the Year Erik Thomas – averaging close to 20 points and eight rebounds per game – looking like a one-man wrecking crew. You can even say that Thomas alone is responsible for taking the Privateers to the Big Dance and hopefully overcome the long +100,000 odds at winning the national title.

New Orleans' cohesion is made clearer with their crisp passing (15 assists per contest) and shooting efficiency (46.2 percent from the field) for the season, and the team's tested experience playing together could certainly surprise a contender or two.

### Team Weaknesses:

Ironically, the Privateers are one of the most mistake-prone teams around despite having a good number veteran starters mentioned earlier. Only two teams in nation turned the ball over more than them during the season, and they don't have any weapons from three-point range, either.

In turn, those turnovers and lack of firepower from deep certainly came back to bite New Orleans. The team suffered three regular-season losses by margins of 30 points or more, with one of those defeats being a 45-point humiliation against the Oklahoma State Cowboys.

### Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	70.8	217
Rebounds Per Game	35.1	194
Blocks Per Game	3.0	198
3-Point Percentage	31.1	325
Free Throw Percentage	71	148

### Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Erik Thomas	19.5
F	Travin Thibodeaux	8.6
G	Tevin Broyles	8.0
G	Christavious Gill	11.7
G	Nate Frye	10.3





# Mount St. Mary's Mountaineers

## (Overall: 19-15, Conf: 14-4)

### Team Strengths:

You'll never know what to expect from under-the-radar teams like the Mount St. Mary's Mountaineers, who are currently priced at a distant +100,000 to win the national title. The Mountaineers actually overcame a dismal 1-11 start to their season, which kicked off with nine-straight road/neutral site games against teams from powerhouse conferences such as West Virginia, Iowa State and Arkansas before dominating their own conference on the way to becoming Northeastern champions.

The Mount's relentless climb after a rocky start will serve the team well in the March Madness journey ahead as they take on the role of giant slayers. The Mountaineers have a couple of perimeter players that can catch fire instantly in Elijah Wood and Lamont "Junior" Robinson, who will both aim to turn heads in the tournament as third-year standouts for this little-known program from Emmitsburg, Maryland.

### Team Weaknesses:

Rebounding has been the biggest problem for the Mountaineers to say the least. During the regular season, they've been out-rebounded by opposing teams by an average of 7.5 boards per game, which is bad enough for fifth-worst in the entire country.

The NCAA Tournament will feature towering, board-crashing standouts galore, and The Mount's lack of depth in the frontcourt will definitely be exploited by schools that take notice of the obvious size advantage in the post.

### Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	68.3	279
Rebounds Per Game	30.3	341
Blocks Per Game	4.0	81
3-Point Percentage	35.7%	138
Free Throw Percentage	67.5%	277

### Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Chris Wray	7.2
G	Elijah Long	15.4
G	Greg Alexander	7.8
G	Lamont Robinson	14.1
G	Miles Wilson	11.3



# MIDWEST

1. KANSAS
2. LOUISVILLE
3. OREGON
4. PURDUE
5. IOWA STATE
6. CREIGHTON
7. MICHIGAN
8. MIAMI
9. MICHIGAN STATE
10. OKLAHOMA STATE
11. RHODE ISLAND
12. NEVADA
13. VERMONT
14. IONA
15. JACKSONVILLE STATE
16. NORTH CAROLINA CENTRAL / UC DAVIS





# Kansas Jayhawks (Overall: 28-3, Conf: 16-2)

## Team Strengths:

It's hard to find a better backcourt in college basketball than the one playing for the Jayhawks. Experts have been raving about the guards of Kansas since the first month the season. The triumvirate of Frank Mason III, Josh Jackson, and Devonte' Graham has simply been too much to handle for opposing teams. Mason leads the team with 20.5 points per game, Jackson is second with 16.4, and Graham is third with 13.2.

Together, they make up more than third of the Jayhawks' offense that ranks 18th in the nation in scoring (82.7 PPG) and fifth in KenPom's adjusted offensive efficiency. The Jayhawks can do severe damage from the outside, where they make 8.7 threes per game on 40.8% shooting. Kansas is +700 to win the national championship.

## Team Weaknesses:

For a team that shoots so well from the outside, it's a bit surprising to see Kansas struggle at the foul line. The Jayhawks shot just 66.0% from the charity stripe during the regular season, second worst in the Big 12. In their third and last loss of the regular season, the Jayhawks made just 70.4% of their free throws (19-for-27) in a 92-89 setback at the hands of Iowa State. Only one player on the Jayhawks' roster averaged at least 80% from the free throw line. Kansas could blow out opponents in the early rounds of the tourney without needing to rely on free shots but once the Jayhawks go deeper in the Big Dance, their free throw shooting woes could come back haunting them.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	82.7	17
Rebounds Per Game	39.1	28
Blocks Per Game	4.6	45
3-Point Percentage	8.7	64
Free Throw Percentage	66.0	302

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Landen Lucas	8.2
G	Frank Mason III	20.5
G	Devonte' Graham	13.2
G	Sviatoslav Mykhailiuk	9.3
G	Josh Jackson	16.4



# Louisville Cardinals (Overall: 24-7, Conf: 12-6)

## Team Strengths:

Rick Pitino and the Cards are making a comeback in the Big Dance after Louisville banned itself from joining last year's March Madness. And in their return to the national tournament, the Cards will be wielding a terrifying defense that is regarded as one of the best in Division I ball. The Cardinals allow just 65.4 points per game, which their opponents bleed for to get. Louisville is terrific in screwing up other team's jumpers, limiting them to only 29.9% shooting on two-point jumpers.

Their excellent perimeter defense extends into the three-point area, where they allow opponents knock down 30.6% of their shots from there. On top of that, the Cardinals blocks 5.5 shots per game, second best in the SEC and 11th in the nation. Louisville is +1,400 to win the national championship.

## Team Weaknesses:

While Louisville has arguably the best defense in the nation, there are times in which the Cardinals seem to let their guards down defensively. We could see that in their 88-81 loss to Wake Forest on Mar. 1 and in their 94-90 win over Virginia Tech back in Feb. 18. Pitino is great enough of a coach to acknowledge this and inculcating to his team the importance of playing tough the entire game is likely on top of his agenda going into the Big Dance. Apart from that, the Cardinals have the tendency of going rusty in their shooting from the free throw line to the three-point area.

The Cards are 224th in the nation with a poor 68.9 FT% and just 108th with 36.5 3FG%.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	77.5	63
Rebounds Per Game	39.8	15
Blocks Per Game	5.5	11
3-Point Percentage	36.5%	108
Free Throw Percentage	68.9%	224

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Mangok Mathiang	7.3
F	Jaylen Johnson	8.2
F	Deng Adel	11.6
G	Quentin Snider	12.6
G	Donovan Mitchell	15.9





# Louisville Cardinals (Overall: 24-7, Conf: 12-6)

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Points Per Game	77.5	63
Rebounds Per Game	39.8	15
Blocks Per Game	5.5	11
3-Point Percentage	36.5%	108
Free Throw Percentage	68.9%	224

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Mangok Mathiang	7.3
F	Jaylen Johnson	8.2
F	Deng Adel	11.6
G	Quentin Snider	12.6
G	Donovan Mitchell	15.9





# Oregon Ducks (Overall: 27-4, Conf: 16-2)

## Team Strengths:

The composition of players on Oregon's roster has the feels of a championship team—or at least one that could go deep in the national tournament. Led by one of the best—and clutchiest—players in the nation, Dillon Brooks (16.0 PPG, 2.7 RPG, 2.9 APG), the Ducks will brave March featuring a number of players that has seen action in last year's Elite Eight.

Apart from experience and a clear go-to-guy in Brooks, the Ducks also features a scary interior defense, mostly built on the tandem of Chris Boucher and Jordan Bell, who combine for 4.7 of the team's average of 6.7 blocks per game—second best in the nation.

According to hoop-math, the Ducks block a staggering 21.7% of their opponents' shots around the basket.

## Team Weaknesses:

Oregon has struggled at the free throw line this season, as reflected by the Ducks' 70.1% clip from the charity stripe.

This is a definite point of concern for the Ducks, who might be involved in some tight contests in the tourney in which the difference between winning and losing is simply their performance from the foul line.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	78.8	46
Rebounds Per Game	36.0	136
Blocks Per Game	6.7	2
3-Point Percentage	38.3%	43
Free Throw Percentage	70.1%	178

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Jordan Bell	10.8
F	Dillon Brooks	16.0
G	Tyler Dorsey	12.4
G	Dylan Ennis	10.9
F	Chris Boucher	12.2



# Purdue Boilermakers

## (Overall: 25-7, Conf: 14-4)

### Team Strengths:

Purdue is inside the top 25 in both adjusted defensive efficiency and adjusted offensive efficiency, per KenPom.com. More importantly, this team is centered on a pair of intimidating interior threats in Caleb Swanigan and Isaac Haas.

Swanigan has undoubtedly been the Boilermakers' focal point, their best player and likely the Big Ten's Player of the Year. He's averaging a double-double this season with 18.7 points and 12.6 rebounds, including four 20-20 performances. And surrounding him are four other capable scorers and sharp shooters in Vince Edwards (12.3), Carsen Edwards (10.2), Dakota Mathias (10.1) and the already-mentioned Haas (12.6).

The Boilermakers are pegged at +3,000 to win the national tournament.

### Team Weaknesses:

There are still some holes to fix for Purdue. Yes, the offense averages at least 80 points per game and the defense can hold its ground against any opponent. But there are nights when the Boilermakers' elite shooting (40.6 3P%) disappears, which is a reason for most of their losses (6) this season. They need to figure out how to survive during times like that. If not, they should find themselves exiting in either the first or second round of the NCAA Tournament for the third-straight year.

### Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	80.5	29
Rebounds Per Game	38.1	45
Blocks Per Game	2.5	271
3-Point Percentage	40.1%	6
Free Throw Percentage	77.0%	16

### Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Vince Edwards	12.3
F	Caleb Swanigan	18.7
G	Ryan Cline	5.7
G	Dakota Mathias	10.1
G	P.J. Thompson	7.3



# Iowa State Cyclones

## (Overall: 23-10, Conf: 12-6)

### Team Strengths:

It's about the offense of Iowa State. They are blessed with an array of players that can play inside and out effectively. Aside from their leader and all-around playmaker, Monte Morris (16.3 PPG, 4.8 RPG, 6.1 APG), they also have an unpredictable scoring boost from Naz Mitou-Long (15.5 PPG), Deonte Burton (14.8 PPG), and Matt Thomas (12 PPG). Collectively, the four produce over eight threes per contest.

With that, the Cyclones rank 27th and 10th overall in points and treys, respectively. On defense, they use their good quickness and timing to be disruptive on the passing lanes and on-ball D. They steal the ball 7.9 times every game (19th in the country), and surprise surprise, it is led by the abovementioned players, as all four are netting at least per outing.

### Team Weaknesses:

Paint presence. The Cyclones have some serious problems boxing out opponents and containing attacks on the shaded lane. Among all of the 64 teams in the tournament, they are arguably the worst in both areas, particularly in controlling the boards. They are in the bottom 30 IN THE NATION in allowed offensive and defensive rebounds.

Such weaknesses, of course, are big. If you can't get second chance points and give out a ton on the other side, you'll be out of the tourney in no time.

### Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	80.9	27
Rebounds Per Game	34.9	169
Blocks Per Game	3.5	125
3-Point Percentage	40.2%	14
Free Throw Percentage	69.6%	195

### Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
C	Solomon Young	4.5
F	Deonte Burton	14.8
F	Naz Mitrou-Long	15.5
G	Matt Thomas	12.0
G	Monte Morris	16.3

# Creighton Bluejays (Overall: 25-9, Conf: 10-8)



## Team Strengths:

Offense has been Creighton's main calling card this 2016-17 NCAA campaign. Even though they lost assists leader Maurice Watson Jr. to an ACL injury midway through the season, the Bluejays still managed to put up a highly-respectable 82.1 PPG average this campaign. That's 19th-best in the entire nation. They shoot a high percentage from the perimeter as well, knocking down 39.9 percent of their 3-point attempts, which is 17th-best in Division I.

Big man Justin Patton has proven to be lethal as well from beyond the arc, nailing 57.1 percent of his outside shots. With the way their shooting the basketball, the sky's the limit for the Bluejays who are pegged at +10,000 to win this year's national championship.

## Team Weaknesses:

Rebounding has been the main source of concern for head coach Greg McDermott this season. They're ranked 229th in the nation in this department, averaging a measly 34.9 boards per game this campaign. The Bluejays have struggled mightily, in particular, on the offensive glass. Creighton's offensive rebound percentage this season is at a lowly 25 percent.

That's the 39th-worst rate in the entire country.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	82.1	19
Rebounds Per Game	34.9	229
Blocks Per Game	2.9	209
3-Point Percentage	39.9%	17
Free Throw Percentage	68.2%	244

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Cole Huff	9.2
F	Justin Patton	13.5
F	Marcus Foster	18.3
G	Kyri Thomas	12.4
G	Davian Mintz	3.3





# Michigan Wolverines (Overall: 20-11, Conf: 10-8)

## Team Strengths:

Momentum is definitely on the side of Michigan heading into the Big Dance. After all, the Wolverines have just won the Big Ten tournament in which they beat March Madness attendees Purdue, Minnesota, and Wisconsin on their way to capturing the league championship. The Wolverines can heat up from the outside on any given game. They are 25th in the nation with 9.4 threes per contest on 38.0 shooting percent from beyond the arc.

The Wolverines also value possession like no other team as they are No.1 in protecting the ball, turning it over just 9.5 times per game per teamrankings.com.

## Team Weaknesses:

The Wolverines see their opponents get just 65.8 points per game, which is 37th best in the nation, but they're vulnerable defensively inside. They don't have great rim protection, averaging just 2.8 blocks per contest. Michigan also struggle at times controlling the game's pace because it doesn't do well on the glass. The Wolverines get only 29.5 RPG, good for only 345th overall.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	74.9	117
Rebounds Per Game	29.5	345
Blocks Per Game	2.8	236
3-Point Percentage	38.0%	47
Free Throw Percentage	77.4%	10

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	D.J. Wilson	10.4
F	Victor Wagner	12.1
F	Muhammed-Ali Abdur-Rahkman	9.2
G	Zak Irvin	12.8
G	Derrick Walton Jr.	15.0



# Miami Hurricanes (Overall: 20-10, Conf: 10-8)

## Team Strengths:

You can get bored watching the Hurricanes play but they could care less so long as their slow-paced style of basketball translates to wins. The Canes' pace factor is at 64.8 points per 100 possessions, 13th in the nation. By putting the game's tempo on a stranglehold, opponents have lesser time to put up points.

Miami gives up only 63.7 PPG, 24th in the nation.

Moreover, Miami's opponents only have few chances on the open court, getting just 18.1% of their shots through transition.

## Team Weaknesses:

The Hurricanes don't shoot the ball that well. They make just 69.4 PPG on 45.3 percent shooting from the floor. With an unsteady offense like that, the Hurricanes definitely would benefit more in hijacking the game's tempo in order to cover up some of their flaws offensively. But even when they control the pace, they still can't seem to limit their turnovers.

The Canes commit 12.7 errors per game, the most in the ACC.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	69.4	249
Rebounds Per Game	36.0	137
Blocks Per Game	3.9	91
3-Point Percentage	35.9%	132
Free Throw Percentage	71.8%	120

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Kamari Murphy	9.0
F	Anthony Lawrence Jr.	6.2
F	Davon Reed	12.6
G	Bruce Brown	13.8
G	Ja Quan Newton	5.6



# Michigan State Spartans (Overall: 18-13, Conf: 10-8)

## Team Strengths:

Every true college basketball fan know better than underestimate Tom Izzo when it's March. Izzo will look to guide the Spartans into another deep run in the tourney, hoping that the team's defense would do wonders for the team. Michigan State is giving up 68.4 points per game with opponents knocking down just 46.3% of their shots from the field.

The Spartans are +10,000 to win it all.

## Team Weaknesses:

Eron Harris hasn't played meaningful basketball since mid-February and he's not going to see any floor action either moving forward due to a season-ending knee injury. Harris' absence has given the Spartans added problems on their offense that already lacks some punch. Harris, who averaged 10.4 PPG before the injury, is one of the only three Spartans that have averaged at least 10.0 PPG.

As a team, the Spartans are just 192nd in the nation with 71.7 PPG.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	71.7	192
Rebounds Per Game	36.7	107
Blocks Per Game	4.8	30
3-Point Percentage	37.6%	59
Free Throw Percentage	66.3%	290

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Nick Ward	13.7
F	Miles Bridges	16.7
F	Josh Langford	6.6
G	Alvin Ellis III	6.5
G	Lourawls Nairn Jr.	3.7



# Oklahoma State Cowboys

## (Overall: 20-12, Conf: 9-9)

### Team Strengths:

Oklahoma State will open the tournament against 7-seed Michigan after finishing the season with an exemplary 20-12 record. It was quite a turnaround for the Cowboys who started Big 12 play by losing their first six conference games. Key to Oklahoma State's resurgence has been their incredible play on the offensive end. The Cowboys are eighth in the nation in scoring, averaging a whopping 85.5 points per game this season. They're even better when it comes to offensive efficiency, with Oklahoma State scoring 124.8 points per 100 possessions. That's tops in the entire nation, according to KenPom.com.

The triumvirate of Jawun Evans, Jeffrey Carroll, and Phil Forte III has simply been too much to handle for opposing teams. Evans leads the team in scoring with 19.0 points per contest, Carroll is second with 17.4, and Forte is third with 13.3. Together, they make up more than half of Oklahoma State's offense. The Cowboys' odds of winning the national tournament are currently priced at +10,000.

### Team Weaknesses:

The only thing holding back Oklahoma State from greatness is its abysmal defense. The Cowboys are 303rd in the nation in scoring defense, surrendering 78.0 points per game this season. That was pretty much evident in their last three losses wherein they allowed an average of 89.3 points. Rebounding is also a major problem for head coach Brad Underwood. Oklahoma State is ranked all the way down to the 121st spot in this department.

### Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	85.5	8
Rebounds Per Game	36.7	121
Blocks Per Game	3.0	200
3-Point Percentage	40.1%	16
Free Throw Percentage	78.7%	4

### Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Leyton Hammonds	8.0
F	Mitchell Solomon	5.4
F	Jeffrey Carroll	17.4
G	Jawun Evans	19.0
G	Phil Forte III	13.3





# Rhode Island Rams (Overall: 24-9, Conf: 13-5)

## Team Strengths:

With eight-straight wins capped off by an automatic berth into the Big Dance as the Atlantic 10's conference champs, Rhode Island is definitely one of the hottest teams in the tournament as we speak and is rightfully deserving of its +10,000 odds of winning the national title.

An experienced core of upperclassmen starters, led by E.C. Matthews and Hassan Martin, can easily compete with the rest of the field's starting units. Matthews, in particular, is on quite a tear with an average of 19 points scored in his last four outings. Considering that Creighton – the team's first-round opponent in the tournament – has been rather dysfunctional without team leader Maurice Watson Jr. in the lineup (torn ACL), the Rams should be able to flex its cohesive muscle and send the Bluejays packing right from the onset.

## Team Weaknesses:

Big-game jitters will be Rhody's Achilles heel, as the team has not been in the March Madness picture since the 1999 season with Lamar Odom as its star player. The school, by the way, has seen five first-round exits in eight lifetime trips to the NCAA tournament.

Furthermore, the Rams are one of the worst programs when it comes to three-point and free-throw shooting. Opposing teams can very well expose these pitfalls, making the possible second-round date against Pac-12 champions Oregon a total nightmare. The Ducks, who lead the nation in blocks this season, could easily turn the Rams into a one-dimensional, mid-range shooting team at the worst possible time.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	73.5	157
Rebounds Per Game	37.5	68
Blocks Per Game	6.1	3
3-Point Percentage	33.7%	229
Free Throw Percentage	65.5%	315

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Hassan Martin	14.3
F	Kuran Iverson	9.4
G	E.C. Matthews	14.8
G	Jared Terrell	12.3
G	Jarvis Garrett	6.7



# Nevada Wolfpack (Overall: 25-6, Conf: 14-4)

## Team Strengths:

The Wolfpack could easily heat up from the outside, as they drain 38.5% of their three-points shots, 33rd best in the nation. They knock down 9.2 threes per game, which speaks volumes about how dangerous the offense of this team is. In addition, Nevada has five players averaging in double figures so defending against the Aggies can't be predicated on stopping just one star player.

As a team, Nevada is 38th in the nation with 80.0 points per game and 34th in KenPom's adjusted offensive efficiency with a rating of 114.5.

## Team Weaknesses:

Sure, the Wolfpack have five players averaging in double figures in scoring but all those players are starters. How about the bench? The Wolfpack's bench is almost bare with Lindsey Drew topping the second unit with just 5.9 PPG, certainly not the type of number to send chills down their opponents' spines.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	80.0	34
Rebounds Per Game	38.9	28
Blocks Per Game	4.4	59
3-Point Percentage	38.5%	33
Free Throw Percentage	70.3%	169

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Cameron Oliver	15.8
F	Marcus Marshall	19.8
F	D.J. Fenner	14.1
G	Jordan Caroline	14.8
G	Lindsey Drew	5.9



# Vermont Catamounts

## (Overall: 29-5, Conf: 16-0)

### Team Strengths

Vermont isn't playing like a +100,000 long shot right now. The team enters as the hottest team in the tournament, having won 21-consecutive games, including the America East tournament championship.

What's truly surreal about the Catamounts is their depth and balanced scoring. No player is putting up more than the 12.6 PPG. They're also shooting 49.7 percent from the field as a whole, among the best in the country. Plus, they have the kind of defense that's solid enough to keep them competitive, or even lead them to a win. Vermont allows just 62.8 points per game (16th).

### Team Weaknesses

Every team has a weakness, and as for the Catamounts, it's their relatively small size. The tallest player on the team stands at 6'8", which can explain the lack of rebounding and weak inside scoring. Vermont also abuses its starting unit, expecting them to exert 100 percent on both ends of the floor.

That heavy usage could eventually lead to fatigue, especially against top programs.

### Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	73.4	157
Rebounds Per Game	33.6	267
Blocks Per Game	4.5	56
3-Point Percentage	36.7%	90
Free Throw Percentage	70.0%	182

### Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Payton Henson	11.4
F	Anthony Lamb	12.6
F	Trae Bell-Hayes	11.1
G	Eric Duncan	8.6
G	Kurt Steidl	8.0





# Iona Gaels (Overall: 22-12, Conf: 12-8)

## Team Strengths:

Iona (+100,000) is one of those high-scoring teams that also yields a head-scratching amount of points to opponents.

The Gaels are averaging 80.5 points per contest with Jordan Washington as the center of their offense. The senior forwards is posting 17.9 points this season and came up huge in the team's second-straight run for the MAAC tournament title, putting up 20.0 points and 7.0 rebounds a game.

Washington's intimidating presence down low is also complemented by fellow senior Jon Severe, the Gaels' second-leading scorer (11.3) and best three-point shooter (43.0%).

## Team Weaknesses:

As mentioned earlier, the Iona defense sucks. It gives up an average of 76.4 points per contest, obviously among the worst across the country. But another concern for the Gaels is their proneness to turnovers and unproven supporting unit.

They average 12.1 TOs per game, and their offense usually becomes disoriented, or goes on a drought, whenever their go-to-guy—Washington—in on the bench.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	80.5	26
Rebounds Per Game	36.0	142
Blocks Per Game	3.0	206
3-Point Percentage	39.7%	18
Free Throw Percentage	77.0%	15

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Jordan Washington	17.9
F	E.J. Crawford	9.4
F	Deyshonee Much	9.3
G	Schadrac Casimir	7.0
G	Rickey McGill	10.8





# Jacksonville State Gamecocks

## (Overall: 20-14, Conf: 9-7)

### Team Strengths

The Gamecocks punched their first-ever appearance in the NCAA Tournament after winning the Ohio Valley Conference tournament as a No. 4 seed. They're headlined by a trio of capable guards in Malcolm Drumwright, Greg Tucker and Erik Durham, who are all each averaging no less than 11 points per contest this season.

Meanwhile, the defense continues to quell opposing offenses. Jacksonville State, which ranks 63rd nationally in scoring defense, has held its previous three opponents below 60 points, including a 66-55 win in the conference championship. This team is priced at +100,000 to win the national title.

### Team Weaknesses

Even though the Gamecocks currently have four double-digit scorers this season, their offense simply hasn't produced enough. They're putting up just 69.7 points collectively, making them very vulnerable in any game.

### Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	74.9	117
Rebounds Per Game	29.5	345
Blocks Per Game	2.8	236
3-Point Percentage	38.0%	47
Free Throw Percentage	77.4%	10

### Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Christian Cunningham	8.4
F	Norbertas Giga	10.4
F	Greg Tucker	11.3
G	Malcom Drumwright	12.6
G	Erik Durham	11.1



# North Carolina Central Eagles

## (Overall: 25-8, Conf: 13-3)

### Team Strengths:

North Carolina Central can put a run together like any of the true contenders in the tournament. The team had a 13-game winning streak at some point during the regular season, and they even wrapped up their campaign with three-consecutive victories in the MEAC tournament by an average of 23 points en route to winning the conference title.

Led by do-it-all guard Patrick Cole and fellow senior Dejuan Graf, the Eagles have a one-two backcourt combination that can easily stun opponents with some underestimated play from the perimeter.

### Team Weaknesses:

Outside of Cole and Graf, no other NC Central player is averaging double digits in scoring. While both of the team's stars are backcourt standouts, the Eagles also had disappointing marks of 33.3-percent shooting from beyond the arc and 69.3-percent shooting from the free-throw line. And like most mid-major conference winners, the Eagles made the most out of their current season by overcoming a generally mediocre Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference group.

Coaching will, in turn, play a major factor into this Wednesday's First Four clash against the UC Davis Aggies, and we'll have to side with the latter in that contest. UC Davis head coach Jim Les has made it to the Sweet 16 round of the tournament with Bradley in 2006, while NCCU's own LeVelle Moton has only taken his Eagles to one NCAA Tournament appearance and only as far as the second round of the Big Dance at that (2014).

### Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	73.3	163
Rebounds Per Game	37.8	51
Blocks Per Game	3.2	173
3-Point Percentage	33.3%	256
Free Throw Percentage	69.3%	212

### Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Kyle Benton	9.2
F	Delvin Dickerson	8.3
G	Patrick Cole	19.5
G	Dajuan Graf	14.3
G	Rashaun Madison	9.8



# UC Davis Aggies (Overall: 19-12, Conf: 11-5)

## Team Strengths:

If it's last three games were any indications, the Aggies are about to enter the Big Dance on a solid form, at least defensively. UC Davis, which won the Big West Conference tourney, has limited each of its last three opponents to 64 points or fewer on 34.9 percent shooting. Those are marked improvements from their season numbers of 68.9 points allowed per game on 42.5 opponents shooting percentage.

UC Davis is a +100,000 underdog to win it all.

## Team Weaknesses:

The Aggies are an undersized team with only one player (freshman Peter Hewitt) standing over 6-8. All of the team's starters are also 6-7 or shorter, which puts the Aggies at a disadvantage when it comes to rebounding and interior defense. That said, UC Davis managed to rank fourth in the conference in rebounding with 35.6 RPG.

The lack of bigs should make the Aggies more reliant on their perimeter game. The problem is that they're not great either in shooting from range. They shoot just 35.1% from beyond the arc and 38.6% on two-point jumpers.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	69.4	249
Rebounds Per Game	35.5	167
Blocks Per Game	3.5	145
3-Point Percentage	35.1%	171
Free Throw Percentage	66.1%	297

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	J.T. Adenrele	5.8
F	Chima Moneke	14.4
F	Lawrence White	7.6
G	Darius Graham	7.5
G	Brynton Lemar	16.1



# THE SOUTH

1. NORTH CAROLINA
2. KENTUCKY
3. UCLA
4. BUTLER
5. MINNESOTA
6. CINCINNATI
7. DAYTON
8. ARKANSAS
9. SETON HALL
10. WICHITA STATE
11. KANSAS STATE / WAKE FOREST
12. MIDDLE TENNESSEE
13. WINTHROP
14. KENT STATE
15. NORTHERN KENTUCKY
16. TEXAS SOUTHERN







# North Carolina (Overall: 26-6, Conf: 14-4)

## Team Strengths:

North Carolina's big strength remains its ability to control the glass. The Tar Heels lead the country in rebounding, particularly on the offensive end. Kennedy Meeks and Tony Bradley are relentless on the offensive boards. Their terrific interior presence is a big reason why the team's offense is one of the most efficient in the country (No. 4 per KenPom).

UNC still isn't the greatest 3-point shooting team, but they do have two legit go-to guys along the perimeter in juniors Justin Jackson and Joel Berry, who can get big buckets for the team when needed.

## Team Weaknesses:

North Carolina has a capable defense (No. 23 per KenPom), but it has given up a distressingly large number of 3s over the course of the season. They're allowing 23.6 attempts per game, which is among the most in the entire country.

They're not allowing a great percentage - just 34 percent - but they could find themselves in some trouble if an opponent gets hot on them from deep come tournament time.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	85.2	10
Rebounds Per Game	43.8	1
Blocks Per Game	3.3	163
3-Point Percentage	37%	83
Free Throw Percentage	70.1%	172

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Kennedy Meeks	12.5
F	Isaiah Hicks	11.9
F	Justin Jackson	18.3
G	Theo Pinson	6.3
G	Joel Berry II	15.1



# Kentucky Wildcats (Overall: 26-5, Conf: 16-2 )

## Team Strengths:

With their trio of talented swingmen - Malik Monk, De'Aaron Fox, and Isaiah Briscoe - the Wildcats can pretty much attack their opponents from everywhere on the floor. Monk (21.2 PPG), SEC's points leader during the regular season, is arguably the most gifted scorer in the nation, while Fox and Briscoe are versatile, playmaking guys who each put up no less than 13 points, four rebounds, and four assists per game.

Edrice Adebayo, another key freshman in Kentucky's roster, provides offense in the shaded lane and he also anchors the defense. He chips in 13.3 points on 61.7 percent shooting and leads the team in rebounds and blocks.

The Wildcats joined fourth-seeded Gonzaga as the only teams to be ranked inside the top 15 in offensive and defensive efficiency.

## Team Weaknesses:

Aside from not being a real, solid threat from the outside (183rd overall in threes), which is not exactly that big of a problem since Monk paces the conference in threes (91), the 'Cats don't really own any glaring weaknesses.

Remember, though, that coach John Calipari's teams tend to fall short during the big dance. Cal, as you may know, only has one national championship in his belt despite his roster being scattered with NBA-level talent year after year.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	86.8	5
Rebounds Per Game	40.5	15
Blocks Per Game	5.3	13
3-Point Percentage	35.1%	171
Free Throw Percentage	70.0	176

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Edrice Adebayo	13.3
F	Wenyen Gabriel	5.5
F	Isaiah Briscoe	12.9
G	Malik Monk	21.2
G	DeAron Fox	15.5



# UCLA Bruins (Overall: 28-3, Conf: 15-3)

## Team Strengths:

Lavar Ball has been endorsing his son as if Lonzo Ball is the second coming of Michael Jordan. But can you blame him for being so proud of the UCLA guard that he's manufacturing ridiculous quotes lately? What's more insane, however, is the Bruins' offense that averages 91.3 points per game—the most in Division I ball. Lonzo Ball is as good as advertised coming out of high school, as he's fingerprints are all over the team's offense. Ball is averaging 14.9 PPG and is the top catalyst of the Bruins' ultra-finesse ball movement that registers 21.7 APG.

The Bruins are a threat from everywhere on the floor. They shoot 10.1 threes on 41.5% rate and carry an effective field goal percentage of 60.4% all the way into the conference championship. KenPom has the Bruins' offense positioned second overall in adjusted offensive efficiency. Few opponents could handle an offense like that of the Bruins', which is a big reason why the team is pegged at +750 to win the national title.

## Team Weaknesses:

As decimating as the Bruins' offense look on paper, the team could struggle duplicating their scoring brilliance in the tournament, where they will meet the real deals of college basketball. The Bruins' strength of schedule is just 139th in the nation. They only have five wins with three losses against top 50 RPI squads this season. UCLA's bad defense also deserves to be put on blast. The Bruins allow 75.0 PPG and let opponents take more shot attempts on average than they do with opposing teams averaging 66.5 shots per game against UCLA's 65.1.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	91.3	1
Rebounds Per Game	39.3	22
Blocks Per Game	5.4	17
3-Point Percentage	41.5	2
Free Throw Percentage	73.6	71

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	TJ Leaf	16.3
F	Thomas Welsh	10.6
G	Bryce Alford	16.5
G	Isaac Hamilton	13.7
G	Lonzo Ball	14.9



# Butler Bulldogs (Overall: 23-7, Conf: 12-6)

## Team Strengths:

An efficient offense has been a staple for Butler over the past several seasons. This year's version of the team is no different with the Bulldogs ranking 15th overall in KenPom's adjusted offensive efficiency with a rating of 118.9. The Bulldogs, who averages 76.9 PPG, shoot very well around the perimeter.

They're not heavily dependent on threes (17th in three-point attempts), but excel in two-point jumpers, which they knock down 44.1 percent of the time, sixth best in Division I basketball. And of course, for a team that operates an efficient offense, it's not a surprise that Butler turns the ball over just 10.1 per game, seventh best in the nation.

The Bulldogs are +7,000 to win the national title.

## Team Weaknesses:

Andrew Chrabascz is a solid presence inside for the Bulldogs. He gives Butler plenty of positives—but not the imposing defensive presence inside. He is averaging just 0.3 blocks per game, which reflects the whole identity of Butler when it comes to rim protection.

The Bulldogs are so easy to score on inside, averaging just 2.8 BPG. In addition, their opponents shoot 60.7% around the basket. Rebounding hasn't been a strength of the Bulldogs. They are 325th overall in rebounds with 32.2 per contest.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	76.9	73
Rebounds Per Game	32.3	311
Blocks Per Game	2.8	227
3-Point Percentage	36.8%	92
Free Throw Percentage	74.1%	60

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Andrew Chrabascz	11.1
F	Tyler Wideman	7.5
F	Kethan Savage	8.0
G	Avery Woodson	8.9
G	Kamar Baldwin	10.1





# Minnesota Golden Gophers (Overall: 23-8, Conf: 11-7)

## Team Strengths:

Point-blank shots are usually gimmes but not against the Golden Gophers. Minnesota's interior defense is unforgiving, as the team is No. 1 in the nation in blocks per game with 6.8. The Gophers block shots at a high rate, swatting away 10.6 of their opponents' shots at the rim.

Big man Reggie Lynch is second in the Division I with 3.5 BPG. He had a 27 blocks in a span of five games this season.

## Team Weaknesses:

Three-point shooting isn't a strong suit of Minnesota. The Gophers are just making 6.2 threes per game. Outside shooting hasn't really been a point of emphasis for the team, as Minnesota launches a mere 17.8 three-point attempts game, 297th in the nation.

A team that isn't much of a threat beyond the arc doesn't spread opposing defenses well and that could be a problem for Minnesota, especially when it finds itself playing catchup basketball.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	75.3	107
Rebounds Per Game	39.9	13
Blocks Per Game	6.8	1
3-Point Percentage	34.5%	190
Free Throw Percentage	70.7%	156

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Reggie Lynch	8.4
F	Amir Coffey	12.1
F	Jordan Murphy	11.2
G	Akeem Springs	9.5
G	Nate Mason	15.5

# Cincinnati Bearcats (Overall: 27-4, Conf: 16-2 )



## Team Strengths:

Offensively, the Bearcats are able to do everything on the floor nicely - not greatly, but nicely. They have the speed to push the pace and the athleticism to get to the basket, and could also hit from distance whenever they're on. To mix all of it well, the team has one of the AAC's best great floor generals in Troy Caupain, who's second in the conference in dimes.

Their two main options - Jacob Evans and Kyle Washington - both put up 13 or more PPG and can provide inside and outside attack. Evans, a sophomore guard, has a good stroke and can be relied on the perimeter, while Washington, a transferee from NC state, gives an efficient overall production. In just 25 minutes of action, he contributes 13.3 points and team-leading numbers of 7.1 rebounds and 1.2 blocks per contest.

Topping all of those abilities off is the great team defense. Placing at the 7th spot, Cincy is the highest-rated AAC team in Kenpom.com's defensive efficiency rankings. They finished the conference play allowing the fewest points, assists, and threes. Additionally, the 60.2 PPG they gave up overall is the fourth-fewest in the nation.

## Team Weaknesses:

Having a mid-tier level of offense allowed the Cats to win a lot against the AAC because they were the group's best defensive squad and every other team in there can't shoot - Cincy only shot 43 percent from the field and they were second in the conference! Think about that.

Now that they're on a much bigger stage with much better teams to face, they can't expect their defense to continue being their saviors. They will probably struggle to score and keep up when they matchup with the UCLAs and Villanovas of the tourney.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	74.7	145
Rebounds Per Game	37.2	102
Blocks Per Game	5.2	21
3-Point Percentage	34.8%	192
Free Throw Percentage	66.9%	279

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Kyle Washington	13.3
F	Gary Clark	10.4
F	Kevin Johnson	8.5
G	Jacob Evans	13.4
G	Troy Caupain	9.8



# Dayton Flyers (Overall: 24-7, Conf: 15-3)

## Team Strengths:

The Flyers, priced at a decent +15,000 to win the national title, have played very well on both ends of the floor this season en route to making their fourth-consecutive trip to the NCAA Tournament.

Head coach Archie Miller has done a fantastic job of maximizing his team's veteran starters, particularly with the senior backcourt tandem of Scoochie Smith and Charles Cooke. Dayton's top two stars were instrumental in keeping the team's superb ball rotation moving, one which translated to 61 percent of the team's made field goals this season having been assisted on the play.

## Team Weaknesses:

Unfortunately, the Flyers lost the high ground towards the tail-end of their campaign. They're entering the Big Dance with two-straight losses; both against mediocre conference rivals George Washington in the regular-season finale and Davidson in the opening round of the Atlantic 10 conference tournament.

It's a good thing that they were able to pile up wins early in the season to avoid a lower seed in the NCAA Tournament. However, they've been paired up with another dangerous mid-major opponent in the first round in Wichita State, which has topped its own conference in virtually every major statistical category and finished with 30 wins under its belt this season.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	76.0	93
Rebounds Per Game	34.5	230
Blocks Per Game	3.8	101
3-Point Percentage	38.7%	29
Free Throw Percentage	69.1%	217

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Xeryius Williams	8.4
F	Ryan Mikesell	5.9
G	Charles Cooke	16.1
G	Scoochie Smith	13.5
G	Kyle Davis	8.1





# Arkansas Razorbacks

## (Overall: 25-9, Conf: 12-6)

### Team Strengths

Arkansas already proved to us this season that it can score in massive bunches and in a variety of ways. The team ranks 31st nationally in points (80.2) and is beating opponents by an average scoring margin of 6.5 points (56th).

Senior Dusty Hannahs leads four double-digit scorers for the Razorbacks with 14.6 point per contest. He's finished with no less than 11 points in his previous six games, but Arkansas will likely need more than that to really make a difference in the upcoming NCAA Tournament. The Razorbacks are a +20,000 bet to emerge as national champs this season.

### Team Weaknesses

A loaded offense isn't always enough to win games. The Razorbacks have a porous defense that allows 73.8 points to opponents per game this season—an obviously unacceptable average for a team that's hoping to better its second-round loss to North Carolina in the 2015 edition of the tournament.

### Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	80.2	31
Rebounds Per Game	36.6	112
Blocks Per Game	4.5	37
3-Point Percentage	36.8%	87
Free Throw Percentage	76.2%	24

### Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Dustin Thomas	4.3
F	Moss Kingsley	11.9
F	Manuale Watkins	6.2
G	Dusty Hannabs	14.6
G	Jaylen Barford	12.6





# Seton Hall Pirates (Overall: 21-11, Conf: 10-8)

## Team Strengths:

The Pirates had a great regular season, and were a rebound away from upsetting eventual champion Villanova in semifinals of the Big East tourney. They finished in a 4-way tie for third place in the conference standings, with their best wins coming against Creighton, Xavier and at Butler. They also got the W in the lone meeting with then-No. 16 South Carolina in December.

Their best player is arguably the 6-foot-10 Angel Delgado, who is posting 15.3 points and 13.1 rebounds, while making 54.8 percent of his shot attempts. He's surrounded by a pair of deadly shooters/scorers in Khadeen Harrington (16.9 PPG) and Desi Rodriguez (15.9), making up the team's strong inside-out game.

Seton Hall is priced at +20,000 to win it all.

## Team Weaknesses:

The Pirates have the size and physical strength to impose their will around the paint, mainly through the aforementioned Delgado. But playing in an up-tempo pace negates his effectiveness and the team's true identity. Seton Hall also doesn't have the luxury to spend too much energy with only seven players included in their regular rotation.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	73.3	161
Rebounds Per Game	39.6	16
Blocks Per Game	2.5	283
3-Point Percentage	33.7%	228
Free Throw Percentage	64.3%	334

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Michae Nzei	4.3
F	Desi Rodriguez	15.9
F	Angel Delgado	15.3
G	Madison Jones	5.7
G	Khadeen Harrington	16.9



# Wichita State Shockers

## (Overall: 30-4, Conf: 17-1)

### Team Strengths:

This Wichita State team is versatility at its finest. No one in the nation can probably rival the team's all-around productivity on both ends of the floor. The Shockers can break down opponents in almost every way possible and could also fill the stat sheet like nobody's business.

In the MWC alone, they finished the regular season ranking as the number one team in points, rebounds, assists, field goals, field goal shooting, and three-point shooting, while also committing the fewest turnovers.

Just to illustrate that all of it are not because they aren't on a marquee conference, they join Gonzaga as the only two teams to be top 22 in the nation in points, points allowed, rebounds, assists, offensive efficiency, and defensive efficiency.

### Team Weaknesses:

The Shockers are a rarity in college basketball. They have no major weaknesses.

There are some concerns on the inability to draw fouls (which helps in messing your opponents' rhythm), but it shouldn't be that big of a deal overall. The lack of blocks (only 3.7 BPG) can also catch your attention, except when you know that their interior defense as a whole is at an elite level.

It should be noted, though, that coach Gregg Marshall's boys seem to frequently fall short on making it to the title game or the final four. The team has been selected to participate in the tournament in each of the last six years, but could only show one final four appearance.

### Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	82.1	22
Rebounds Per Game	40.7	2
Blocks Per Game	3.7	78
3-Point Percentage	40.8%	76
Free Throw Percentage	73.4%	76

### Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Shaquille Morris	9.5
F	Markis McDuffie	11.8
F	Zach Brown	7.2
G	Landry Shamet	11.1
G	Conner Frankamp	9.2



# Kansas State Wildcats

## (Overall: 20-13, Conf: 8-10)

### Team Strengths

Kansas State is one of six Big 12 programs headed to the Big Dance, and this particular group can definitely make noise as a +30,000 underdog.

Four players—Wesley Iwundu, Barry Brown, Kamau Stokes, D.J. Johnson—average at least 11 points for the Wildcats, who carry an offense that puts up a decent 72 points per contest along with a highly-disciplined defense that ranks among the best nationally in defensive efficiency and in opponents' turnover percentage.

This team also has major upsets against Baylor (twice) and West Virginia, including a pair of close losses to in-state rival Kansas, this season.

### Team Weaknesses

The Wildcats are horrible in a bunch of other categories, and the most glaring of which is their lack of rebounding (299th in the country). They also don't do so well against defensive-minded teams, as proven in its loss to West Virginia in the semifinals of the conference tournament. But do note that there were numerous times when their offensive inconsistencies were covered up by their defensive efforts.

### Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	71.7	192
Rebounds Per Game	32.7	299
Blocks Per Game	3.8	102
3-Point Percentage	36.1%	128
Free Throw Percentage	68.9%	223

### Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	D.J. Johnson	11.2
F	Wesley Iwundu	12.5
F	Dean Wade	9.4
G	Barry Brown	11.7
G	Kamau Stokes	11.6



# Wake Forest Demon Deacons (Overall: 19-13, Conf: 9-9)

## Team Strengths:

Scoring, scoring, and more scoring. Wake Forest, currently priced at +30,000 to win the national title, is never replete of point-producers on the floor. All-ACC first-team selection John Collins, in particular, has been a huge revelation for the team in his sophomore year. Collins has a superb 62-percent field-goal percentage for the season as a scoring threat from every spot on the court and as a foul-drawing machine just the same.

The Demon Deacons also know when to turn up the heat during contests. They're 10th in in the country with an average of 43.2 points scored in the second half, so teams that are caught napping on the boys from Winston-Salem late often end up on the losing end of those contests.

## Team Weaknesses:

The downside to having an explosive offense is that it's usually attained at the expense of poor defense, and Wake Forest is indeed a casualty of that belief. Five of the team's losses this season saw opponents break the 90-point barrier, and allowing over half of their opponents' two-point shots to go in this season isn't going to do the team any favors in the tournament either.

In addition, the Demon Deacons won just one of their eight contests against ranked opponents this season. That means if no upsets emerge from the tournament, they'll likely be outclassed by more well-rounded programs that know how to actually play good D or can stay toe-to-toe with them in shootouts.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	82.7	15
Rebounds Per Game	36.8	98
Blocks Per Game	3.8	109
3-Point Percentage	38.7%	30
Free Throw Percentage	77.3%	11

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	John Collins	18.9
F	Konstantinos Mitoglou	9.0
G	Mitchell Wilbekin	7.0
G	Bryant Crawford	16.1
G	Keyshawn Woods	12.8





# Middle Tennessee Blue Raiders

## (Overall: 30-4, Conf: 17-1)

### Team Strengths:

First off, let's be reminded that this is the same school that shockingly upset second-seeded and Denzel Valentine-led Michigan State from last year's tournament. Now, Middle Tennessee is back and better than ever, coasting to another Big Dance berth by winning the Conference USA title and with a healthy three-game margin in the conference standings to boot.

The Blue Raiders – currently priced at +30,000 to win the national title – have played very disciplined and efficient basketball this season, ranking in the top 15 of the country in field-goal shooting and turnovers committed. If they can keep their composure at the highest level like they've done during the regular season, they might be able to stun not just one but many of their higher-seeded opponents in tournament, beginning with fifth-seeded Minnesota and its questionable offense.

### Team Weaknesses:

Close games in March Madness are decided at the charity stripe, and that's one of the few visible weaknesses from Middle Tennessee. The team shot a lackluster 70.1 percent from the free-throw line this season, all the while committing a foul in nearly a fourth of their plays ran to send their opposition to the line for frequent retaliation.

### Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	74.2	135
Rebounds Per Game	35.1	193
Blocks Per Game	2.8	224
3-Point Percentage	37.0%	83
Free Throw Percentage	70.1%	180

### Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Jacorey Williams	17.3
F	Reggie Upshaw Jr.	14.5
G	Giddy Potts	15.8
G	Edward Simpson Jr.	3.5
G	Tyrik Dixon	5.8



# Winthrop Eagles (Overall: 26-6, Conf: 15-3)

## Team Strengths:

Much of the threat posed by Winthrop is coming from the tandem of Keon Johnson (22.5 PPG) and Xavier Cooks (16.3 PPG). Johnson has an Isaiah Thomas-like style of play, because along with his small stature (5'7) is a great ability to get past opponents and score. Cooks, meanwhile, is a versatile swing-man, who aside from being able to provide points, also register 9.8 rebounds, 2.8 assists and 1.8 blocks.

With the big help from the two, the school's 2016 campaign had them reigning the Big South on offense, as they finished the conference play being the number one team in points (80.5 PPG) and threes. Additionally, they will enter the opening round as winners of eight straight games, and in that span, they own an average winning margin of 16 points (83.9 PPG to 67.9 PPG).

Defensively, they can also be good when they're on. They are able to hold opponents to just 40.5 percent shooting while recording over five blocks per contest, which are both ranked inside the top 32 in the country.

## Team Weaknesses:

The Eagles fall under the cliché of a team relying too much on one or two players. Such formula can quickly kill a team's national championship run, unless that duo is on the level of Michael Jordan & Scottie Pippen, etc., which Johnson and Cooks obviously aren't.

Another big hurdle for the team is rebounding. Not only do they give out dozens of second chance opportunities to the opposition, they also struggle getting one for themselves. They are ranked way down to the top 220s in offensive rebounds and offensive rebounds allowed.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	79.7	43
Rebounds Per Game	37.4	114
Blocks Per Game	5.3	15
3-Point Percentage	37.3%	37
Free Throw Percentage	72.0%	218

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Josh Davenport	5.7
F	Xavier Cooks	16.3
G	Bjorn Broman	5.5
G	Anders Broman	8.2
G	Keon Johnson	22.5



# Kent State Golden Flashes

## (Overall: 22-13, Conf: 10-8)

### Team Strengths:

Kent State's rare tournament appearance (first in eighth years and sixth since joining in 1913) is mainly because of one man. This basketball team has "Jimmy Hall" written all over it. The senior provides everything on all areas, as he is averaging TEAM-LEADING stats of 18.9 points, 10.5 rebounds, 2.6 assists, and 1.4 blocks on 52.1 percent shooting.

Through Hall's tenacity on the boards, the Golden Flash are able to rank second in the nation in offensive and total rebounds.

Momentum and rhythm will also play part, since they finished the regular season and conference tournament winning nine of their last 10 games.

### Team Weaknesses:

The good knack for getting second chance points is mostly getting cancelled out because they can't box out on the other end. They are giving up 10.8 offensive rebounds per contest, which is one of the worst in the country.

Along with that is the poor team defense. They struggle rotating to the open man and it may be heavily proven in the first round against the high-octane attack of UCLA.

Lastly, they do a poor job of taking care of the ball. The 13 turnovers they commit every game have them placing at the 288th spot in the stat's rankings. They also had 15 game where they had 13 or more errors.

### Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	76.9	96
Rebounds Per Game	40.5	2
Blocks Per Game	3.6	122
3-Point Percentage	31.8%	319
Free Throw Percentage	71.9%	117

### Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
C	Jimmy Hall	18.9
F	Mitch Peterson	5.3
F	Deon Edwin	13.0
G	Jaylin Walker	15.6
G	Jalen Avery	5.1



# Northern Kentucky Norse

## (Overall: 24-10, Conf: 12-6)

### Team Strengths:

In just its first year of NCAA Tournament eligibility, Northern Kentucky ran away with the Horizon League conference title en route to its first-ever appearance at the Big Dance. The team even accomplished that feat with a remarkable 15-win turnaround from the previous season, making them an intriguing sleeper pick with a price of +100,000 to win the national title.

Four Norse players averaged double-digits in scoring, led by All-Horizon League selection Drew McDonald. The Cold Spring, Kentucky native is averaging 16.4 points and 7.7 rebounds per game this season, and he's one of Northern Kentucky's trusty forwards that can hit shots from deep as well as any of the team's backcourt players.

### Team Weaknesses:

At 6'7", McDonald is already the Norse's tallest player on the roster. Judging by the lack of blocks being produced as seen in the chart below, NKU will definitely see a drastic shift in matchup size at the tournament immediately against their first-round opponent and inter-state powerhouse Kentucky.

Not only do the Wildcats have standout big men in the likes of Bam Adebayo and Derek Willis able to shut down the Norse's post game, history has also outright favored the top-seeded teams in the Big Dance. No 16th-seeded team has ever beaten the No. 1 seed in the national tournament, and Northern Kentucky probably won't be the first. NKU only faced two teams from Power Five conferences this season and it lost both of those contests by double digits to Illinois (15) and West Virginia (31).

### Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	74.9	115
Rebounds Per Game	37.1	85
Blocks Per Game	2.6	259
3-Point Percentage	36.1%	120
Free Throw Percentage	67.6%	273

### Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Drew McDonald	16.4
F	Jordan Garnett	4.9
F	Carson Williams	10.5
G	Lavone Holland II	14.3
G	Cole Murray	10.2





# Texas Southern Tigers

## (Overall: 20-11, Conf: 16-2)

### Team Strengths:

After winning the SWAC tournament, what's there to stop Texas Southern? Uhm, maybe North Carolina in the first round? Even though the odds are stacked against the Tigers to win their NCAA Tournament opener, don't expect them to show up in awe of the quality of their opponent. After all, they've had a tough regular season schedule that featured match up against the likes of Arizona, Louisville, Baylor, and two other Top 50 RPI programs.

They lost all those games but a nine-game win streak heading into the Big Dance combined with the experience against topnotch programs should earn the Tigers at least a speculative look.

### Team Weaknesses:

It's going to be hard for Texas Southern to upset foes in the tournament if it continues to shoot from the three-point area like they've done in the regular season, when they made just 29.7 percent of their shots from deep. Opponents would likely just pack the paint and tempt the Tigers to take three-point attempts that even they could be hesitant on taking.

Even their two-point jumpers reek, as they are 332nd overall on those attempts with a pathetic 29.6% clip.

### Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	74.4	132
Rebounds Per Game	35.3	177
Blocks Per Game	3.2	183
3-Point Percentage	29.7%	339
Free Throw Percentage	73.3%	82

### Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Marvin Jones	17.0
F	Kevin Scott	9.7
F	Jalan McCloud	8.7
G	Demontrae Jefferson	14.9
G	Zach Lofton	17.0



# THE WEST

1. GONZAGA
2. ARIZONA
3. FLORIDA STATE
4. WEST VIRGINIA
5. NOTRE DAME
6. MARYLAND
7. ST. MARY'S
8. NORTHWESTERN
9. VANDERBILT
10. VCU
11. XAVIER
12. PRINCETON
13. BUCKNELL
14. FLORIDA GULF COAST
15. NORTH DAKOTA
16. SOUTH DAKOTA STATE





# Gonzaga Bulldogs (Overall: 30-1, Conf: 17-1)

## Team Strengths:

Gonzaga is doing just about everything well this season. The Zags offense - led by Wooden Award contender Nigel Williams-Goss (16.4 points, 4.7 assists) - is 11th in the country at 85.2 PPG, while their defense is 8th at 61.1 PPG. They are 6th in offensive efficiency per KenPom.com, and 3rd in defense - the only team in the country in the top 10 in both categories.

They've been particularly elite in limiting opponents from beyond the arc. They're allowing opponents to shoot just 29 percent from deep, the 2nd-lowest percentage in the country.

## Team Weaknesses:

The Zags aren't much of a 3-point shooting team. Although they have a decent percentage (38%), they take just under 20 per game, which is 228th in the country.

They don't shoot too many 3s in part because they don't need to, but it remains to be seen whether they actually have that in their arsenal if they find themselves down big in the tourney.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	85.2	11
Rebounds Per Game	40.7	6
Blocks Per Game	3.3	163
3-Point Percentage	38.1%	52
Free Throw Percentage	73.4%	73

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Przemek Karnowski	12.3
F	Johnathan Williams	10.1
F	Jordan Mathews	10.7
G	Nigel Williams-Goss	16.4
G	Josh Perkins	8.8



# Florida State Seminoles (Overall: 24-7, Conf: 12-6)

## Team Strengths:

Dwyane Bacon and the rest of the boys from Tallahassee will bring a tasty offensive recipe to the national tournament. Bacon, which leads the team with 16.9 points per game, spearheads FSU's lethal offense that generates 83.0 PPG and shoots 48.5 percent from the field—13th overall in the nation. The Seminoles (+2,800) shoots so well from the floor because they don't settle on long shots as much as they do near the basket.

The Noles take 43.3% of their shots at the rim and makes 63.2% of them. Size is also an ally of the team with the Noles' roster having a height average of 6-7. Florida State is third in the ACC in rebounding with 34.8 per outing.

## Team Weaknesses:

When it comes to defense, Bacon's team isn't just as crispy. The Noles allow 71.2 PPG and their opponents take 58.9 shots per game. Their performance on the foul line is another issue.

They have a lackluster 68.9 free throw shooting percentage, which is something their opponents could take advantage of in the tournament, especially during tight contests.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	83.0	13
Rebounds Per Game	37.4	70
Blocks Per Game	5.5	21
3-Point Percentage	36.1%	121
Free Throw Percentage	68.9%	225

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Jonathan Isaac	12.2
F	Michael Ojo	5.0
F	Xavier Rathan-Mayes	10.4
G	Dwayne Bacon	16.9
G	Terance Mann	8.5





# West Virginia Mountaineers (Overall: 24-7, Conf: 12-6 )

## Team Strengths:

Led by bonafide two-way players Jevon Carter and Esa Ahmad, the team is an undeniably athletic bunch, and it's a big key as to why Mountaineers basketball own one of the most refreshing styles today. Forget about run-and-offense, every other squad is operating that scheme. Coach Bob Huggins and his boys are about the run-and-gun defense.

Through Carter, who aside from headlining the team in points (12.9 PPG) and assists (4.0 APG), also paced the Big 12 in steals (2.7 SPG) and steal percentage, West Virginia finished the regular season leading the nation in steals and turnovers forced. That, along with only allowing 66.8 PPG on a 42.3 percent shooting, has WVU currently placing fifth in Kenpom.com's defensive efficiency rankings.

To top it all off nicely, they aren't your classic "all defense and no offense" squad. In fact, their 83.8 PPG and 17.1 APG are both top 16 in all of Division I ball.

## Team Weaknesses:

The Mountaineers' problems root on being consistently inconsistent shooting the ball, both on field goals and free throws. Although they shot decent overall, their difficulties on the area were highlighted during the conference games, where they only made 44.9 percent from the field. The same goes on their foul shots, as they ended the regular season with a 68.7 shooting clip from the charity stripe.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	83.8	15
Rebounds Per Game	37.2	101
Blocks Per Game	4.5	51
3-Point Percentage	46.3%	81
Free Throw Percentage	36	141

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Nathan Adrian	10.3
F	Esa Ahmad	11.4
F	Daxter Miles	9.1
G	Tarik Philip	9.3
G	Jevon Carter	12.9



# Notre Dame Fighting Irish (Overall: 23-8, Conf: 12-6)

## Team Strengths:

The Fighting Irish are boasting an array of offensive weapons. Bonzie Colson, VJ Beachem, Matt Farrell, and Steve Vasturia can hurt the defense in various ways and lead the game in scoring at any given day.

The regular season saw Colson, the team's main option and do-it-all guy, post 17 points, 10.4 rebounds, 1.7 assists, 1.1 steals, and 1.4 blocks per game on 52.3 percent shooting. His three usual partners in crime, meanwhile, each averaged 13 or more points and combined for over six threes every contest.

Through the potent attack, Notre Dame is netting 78.5 PPG and currently lands on the 17th spot in Kenpom.com's offensive efficiency rankings. Opponents can't also be too keen on trying to let the Fighting Irish earn points on the charity stripe. The team is filled with jump shooters, and as expected, their accuracy from the line is second to none - 80.9 percent, first in the nation.

## Team Weaknesses:

Interior defense and rebounding. It's two things that'll kill their chances for a championship or Final Four run. Although Colson and Beachem combine for almost three blocks per game, they aren't exactly bigs who play D on the paint.

With no intimidating presence to alter shots or moves on the shaded lane, all offense from their four main guys will get cancelled out once they show the inability to contain the ground-and-pound teams down the line.

ND is ranked all the way down to the 247th spot in rebounding, and they also finished the conference play giving up the most boards in all of ACC (37.3 RPG).

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	78.5	62
Rebounds Per Game	34.2	247
Blocks Per Game	3.9	98
3-Point Percentage	38.9%	30
Free Throw Percentage	80.9%	1

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
C	VJ Beachem	15.4
F	Rex Pflueger	4.7
F	Bonzie Colson	17.0
G	Steve Vasturia	13.5
G	Matt Farrell	14.2



# Maryland Terappins (Overall: 24-8, Conf: 12-6)

## Team Strengths:

This is a team that can hit good on both ends of the floor. They have a decent stroke from the outside and they can also suffocate opponents with their inside and outside defense - 88th in threes, 45th in blocks, and 51st in allowed field goal shooting.

Melo Trimble's (17 PPG, 3.7 RPG, 3.7 APG) speed and offensive abilities will continue being a cause of headache to defenders, since he can create opportunities for himself and others from various areas in the court.

## Team Weaknesses:

Melo Trimble - the Terappins' leader in minutes, attempts, points, and assists - is a big part of their strengths AND weaknesses because they simply rely on him too much. He does have the skillset to be a leader, but no player should be entrusted with such heavy workload - although we can also argue that Trimble doesn't trust his teammates that much.

The Terappins' next three scorers - Anthony Cowan, Justin Jackson, and Kevin Huerter - barely combine for 30 points per contest and they collectively shoot a mediocre 42.7 percent from the floor.

Along with that is the abundance of second chance points they give up to the other team. They may play defense that alter shots, but they can't stop the opposition from getting it back, as they allow a whopping 11.7 offensive rebounds every game.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	74.2	157
Rebounds Per Game	35.9	174
Blocks Per Game	4.7	45
3-Point Percentage	36.3%	117
Free Throw Percentage	69.8%	183

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
C	Damonte Dodd	6.4
F	Justin Jackson	10.4
F	Kevin Huerter	9.0
G	Melo Trimble	17.0
G	Anthony Cowan	10.5





# Saint Mary's Gaels (Overall: 28-4, Conf: 16-2)

## Team Strengths

Saint Mary's was one win shy from winning its first WCC title since 2012, but the team's overall performance this season is good enough to guarantee them a ticket to the NCAA Tournament.

The Gaels have a dynamic duo in juniors Jock Landale (16.8 PPG) and Calvin Hermanson (13.0 PPG) to headline their offense that averages 72.5 points per contest, the third-highest in the conference. But the strength of this team is built upon its rock-solid defense, which ranks second across the nation in points allowed (56.5).

## Team Weaknesses

The Gaels eat opponents alive on the defensive end, but they sometimes get swallowed on the other side of the floor. Other than Landale and Hermanson, there are no other players scoring in double figures for the team. This was brutally exposed in Saint Mary's 74-56 loss to Gonzaga in the WCC title game.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	72.0	191
Rebounds Per Game	35.6	168
Blocks Per Game	3.2	179
3-Point Percentage	39.9%	12
Free Throw Percentage	74.8%	44

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Calvin Hermanson	13.0
F	Jack Landale	16.8
G	Evan Fitzner	5.7
G	Joe Rahon	8.1
G	Emmett Naar	9.5







# Northwestern Wildcats

## (Overall: 23-11, Conf: 10-8)

### Team Strengths:

The Northwestern Wildcats will be going dancing for the first time in their program history. Sunday's selection ended a brutal 78-year stretch in which Northwestern did not get invited to the national tournament. Head coach Chris Collins has done a masterful job of transforming this once-beleaguered squad with the Wildcats going 43-23 the past two seasons.

What makes this Northwestern side different from past teams is their athleticism, particularly on the wings. Scottie Lindsey and Vic Law are each averaging more than 12 points and a steal per night this season. Lindsey and Law can switch defensive assignments on the fly and that will be a major weapon for Collins come tourney time. Defense has been Northwestern's main calling card this season with the Wildcats surrendering just 65.1 points per game this campaign. That's 34th-fewest in the entire nation.

**The Wildcats are pegged at +20,000 to win this year's national tournament.**

### Team Weaknesses:

The Wildcats eat opponents alive on defense, but they sometimes get swallowed on the opposite end of the floor. Northwestern is 231st in the nation in scoring, averaging just 71.1 points per game this season. Other than Bryant McIntosh, Lindsey and Law, there are no other players scoring in double figures for the Wildcats. This was brutally exposed in Northwestern's humiliating 76-48 loss to Wisconsin in the semifinals of the Big Ten Tournament.

### Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	71.1	231
Rebounds Per Game	36.2	153
Blocks Per Game	5.0	23
3-Point Percentage	34.1%	220
Free Throw Percentage	75.1%	36

### Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Vic Law	12.4
F	Dererk Pardon	8.5
F	Sanjay Lumpkin	6.1
G	Scottie Lindsey	14.2
G	Bryant McIntosh	14.4



# Vanderbilt Commodores

## (Overall: 19-15, Conf: 10-8)

### Team Strengths:

The Commodores are one of the nation's most prolific three-point shooting teams, as evidenced by ranking seventh overall in trifectas. Along with main options Matthew Fisher-Davis (13.6 PPG) and Luke Kornet (13.2 PPG), the team also has three other guys that chip in at least one trey per contest.

As shooters, of course, they are great at the charity stripe - 77.6 percent, eighth in the nation. They also put up great efforts against the SEC's best. In addition to being 3-0 against Florida this year, they also have a victory over Arkansas and South Carolina, and one where they almost upset Kentucky.

### Team Weaknesses:

Vandy is another classic case of a team living and dying by the three. They may be above average from behind the line, but their overall shooting is just 43.1 percent, and they have 15 games this season where they shot below that mark.

Adding to that is their poor rebounding skills, particularly on offense, as they are ranked way down on the 309th spot in the stat's rankings. Getting boards is as important as it can get down the stretch, especially for the Commodores, who's three-point-happy ways create a ton of long-rebound scenarios.

### Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	71.3	224
Rebounds Per Game	34.6	130
Blocks Per Game	3.7	84
3-Point Percentage	37.7%	61
Free Throw Percentage	77.6%	8

### Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
C	Luke Kornet	13.2
F	Joe Toye	6.4
F	Jeff Roberson	11.0
G	Matthew Fisher-Davis	13.6
G	Riley LaChance	10.5



# VCU Rams (Overall: 26-7, Conf: 14-4)

## Team Strengths:

The Rams won't wow anyone on offense, but their passing is better than most teams, and they usually make sure that the open man or the one who has the best rhythm to take a shot will have the ball, as evidenced by ranking 43rd in the country in assists.

Mixing well with that unselfishness is the solid team defense. As the 36th-ranked D overall (as per Kenpom.com), they only allow opponents to score 66.3 points per game and shoot 41.8 percent from the field.

Their floor general, JeQuan Lewis, can be considered as a key strength as well. He's a two-way player that register 14.7 points, 4.8 assists, and 1.8 steals per contest, all of which leads the team.

## Team Weaknesses:

As mentioned, the Rams can't score in bunches. They are only in the top 100s in points and 72nd in offensive efficiency. They have the tendency to put too much trust on their pesky defense, and it will have them going home after a couple of rounds, or probably earlier than that.

VCU is also falling behind in outside shooting. Lewis provides some touch behind the line (2.5 threes per game) but other than that, this team has no threat in trifectas. They collectively shoot a dismal 33.6 percent from three and only rank 291st overall in threes made.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	75.0	129
Rebounds Per Game	36.3	111
Blocks Per Game	4.0	76
3-Point Percentage	33.4%	241
Free Throw Percentage	70.5%	159

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
C	Mo Alie-Cox	9.8
F	Justin Tillman	12.5
F	Jordan Burgess	4.7
G	Samir Doughty	5.7
G	JeQuan Lewis	14.7



# Xavier Musketeers (Overall: 21-13, Conf: 9-9)

## Team Strengths:

The Musketeers boast an offense led by two dangerous perimeter players - Trevon Blueitt (18.1 PPG) and JP Macura (14.5 PPG). Both are lights out shooters and rank as the top three-pointers in the Big East. In fact, the 140 treys they hit together are tied for second-most in the conference among any team's scoring or shooting tandem, behind Villanova's Josh Hart and Kris Jenkins, who made 158.

Adding to that is their good ability to rebound, which is good for a team that likes to take shots from the outside. They are currently 32nd in the nation in total boards and 27th in offensive rebounds.

## Team Weaknesses:

Well, for a jump-shooting team like Xavier, one of the key weaknesses, as you may know, is that they likely live and die by the three. Although they have a pair of deadly outside threats, their overall shooting from downtown is just 34 percent.

Part of it may be the reason for their super up-and-down season. They had six different stretches where they went on a three-plus winning or losing streak.

It's also not good that they are not productive on hustle plays (only 6.1 steals and 2.7 blocks per game) and they can't consistently hit foul shots (68.9 percent), since all can be a key to them edging out the top-ranked teams down the line.

Lastly, the loss of their speedy, shifty floor general, Edmond Sumner, may prove to be too big. The sophomore's abilities were mixing really well to the team's two shooters, as he is able to push the pace, throw the defense off balance, and set teammates up nicely.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	74.6	147
Rebounds Per Game	37.6	32
Blocks Per Game	2.7	224
3-Point Percentage	34.0%	229
Free Throw Percentage	68.9%	223

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
C	Rashid Gaston	8.0
F	Trevon Blueitt	18.1
F	Malcom Bernard	6.4
G	JP Macura	14.5
G	Quentin Goodin	5.0





# Princeton Tigers (Overall: 23-6, Conf: 14-0)

## Team Strengths:

A sizzling 19-game win streak will be brought to the March Madness table by Princeton, who's priced at +50,000 to win the national title this season.

The Tigers won the inaugural Ivy League tournament over Yale this past Sunday to receive an automatic bid into the Big Dance, thank in large part to the league's Player of the Year in Spencer Weisz and Defensive Player of the Year, Myles Stephens.

Princeton's playing very sound basketball right now as a whole, with no apparent weakness that sticks out like a sore thumb. In fact, the Tigers are just one of six teams in the country that turned the ball over less than 10 times on average this season.

## Team Weaknesses:

Let's be honest: the Ivy League is primarily known for academics and not necessarily athletics. Having said that, Princeton's lengthy winning streak is mainly a product of the weak competition from its own group.

Case in point: the Tigers began the regular season with a 4-6 record through their first 10 games – all against non-Ivy League opponents. Only one of those defeats was courtesy of a Power Five program (California), but the rest were merely against mid-major schools in BYU, Monmouth, VCU, Lehigh and St. Joseph's.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	70.8	214
Rebounds Per Game	32.5	306
Blocks Per Game	3.2	182
3-Point Percentage	38.1	47
Free Throw Percentage	73.6	72

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Spencer Weisz	10.4
F	Steven Cook	13.7
G	Devin Cannady	13.7
G	Myles Stephens	12.6
G	Amir Bell	6.6



# Bucknell Bison (Overall: 26-8, Conf: 15-3)

## Team Strengths:

Patriot League juggernauts the Bucknell Bison, who are decently priced at +35,000 to win the national title, won their third-consecutive regular-season title and sixth in seven seasons without losing back-to-back contests during their campaign. They also carry a solid six-game win streak heading into the Big Dance, capped off with a dominant 81-65 win over rival Lehigh in the conference championship game.

Junior center Nana Foulland, the Patriot League's Defensive and overall Player of the Year, embodies the team's principles of finding and converting good looks at the basket. Foulland shot a sweet 62.8 percent from the field this season, with the Bison as a whole ranking in the nation's top 25 with a team field-goal percentage of 48.1 percent.

## Team Weaknesses:

Despite lording over the Patriot League for the past few years, Bucknell has only made it to the NCAA tournament thrice since 2010, and as a double-digit-seeded entry on all three occasions at that. With a win over Vanderbilt being the biggest non-conference victory this season, the Bison might be biting off more than they can chew when they take on more competitive schools in the Big Dance, beginning with the West Region's No. 4 seed and Big 12 conference championship finalists West Virginia.

WVU, mind you, employs a stingy defense that forces opponents to turn the ball over on over a fourth of their possessions (an NCAA-best 28.1 percent). Bucknell's unfamiliarity with the "Press Virginia" scheme of the Mountaineers might very well lead to the team's downfall this week.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	76.1	87
Rebounds Per Game	34.4	234
Blocks Per Game	3.8	99
3-Point Percentage	37.7%	55
Free Throw Percentage	67.9%	260

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
C	Nana Foulland	14.9
F	Zach Thomas	16.0
G	Stephen Brown	11.0
G	Kimbral MacKenzie	11.5
G	Nate Jones	3.7



# Florida Gulf Coast Eagles (Overall: 26-7, Conf: 12-2)

## Team Strengths:

The Eagles love to showoff and excite crowds with some highlight-worthy plays, which are mainly attacks to the rim. That's what they've been doing all season long, and there's no stopping them from living up to their nickname: "Dunk City".

They're heading to the NCAA Tournament for the second-consecutive year after claiming the Atlantic Sun tournament title, and are filled with talented and athletic guards like Brandon Goodwin who leads them in scoring with 18.2 points per outing.

Florida Gulf Coast is a +100,000 to win it all.

## Team Weaknesses:

This team's aggression and fearlessness to drive inside is admirable, but head coach Joe Dooley would rather see his boys register a W. And to do that, they'll need to drain some buckets the outside, not just through dunks or penetrations. The Eagles, however, are just shooting 31.9 percent from three-point range this season.

## Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	76.4	81
Rebounds Per Game	36.9	94
Blocks Per Game	3.4	158
3-Point Percentage	33.9%	219
Free Throw Percentage	69.5%	205

## Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Marc-Eddy Norelia	8.9
F	Demetris Morant	10.7
F	Brandon Goodwin	18.2
G	Zach Johnson	11.8
G	Christian Terrell	10.3





# North Dakota Fighting Hawks

## (Overall: 22-9, Conf: 14-4)

### Team Strengths:

North Dakota (+100,000) is making its NCAA Tournament debut, but it would be overly optimistic for us—even for them—to expect the Fighting Hawks to move past the first round against a second-seeded powerhouse in Arizona. The Big Sky champs should still have enough to flirt with an upset, however.

They have a variety of options to choose from for their offense that racks almost 80 points per contest on a solid 48 percent shooting. There's Quinton Hooker (19.1), Geno Crandall (15.6) and Corey Baldwin (10.3), the team's double-digit scorers this season.

### Team Weaknesses:

Defense and rebounding. Those are the areas where the Fighting Hawks are totally vulnerable. They average just 35.1 boards as a team, a result of their lack in size, and allow opposing teams to score 75 points against them.

### Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	78.7	45
Rebounds Per Game	35.1	190
Blocks Per Game	2.8	227
3-Point Percentage	38.4%	36
Free Throw Percentage	73.2%	88

### Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Drick Bernstine	7.9
F	Conner Avants	9.8
F	Geno Crandall	15.6
G	Corey Baldwin	10.3
G	Quinton Hooker	19.1





# South Dakota State Jackrabbits

## (Overall: 18-16, Conf: 8-8)

### Team Strengths:

This will be the Jackrabbits' second-straight appearance in the tourney and fourth time in eight years as a major school in the NCAA. Last season, they were manhandled by Maryland in the opening half, and it ultimately caused them to fall short despite giving a good run in the crucial parts of the game.

The invite to the dance was once again due to a big lift from Mike Daum, winner of this season's Summit Player of the Year plum. He's the Jacks' entire offense, as he puts up 25.3 points, 8.2 rebounds, and 2.3 threes per contest on 51.6 percent shooting. As well-skilled stretch four, he should be a threat to defenders from everywhere.

Daum's scoring ability and the team's efficiency from the foul line - 77.6 percent, ninth in the nation - are the two things that South Dakota State are dangerous of.

### Team Weaknesses:

Probably everything. It seems like they can't do anything effectively besides feeding the ball to Mike Daum and hitting well from the charity stripe. The Jacks are ranked all the way down to the top 300s in allowed points, field goals, threes, and assists. To top it all off nicely, they are also pretty careless with the ball.

Frankly, this team's weaknesses can make one wonder how they managed to finish with a winning record.

### Team Stats:

Category	Stat	NCAA Rank
Points Per Game	77.6	76
Rebounds Per Game	35.0	119
Blocks Per Game	3.3	170
3-Point Percentage	36.3%	119
Free Throw Percentage	77.6%	9

### Starting Lineup:

Position	Name	PPG
F	Mike Daum	25.3
F	Reed Tellinghuisen	11.9
G	Chris Howell	7.7
G	AJ Hess	9.8
G	Michael Orris	8.3