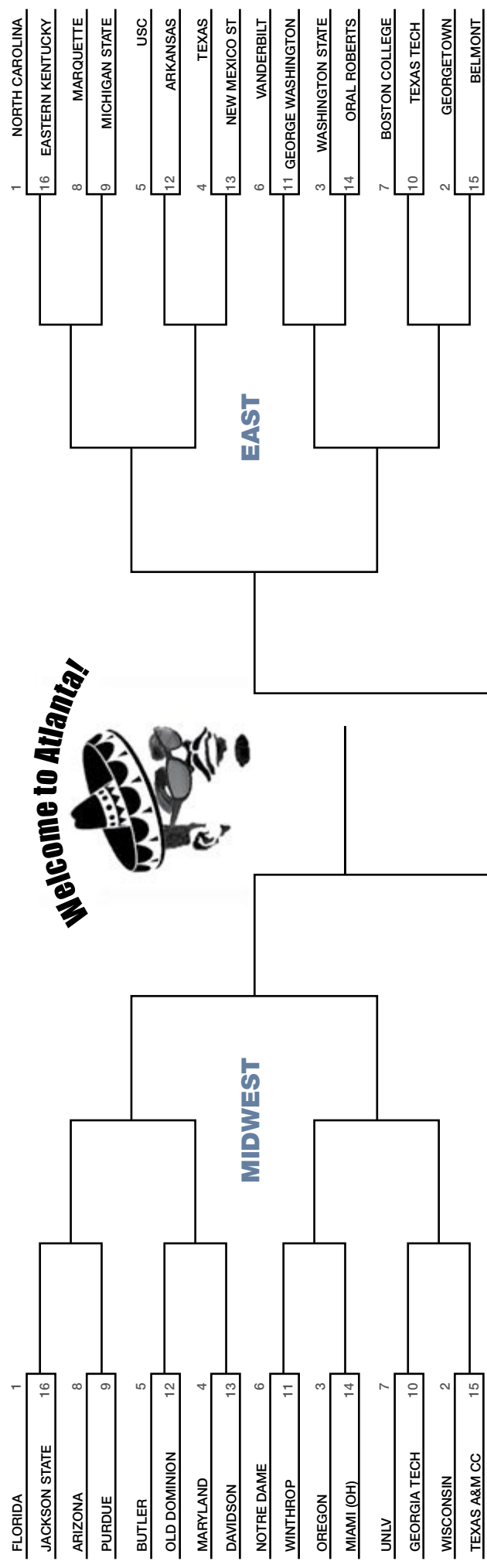


DEADSPIN

2007 NCAA MEN'S BRACKET



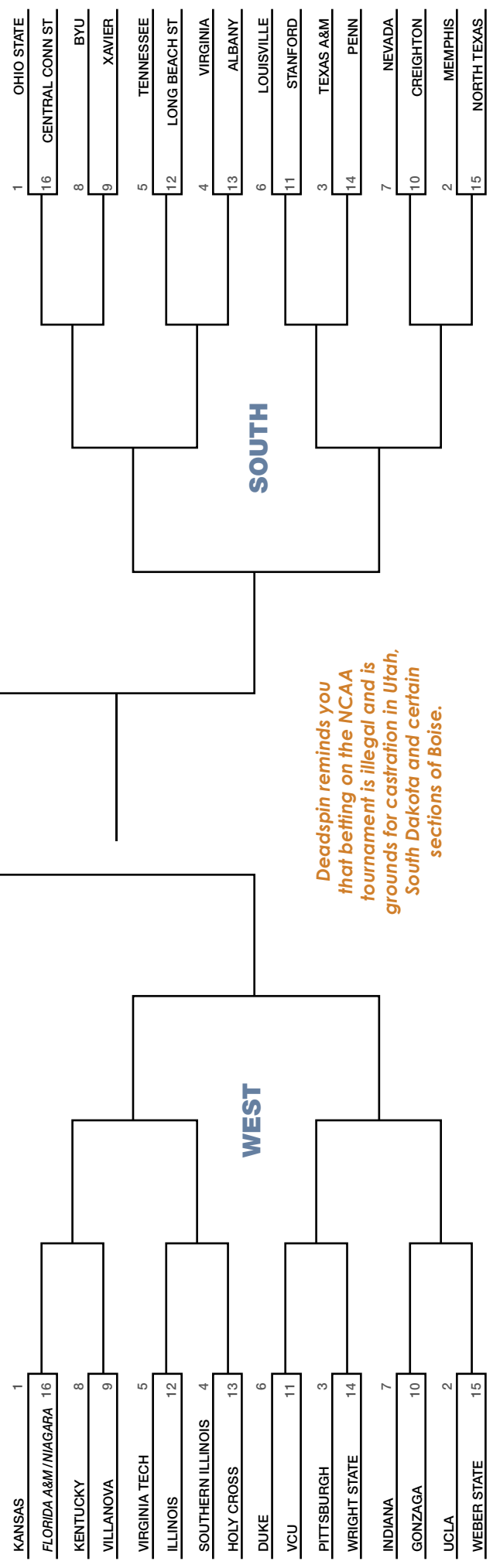
FIRST ROUND MARCH 15-16
 SECOND ROUND MARCH 17-18
 SWEET 16 MARCH 22-23
 ELITE EIGHT MARCH 24-25
 FINAL FOUR MARCH 31
 NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP MARCH 31
 SECOND ROUND MARCH 17-18
 FIRST ROUND MARCH 15-16



Welcome to Atlanta!



NATIONAL CHAMPION



Deadspin reminds you that betting on the NCAA tournament is illegal and is grounds for castration in Utah, South Dakota and certain sections of Boise.

MIDWEST REGION



Florida Gators [1]

1. Joakim Noah has a MILF. To oversimplify, there are three types of hot college sports groupie. There are The TV Fame-Whores (ex. J. Sterger). There are The Celebrities. (ex. A. Judd) And then there is that rarest (and loveliest) of sightings: The MILF. Last March, Joakim Noah's mom, Cecilia Rodhe, dropped on an unsuspecting Madness-watching nation as suddenly has her son. (Three words: "Former Miss Sweden.") This year, Mom -- like Son -- won't sneak up on anyone. If you're looking for a fun Tournament-watching drinking game, try sipping every time the camera cuts to her in the stands. It's a toast to moms!

2. You Know Me, Al. Of Florida's "Big Four" juniors that everyone talks about, the best Gator NBA prospect is ... Al Horford. Just ask Dickie V, who a few weeks ago inadvertently let it slip that Florida coach Billy Donovan (allegedly) told him that Horford was a better NBA prospect than Joakim Noah. But I'd argue: Perhaps not just Noah. Let's face it: Greg Oden, once you see him, is softer than you thought he would be. (On one good leg, Horford dominated Oden when the Gators thumped the Buckeyes by 26 in December.) And Kevin Durant, while oozing the Holy Trinity of "length," "upside" and "Simmons-love," is still one selfish shoot-first teammate away from being the next Rashard Lewis rather than the next Dirk Nowitzki. Given Horford's size, speed and versatility (watch him grab a defensive rebound, then lead the fast break with the dribble), he is the most NBA-ready player not just on this Gators team, but arguably in ALL of college basketball -- a more athletic Elton Brand. Horford is not a screamer or sexy, but double-doubles rarely are. His presence is the reason Noah becomes a vastly tougher matchup, and Horford provides the Gators with unmatched depth in the post, freeing up the team's 3-point shooters.

3. Repeat After Me. The return of Florida's entire starting five from last year's title team (plus the top reserve from both the frontcourt and backcourt) has created the expectation that this could be the first team to repeat as champs since Duke in '91-92. But the last title team to return all five starters was Arizona in 1998. That 1-seeded Wildcats team got out of the first weekend with two wins by an average margin of 36 ppg. All seemed clear. But then, in the regional final, they were shocked and awed by Utah (by 25!) Why will Florida avoid Arizona's fate? That Arizona team was guard-heavy, dependent on outside shooting (6-for-36 FG shooting in the loss to Utah) and, backcourt neutralized, unable to match the Utes' advantages inside. However, just as in last year's run, there isn't a team in the field that can match the Gators' size and depth advantages in the frontcourt (in addition to solid -- if not spectacular -- guard-play that is presumed to be a prerequisite for title contention). It's tougher to neutralize interior size than outside shooting. To wit: Look to Florida's three ugly late-season losses at Vandy, at LSU and at Tennessee for the template of how to KO the Gators: The common factors in all three losses? Cold outside shooting by the Gators (27 percent 3-pt), hot shooting by their opponents (56 percent FG) and Florida's brutally slow starts. —Dan Shanoff • <http://www.danshanoff.com>



Wisconsin Badgers [2]

1. Old School Quickies. Bucky Badger's full name is Buckingham U. Badger. Is Minnesota's Golden Gopher that sophisticated? I doubt it. The Badger mascot actually stems from when the territory was dubbed "The Badger State," not because of animals in the region, but rather an association with miners in the 1820's. Prospectors came to the state looking for minerals, and without shelter in the winter, they had to live like badgers in tunnels burrowed into hillsides. Speaking of back in the day, annual tuition in 1900 was \$20. Now that would really make paying off school loans a lot easier. One last fact: Did you know 17 Nobel Prizes and 24 Pulitzer Prizes have been awarded to UW alumni & faculty?

2. What You Need to Know About This Team. There's quite the range of personalities on this squad. Forward Marcus Landry says his dream job is a pastor, while guard Trevon Hughes simply states "Victoria's Secret." Uh, OK. Sophomore forward Kevin Gullickson says the best movie he's seen this year is *Clerks II*. Kevin, go see some more movies. Brian Butch's favorite TV show is "Grey's Anatomy." Do with that what you will. I'm going to cut him some slack after his elbow ended up on the wrong side of his arm against the Buckeyes.

3. What Else You Need to Know About These Guys. Center Greg Steimsma's favorite musical groups are Kenny Chesney & Korn. That's enough to make Peyton Manning excited & scared at the same time. Player of the Year candidate Alando Tucker is averaging 20 points per game and has the uncanny ability to get a shot off anywhere in traffic. He will surely be undervalued by NBA GM's this spring because he is a "tweener." Tucker's cell phone ring is the theme from "The People's Court." Many of us here in Wisconsin are hoping for a Judge Wapner style ruling this March in favor of Wisconsin.
—Sam McClone



Oregon Ducks [3]

1. Not that Aaron Brooks. From the same school that gave the sports world another Jaison Williams (current WR) and Steve Smith (former CB), comes current point guard and Pac-10 Player of the Year candidate Aaron Brooks. He can't throw 50-yard backward passes, but highlights before this season include breaking his wrist after punching a basket support at UCLA and then nearly breaking a semi-albino shooting guard's face. In all fairness to Brooks, I'm not sure if popping a Washington Husky is technically a punishable offense.

2. Mac Court is really old. McArthur Court is about 80 years old, and if you go to a game there, you might die. OK, maybe not, but a lot of the stands are supported by wood, and when fans start getting excited and get on their feet, being in the building becomes, to say the least, uncomfortable. The rumor is that a new arena won't be built until there's a new coach, due to the fact that people (read: those with the greenbacks) seem to want Ernie Kent out. A 23-win regular season, however, probably ensures that somebody will be hit with a roof shingle or fall through the stands at some point next season. Also, on a somewhat related Mac Court topic, the student section was told to tone it down after starting a "Your Son Hates You" (clap clap, clap clap clap) chant directed at Henry Bibby. Classy all the way.

3. Fun Duck Facts. The uniforms (save for maybe the bright yellow ones) probably won't blind anybody and have no diamond plating or fade paint ... Backup point guard Adrian Stelly worked as a janitor at Mac Court his freshman year before walking on the following year ... shooting guard Chamberlin Oguchi plays for the Nigerian National Team ... shooting guard Bryce Taylor has improved significantly since cutting off his Sideshow Bob dreadlocks before the season ... It's not a typo, forward Maarty Leunen really does spell his name with two As ... Freshman Tajuan Porter is 5'6" and somehow tied the Pac-10 freshman record for threes ... I once saw backup forward Mitch Platt in a Quizno's. I don't remember his order, but it didn't impress me, much like his 30.8 percent free throw percentage that season. —Dan Rubenstein



Maryland Terrapins [4]

1. We Burn Couches Better Than You. We Burn Couches....YES we do! Maryland has a history of causing town riots up and down Route 1 in College Park after meaningful victories (and losses). The most famous was in 2002, with 18 arrests, \$10,000 worth of damage and eight trips to the hospital after the National Championship.

2. I'm Mike Jones! Because of his shared name with Rapper Mike Jones, Terrapins senior guard Mike Jones gets a giant "Who?!" yelled when his name is announced after a made basket. Jones also set the Maryland record for 3-pointers made in a game early this season with nine.

3. The Italian ACC. Maryland hoops alum, and gun aficionado Lonny Baxter has made it to Italy after serving a two-month prison sentence. He is currently averaging seven points and four rebounds for the Italian League's Mens Sana Basketball. The 2004 League Champions are frequently referred to as Montepaschi Siena (due to the sponsorship from a Siena bank), and the team starts three former ACC standouts in Baxter, Terrell McIntyre and 2001 ACC Player of the Year Joseph Forte. —*Awful Announcing* • <http://awfulannouncing.blogspot.com>



Butler Bulldogs [5]

1. A.J. Graves lays more pipe than you do. Butler's 6-1, 155 lb. Emo-bang wearing A.J. Graves lays pipe all summer long at his family's plumbing business in Switz City, Indiana. A.J. was all-state at White River Valley H.S. in 2004 and finished two votes behind North Central's A.J. Ratliff in voting for Indiana's Mr. Basketball. He wasn't recruited by any of the major programs and chose to follow his brothers Andrew and Matthew to Butler, choosing the Bulldogs over Indiana State, Xavier, Bradley and SIU. A.J. led Butler to the preseason NIT championship this year, beating Notre Dame, Indiana, Tennessee, and then, after shrooming the night before with Josh Heytvelt, beating Gonzaga in the final. At that time, Butler's R.P.I. was 1. Because A.J. is widely regarded as the best looking Graves brother, we could totally see him laying lots of pipe, even without the plumbing thing.

2. Greg Oden in a Butler uniform? But for the incompetence of the former Butler Athletic Director, it could have happened. Thad Matta, the current Ohio State coach, was the head coach at Butler in 2000-01. That year, Thad's team beat the crap out of Wake Forest in the first round of the NCAA tournament, 79-63 (Butler was actually up 43-10 at the half). After returning to Indianapolis, Thad, who was then on a three-year contract, met with then-AD John Parry about his contract. According to a reliable source, Thad didn't want any more money, just some job security, and asked for a 10-year contract. The genius John Parry refused. Several weeks later, after Skip Prosser left Xavier to take the Wake Forest job after Dave Odom went to South Carolina, Xavier came calling. It seems that the Xavier president had dinner in the same Kansas City restaurant as the Butler team during the NCAA opening round (XU was in the same regional) and was impressed with the way Thad's team handled themselves, so he told the Xavier A.D. to go hire Thad, which he did. Three years later, after Jim O'Brien starts shipping money to recruits, Thad ends up at Ohio State. It goes without saying that Thad is the reason that Oden went to Ohio State (what, do you think Dan Peters can recruit now that he no longer has access to Bob Huggins' checkbook?). So, given the NBA rule change that has Oden in college for one season, do you think Thad would have been able to talk him in to coming to Butler to play in historic Hinkle Field House in front of his hometown fans? I think yes. And but for the incompetence of one Butler A.D. in refusing to lock Thad up for 10 years, it could have happened.

3. Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon: Indiana hoops/Deadspin-style. Butler head coach Todd Lickliter played at Butler with Doug Mitchell, who is the head coach of Illinois Indiana recruit (oops, sorry Will), Eric Gordon, who played AAU basketball with Duke's Josh McRoberts, who is the son of former Butler player Tim McRoberts, who was a Butler teammate of Chad Tucker, who was a Butler teammate of Thad Matta, who was a Butler teammate of Darin Archbold, who was in *Blue Chips* (filmed at Brandon Crone's high school in Frankfort, IN) with Robert Wuhl, who was in *Bull Durham* with Kevin Costner, who was in *JFK* with Kevin Bacon, who was in *A Few Good Men* with Tom Cruise, who was in *Jerry Maguire* with Cuba Gooding, Jr., who was in *Coming to America* with Eddie Murphy, who was in *48 Hours* with Nick Nolte, who was in *Blue Chips* with Bob Knight, who coached Bowling Green coach Dan Dakich at Indiana, who went to Pierce Middle School in Merrillville, Ind. with ... Dee Mirich. Affirmed. —*Bulldog Lounge*



Notre Dame Fighting Irish [6]

1. The benefits of weed. When the Irish's starting point guard Kyle McAlarney was indefinitely suspended for having pot in the front seat of his car in late December, freshman guard Tory Jackson was immediately thrust into the starting spot. Although he still lacks K-Mac's consistency from behind both lines, Jackson's evolved into a very capable dynamo at the one position, scoring 34 points, dishing out 13 assists and pulling in 16 rebounds in back-to-back home wins over DePaul and Marquette. It's no wonder Jackson's a natural distributor; the Saginaw native is one of 15 siblings.

2. From downtown South Bend. Irish gunner Colin Falls has taken a majority of his shots from behind the 3-point arc (214 out of his 271 field goal attempts this season have been from long distance), but it's still quite an accomplishment to become the career 3-point leader in the history of both Notre Dame and the Big East conference. Falls ended his senior Big East regular season with 189 threes, six more than Gerry McNamara. His record seems even more valuable when you consider that his Orange counterpart was in school for nine years.

3. Not in our church. Walking into the Joyce Center, you wouldn't think it a basketball stronghold, but the Irish and Leprechaun Legion student section completed an 18-0 home campaign that extended their home winning streak to 20 games. It's a good thing Mike Brey's team was so consistent in South Bend, considering their road losses included St. Johns (RPI 130), South Florida (RPI 182, defeated them by 24 at home) and DePaul (defeated by 24 at home as well). If you're wondering how they play without a partisan crowd, the Irish were 1-1 at neutral sites, defeating Maryland in DC and losing by two to Butler. —*Rakes Of Mallow* • <http://www.rakesofmallow.com>



UNLV Runnin' Rebels [7]

1. Viva Las Vegas, baby. Where else can you see pregame introductions featuring fireworks and flames shooting out of the shot clock as players come out on a red carpet? The band plays "Viva Las Vegas" leading into the infamous Ree-eee-bels chant, members of the dance team make showgirls look like dogs and courtside seats have featured the likes of casino mogul Steve Wynn and other "Vegas celebrities." Hey, where else are you going to see a mobbed up casino owner cheering on his team?

2. Don't bring that weak stuff here, eh. After redshirting last season, Canadian-born Joel Anthony has provided plenty of thunder down in the blocks. Twice he's approached a triple-double in points, rebounds and blocks, coming up two points short against TCU. Over the course of the season he's had 10 games with at least four blocks, including a school record 12 in the TCU game.

3. Just Win, Baby. The UNLV basketball program has had tremendous success in its 48-year history and has left a high quality, although occasionally shady, imprint all over the record books. They're third in overall program winning percentage behind only Kentucky and North Carolina. They were the second winningest program of the '80s behind North Carolina and had the fourth-longest winning streak of all time from 1990-1991 at 45 games (we won't discuss the rumored thrown game that ended it). —*David Fucillo*



Arizona Wildcats [8]

1. Stretch Marks. The 2006-2007 season has resembled that of a young Alpha Phi freshman, heading to Tucson after a long summer of working out and tanning in the sun. Sure, she looks great when college begins, but five months of drinking any possible liquid (Everclear, YUMMY!) and ordering Domino's on her Cat Card has led to a larger ass and a sudden case of college acne. Arizona begins the year 12-1 before dropping eight of the next 16 games, including six of eight during a stretch in January.

2. Deja Vu? Lute "My Dentures Bring All the Boys to the Yard" Olson's only National Championship came in 1997 when the Wildcats finished fifth in the Pacific-10 Conference, the same place they find themselves this year. Also in '97, Mike Bibby won the Pac-10 Freshman of the Year award, something Chase Budinger has all but wrapped up.

3. Get the Stars the Ball. The two best players for Arizona are Marcus Williams and Chase Budinger, so it would make the most sense to get them the rock. When Williams or Budinger score more than 20 points, the Wildcats are 15-1 this season, with the only loss coming against Oregon by two. —*Shane Bacon*



Purdue Boilermakers [9]

1. Turnaround. The Boilermakers reached the 20-win mark for the first time since the 2000 season. Their 11-game turnaround from last season's nine-win campaign is one of the five best in the nation. Furthermore, their RPI at the end of last season was 175; this year it's 47. (For a point of comparison, Michigan is 53 and Iowa is 85.) Purdue scored key wins over Virginia, Illinois, Michigan State and Indiana, but had bad losses to Indiana State and Minnesota. Purdue's 16 home wins is the most ever for a Purdue basketball team, yet they only won two games on the road; they also won two on neutral courts. Carl Landry was the first Purdue player ever to be Big Ten player of the

week three consecutive weeks, and Chris Kramer set a Purdue record this year for steals by a freshman. It will continue; second-year coach Matt Painter is set to welcome the best recruiting class in the history of Purdue basketball. In fact, Painter will land four top-50 players in one class. Many seasons, longtime Coach Keady (famous for the combover) didn't have a single one. (In fact, the most noteworthy Keady class got an assistant coach "re-assigned" and put Purdue into NCAA probation.)

2. Who To Know. David Teague's shooter's eye clearly got better as the season progressed, to where he's now averaging 14.4 points and shooting 43 percent from 3-point range as the second option behind senior Carl Landry. Chris Lutz became a better defender each game as well, and made better offensive decisions that really helped Purdue as a team. Expectation here is that Teague and Landry will carry them through one round but in the second they'll lose by 10-15 to a team with legit big men.

3. Purdue's Recent Tourney History Is Checkered At Best. Purdue hasn't been in the Tourney since 2003, when they sneaked in as an 18-10 9-seed and then demolished LSU by 24 in the first round before succumbing to Texas in the round of 32. In 2000, the Boilers got Gene Keady as close to a Final Four as he ever got, needing only to beat a mediocre Wisconsin team in the Elite Eight (in their fourth meeting of the season). Naturally, they fell short. In 1996, Purdue won their third consecutive outright Big Ten regular season title, becoming just the second team to ever accomplish such a feat. They followed that up by coming the closest any No. 1 seed has ever come to losing to a No. 16 as Western Carolina's shot at the buzzer rattled out and the Boilers exhaled with a 73-71 clunker (and went on to lose in the second round). In 1994, Glenn Robinson led the Boilers to the Elite Eight, again bringing Keady one win from a Final Four only to be upended by Duke. We could go on forever reliving these good old times ... but Purdue's last Final Four was 1980. Enough said. —*Boiled Sports* • <http://boiledsports.blogspot.com>



Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets [10]

1. You Might Be A Yellow Jacket ... Sure, the most famous Georgia Tech -- because we're talking about the university here, I will refer to them by their official name, "The Georgia Institute of Technology" -- alumnus is Jimmy Carter, who was (reportedly) President of the United States and also won the Nobel Peace Prize, tellingly, not for being President Of The United States. But the GIT ('er dun!) alumnus more recognizable to the

majority of United States citizens is no doubt comedian Jeff Foxworthy, the famous "you might be a redneck" fellow and current host of "Are You Smarter Than A Fifth Grader?" (Answer: No.)

2. Their Fandom Of Anheuser-Busch Products Rivals The St. Louis Cardinals! For years, the Cardinals' played the Anheuser-Busch anthem "Here Comes The King" during the seventh-inning stretch -- more colloquially known as "the Clydesdale song" -- before moving it to the eighth inning when they moved to their new ballpark. The Georgia Tech band has a similar tradition; they play "When You Say Budweiser" during the second-to-last timeout every home game. The fans respond by, according to Wikipedia, "alternately bending their knees and standing up straight." I don't know what that means.

3. Thaddeus REALLY Young. The Yellow Jackets are led by their two hot freshmen recruits, Thaddeus Young -- who was born in *June 1988!* -- and Javaris Crittendon have been the team's two best players all season, the two leading scorers, the two dominant forces, if someone who is a teenager can ever be referred to as a "force." The bad news is that they both very well might be gone after this year to the NBA Draft. (Though Crittendon says he's staying.) And I still can't get over the fact that I was already going through puberty when these two were born. (Barely.) —*Will Leitch*



Winthrop Eagles [11]

1. Some Winthrop Firsts. 1886: Winthrop first opens its doors.

1972: Winthrop goes co-ed and allows its first males to enroll.

August 20, 1977, 10:00 am: Freshman, and future actress Andie MacDowell first steps foot on campus.

August 20, 1977, 10:01 am: The few pioneering men who broke the gender barrier see MacDowell and call their friends, telling them that Winthrop is exactly how they pictured going to a former all-girls school would be.

August 20, 1977, 10:05 am: The men's dreams are dashed when MacDowell is asked out on and subsequently accepts a dinner date with the school's president.

1999: Basketball team makes first NCAA Tournament.

2003: I hook with a Winthrop girl for the first time.

2007: First Top 25 basketball ranking in school history.

2. Are you feeling lucky? Having once been an all-girls college, Winthrop stills maintains a 3:1 girl-to-guy ratio. For the guys on campus, this creates a law of supply and demand that just can't be topped. And if you get tired of that you can always try and win a car. Every year at a home basketball game, the fans make paper airplanes and throw them toward a car at mid-court with its windows open. First plane in wins the car. The best thing is that people actually win.

3. Nice Pants. When you think about the coaches that you've had in your lifetime, "high fashion" isn't typically the first phrase that pops into your head. Unfortunately a grown man in a t-shirt tucked into some high-riding shorts with socks pulled over his calves might be. Or even a guy in perma-sweats might be a more accurate depiction. Not so for Winthrop. Every year before they play in the tournament, Coach Marshall takes his coaching staff to a tailor in Charleston, S.C., where they are all fitted for custom made suits. With this being the seventh time in nine years that they will be going to The Dance, that makes for a solid wardrobe selection. —*John Redcorn*



Old Dominion Monarchs [12]

1. Their long-distance bill must be horrendous. Nobody has made better use of overseas players than ODU. Australian stalwart Alex Loughton graduated last year after leading the Monarchs to an NCAA berth and the final four of the NIT. This year, the team is paced by Lithuanian sharpshooter Valdas Vasylius and tough Ivory Coaster Arnaud Dahi. Seven-foot-three Sam Harris is a work in progress who hails from the island of Tasmania.

2. Ladies... The men's team is still struggling to reach the level set by the Lady Monarchs, who won an NCAA championship in 1985, amassing a 31-3 record. ODU has also taken top prizes in Field Hockey and Sailing, showing some impressive skills with both individual and team Dinghy handling.

3. "Hello, U-Haul? This is Chris again." Very few Monarchs have gone on to have NBA careers, but those who pulled it off have been tenacious. Kenny Gattison put in a solid decade in the pro ranks, Dave Twardzik won a ring with the Trail Blazers in 1977 and Chris Gatling made the All-Star game in 1997, but was best known for triple-pump fakes, flopping and being traded multiple times. He played for nine teams in an 11-year career. —*Eric Angevine*



Davidson Wildcats [13]

1. OK, let's get it straight now -- Steph-en. If you pay attention to this team over the next week, you'll hear a lot about Stephen Curry, who pronounces his name as if it were spelled, "Steffen," not how most people named Stephen say their name. Not a big deal, except it touched off a (very) mini-controversy when some blabberheads got it wrong during one of Davidson's (very) few mentions on a four-letter network. So some Wildcats faithful got a little fired up because Curry has been overlooked most of his career. He is getting some pub now, but only after averaging 21.2 points a game -- second-most in the country by a freshman behind some dude in burnt orange named Durant. As the story goes, Stephen wanted to follow in the footsteps of father and former NBA sharpshooter Dell Curry and go to Virginia Tech. The Hokies didn't want any part of him, so he wound up at little ol' Davidson, where he rewrote a whole bunch of freshman, scoring and 3-point records. At one point, Davidson also was in the hunt for the son of a more famous former NBA star (Jeff Jordan - you might have heard of dad, Michael). Word is that Jeff might be headed to Loyola Chicago instead, but the Wildcats are plenty happy with the son of a former NBA player they have.

2. Time to win one of these games. There's a fairly legitimate theory that schools such as Davidson should be happy just to make the NCAA tournament, but enough is enough. This is the Wildcats' third NCAA appearance since 2002, and they need to win a game. And there is a lot of reason to think that this is the year it will happen. The Wildcats graduated seven seniors off last year's NCAA team so this was supposed to be a rebuilding year. Instead, they went 29-4, winning 25 of their last 26 games with winning streaks of 12 and 13 games. They also were hammering people all year, winning by an average of 13.4 points and turning into a virtual cash machine, going 21-8-1 against the spread. This is coach Bob McKillop's fourth NCAA trip, passing Lefty Driesell for the most by a Davidson coach. The Wildcats went to the Elite Eight twice back in the 1960s but have gone 0-5 since. This shouldn't be the year it happens, but with all of this surprising success, maybe it should be.

3. So why not now? Earlier this month, Davidson inducted two of its most seminal sports figures -- at least for somebody who might have been enrolled there between, say, 1992 and '96. The inductees were former men's soccer coach Charlie Slagle and basketball star Brandon Williams. Slagle took the Wildcats to the NCAA soccer final four in 1992 -- when Davidson happened to be hosting the thing. This is sort of like the Arizona Cardinals reaching the Super Bowl when it is in Phoenix. After all, they put the big game there because nobody expects the home team to make it. The Wildcats got wiped out in the semifinal, but let's just say sobriety was a scarce commodity that weekend. As for Williams, aka Ozone (because he played up in the ozone layer), he was the star for a relatively great basketball run from 1994-96. That included NIT bids in '94 and '96, although the latter year should have been in the Big Dance. That's when the Wildcats wound up 25-5 and went 14-0 in the regular season before choking in the tournament final to Western Carolina. Davidson was crushing people like it did this year. Now that they got past the conference tournament hurdle, an NCAA win should be up next. As for Williams, he wound up buried on the San Antonio Spurs roster a couple years later and won a championship. This is sort of like an Arizona Cardinals player winning a Super Bowl ring. —*Matt Pitzer*



Miami RedHawks [14]

1. You Give "Of" A Bad Name. In NCAA football we have Miami and Miami of Ohio. Perhaps in basketball, we should have Miami and Miami of Florida. Who's with me? (Charges out of Delta House) ... (Returns) What the f**k happened to the Deadspin I know? Where's the spirit? The Miami University RedHawks have qualified for the tournament of 64 -- I mean 65 -- for the 17th time in school history. The one in Florida has reached the tournament but a mere five times. MU also has twice as many tournament wins as "The U." (Six vs. three.) Miami University has hardly earned the consolation of using the "Of [state]" when it comes to basketball in March. And we're just the folks to change that thought process. LET'S DO IT!

2. I Wonder What That LeBron Guy Is Doing Now. You may not believe this, but the guys playing for Miami this season had trouble against LeBron James in high school. The Brothers Pollitz (Eric and Tim) lost in consecutive years to James and company in the Ohio Division III quarterfinals in 2002 and 2003. Doug Penno -- that dude who hit the banked 3-point shot to beat Akron in the silly MAC Championship -- was on the team that lost to James' high school in the state championship game, 40-36. So could it possibly be construed as ironic that Penno and Pollitz won a conference championship on the very court on which LeBron James plays professionally (Quicken Loans Arena)? No? Yeah, I didn't think so either.

3. WHAT ... Is Your Name? What ... Is Your Quest? For a school stowed away in Southeast Ohio's armpit, Miami sure has a lot of famous graduates: Woody Hayes, Weeb Eubank, Paul Brown, Ara Parseghian, Ben Roethlisberger, Ron Harper, Charlie Liebrandt ... ah hell. Just read the damn list. Not listed, but should be, is author Scott Ginsberg, known as "The Nametag Guy." He claims to have worn a nametag 24/7 for the last six years. (Most. Awkward. Sex. Ever.) He claims that the nametag not only gives him a profound level of approachability and confidence, but it keeps the evil pirate ghosts from invading his mantra and selling his soul for rum. Ginsberg is clearly a glaring omission on the list of notable MU alum. If only there were some way I could add his name to that Wikipedia list. —*Matt Sussman*



Texas A&M Corpus Christi Islanders [15]

1. The house that Arrow built. TAMUCC has only been part of the Texas A&M system since 1989. In 1998, they hired South Alabama coach Ronnie Arrow to create a Division-I basketball program out of thin air. He did just that, cobbling together a pair of respectable .500 seasons before earning Independent coach of the year honors three times. This year, the Islanders made their debut in the Southland Conference and compiled a 25-6 overall record. Someone ought to name a building after that guy.

2. Who invited these bastards? Northwestern State University upset No. 3 seed Iowa in the Big Dance in 2006. No doubt they and other Southland conference members were wolf-whistling like inmates at Oz catching sight of fresh meat when TAMUCC appeared on their schedule for the first time this year. Fast-forward to March, and the new guys have a dominant 13-1 record in the conference and have grabbed the auto-bid. Fellas, I think you've been hustled.

3. I haven't seen this many seniors since I visited Grandma at Del Boca Vista. The Islanders can start a very experienced lineup -- five seniors, anchored by All-Southland Center Chris Daniels. When one of them needs a breather, two more fourth-year players are on the bench. But don't fret for next year's team. Brilliantly named junior college transfer Scooby Johnson is making his case to fill Daniels' enormous shoes. He was a perfect 5-for-5 for eleven points in the SLC Championship game. —*Eric Angevine*



Jackson State Tigers [16]

1. Sweetness. Jackson's State's most famous graduate is, of course, the great Walter Payton. It is a little known fact that his brother, Eddie Payton, is the head golf coach of the Tigers and has built them into a powerhouse in the golf crazy SWAC.

2. Oil Can. Of the many great academics who have attended the university, the most famous quote by an alum is by former major league pitcher Dennis "Oil Can" Boyd, speaking to Bo Jackson: "I am The Can, and I am going to come right at you with my best shit, and if you can hit it, I want to see how far Bo Jackson can hit The Oil Can." Jackson hit Boyd's first pitch over the 71-foot high score board in straight away center at Fenway (the ball landed 515 feet from home plate).

3. Priorities. The Tigers, also known as the Blue Bengals, last appeared in the NCAA's in 2000. That year, the school sold more tickets to alumni to attend the Jackson State Alumni Jazz Brunch Hair and Fashion Show than to the NCAA tourney. —*Nation Of Islam Sports Blog* • <http://nationofislamsportsblog.blogspot.com>

WEST REGION



Kansas Jayhawks [1]

1. Sharing The Wealth. Brandon Rush, Mario Chalmers, Darrell Arthur, Sherron Collins, Sasha Kaun, Darnell Jackson and Julian Wright have all had their turn leading the team in scoring. For the math-challenged amongst you, that's seven different players. And what does this mean for you, poor 16 seed? Unlike KU teams of recent vintage, these Jayhawks do not rely heavily on one or two superstars to carry the load. Thank God, because with a young rotation made up of three sophomores, three juniors and two awe-inspiring freshmen, these baby Jayhawks can be pretty inconsistent.

2. Sweet Home Chicago. Two of the Jayhawks' most highly-touted players, freshman Sherron Collins and sophomore Julian Wright, hail from greater Chicagoland. Bill Self has built upon the connections he forged in the area while coaching the University of Illinois and made recruiting the Chicago area a priority. It's a good thing, too, because while the Jayhawks' roster features five native Kansans, only one of them is averaging more than one point per game (freshman Brady Morningstar). Though Illini fans see the controversial signings of these players as proof of recruiting improprieties on the part of head coach Bill Self, Kansas fans helpfully respond by pointing out that Bruce Weber is not a very good recruiter and also, kind of insane. (*Ed. Note: Bill Self wears a toupee!*)

3. By the Numbers. With Saturday's win over the Texas Male Cows, the Jayhawks chalked up win number 1900 (third all time) and conference championship number 50 (not all achieved in the Big XII). While some people point to the Bradley or Bucknell debacles as the worst Jayhawks losses in history, for my money it doesn't get any worse than the infamous 1902 loss to the Muscatine, IA YMCA. —*Pete Gaines*



UCLA Bruins [2]

1. White guys from Orange County, brah! A lot of people make a big deal out of the fact that UCLA has 2 Cameroonians, a Canadian and a Serbian pimp (Facebook pictures don't lie) on the roster. That's just fine and dandy, but in all seriousness, what college team doesn't have a full UN committee on their roster these days? The real void in the college basketball demographic can be found by taking the 405 South about an hour from the UCLA campus. How many kids can you name who just two years ago were busy partying with the cast of Laguna Beach and are now playing D1

ball? If you're a talented high school athlete in the 949, your priorities typically look like this: Surf, girls, surf, girls, volleyball practice brah!, surf, girls, hair gel, water polo practice, surf, girls, girls. High School Basketball in the OC?? Give me a break! Only the most baller of ballers can pull that off, and UCLA has not one, but two of them on the team: Mike Roll and James Keefe. Two OC studs who could have just as easily been majoring in Vagina Acquisition at USC, but instead chose to help lead UCLA to dominance.

2. Finally, 100% Lavin Free. Sure, we all loved the contributions of Cedric Bozeman and Ryan Hollins in last year's championship-game run. They were great and all, but as long as they were wearing 'UCLA' across their chests, the stench of Steve Lavin was still lingering around the locker room. With the graduation of four seniors last year (Bozeman, Hollins, Michael Fey and Janou Rubin), the UCLA program has now completely rid itself of the taint of Steve 16. It's all Ben Howland's program now. No more excuses. Although, I must admit that us UCLA fans miss the days when our star player, TJ Cummings, was allowed time away from practice so that he could make sweet sweet love to Missy Elliot after his cameo in her "Work it" video.

3. Me and Lorenzo, chilling in the Benzo. We've beat up on a lot of teams in the past two years. Fans everywhere realize the only chance their team has of beating us is if they can figure out a way to get under our players skin when we come to town. Some get creative and have been successful, most notably Ryan J. Boyd of West Fuckin' Virginia, who distracted our team by throwing planet earth out of orbit with his pelvic thrusts. However, the vast majority of our opposing fans are not nearly as resourceful as Mr. Boyd. They typically resort to the "Let's talk shit" technique, and usually target the questionable physical appearance of our starting center, Lorenzo Mata. To them I reply, "Let's do the math, shall we?" A simple Google search of 'lorenzo+mata+ugly' yields 28,800 results, while a search of 'lorenzo+mata+bitches' yields 132,000 results. The math is simple ladies and gentlemen ... for every hater out there who tries belittling our legendary big man, there are five ladies ready and willing to service him. Therefore, your attempts at distraction are fruitless. You should have had a fat guy do the YMCA, dumbasses. —*Trevor Gribble*



Pittsburgh Panthers [3]

1. The Name Game. Pitt's starting lineup includes a lanky Canadian forward with stupid lines shaved in his head and a compact cornrowed point guard formerly of the famed New York Gauchos AAU team. One is named Levance and another is named Levon, but can you tell which is which?

2. Tarzana Of The Pennsylvanians. To understand Aaron Gray you must understand where he came from. Although raised as a Pennsylvanian he was born in Tarzana, Calif. It all makes sense when you take into account his towering presence and his body hair that refuses to be tamed. Of course in Hebrew the word "tarzan" translates as "dandy, fop, coxcomb" (via Wiki). Obviously Gray is a gentile-giant, but some NBA GM's might say he's lived up to the chosen people's description all to well.

3. Basketball Been Berry Berry Good. Pitt has become a prime destination for Dominican ballers going back to the days of Jaime Peterson. More recently the team featured Ricardo Greer who has parlayed his skills into a solid Euro-league career. He currently teams up with ex-NCAA standouts like Aaron Miles, Britton Johnson, and Michael Wright. The torch is currently carried by the team's top shooter, Ronald Ramon, and assistant coach (and former star player) Orlando Antigua who will forever be known as the first hispanic Globetrotter. —*unsilent majority*



Southern Illinois Salukis [4]

1. Watch Yo Mouth. Among many famous alums - Dennis Franz, Shawn Colvin, Bob Odenkirk, John Belushi (though it's up for debate whether or not he actually attended a class) - without a doubt the coolest Saluki grad is Richard Roundtree, best known as SHAFT. In addition to being the private dick who gets all the chicks, Roundtree played football for SIU and was treated for breast cancer in 1993.

2. These Guys Are Unusually Smart. SIU is not necessarily known for its academic excellence - it's more known for its parties - but the basketball team is wiping the floor with the student body, at least in the classroom. Star guard Jamaal Tatum is an honors

student like fellow starters Matt Shaw and Bryan Mullins. Tatum's father is a professor, but not as impressive a professor as the father of reserve center Kobby Acquah, whose dad is the head of the physics department at the University of the Cape Coast in Ghana.

3. The President Should Have Been Governor. SIU's president is Glenn Poshard, who lost a brutal and close gubernatorial race with former Illinois Gov. George Ryan in 1998. Had he won, the state of Illinois would have been much better off; Ryan proved to be an impressively corrupt public official and was ultimately convicted of 18 federal public corruption convictions and sentenced to six-and-a-half years in jail (he's somehow avoiding prison so far on appeal, because he's white and old). —*Will Leitch*



Virginia Tech Hokies [5]

1. Can't Win the Small Ones. The Hokies finished their ACC season 10-6, their best mark in the conference and one game out of first place. The weird part? Tech was 5-2 against the top four teams in the conference, including 3-0 against teams ranked in the national top five, but

only 3-4 against the bottom five teams, including two double-digit losses to N.C. State and Sidney Lowe's red blazer. It doesn't help that three of their four non-conference losses came to powerhouses Marshall, Western Michigan and a George Washington team that's having a down year. On the other hand, Virginia Tech was the first team to beat both Duke and UNC on the road in the same season since Georgia Tech in the 1995-96 season, and only the third team to do so in the last 25 years. But it's all about ending the futility: Virginia Tech hasn't been to the NCAA tournament since 1996, when Ace Custis patrolled the lane and the Hokies were in the Atlantic-10 conference. To put that in perspective, 1996 was the year the "Macarena" was the top-selling single in America.

2. A Ballsy Move. Junior forward Deron Washington has provided plenty of highlight plays this season with his freakish athleticism and constant hustle, and his retro look also provided fodder for a sign at UVA that read, "Hey Deron, the 80's wants its sweatband back." Sweatband aside, Washington inspired Duke haters everywhere by putting his sweaty manparts in Greg Paulus' face on his way to a layup in Tech's 67-65 upset of Duke at Cameron Indoor. Washington later sealed the deal by blocking Paulus' last-ditch heave out of bounds at the buzzer. The sweatband compares with only A.D. Vassalo's penchant for shaving "PR" into the back of his hair, reminding the entire world that he is a shoot-first guard from Puerto Rico, for most interesting Tech hair.

3. The Ones That Got Away. Sometimes missing out is good, sometimes it's bad. Tech coach Seth Greenberg offered Stephen Curry, son of Virginia Tech Hall of Famer Dell Curry, a walk-on opportunity with the Hokies in response to Curry's desire to follow his dad's footsteps at VT. Today, Curry is leading Davidson in scoring and shooting 41 percent from behind the arc, which would help a Tech team that is shooting just 35.6 percent from deep this season. Also, the man Greenberg replaced at Tech, basketball legend Ricky Stokes, is currently running the East Carolina program into the ground much as he did the Hokies. Stokes took the Pirates helm after departing Blacksburg after the 2003 season with a sterling 46-69 record. Among those 46 wins was a grand total of 10 in three seasons of Big East conference play. Greenberg won seven in his only year coaching in the conference. —*Brad Hinshelwood*



Duke Blue Devils [6]

1. Duke Green. Not that the .500 record in ACC play this year was a tipoff or anything, but this is one of the youngest Duke squads in history. The only senior on this year's team is Joe Pagliuca, who's seen his minutes steadily decline from year to year: from 9 to 7 to 4 to 2. DeMarcus Nelson, the team's leading scorer, is the only junior on the squad, and after that it's six sophs and six freshmen. Early trips to the Association meant that the starting lineup could have looked like Livingston-Paulus-Nelson-Deng-McRoberts this year, but given that the NBA saved Duke fans another year of Shavlik Randolph in '06, I think that most would agree it evens out.

2. Coach K Prepares You For Life, Coach Dan Brooks Just Wins Championships. We know about Dukies in the NBA. But what about other sports? Duke has five players in the NFL, none of whom were drafted and only one of whom (Ryan Fowler, LB, Cowboys) played a snap last season. Duke also has five MLB players, most notably Chris Capuano, Scott Schoeneweis and Quinton McCracken (still alive... shocking!). The school that once produced Sonny Jurgensen and Lawrence "Crash" Davis (yes, he was real) can take pride in its other main athletic export, however: LPGA players! Brittany Lang, Virada Nirapathpongporn, Candy Hannemann and Kristina Engstrom all have their tour cards for '07, and the Duke women's golf team has won four NCAA titles in the last ten years (including the past two) in addition to 11 straight ACC championships.

3. A Gaudet Record. You may recall the Mike Krzyzewski/Pete Gaudet Record Fiasco of 1995, especially when Billy "Why Is A 700 Year Old Man Still Calling Himself Billy?" Packer frothed over it during a telecast this year in the midst of Duke's longest losing streak in 11 years. Sadly for Duke haters, much of the conventional wisdom regarding the case is faulty; the record decision was made when the team was 9-3 before Gaudet had even coached a game, so you'll either have to chalk it up to a premonition on Coach K's part, an evil NCAA conspiracy (so the most famous coach in college hoops can't just say "go back and change it?"), or just the usual standby: Satan. But where, you may ask, is Pete Gaudet now? He parlayed 12 years on the Duke bench into... the video coordinator position for the OSU women's hoops team. I am in no way judging that career choice. —*Matt DeTura*



Indiana Hoosiers [7]

1. Larry Bird and What Might Have Been. The 1976 Indiana Hoosiers--the last undefeated team in men's college basketball history--are generally considered to be the second-best team of all time behind 1968 UCLA. But remember that West Baden/French Lick native Larry Bird was successfully recruited by Bob Knight, had committed to Indiana, and in fact showed up for preseason practice in the autumn of 1974. After only a few weeks, Bird fled Bloomington for home, too intimidated by the "big city" to hang around for the start of the season. To quote the ghost of James Naismith, "The '76 Hoosiers were but one hilarious mustache away from being the greatest North American sports team ever. And I don't mean mine."

2. 550 Degrees Kelvin. Yes, first-year Indiana coach Kelvin Sampson famously made too many (oh, around 550) ill-timed phone calls to recruits while at Oklahoma. But as soon as you're finished feigning outrage ... let's move on to the Sampson family's role in the Battle of Hayes Pond. Sampson is a Lumbee Indian and his father, Ned Sampson, helped drive the Ku Klux Klan out of their North Carolina Lumbee community in 1958. Local Klan Wizard James "Catfish" Cole, who given his moniker had ironically targeted the Lumbee tribe as "mongrels," not only knew very little about the motion offense, but was also was a complete asshat. Showing a little more versatility and lot more dignity, Kelvin won the 2002 NAMA Jim Thorpe Award in addition to his 1992 Pac-10 and 1995 National and Big 12 Coach of the Year Awards.

3. Speaking of Whitey. There may be some debate over whether former Hoosier coach and two-time NCAA champion Branch McCracken, after whom the team's court has long been named, is the most elegantly named man who has ever lived. Reasonable people can disagree agreeably. But what's a little more assured is that Indiana's interior offense

has to go through junior D.J. White. White (no relation to D.J. Jazzy Jeff) is only averaging 13.7 points and 6.8 rebounds on the season, but with IU's guard-heavy attack, he is often the focal point in the paint. If the Tuscaloosa native isn't effective in the tournament, expect the entire team to follow suit. —*T. Apple*



Kentucky Wildcats [8]

1. Roc-A-Fella. After many of his made baskets, Kentucky starting point guard Ramel Bradley uses his hands to make a diamond symbol to the crowd. According to Bradley, the symbol is an ode to his fellow Brooklyn native Jay-Z and represents Roc-A-Fella records and the Dynasty of Kentucky basketball. However, many in Kentucky do not understand the reference, leading to an infamous radio argument in Louisville between two callers over whether Ramel Bradley and Jay-Z were ripping the symbol off of former pro wrestler "Diamond" Dallas Page. The debate ended when both callers had to be hung up on due to profanities.

2. Poland! Backup center and Polish native Lukask "Woo" Obrzut is a crowd favorite, in large part due to his odd observations and translations made in postgame interviews. Earlier this season, when asked if the crowd made him excited, he commented, "I live off of crowds ... I eat it." Then, when asked how he remained so calm under pressure he said, "When I was a little Woo in Poland, my mom threw me in the icy river and I had to get myself out. That was pressure."

3. The New Brit. While not able to help the current group of Wildcats, many Kentucky fans are looking forward to the arrival of seven-foot British recruit Mike Williams. Williams, who lives in Alexandria, Virg., now, caused a stir in Kentucky when it was revealed that he had named himself the "Big Black Member" on his Myspace profile. That name combined with his thick British accent has folks in Kentucky ready for four more years of goofiness. —*Matt Jones*



Villanova Wildcats [9]

1. Kelvin Sampson for Mayor. Members of 'Nova Nation' will line up to shake the hand of Kelvin "Urban Meyer's just swimming in my texting wake" Sampson, former coach of Oklahoma, for jumping ship to Indiana. Seems that Scottie Reynolds, who played his high school ball in Herndon, Virg., had spurned the advances of several closer Big East powers (and perhaps some inferior ACC teams as well) to sign a national letter of intent with the Sooners. Kelvin jumps ship; Scottie's released from his letter; now he's Second Team All-Big

East, unanimous Big East All-Rookie Team and the odds-on favorite to be Big East Rookie of the Year. Villanova is not a tournament team without the play of Reynolds.

2. Give the man his due. Entering the 2005-06 season, 'Nova was expected to contend for a national championship, which they did. They would have been stronger had the services of Curtis Sumpter been available. Sumpter, with a history of knee trouble, tweaked his knee during the 2005 tournament game against Florida, and again during practice leading up to the 2006 season. He could have returned in Jan/Feb 06 to play, maybe at 75-80 percent, but instead opted (correctly) to redshirt and come back this season fully ready to do battle. Sumpter was named First Team All-Big East, and on Senior Night against Rutgers at the Pavilion on campus, Sumpter went to half court with both his parents and the Villanova trainer Jeff Pierce, instrumental to Curtis' recovery.

3. Have the Nitro close by. Villanova is a fun team to watch, and not just because of Scottie Reynolds, Curtis Sumpter, Mike Nardi, and Jay Wright (he's dreamy, so they say). Their games may give you a heart attack. Wildcat basketball this season follows the following pattern: Race out to an early lead, suffer scoring drought allowing opponent to close, small lead at the half, scoring drought allowing opponent to catch up, trading of baskets and leads, scoring drought allowing opponent to take lead, furious comeback to draw even ... and then one of two things. Either: (a) take the lead, hit your free throws down the stretch and win; or (b) stay within a possession, miss key and sometimes wide open shots down the stretch, lose by between three and nine points. —*Mike Metzger*



Gonzaga Bulldogs [10]

1. Almost Howland. Twenty five years before his actions forced the residents of Spokane to explain why open sobbing by the leading scorer in college basketball is a perfectly normal reaction to a semi-realistic opportunity to win a NCAA tournament game, UCLA coach Ben Howland actually received his first coaching opportunity from Gonzaga. In 1981, following the end of his storied playing career in Uruguay, Howland was recruited to Gonzaga by then-coach Jay Hillock (now director of pro personnel for the Chicago Bulls) to act as a graduate assistant coach, with one of his duties being to defend John Stockton at practice.

2. Stockton Comes Alive! Speaking of Stockton, unless the 2009 Hall of Fame voting is placed solely in the capable hands of Isiah Thomas (during the 1987-88 season, Stockton broke Thomas' single season assist record, something Isiah Thomas will not forget, not ever), The Pasty Gangster stands to become the first Gonzaga basketball player inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame. However, two previous Gonzaga graduates, Ray Flaherty and Tony Canadeo, if they were still alive, would not understand all the hoopla. Both men were members of the Gonzaga football team and mid-70's inductees into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. What? You know not of Gonzaga's unremarkable football accomplishments just because the program folded 65 years ago? Get on the trolley. The current school mascot, the Bulldogs, is actually derived from one writer's reference to the football team's "bulldog-like tenacity." Canadeo, who was inducted into the Hall in 1974, had his number (No. 3) retired by the Packers in 1952 and still ranks fourth on the team's all-time rushing list. Flaherty, inducted in 1976, coached the Redskins to two world titles and is credited with giving the NFL the modern version of the screen pass.

3. Bing Me, Baby. If you're like me and have done away with the antiquated notion of graduation being a prerequisite to qualify as notable university alumni, then Bing Crosby certainly tops the list at Gonzaga. Das Binger is known for "White Christmas," his love of freshly squeezed orange juice and the alleged good-natured beatings administered to close family [buh-buh-buh-booo]. He was also quite kind to his educational institution, despite his failure to graduate. A generous Gonzaga benefactor, Crosby was instrumental in the construction of the Crosby Library in 1957, which has since become the Crosby Student Center. Approximately 200 items from the Crosby Collection, including his Oscar for "Going My Way," gold and platinum records, audio recordings and original manuscripts, are currently on display in the Crosbyana Room. All of the material serves as a reminder to students that even though the Binger left us for the great orange grove in the sky, at Gonzaga, the juice is always orange and the glasses are always tall and cool. No doubt about it. —Nate Odle



Virginia Commonwealth Rams [11]

1. Like Father, Like Duke. Gerald Henderson Jr., he of the face-breaking adamantium elbows, is the son of VCU alum Gerald Henderson (fancy that!), the best NBA player to come out of the Commonwealth. We can only presume the elder Henderson acquired the *How To Land Your Ulna Bone On The Bridge Of An Opponent's Nose With Devastating Results* style guide while winning an NBA Championship with the 1990 Bad Boy Pistons and subsequently passed them down to his eager protege/son, not yet even three years old at the time. Speaking of Duke – and since we put our headline-eggs in the Duke basket -- this all comes semi-circle in noting that Duke alum Jeff Capel(the III) coached VCU for four years prior to current head coach Anthony Grant, never winning fewer than 18 games. Last year Capel left VCU for a coaching job at Oklahoma one month after signing a six-year contract. What does it all mean? Never trust a Blue Devil.

2. VCU's Gonna Get Medieval On Your Ashe. Speaking of broken bones and style guides, VCU doesn't have a football team, but Robert Lanham, author of *The Hipster Handbook* and a VCU alum, tells us the school does have a "medieval club" where students practice their jousting in full armor (good Knights-in-Shining-Armor are so hard to find

these days). Epic scrimmages take place on the grass beneath a statue of Robert E. Lee on Monument Avenue, a street decorated with a collection of enormous bronze statues celebrating a handful of civil war "heroes." The other statues include Stonewall Jackson, J.E.B. Stuart, Jefferson Davis and perhaps most appropriately, deceased tennis pro Arthur Ashe.

3. Winning At Home Is All About Defense, Rebounding and Fresh Organs. Wiki tells us VCU is home to the nation's oldest organ transplant center. The records tell us that VCU has been one of the best home teams in the country, going 98-19 since they opened the Stuart C. Siegel Center in 1999. Coaching probably has a lot to do with the Rams success at home, but we also think the school is just loaded with heart.

—*The Assimilated Negro* • <http://www.theassimilatednegro.com>



Illinois Fighting Illini [12]

1. Breaking The Social Contract. In a season that was riddled with repeated freak injuries and the thank-God-we-might-not-have-to-talk-about-the-Chief-anymore madness, the most bizarre story was the late-season car crash involving guard Jamar Smith and center Brian Carlwell. In case you've been fortunate enough to forget, during a severe ice storm, Smith -- who was later discovered to have been drunk -- skidded across the road and crashed into a tree, destroying his car and knocking Carlwell out. Smith, rather than call the police, drove the car home and went inside his apartment. Why? Because *he thought Carlwell was dead*.

(Carlwell spent nearly a week in the hospital in critical condition; the police only knew about the incident because one of Smith's neighbors saw the car and called 911.) I'll say this: If one of my friends knocks me out in a car crash and leaves me for dead in the car (during an ice storm), it's unlikely we are going to remain friends.

2. This Is Not A Fun Team To Watch. Pity the poor Illini first-round opponent. Not because Illinois is a particularly formidable opponent -- they're not -- but because they might play the least visually appealing form of basketball in the country. Thing is, kids, Illinois is not an offensively skilled team -- to say the *least*. The Illini have Shawn Pruitt underneath, Warren Carter slashing ... and four guards who either can't dribble, can't shoot or (more often) both. Illinois' defense is as solid as anyone's in the country -- Chester Frazier is particularly nettlesome -- but if you watched that wretched Big Ten tourney game against Wisconsin, you recognize that all the defense does is make the other team look as, or as nearly, offensively inept as the Illini. This makes for a lot of 53-48 games that are hideous to witness.

3. The Embattled Duck Man. Coach Bruce Weber, who looks, talks and walks like a duck but is not, in fact, a duck, came under considerable fire this year, not just for his team's off-court problems, but also for their lack of cohesion on offense. But considering how much of a shitstorm the season has been in every possible way, it's rather amazing the Illini are in the NAAs at all. It's a testament to Weber's insistence on frantic defense -- which is even more impressive considering Weber was known as an offensive specialist when he came to Illinois -- that they could have made it this far. In an odd way, it might have been his best, if most taxing, coaching job yet. Now, about that recruiting ... —*Will Leitch*



Holy Cross Crusaders [13]

1. Before Chief Wahoo, there was Chief Sockalexis. Roughly 12 years before Jim Thorpe became the most famous Native American athlete ever, a Penobscot Indian named Louis Sockalexis was starring in football, track and baseball at College of the Holy Cross. After batting over .400 in college, Sockalexis defied racism and became the first Native American to play in the major leagues. Ironically, he played for the Cleveland Spiders, who renamed themselves the Indians in 1915.

2. Put that in your pipe and smoke it, Coach Wooden. Woodrow Wilson lookalike William J. Casey coached the 1920 Holy Cross basketball to an undefeated record. Back then the season was a grueling two games, and the Crusaders won both. In 1947, Holy Cross won its only NCAA championship with the legendary Bob Cousy. The Cooze only contributed two points, both from the line, in the 58-47 win over the Oklahoma Sooners.

3. Holy Cross loves Simmons. Keith Simmons, that is. He and backcourt buddy Torey Thomas bring senior leadership to a team that went 13-1 in the Patriot League this year. A low-scoring loss at Bucknell was the only blemish on their conference record and was one of only two games that Thomas fouled out of during the season. Despite playing an average of 35.5 minutes per game, top scorer Simmons has not fouled out once in the '06-'07 season. —*Eric Angevine*



Wright State Raiders [14]

1. Go Vikings...err...Coyotes...err...Raiders? Since this is only Wright State's second trip to the Big Dance, not many people know much about the school. Despite what Wright State's logo entails, their mascot is the Raider. It is not coyotes or even their circa 1993 mascot, a viking.

2. It's Vitaly's world...we're just living in it. Vitaly Potapenko is Wright State's most famous basketball alumni. The Cleveland Cavaliers selected him #12 overall in the 1996 NBA draft. In the words of GOB Bluth, "They made a huge mistake." Fans of the Celtics, Supersonics and Kings also have the same sentiments.

3. The Wright State University of Las Vegas? Despite only being in Division I since 1991, Wright State has been marked with scandal. In 1996, with a stellar 356-159 record (74-71 in Division 1), Ralph Underhill was fired for allegedly stealing five bottles of vitamins from a Dayton-area grocery store. He was never convicted of the crime (he took a plea bargain). In 2006, after only three years at Wright State, Paul Biancardi was asked to resign and instead was fired for his involvement with Jim O'Brien and the Ohio State basketball scandal. —*Scott DeMange*



Weber State Wildcats [15]

1. The Original 'Cinderella Team.' You've seen the DirecTV commercial: "Who ever heard of Weber State?" Outside of Utah, the only people who know the name (and that it's pronounced WEE-ber) are NCAA Tournament fans who recognize the Wildcats as the scrappy minor-mid-major team that has managed to win six first-round games since 1969. The team's greatest moment in the spotlight was its 1999 first-round win over North Carolina, followed by an overtime loss to Florida.

2. Who's the Little Guy? The one in the purple-striped tie, who disappears completely in the middle of a players huddle? That's first-year head coach Randy Rahe. And while generous reports put his height at 5-7 or 5-8, he's suddenly a giant in the state and in the Big Sky Conference (which, by the time this is posted, will assuredly have named him coach of the year after the Wildcats' worst-to-first turnaround). Rahe's a no-nonsense guy who put this team together around only three returning players and got everyone to buy into a team-first, hard-work mentality. He's also refreshingly non-cliché in interviews: When asked about watching Weber's 21-point lead in the Big Sky title game dwindle to two points in the second half, he replied, "I wanted to throw up."

3. Players to Watch. Senior forward David Patten, the Big Sky player of the year, is the heart of this team. He has great range, shooting almost 40 percent from 3-point land, but was asked to play closer to the basket this season and developed into an inside threat -- he'll participate in the dunk contest at the Final Four. He's also tough, suffering a broken cheekbone during a game on February 1, then scoring 22 points against Northern Arizona 48 hours later. Others: Dezmon Harris, the junior point guard who's not really a point guard. You'll recognize him by his ball-handling skills, his fearless drives to the basket and his absolutely gigantic head. A head that size should be on a 7-footer's body; Harris is 6-1. Sophomore guard Juan Pablo (JP) Silveira of Uruguay has scored in double figures eight of his last nine games. He also is smoking hot and has developed a devoted female fan base in Ogden and among the ladies of Deadspin.

—*Jen Phillion*



Florida A&M Rattlers [16a]

1. Currently holds the record for most racially offensive prior names. Originally established as the State Normal College for Colored Students; apparently, that was deemed to not effectively differentiate it from the rest of the state-run universities. So, the name was changed to Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College for Negroes. Somehow, white guilt infiltrated the state legislature, and the school is now known as just Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University.

2. The best year. Greatest basketball legend is the 1952 team known as the "FAMU Famed Final Four." No, it's not a reference to THAT final four. The team won the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference tourney despite playing the final five minutes and two overtimes with only four players after the rest of the team fouled out. The losing team, Alabama State, contemplated dropping basketball after the loss.

3. NBA Factory. FAMU has been a pipeline to the NBA over the years. Or, at least it has been for Jerome James, Clemon Johnson, Samuel Watts and Bob Williams, if you have ever heard of them. The greatest contribution the Rattlers have made to professional sports is that deliciously sexy milk chocolate drop Pam Oliver of Fox Sports. —*Nation Of Islam Sports Blog* • <http://nationofislamsportsblog.blogspot.com>



Niagara Purple Eagles [16b]

1. We wear purple to stay neutral. MAAC Tournament MVP and freshman Tyrone Lewis was barred from his valedictorian speech at his High School in Levittown, Penn., because of a threat by the ever-popular Bloods. When his sister testified against the gang they shot at Tyrone's car, killing one of his friends after a school dance, and they threatened to get him during his graduation speech. His speech was given over closed-circuit feed from an undisclosed location. When the team traveled to Rider this year for an away game, Tyrone received a police escort from the arena to the team bus based on the high concentration of bloods in the area.

2. Not The First Time. We've been to the NCAA's twice before this, once with Calvin Murphy's team in 1970 and once with All-American Juan Mendez in 2005. In 2005 the school flipped out and NU was a huge story in the media based on its 35-year drought. Going to the NAAs twice in three years (with an NIT bid the year before that) has been splendid. One more thing: There's no way we're a 16 seed. Jay Bilas said so!

3. Not Guilty, and We're Filthy. Back in August there was a scuffle between some basketball players and some baseball players, which lead to a concussion and some basketball suspensions. Team MVP Charron Fisher was suspended for eight games but the charges were ultimately dropped. During those games we went 2-6; since then we've gone 20-5, including a current 11-game win streak. In that time Fisher averaged 21 points per game and eight rebounds. Opposing fans enjoy singing the "Cops" theme song to our players, because they are completely misinformed. The players eat it up and use it as inspiration to play hard and quiet opposing fans.

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Bonus Fact... I'm the Student Body President at the University and have attended every home game except two in my time at NU. To get to this weekend's tournament (since I was broke), I volunteered to wear the Purple Eagle costume and portray Monte the Eagle. That's right: This preview is being written by the mascot. —*Eric Clingersmith*



North Carolina Tar Heels [1]

1. What's in a nickname? Monikers flow in a locker room like coffee in a diner. You're more than familiar with Carolina's first-team All-American, Tyler "Psycho T" Hansbrough. But can you recall the only player strong enough to hold Hansbrough in check this season? That would be unsung senior Dewey "Biscuits" Burke, who earned acclaim by preserving order in the aftermath of a hard Gerald "G" Henderson Duke foul with a bear hug on the bloodied big man. But Biscuits was already a BMOG (Facebook fan club: "Dewey=Biscuits"), having won his BoBerrylicious tag earlier in the season. Burke converted truly clutch buckets to help the Heels hit 100 points in three different home games, thus enabling fans to head home happy and redeem their ticket stubs for free biscuits at Bojangles' fried-chicken joints the very next day. Where does "Biscuits" Burke rank all-time among the top Tar Heel nicknames? Aside from freshman teammates Wayne "The Rain" Ellington and Brandan "The Condor" Wright, he'll have to contend with Kenny "The Jet" Smith, Billy "The Kangaroo Kid" Cunningham and Sam "Big Smooth" Perkins.

2. Have a Coke and a smile, Ol' Roy. Allegiances run deep in college basketball. Carolina coach Roy Williams still tears up when talking about his 15 years with the rock-chalk Jayhawks. He'll never buy a home in Durham. And you'd better not force him to drink a Pepsi product. While scouting a game during last year's Pepsi-sponsored ACC Tournament in Greensboro, Williams was told by ACC officials that he couldn't chew ice from his red Coke cup. After initially threatening to leave the arena, he eventually complied. This year, Tar Heel team managers brought a stash of Coca-Cola products to the tourney (Diet Sprite for Williams; Diet Coke for assistant coach Joe Halladay, and Coke for assistant coach Steve Robinson). In a TV commercial sure to make the rounds during this year's Big Dance, Williams recounts how his moms used to leave a hard-earned dime out for him to buy a Coke with his friends. Will the ad air often enough to spark a backlash akin to that against Coach K and his cozy AmEx ties?

3. Six Degrees of Wes Miller. Warren Weston Miller -- the Carolina senior marksman whose favorite shot is "any lay-up because there haven't been many" -- is best friends with Jacksonville Jaguars running back Alvin Pearman, who also grew up in Charlotte. Pearman, of course, is tight with fellow Jaguars offensive weapon Matt Jones, the versatile quarterback-turned-receiver who broke former Razorbacks All-American Corliss Williamson's SEC basketball record for season scoring average (24.5 points per game) as a junior at Arkansas. "Big Nasty" Williamson, mind you, is still playing ball professionally for the Sacramento Kings -- and was once moved to Toronto in a trade involving former Raptors center Eric Montross. "The Big E," as all Tar Heels know, not only was a first-team All-American at North Carolina but played the 1990-91 season as a freshman alongside senior point guard King Rice ... also known as a backcourt mentor and the favorite former player of one Warren Weston Miller. —*Brian Styers and Matt Viser*



Georgetown Hoyas [2]

1. "Their offense is unstoppable." That's a direct quote from college hoops statistical stallion Ken Pomeroy via DC Sports Bog, and it's an odd one considering Georgetown was 11th in the Big East in scoring this season. However, KenPom's analysis reveals that the Hoyas are third in the nation in offensive efficiency, right behind UNC and Texas. As the man said, "People get sucked in and think they're a defensive team, but considering the number of possessions they get, their offense is incredible."

2. Twin pillars of pro potential. I wrote last year that Jeff Green and Roy Hibbert would be next off of Georgetown's NBA assembly line that has produced Ewing, 'Zo, Dikembe and Al (not to mention Jahidi, Othello and Boumtje-Boumtje!). Fast forward 12 months, a Sweet 16 appearance and a junior season of pissing excellence, and their pro stock has improved a bit. NBADraft.net has Green going eighth overall while Draft Express has him at 15th, and the former has Hibbert going 17th overall (in '08) while the latter has him at 10th. Regardless, NBADraft.net still has Greg Ostertag as Hibbert's player comparison, which is a crime to draftniks everywhere.

3. A story of fathers and sons. John Thompson Jr. and Patrick Ewing dominated college basketball from '82-85, making it to three Final Fours and winning a national championship. Now it's their kids' turn ... kind of. JT III's time at the helm has been marked by constant improvement (NIT in year one, Sweet 16 in year two and a Big East regular season championship in this, his third year), but Patrick Ewing Jr.'s time on the court has been limited since transferring from Indiana. He only averaged 13 minutes and four points/game this season, but has been getting more PT of late; scoring 22 and grabbing nine boards against 'Cuse and UConn. CBS will shine a light on this as long as Georgetown is still in the Tournament, which should be awhile. —*Jamie Mottram*



Washington State Cougars [3]

1. Worst to, well, second. Without question, Washington State was the single most surprising team in a BCS conference this year. Coming off a last-place finish last season, and with Tony Bennett taking over as a first-time head coach from his father, Dick Bennett, the media picked Washington State as an overwhelming favorite to repeat that last place finish. However, the added maturity of an additional year, and the good health of a couple of key players (Derrick Low and Daven Harmeling), made an enormous difference to a team that had only had one senior last year. In fact, Tony Bennett has gotten off to such a flying start this season, with a 13-5 record in the Pac-10, that he could lose his next 85 straight conference games and still have a higher winning percentage in conference than his father's predecessor, the shockingly inept Paul Graham.

2. A motley crew. The Cougars' 13-year absence from the NCAA tournament, and the tremendous success of Gonzaga and, more recently, U Dub, certainly hasn't helped their recruiting in the state of Washington any. In fact, Washington State does not have a single scholarship player from the state of Washington. They do, however, have players from eight different states, and three foreign countries. Included amongst these are a long-haired Hawaiian point guard (Derrick Low) with a traditional tattoo covering the entire length of his right leg, a 6'10" Texan (Robbie Cowgill) who needs to eat 7000 calories a day to maintain himself at a svelte 210 pounds and a 6'10", 270 pound beast from Australia (Aron Baynes) that has come out of seemingly nowhere to have a huge impact in WSU's last two Pac Ten wins.

3. Like father, like son. Without question, the backbone of Washington State's success this season has been the defensive system developed by Dick Bennett. Throughout his career Bennett built a reputation as a defensive innovator. In fact, in a 1998 *SI* poll of Division-I coaches, Bennett placed third when they were asked, "If you could go to only one coaching clinic, whose would it be?" They certainly wouldn't be there to learn the offense that his Wisconsin team scored 41 points with against Michigan State in the 2000 Final Four. The Bennett Defensive philosophy is sometimes referred to as a pack-line defense. Alternatively, UCLA swingman Josh Shipp refers to it as "kind of weak." The basic idea is to pressure the ball and force it in the middle, while all other defenders stay within 17 feet of the basket; at practice they tape a line on the floor three feet inside the 3-point line. If the defensive system is working effectively, you will see no penetration to the baseline, quick traps by the other big man anytime the ball goes inside, a lot of forced, heavily contested jump shots and frustrated looks on the opponents' faces. If it's not working effectively, you'll see Wazzu lose, as they simply don't have enough firepower to succeed otherwise. —*Ted Murray*



Texas Longhorns [4]

1. Kevin Durant. The lanky six-foot-nine freshman phenom is averaging 25 points and 11 rebounds a game and has led this team of toddlers-- the No. 15 Longhorns started the season with four fish and a sophomore-- to its eighth consecutive 20-win season. In their Feb. 28 double-overtime victory over then-No. 7 Texas A&M, Durant scored 30 points, including a long jumper from basically out of bounds at the end of regulation that should have ended the game (damn you Acie Law).

2. Kevin Durant. No, seriously: Have you seen this guy? He thrives in all five positions on the floor, bombing 3-pointers, leading fast breaks or using his height to pull down rebounds and block shots. His work ethic is now the stuff of legend, complete with tales of him running up a Maryland hill long past sundown. And in this, his first-- and probably only-- NCAA season, he's up for virtually every major award short of a leg lamp, including National Player of the Year.

3. Kevin Durant ... 's Ankle. Durant scored 25 points in the first half-- the first half-- of the Big 12 regular-season championship against No. 3 Kansas on March 3, but with 11 minutes to play in the second, he fell to the floor, clutching his left ankle (which he'd apparently injured in practice the day before). Durant returned with about seven minutes to play, but it was too late: The 'Horns had already blown a 16-point lead and were struggling to keep the game interesting. While they succeeded-- D.J. Augustin's attempt at a game-tying 3 was blocked with five seconds to go, as the Jayhawks rock-chalked their way to a 90-86 win-- Durant shot only 3 of 8 in the second half, and scared the bejeebus out of everyone. If he's not at full strength, this team's future is a giant question mark: The Texas bench scored only two points against Kansas. Which is, as even an Aggie could figure out, not good. (For what it's worth, Durant seemed fine in loss to Kansas in the Big 12 title game.) —*Whitney Pastorek* • <http://www.whittlz.com>



USC Trojans [5]

1. This is Hollywood after all. The Trojans play on Jim Sterkel Court at the new Galen Center. Who's Jim Sterkel? Some guy who played for two seasons at 'SC in the '50s and averaged fewer than 10 points a game. So who decided to name it after him? Only the university knows: The \$5-million donation for the naming rights was sent by an anonymous high-school friend of Sterkel's who stipulated that his identity never be revealed. Schmalzmeister columnist Bill Plaschke of the *Los Angeles Times* tracked down Anonymous, who explained that Sterkel had been his role model for living a good life, his mediocre sports career notwithstanding. A friendly, churchgoing type, Sterkel developed testicular cancer in adulthood, which eventually killed him, but which didn't stop him from writing Anonymous to console him about his own son's losing battle with leukemia. ("I'll never forget that he

took the time out of his own life during his final days to do this for me, to try to inspire my life even when he was losing his own life," Anonymous said.) Between the tear-jerking sentiments and mysterious nature of the donation, it's a miracle Fox Faith isn't developing a film about the whole thing right now.

2. It's the hard-knock life. Former mohawk-sportin' junior swingman Nick Young will almost assuredly be jumping to the pros after this season with his team-leading 17.5 PPG. But don't worry that the NBA will be able to throw anything at him that can compare with what he's endured thus far in his life. When he was five, a teenage gang member killed his brother and close friend Charles Jr., who was only 18. His brother John, torn up by Charles' death, suffered a mental breakdown and ended up in an institution, a possible NBA career up in smoke. His father, Charles Sr., coped through alcohol. While his family life has improved much since then, there's no question there's a certain weight of expectation rests on Nick's shoulders. "I think a lot about what will happen if I don't make it [in the NBA]," he said.

3. When I think of you, Baton Rouge. Considering how mediocre the Trojans have been since their unlikely run to the Elite Eight in 2001, losing to eventual champion Duke, USC should be thrilled just to make this year's tournament. But if they had their wish in terms of seeding, the team might prefer to avoid a visit to Louisiana. In the early morning hours of Saturday, May 13, 2006, Trojan freshman point guard Ryan Francis was shot to death while driving with some friends in Baton Rouge, where he was later buried. Francis was the first recruit second-year coach Tim Floyd signed as part of his attempt to rebuild the floundering team. "It's difficult for me, because I loved the kid," Floyd said. "He never leaves my mind." DeAnthony Norman Ford, who has been charged with Francis' murder, will face trial in June in Baton Rouge. —*Tim Grierson*



Vanderbilt Commodores [6]

1. How It Got Here . Founded in 1873, Vanderbilt University was originally to be known as Central University in Nashville, on the hope that founding a university in Graceland could heal the sectional wounds inflicted by the Civil War. It was renamed Vanderbilt, however, after Cornelius Vanderbilt abandoned his original two plans to erect an enormous statue of himself, or to build a university in Staten Island named after his mother. Instead, the Commodore chose Plan C, and donated to found a school in Tennessee that he would never visit.

The tradition of Gilded Age aristocracy is apparent in many aspects of modern campus life, ranging from the students wearing jackets and ties to football games, to not observing Labor Day due to the Commodore's disdain for the working class, to denying a living wage to school employees, causing a labor uprising on campus and raising the ire of John Edwards and Sergeant Roger Murtagh.

2. Travelin' Man. Speaking of aristocrats, Vanderbilt is headed by Gordon Gee, who can best be described as the Larry Brown of university presidents. Gee has the steward of an amazing five universities: Colorado, West Virginia, Ohio State, Brown and now Vanderbilt. Gee's signature move has been, somewhat oddly, spending lavish sums of money on building or revamping the president's residence at all universities, spending over \$10 million in total on repeatedly giving him an acceptable place to call home. However, given that Gee's wife Constance reportedly smokes pot at the president's quarters (until filing for divorce last week), perhaps the constant renovations and moving may be necessary to clean the residue. Gee has also come under criticism for throwing extravagant parties, cronyism in the board of directors, taking a lavish salary and eliminating the athletic department to put Vanderbilt's athletics under the umbrella of student affairs. The moral? Beware of presidents in bow ties.

3. Tenacious D. The Commodores are coached by Kyle Gass look-alike Kevin Stallings, who just completed his eighth season as skipper of the men's basketball team. After seven years of relative benign leadership and being excruciatingly anonymous for a major conference coach, Stallings mixed it up a bit this year by speaking his mind on his SEC brethren. In their home tilt against Florida this year, Stallings grabbed the game ball and refused to give it back to Joakim Noah, forcing the refs to intervene when Stallings started slapping the foot-taller Noah. Stallings professional comment afterwards was "Noah is a competitor, and so am I," apparently hoping he could post up Al Horford. He later referred to Bruce Pearl as an "idiot asshole" for showing up shirtless and draped in orange paint at a Lady Vols game this January. His reaction to this flare up was much more on point: "Who would want to see me without my shirt on anyway?" For this, we defer to Mrs. Stallings. —Angelo Grasso • <http://gowanusbaseball.blogspot.com>



Boston College Eagles [7]

1. Our coach scared "the crap" out of Pitino. Forget the sophomoric jabs against coach Al Skinner. Sure Skinner and 1987 Kentucky Derby winner Alysheba have never been seen in the same place at the same time, and, all right, Skinner has an inexplicable mock turtleneck fetish, but so what? Skinner's a baller. A semi-regular at Rucker Park in Harlem in the '60s and '70s, Skinner recorded the first triple double in UMass history in 1973, two years after someone named Julius Erving left UMass for the ABA. Nicknamed 'Quicksilver,' Skinner was a madman on the court. In an interview last year, Rick Pitino, a

UMass teammate, said Skinner "would always scare the crap out of me." Skinner played six seasons of pro ball, including a spot on the 1976 ABA champion New York Nets.

2. What do you do? I'm in construction. Recent seasons have been marred by pot arrests, a counterfeit scam and a player throwing himself out a second story window to flee an assailant who may not have actually existed, but players from BC's 1978-79 season scoff at these so-called scandals. While serving time in federal prison, Henry Hill (later played by Ray Liotta in *Goodfellas*) hatched a scheme to fix BC basketball games. Hill paid three basketball players about \$10,000 each to shave points in games that season. In a *Sports Illustrated* article Hill claimed that he won between \$75,000 to \$100,000 in the scam, while his partners made more than \$250,000.

3. Pretty Boy Troy. Jared Dudley, the loud-mouthed, cornrowed workhorse forward who was only recruited by three Division 1 schools, is on pace to become BC's sixth-leading scorer. However, he'll still fall about 600 points short of Troy Bell, the most prolific scorer in school history (2,632 points) and the impetus behind the program's recent turnaround. The season before Bell arrived on campus, BC won just six games, the worst record since the 1945-46 season. His sophomore year, Bell led BC to a shocking three-seed in the NCAA tournament. Drafted by the Celtics and traded to the Grizzlies, Bell played in just six NBA games before a recurrent knee injury ruined his career. Unwanted by even the developmental league, Bell now lives in Minnesota and is training as a boxer. He may end up a mere footnote in basketball history, but the dude was absolutely transcendent inside Conte Forum. —*Brian Scheid*



Marquette Golden Eagles [8]

1. Commies and Question Marks Everywhere. Not only did little Joey McCarthy get his law degree at Marquette, the great Matthew Lesko attended Marquette undergrad. The question is, did he find a government grant to cover his bong water recycling program?

2. HarBoughs of Holly. Coach Tom Crean is married to the former Joani Harbaugh, sister of Jim. For the last few years, Tom's father-in-law Jack has served as associate athletic director of the Golden Eagles. Harbaugh the elder has had great success as a football coach, yet Marquette has no football team. Dots. Connected.

3. Slump Buster Needed. Last year, Marquette was led by senior Steve Novak and freshman point guard Dominic James. With Novak now getting tushy slivers in the NBA, most thought the Big East Rookie of the Year James would take over the team. Instead, he has found the depths of a sophomore slump. Fellow sophomore guards Jerel McNeal and Wesley Matthews have stepped up and begun to shine, as has power forward Ousmane Barro. With the impending pressure of the NCAA tourney, however, James must shake off this slump or the Eagles will be extinct. —*Brian Saperstein*



Michigan State Spartans [9]

1. Drew Me Baby One More Time. Use both hands, please. If you can overlook the disturbing visual similarities between Drew Neitzel and Britney Spears (she just wanted to look like him). There's a lot to appreciate about the Spartans leader. When he was 12, Drew won the national 2-ball championship where his ambidexterity was used to its full advantage. So while you're accustomed to him flaring off a screen and fading away at a 45 degree angle with his left, he's equally capable at pulling up in the lane with his right. Should Neitzel's gritty David Eckstein/Scotty Skiles-like underdoggedness not do it for you, I think we can all admire someone who's talented with both hands.

2. Not your mother's turnover. Neitzel may be adept with both hands, but the Spartans' ball control as a whole leaves a lot to be desired. Michigan State hands the ball over to opponents at such a staggering rate, even Rex Grossman is impressed. The Spartans commit a turnover on 24 percent of their possessions (24!!!), which ranks 306th in the country ... right in between powerhouse programs Alabama A&M and McNeese St. To make the aforementioned stat even more puzzling, consider that Izzo's crew ranks fourth in assist/per FG. It's all good or all bad. The best FG percentage defense (43.5) in the Izzo era is the reason you're even being subjected to the blabber.

3. I-Dunk, I-Block. In the pantheon of greatest player nicknames in history, the moniker attached to Spartans reserve sophomore center Idong Ibok is merely a blip on the radar at this point. But keep your eye out: A 7-foot 5-inch wingspan causes havoc on defense and makes the most of its 11 minutes per game. Ibok will finish as the Spartans all-time leader in blocked shots and will play a vital role in any potential Sweet 16 run. —*Jason Kent*



Texas Tech Red Raiders [10]

1. Nic Cage Likes Them Out of the East. The “Masked Rider” mascot of Texas Tech began unofficially in 1936 as “The Ghost Rider,” as unknown groups of students would circle the field on horses at home football games, then depart the stadium. At the 1954 Gator Bowl, The Masked Rider became the official mascot and the first horse-ridden mascot in major college sports. Tech’s other mascot, Raider Red, so developed because of an old Southwestern Conference Law preventing live animal mascots at away games, is played by a student who cannot reveal his identity during the entire duration of his tenure as “Raider Red.”

2. Awkward Dinner Conversation. Texas Tech’s greatest basketball success came in 1993, when a Sheryl Swoopes-led team captured the NCAA championship. Of course, in October 2005, Swoopes came out publicly. You have to wonder what alumni fundraising dinners might be like in Lubbock with Knight and Swoopes in the same room, given that Knight has proven himself truly understanding of female issues over the years, including throwing vases at secretaries and once commenting, “I say, if you know rape is inevitable, just sit back and enjoy it.”

3. Getting Shouts from the Jam Man. The Jam Man (!!), who can be found at <http://www.thejamman.com/bio.html>, has been involved in the “hip hop scence (sic) almost from the very beginning,” and helped bring hip hop into the main stream, according to him. Funny, we had no idea. He shouts out the Texas Tech Men’s team on his webpage, specifically Martin Zeno, Jarius Jackson, Michael Prince and Darryl Dora, only one of whom has been hit in the face by Knight this season (to our knowledge). —*Ted Bauer*



George Washington Colonials [11]

1. Hip....Hip-op....Hip-op-anatamus. He get all da easy ones!

The champs of the A-10 Tournament are the fightin’ Colonials from the George Washington University. Thank god they don’t call it that, like some teams I know. In the Big Ten. Who wear red and gray. While the Gdubs are called The Colonials for purposes of a mascot, they actually have three mascots present at each game: Little George (a person wearing a Revolutionary War costume with a giant George Washington head), Big George (a 10-ft. tall inflatable George Washington) and the Hippo (an inflatable Hippo). Emily Yoffe (of slate.com) has an hilarious article about her experience being inside Big George (not a euphemism). She also shares her story of the last time she attended a GW basketball game where her daughter was so scared by Little George that later that night Yoffe and her husband heard the two-year-old over the baby monitor going, “Giant head, no! No, George Washington giant head! Very scary! Very scary! No, George!” In case you were wondering, the Hippo is due to GW’s secret society, The Order of the Hippo. According to the GW Wikipedia entry, “it is unknown what this secret society does on a daily basis.” I can only speculate as to whether or not the Order’s activities include using Big George’s cell phone to send pictures of Little George to unsuspecting GW co-eds.

2. Yinka Dinka Doo. Probably the most famous basketball alumni of GW is Yinka Dare (not to be confused with Deadspin commenter Yinka Double Dare). Yinka had a lot of success as a Colonial and then went on to become one of the biggest underachievers in NBA history. In his rookie season, he played for three minutes before getting a season-ending knee injury. Each minute he played was worth \$300,000. I wish my time were considered that valuable. In his four-year career, Dare recorded 96 turnovers and four assists, which is one of the worst A/TO ratio in NBA history. I was all set to really lay into what a doof this guy was, and then I read that he died of a heart attack three years ago at the age of 32 and felt like shit.

3. So, Who Shelled Out \$38,000 per Year for this Place? Notable Alums who Did Not Play Basketball and Also Make Me Feel Guilty for Being Mean include: Kenneth Starr, L. Ron Hubbard, Red Auerbach, current Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Gen. Peter Pace (and three former CotJCs Vessey, Shalikashvili and Powell), Allen Dulles (former CIA director), J. Edgar Hoover, W. Mark Felt (Deep Throat) and Charles W. Colson and Leon Jaworski, who were on opposite sides of the Watergate scandal. Those hearings must’ve been like an Order of the Hippo reunion barbecue. Finally, we now

know who to thank for our WWL Overlords. Founder of ESPN Chet Simmons (I will not debate this. Period.) is a graduate of the George Washington University. Bonus tidbit: I read that in 1999 GW “acquired” the Mount Vernon College for Women. It does not specify what they did with it. I like to think the students were for the Order of the Hippo members, and it was all very hush-hush. —*Andrea Reiher*



Arkansas Razorbacks [12]

- 1. The Name.** The team was originally known as the Arkansas Cardinals until 1909, when football coach Hugo Bezdek declared that his team played like a bunch of “wild band of razorback hogs.” The nickname stuck and became official before the 1910 season. The “hog call” of “Woo Pig Soeey!” came around several years later. The name has remained unique nearly 100 years later, as no other major college team has named itself after a feral pig.
- 2. Maybe You Should Try the NFL.** Embattled Arkansas head coach Stan Heath most likely needed this NCAA berth to save his job. Had he been let go, he might have been wise to interview for a job as an NFL receivers coach. In his six seasons as a head basketball coach, Heath’s basketball teams have produced two NFL receivers. He coached San Diego tight end Antonio Gates while at Kent State and Jacksonville wide receiver Matt Jones while at Arkansas.
- 3. Déjà Vu.** During the SEC championship game, the Razorbacks played Florida at the Georgia Dome. Back in December, the Razorbacks and the Gators met at the Georgia Dome for the SEC football championship game. This was the first time since the SEC began playing its football championship game in 1992 that the same schools met in both the football and basketball championship games during the same year. —*Chris Driver*



New Mexico State Aggies [13]

- 1. Their Coach Is Not In A Wheelchair.** After years of coaching at Illinois, coach Lou Henson retired after the 1995-96 season, to much fanfare. (He even shook hands with Bobby Knight, the big bully.) But he ended up taking only one year off before returning to New Mexico State, where he had taken the Aggies to the Final Four in 1970, for yet another farewell tour at a salary of \$1 a month. Henson stayed there for seven years before retiring again because of his diagnosis of non-Hodgkins lymphoma, a disease that had him coaching two games from a wheelchair. He is the all-time winningest coach at both NMSU and Illinois.
- 2. The New Coach Is Much More Handsome Than Lou Henson.** The Lou Do was succeeded at NSMU by current coach Reggie Theus, the former NBA star perhaps most famous for his performance as coach Bill Fuller on the cutting-edge sitcom “Hang Time.” My personal favorite act of Theus thespianism, however, is his work alongside Joe Piscopo and Julie Hagerty in the 2000 family comedy “Baby Bedlam,” playing “Mosiah ‘The Messiah’ Jackson.”
- 3. They’re Cleaning Up Their Act.** For years, New Mexico State fans have had a ritual after an opposing player makes a free throw: They chant, “Nice shot, asshole!” Theus is not a fan of the chant and has asked fans to clean it up, and the athletic department has undergone the “Bigger Man Project” in an effort to make fans stop. (It turns out, television broadcasts don’t like open vulgarity.) In response, some fans have begun yelling “Nice shot, Pendejo!” which is *almost* the Spanish equivalent of “Nice shot, asshole!” but is actually worse; it literally translates as “nice shot, anal hair!” —*Will Leitch*



Oral Roberts Golden Eagles [14]

1. So, Then, Why The Hell Are You At Oral Roberts? The Golden Eagles, in the tournament for the second year in a row, are defined by their star player, Caleb Green. He's a 6-8 forward who has won the Mid-Continent player of the year award *three years in a row*, which I guarantee will never happen again in any major conference. He's actually from Tulsa and, in high school, won the Jim Thorpe Award for the best athlete in the state of Oklahoma. He's best friends with fellow ORU star, guard Ken Tutt; together, the duo has won 83 games in their four years on campus.

2. They Beat My Official Tournament Favorite ... On The Road. I'm terrible at predicting *anything*, but right now, no team in the country, save for maybe Ohio State, looks better than Kansas. Well, these bad mofos from Oral Roberts won *at* Allen Fieldhouse earlier this year, 78-71, way back in November. (This was after they had lost to Loyola Marymount.) Oral Roberts was the first job for current Kansas coach Bill "Toupee" Self.

3. Bears Repeating. I mentioned this in their tournament preview last year, but it absolutely must be mentioned any time the Golden Eagles are mentioned anywhere for anything. "The school was indeed founded (and humbly named) by Oral Roberts, who is most famous, of course, for telling his parishioners in 1986 that if they did not raise \$8 million by March of that year, God would "call him home." (Sadly, we didn't get to find out if Roberts really had such a conversation with the Almighty; they hit the number.) Roberts has claimed to have personally raised the dead and, last year, said that a vision of a "cloud over New York" has told him Christ is coming soon. (After he dies, Roberts has told followers that he plans to return and rule the world with Christ.)" —*Will Leitch*



Belmont Bruins [15]

1. Live by the Three... Belmont upset the Atlantic Sun conference's regular-season champion East Tennessee State on its home floor in the worst way possible -- with a 94-67 rout underwritten by a flurry three-pointers. Belmont made 12 in the first half alone, including a desperation shot at the buzzer -- the salt in the wound that made it 49-30. The team shot 48.3 percent from behind the arc (only slightly worse than the 50.0 percent it shot overall) with nearly half its field goals being threes. This should bode well for the tourney, where the only chance tiny schools like Belmont (which qualified for the second year in a row, and the second time in school history) is to get hot from 3-point territory. Schools like Belmont may not have the opportunities for such an upset much longer, however -- once again, there is grumbling that the college three-point should be pushed back at least a foot, or perhaps even all the way to the NBA distance. Of course, we've heard this all before.

2. The People Behind The Music. Sure, country star Vince Gill is Belmont's most famous alum and the basketball team's biggest fan, but as a graduate of the school's Mike Curb College of Entertainment & Music Business, he's something of an anomaly. The CEMB is the Country (and Christian) music industry's largest incubator of future studio techs, songwriters, managers, entertainment lawyers and label execs. The school has practitioners from each of those professions on the faculty (along with professional expert witnesses, the veterans of those pesky intellectual property lawsuits). Each year, hundreds of Belmont students stock Nashville's intern programs, and other famous alumni include country singers Trisha Yearwood, Braid Paisley, and Josh Turner.

3. Mike Curb? The Belmont Bruins' home court is the Curb Event Center, which, like the CEMB, has been underwritten by Mike Curb. Who is Mike Curb, you ask? Well, he's the university benefactor who wrote the song "You Meet the Nicest People on a Honda (Go Little Honda)" while a freshman in college, which he somehow parlayed into a career as a record industry mini-mogul. His later band The Mike Curb Congregation toured with the Osmonds and sold millions of albums despite sounding more white bread than even Bread itself. That's because Curb himself has a bit of a conservative streak -- he also wrote "Together, A New Beginning," the campaign song for Ronald Reagan's 1980 presidential campaign, while he was the lieutenant governor of California. More often than not, his politics clouded his judgment. While running MGM Records in the 1970s, he brought aboard Roy Orbison and the Osmonds, and dumped The Velvet Underground because he didn't like the drug references. —*Greg Lindsay*



Eastern Kentucky Colonels [16]

1. Robert E. Lee's spirit is on their side. Eastern Kentucky University is located in Richmond, Kentucky, site of the Civil War Battle of Richmond. The Battle of Richmond holds the distinction of being the most decisive victory of the war by the Confederate Army over the Union's forces, with the Union being routed by the Confederates and suffering nearly 5000 casualties. Oddly enough, George Mason University, last year's tourney Cinderella, is in Fairfax, VA, site of another embarrassing loss for the Union Army. Of course, in that incident, the Union only lost 33 soldiers. So therefore, by flawless logic, Eastern Kentucky should roll right through to the title this year a couple hundred times more impressively than George Mason got to the Final Four last year.

2. It's not the size that matters. Eastern Kentucky's tallest player is 6'8" junior center Darnell Dials, who's averaging a robust 8.4 points and 4.1 boards on the year. Not so good. However, their three talented starting guards -- Mike Rose, Adam Leonard and Julian Mascol -- average nearly 60 percent of their total points per game. That's what I call balance. But hey, you know the old saying: Guards win the NCAA tournament. That sound of whimpering you hear in the corner is heralded bigs Kevin Durant and Greg Oden.

3. You school's not as tough as the Fall Guy's team. Eastern Kentucky boasts as perhaps its most famous alum the Six-Million-Dollar Man himself, tough guy actor Lee Majors. Majors was such a bad-ass that he arrived at Eastern Kentucky after he was expelled from Indiana U. (where he was a football recruit) for kicking a frat brother's ass in a fight. Later, he would go on to hire his body out for pay, hey hey in the Fall Guy, bang Farrah Fawcett when she was at her most smokin' and bag a Playboy Playmate when he had a midlife crisis (forget buying a sports car!). —*Arie Bram*

SOUTH REGION



Ohio State Buckeyes [1]

1. Jerky The Cornjerker. Every one knows that Thad Matta went to high school in the appropriately named Hoopston, Ill. (OK, maybe just I knew that? But did you know that the Hoopston mascot was Jerky the Cornjerker? He looks like this. I wonder what their version of The Tomahawk Chop looks like?

2. The Buckeyes Will Kill You. The Buckeyes usually get the short end of the stick when it comes to "mascot battles," with most just saying that "My (insert wild beast or human with weapon mascot) would eat your Buckeyes," ending the argument. What most fail to realize is that the Buckeye is poisonous to humans, horse and cattle, making the Buckeye the victor in many of these hypothetical scenarios (yeah, Texas). However, squirrels and badgers can eat Buckeyes with no ill effect, which explains Ohio State's struggles against Wisconsin. Maybe Michigan should consider changing its mascot. The Michigan Squirrels has a nice regal ring to it.

3. Slaves To Nike. Nike is unveiling new jerseys for the Buckeyes during the tournament, featuring a slim, tighter fit and LeBron James' LBJ23 Nike logo. What isn't known yet is whether these uniforms will also feature an inability to capitalize on natural talent, a desire to leave early for the NBA, and a general futility with the game on the line in the closing moments? —*Anton Golden* • <http://donkeycarnival.blogspot.com>



Memphis Tigers [2]

Memo to all television announcers and sportswriters: Now that we're back around to tourney time, and the Memphis Tigers are a good bet for a high seed, it's highly likely at some point over the next month that you'll find yourself writing or talking about Memphis. You will be tempted to make all kinds of Elvis references, throwing around "thankyuhverramuch"es and "hound dawgs" like Pacman raining singles at the club. Don't do it. It's not funny, and you're not clever. Whatever you can possibly think of, it's been done before. Now, let's talk Tigers.

- 1. Perfecto.** Memphis ran off a perfect 16-0 record in Conference USA play this year, which is not – despite what big-conference snobs would have you believe – as easy as skipping through daisies on a pleasant spring day. Going into the Conference USA tourney, the Tigers owned a 19-game winning streak—the nation's longest—and an amazing 29-game string of home wins. Over the last two years, only Florida has matched the Tigers' 58 victories.
- 2. Release The Hounds!** How do you replace 40-plus points and 10-plus boards? Last year, Memphis rode Conference USA Player of the Year Rodney Carney, Darius Washington Jr., and Shawne Williams all the way to the Elite Eight. But Carney's in Philadelphia, Williams is in Indiana and Washington's in Greece. But Memphis coach John Calipari hasn't notched 20-plus wins in each of his seven seasons at Memphis by freaking out. He simply released the hounds, cutting loose a team that now ranks ninth in the nation in scoring offense (80.4 ppg) and averages almost an 18-point margin of victory. Guard Chris Douglas-Roberts and forward Joey Dorsey, both first-team All-Conference, rank among the C-USA leaders in points and boards, respectively, and are the Tigers to watch as the tourney unfolds.
- 3. Bring The Cash.** Fun fact: Guess who's the richest former Tiger basketball player. Penny Hardaway, who amassed about \$120 mil over the course of his now apparently over career? Not even close. Michael Wilson, the Tiger-turned-Globetrotter who set a world record when he dunked on a 12-foot rim? Getting colder. The answer is ... Bill Laurie. (Who?) Seems while he wasn't running point for the then-Memphis State Tigers of the early-'70s, Laurie was romancing a young coed named Nancy Walton. Nancy's pop Bud started a little family business -- maybe you've heard of it, goes by the name "Wal-Mart." Laurie held on tight to his college sweetheart, and he now counts his wealth by the billion. Makes Memphis State's '73 NCAA championship loss to Bill Walton's UCLA team a bit easier to stomach, we'd think. And with that, Jay Busbee has left the building.

(Dammit!) —Jay Busbee • <http://www.sportsgonesouth.com>



Texas A&M Aggies [3]

- 1. Billy Gillispie Might Have Been A Good Hire.** In their first eight seasons in the Big 12, the Aggies won 25 conference games and lost 103. For you math whizzes out there, that equates to 19.5 percent. In the past three years, they've won 31 conference games (64.6 percent). For a perspective of how far things have come in College Station, just two years ago the Aggies got so excited about making the NIT that they had T-shirts made for the occasion. I can't wait to see this year's NIT shirt design for UConn and Oklahoma State.
- 2. Acie Law Can Use Both of His Hands.** Born righthanded, probable All-American point guard Acie Law learned to use his left hand to dribble and shoot after breaking his right arm three times. I'm sure he didn't teach himself how to do anything else left handed. Nope, no way ... not a 15-year-old high school kid. Speaking of Law, it's actually Law IV as you will see on the back of his jersey. You may ask "why would one include that on their jersey?" Well, Acie has an answer for you. "It's my name. I'm Acie Law the fourth. When I first got to A&M I wanted to put my whole name on there, and that's what it is." Well OK then. I guess that clears it up.
- 3. Biggy Smalls.** Junior forward Joe Jones, whose name is oddly enough pronounced similar to rapper Mike Jones, hails from the mighty metropolis of Normangee, Texas, population 719. In fact, Jones happens to be dubbed the "Pride of Normangee." Strangely enough, before the emergence of Mr. Jones, Normangee was only known for one thing:

tractors. So now when Jim Nantz busts out with “Who? Joe Jooooones” during the Final Four, you’ll know it all started out with 718 other people and some tractors. Billy Gillispie has Jones beat though. His hometown of Graford, Texas has a population of 578, or 141 fewer than Normangee. Bryan-College Station, population 192,603, must be like NYC to these guys. —*Mitch Martin*



Virginia Cavaliers [4]

1. Liz Lemon is a Total Geek. You know her now as creator and star of the funniest show on Thursday nights, “30 Rock,” but Tina Fey spent her time in Charlottesville avoiding keg parties and being a nerdy drama major. It all paid off two years after graduation from UVa with her acceptance into the renowned Chicago comedy troupe, Second City; she later became the first female head writer in “Saturday Night Live” history. Other famous alumnae: Melissa Stark, Katie Couric and super-hottie Georgia O’Keefe.

2. Stairway to Mezzanine. The Cavaliers ate up every last morsel of that home cookin’ this year as they went 16-1 in the inaugural season of John Paul Jones Arena. You may remember John Paul Jones as the 1948 graduate of UVa Law School whose son dropped \$35 million towards building the new arena. There’s no relation to either the Revolutionary War hero nor the bassist for the entirely overrated 70s band Led Zeppelin. That one home loss? To Stanford. Stupid drunk tree.

3. The Manatee Has Become the Mentor. On February 14, 2006, Duke superstar J.J. Redick became the all-time NCAA leader for career 3-point field goals, breaking the record set eight years earlier by University of Virginia shooting legend, Curtis Staples. As a young lad in Roanoke, Virginia, Redick had attended a basketball camp where he was coached by Staples. The Cavaliers retired Staples’ jersey No. 5 during a ceremony last November. —*Rob Iracane*



Tennessee Volunteers [5]

1. The machines ... they’re getting smarter. UT’s freshman class has overcome being labeled “The Fab Five” by Knoxville media outlets to become a legitimate driving force on the court. Top-50 recruits Duke Crews, Wayne Chism and Ramar Smith have been particularly effective, finishing the regular season as three of the top five scorers for the Vols. Chism and Crews have split time at center this season, stepping in for dismissed senior Major Wingate, and lead the team in total rebounds. Crews is first in field goal percentage and blocked shots. And when they’re on their game, there’s not a whole lot you can do to

contain them: The trio scored 15 of Tennessee’s 22 overtime points in their victory over Texas in December. While the Vols will mourn the departure of beloved senior Dane Bradshaw at the close of tournament play, the continued development of Crews, Chism and Smith will make Tennessee a formidable opponent in the coming seasons.

2. A specter not felt. Coach Bruce Pearl drew national media attention for his shirtless, violently orange presence in the student section at a Lady Vols game in January. (Rumors that Pearl’s skin was not, in fact, painted, but permanently dyed from sweating through his orange blazer have been dismissed as vicious conjecture.) Viewers across the country convulsed with laughter, horror or inexplicable arousal, unaware of just how recently they had escaped a similar terror: It seems that, prior to the Vols’ first exhibition game on October 31, Pearl was taking suggestions from students for possible Halloween costumes. The most popular idea? Dressing him as Tennessee women’s coach Pat Summitt. Mercifully, Pearl declined to combine his superhuman strength with the destructive power of Summitt’s mind-lasers, preventing certain apocalypse in Tennessee ... for now.

3. That noise. That infernal noise. It’s arguably the most hated song in all of college sports. It’s revered or despised by the entire known universe. And, oddly, “Rocky Top” isn’t even the official Tennessee fight song. (Contrary to widely held belief, nor was it first developed as a neurological weapon.) The Pride of the Southland Marching Band debuted

it at a football game in 1972; antennae across the state twitched in primal recognition at the mention of moonshine, and the rest is history. Leave it to an SEC school to abandon the perfectly proper "Down the Field" and adopt an ode to murder and grain alcohol as its anthem. —*Holly Anderson*



Louisville Cardinals [6]

1. Time to make the donuts. The Cardinals' late-season turnaround is due in large part to the emergence of Louisville's talented freshman class, including center Derrick Caracter. DC, who has footwork that Greg Oden would kill for, has gotten his act together after serving a pair of suspensions this season. Caracter's mother deserves part of the credit for keeping her son focused via the US Mail. Did she send him letters of encouragement? Well wishes from friends and family back home in Jersey? No, she sent him an application for employment at Dunkin' Donuts; a not-so-subtle reminder of what the big fella had to look forward to if this whole student-athlete thing doesn't work out.

2. Bigger boobs: Anna Nicole or Congress? Prominent Louisville alumni include senators Mitch McConnell (R-KY) and Chris Dodd (D-CT). But before any Cardinal alumni get too smug, Anna Nicole Smith's putative babydaddy Larry Birkhead also graduated from the 'Ville.

3. Mark it eight, Dude. Rick Pitino is the only coach to take three different schools to the Final Four. But according to Card Chronicle, Pitino's winning ways on the hardwood extends beyond hoops to bowling. After Pitino posted high-game honors at the team's recent ten-pin throwdown, he triumphantly posted the scores on his personal website. Other Cardinals also maintain a presence on the internets. On his MySpace.com page, reserve Cardinal center Terrence Farley states that he is "just lookin to be easy and relax all the time," which belies his fervent game-day hustle. (Apparently Farley's laissez-faire off-court demeanor leads hottie coeds to be his internet friends.)

—*flubby* • <http://kissmesuzu.blogspot.com>



Nevada Wolf Pack [7]

1. The McGee Family Reunion Comes With A Shot Clock. JaVale McGee's mom Pam and Aunt Paula won the 1983 & 1984 NCAA basketball championships with USC. Although Aunt Paula (who got robbed) wasn't selected for the Olympic team, Mom won a basketball gold medal in 1984. His dad, George Montgomery, a 6-8, C/F out of Illinois, was drafted in 1985 by the Trailblazers before such luminaries as Lorenzo Charles, Uwe Blab, Arvydas Sabonis and Spud Webb.

2. From The Penthouse To The Outhouse. The dichotomy of being a mid-major can be seen in the arenas you play in when on the road. On December 30, the Wolf Pack played at sold out Key Arena in Seattle against Gonzaga in the "Battle in Seattle." Attendance: 15,110. On February 22, the Pack played in the sold out Memorial Gym in Moscow, Idaho against conference foe University of Idaho. Attendance: 1,200. Idaho's normal home floor in the Kibbie Dome was being used for the annual Lionel Hampton International Jazz Festival.

3. In Good Company. Wolf Pack head coach Mark Fox has racked up a record of 79-16 (.832) in his first three seasons. All-time NCAA records start when a coach reaches his fifth year, but extrapolating Fox's record, after five years, he would have the highest winning percentage in the NCAA. Mark Few of Gonzaga (.821) and Roy Williams of North Carolina (.799) move down to second and third. —*PJ Connolly*



Brigham Young Cougars [8]

1. Provo is an international destination. No, really.

Hanging next to Danny Ainge's oversized jersey in from the rafters of the Marriott Center is that of Kresimir Cosic. Cosic, a 6'11" center from Croatia, became in 1972 the first foreign player to be named a UPI All-American. BYU's international pipeline has recently shifted to Brazil, where former Cougar and first round NBA draft pick (hey, don't laugh, it's true!) Rafael Araujo is from. Current Mountain West Conference Freshman of the Year Johnathan Tavernari and reserve forward Fernando Malaman are also Brazilian, as is assistant coach Walter Roese.

BYU's student body is especially well-suited to welcoming international players, since more than 70 percent of BYU students are fluent in a second language.

2. Keena Young was born to play for BYU. You just wouldn't know that by looking at him.

Keena Young, BYU's starting forward and the reigning Mountain West Conference Player of the Year, has a family history perfect for the university. Of course, the Young family shares a last name with the university's namesake, Brigham Young. But Young's mother's first name, LaVella, is remarkably similar to that of legendary former Cougar Head Football Coach LaVell Edwards. And Young's father, Cleveland, shares a name with former head basketball coach Steve Cleveland, who recruited Young to BYU before leaving to take the head coaching job at Fresno State in 2005.

3. "Hey, are you the coach's son?" In keeping with the family-oriented focus of the school's sponsoring religion, BYU's basketball team has featured various family ties throughout the years. Starting point guard Austin Ainge is the son of former Wooden-Award winning Cougar guard and current Boston Celtics GM Danny Ainge. Reserve guard and 3-point shooting specialist Mike Rose is the nephew of head coach Dave Rose. And last season's lone departing senior, Brock Reichner, is Rose's son-in-law, having married Rose's daughter (and former Lady Cougar basketball player) Chanell. Former BYU coach Roger Reid coached his sons Randy and Robbie on the team prior to being fired in 1996.

—Joel Baughman



Xavier Musketeers [9]

1. Can't touch this! Junior guard Stanley Burrell is the second leading scorer for the Musketeers. No, not that Stanley Burrell! The Xavier student section had nicknamed him "The Hammer" before he even set foot on campus.

2. Dinner at 4...in bed by 9! Xavier has one of the oldest, most experienced squads in college basketball. Their players stay all four years, and they graduate. They have nine upperclassman on their roster. Throw in the dismissed Dedrick Finn, and Xavier's starting five would include four seniors and one junior. Fans across the Atlantic 10 constantly say to themselves, "Wait, Doellman is STILL there? That guy has to be like 60!"

3. The poop of angels. The University of Cincinnati is Xavier's main rival. If you think Duke and UNC are close (10 miles), Xavier and UC are only 3 miles apart. Skyline Chili is the sponsor of the annual Xavier vs. Cincinnati Crosstown Shootout/hatefest. For those of you not familiar with Skyline, I suggest you suck it up and make a trip to the greater Cincinnati area and try a delicious coney or 3-way. Yes, I know it's "in Ohio" but trust me when I say that Skyline chili truly is "the poop of angels." —Scott DeMange



Creighton Blue Jays [10]

1. The original Huggy Bear. Before Bob Huggins (and Tom Asbury and Jim Wooldridge), there was Dana Altman. In four years at K-State, Altman led the Wildcats to three postseason tournaments (including the Big Dance in 1993) and won a Big Eight Coach of the Year award. Since taking over at Creighton in 1994, he has become the school's all-time wins leader (passing Eddie Sutton and Willis Reed), won two more conference coach of the year awards (2001 and 2002) and led the Bluejays to seven NCAA tournaments in the last nine years.

2. Ballroom dancing was already full. The MVC's leading scorer, fifth-year senior Nate Funk, is the latest in a long line of Creighton players who suspiciously resemble less highly evolved humanoids (see also: Kyle Korver). Academically, though, Funk adheres to the Matt Leinart evolutionary chain. Enrolled in a single class in his final semester, one would hope Funk would take advantage of Creighton's strong academic reputation (No. 1 in the Midwest - US News). Nope. Applied Guitar. (Fair and balanced disclosure: Fellow senior Anthony Tolliver was named an academic All-American last year.)

3. The Will Leitch Haircut and Music Emporium. Creighton players who live on campus can now take advantage of a massive redevelopment of North Omaha intended to make the region more attractive to students and young professionals. One of the cornerstones of the plan is Slowdown, a concert venue owned and operated by Saddle Creek Records (Bright Eyes, The Faint, Cursive). Creighton senior and Compton Community College alum Nick Porter remains unimpressed. —*Christopher Wachal*



Stanford Cardinal [11]

1. Dynamic Duo. In everyday life, seven-foot Stanford twins Brook and Robin Lopez are mild-mannered freshmen on the Cardinal's basketball team (some say a bit too mild mannered). But while not hiding behind their secret identities, they enjoy writing and drawing homemade comic books. "They draw their own little comic characters and comic strips," Alex Lopez, the younger of their two older brothers, told the *Arizona Daily Wildcat*. "I think they both like Batman, and Superman and Flash and all the Justice League type of characters." Alex Lopez, by the way, started for Santa Clara for two years. Deborah Ledford, their mom, was the world's second-fastest female swimmer in the 400-yard individual medley in 1976; and Heriberto Lopez, their dad, played baseball in Cuba.

2. A Knight's Tale. Trent Johnson (Bosie State, '83) has done a serviceable job as Stanford's head coach for the past three seasons (52-39 overall, three straight NCAA Tournament appearances), after having led Nevada-Reno to the NCAA Tourney Sweet 16 in 2004. But the real coaching story on the mid-Peninsula is located about four miles down the road in Atherton, where former Stanford player Kris Weems has coached tiny Menlo School to three straight Peninsula Athletic League titles and a Central Coast Section playoff semifinal appearance. Weems was a junior guard on the 1998 Stanford team that reached the NCAA Final Four. With the smallest enrollment in the league and with his teams usually undersized, Weems has coached the hell out of the Knights, and some say that it wouldn't be surprising to see him in Stanford's top spot one day. Another rumor has Mike Montgomery coming in to take the vacant Santa Clara University head coaching job, and bringing in Weems as his assistant.

3. Cardinal notes. One reason we're glad Stanford got in; the world will now meet the gloriously-named Taj Finger, a 6-foot-8 junior forward from Kisco, N.Y. ... Sophomore guard Drew Shiller was San Mateo County MVP in three sports, football, basketball and baseball, and most thought that his future was as a college quarterback, as he set Peninsula Athletic League passing records for two straight seasons with Burlingame High ... After several incidents including drunken behavior and frolicking in restricted areas during games, the two previous people to wear the Stanford Tree mascot costume, Thomas Leep and Erin Lashnits, were summarily dismissed. There have been no complaints so far regarding the current Tree, John Whipple. The tree mascot, by the way, was chosen by the Stanford Band in 1975 over runners-up the Steaming Manhole and the French Fry. —*Rick Chandler*



Long Beach State 49ers [12]

1. Nixon's The One. NCAA opponents would be wise not to overlook the 49ers in general and senior forward Aaron "Mr. Big Shot" Nixon in particular. After a 74-49 loss to Temple on December 2, Long Beach State has won 22 straight, winning the Big West championship, where Nixon was named Tournament MVP. Nixon was the team's leading scorer in 11 games in the streak, including three games he won on last-second shots. Originally from Ohio, he attended Columbus State before transferring to another JC, San Bernardino Valley College, as a sophomore. "I wasn't sure I was going to graduate from junior college," Nixon said, acknowledging an aversion to studying.

2. Dream Weaver II. Long Beach State is the home of Jered Weaver, now of the Anaheim Angels, who is the younger brother of Jeff Weaver. Jered has the glory of gracing the cover of a sports video game (EA MVP '07). Another Long Beach State "Dirtbags" alum: Jason Giambi.

3. Ouwit, Outplay, Outlast. You may recognize some of these people who have coached at Long Beach State: Jerry Tarkanian and Lute Olson (basketball); George Allen (football); Jon Urbanek and Don Gambriel (swimming). Current pro volleyball player and former 49er volleyball standout John "J.P." Calderon is now a contestant on *Survivor*. Two other noted alumni: Steven Spielberg and Harold Reynolds. —*Rick Chandler*



Albany Great Danes [13]

1. Jamar Wilson, Mayor of Sm-Albany. This is becoming a rite of spring. Jamar Wilson dominates an America East Final (22, 7 and 6 in the conference title game), and the Great Danes get a bid to the Big Show. Diddly posed the thought on everyone's mind (in the Capital District at least): "I think we're seeing the dawn of a new dynasty with Albany. I just wish they'd change their frigging nickname." Dynasty? Perhaps. Scrap the Great Danes? No can do. The nickname can stay. SUNY Albany is the only college or university with the Great Dane as its mascot. It looks like a wife-beating version of Scooby Doo.

2. The Am East in 58 words or less. Vermont had won 13 straight games and reached the America East championship for the fifth consecutive season. The Catamounts won the tourney in '03, '04 and '05, but have now dropped the last two finals to Albany (last year in scenic Sm-Albany and this year in SyrupLand). Former coach Tom Brennan keeps smarmy Doug Gottlieb in check daily. Albany beat Vermont 60-59 in the America East title game behind Wilson, a huge strip by Carl Ross (#00 in your program, #1 in your heart) and god awful execution by Vermont on the game's final play. It also didn't hurt to have Vermont big man Chris Holm roll his ankle on the opening tip and limp to eight points and three boards (well below the 11 and 12 he averages). Albany ended up out rebounding the nation's best rebounding team. These guys were a 16 last year, and led UConn by 12 with 11 minutes to play, finally losing 72-59.

3. Useless Nuggets. SUNY Albany has hosted the New York Football Giants summer training camp since 1996. This guy ran the merchandise tent in the summer of '96. Extremely good times. On April 17, 2005, students from the University at Albany set and currently hold the record for the world's largest pillow fight with 3,648 participants, observed by Guinness Records officials. It's official. You can Google that. —*Tom Doyle* • <http://gheorghe77.blogspot.com/2007/03/jamar-wilson-mayor-of-sm-albany.html>



Pennsylvania Quakers [14]

FIVE REASONS TO PICK THE PENN QUAKERS AS YOUR SLEEPER

1. Two-time conference player of the year Ibrahim Jaaber led the Ivy League in steals and assists and was second in scoring to teammate Mark Zoller. Jaaber finishes his Penn career as the all-time Ivy League leader in steals, and is the kind of poised, experienced guard to whom commentators love to point at tournament time. He also has a fantastic name.

2. In last year's tournament, 15 seed Penn led 2 seed Texas at the half before coming up short, 60-52. Widely forecast as a 14 seed this year, the Quakers might face an overachieving 3 seed like

Southern Illinois or Washington State - good as they are, not teams that put fear into the hearts of small-college players.

3. Surprising as it may be, Penn has a Final Four pedigree; the Quaker team led by Tony Price beat four higher-seeded teams in a Cinderella run to the 1979 Final Four. The Quakers were defeated by Magic Johnson's Michigan State Spartans, the eventual champions.

4. In one of their best games this season, the Quakers defeated Drexel, a tourney hopeful with a 39 RPI and wins against Syracuse, Villanova, and Creighton.

5. As much as people laugh at the team name, the actual Quakers are kind of awesome. Prominent in the abolition and anti-war movements for centuries, the Religious Society of Friends is a religion that's small in number (approximately 350,000 around the world) but hugely respected by those who value stubborn adherence to a moral code. Ironically for a group that opposes violence, Quakers sure do stick to their guns.

FIVE REASONS NOT TO PICK THE PENN QUAKERS AS YOUR SLEEPER

1. Aside from the Drexel win, Penn hasn't beat anyone: they lost to Syracuse, Villanova, UTEP, Seton Hall, and St. Joe's. Most damningly, they lost to UNC - perhaps the exact caliber of team Penn might meet in round one - by a brutal 102-64 score.

2. William Henry Harrison, Penn alumnus, is quite possibly the lamest US President ever: He developed pneumonia shortly after his two-hour Inaugural Address, delivered in the wind and rain and died 30 days into office.

3. While many praise the Ivy League for being the only conference to award its automatic NCAA tournament bid to the regular-season champion rather than a conference tournament winner, it also means that the Ivy League champ is the only team to make it to March Madness with no experience in a one-and-done tourney.

4. Though they're a popular Cinderella pick in office pools nationwide thanks to their...uh... fundamentally sound basketball, the Ivy League hasn't won a tournament game since 1998, when 5 seed Princeton defeated UNLV.

5. This guy:



—Dan Kois

North Texas Mean Green [15]



1. Green Eagle. Although we all know UNT as the Mean Green, the school mascot is actually Scrapy the eagle. And Scrapy he is. In 1974 (back during Vietnam, when college students used to protest war in between bong hits), the school scrapped "Scrapy" because the flower children thought his name was too warlike. They renamed him "Eppy" the Eagle. That name stuck until December 2, 1995, at the UNT vs. Alabama Crimson Tide game, when the college announced that Eppy was Scrapy once again, no doubt pleasing many-a-confused fan who'd spent two decades wondering what the hell "Eppy" even meant. As for the "Mean Green" moniker, it's usually associated with 1969 UNT graduate "Mean" Joe Greene, but there is another story that links it to a couple of jokers starting a chant at a game back in the '60s. Understandably, most Mean Green fans prefer to stand by the Joe Greene story.

2. Cannon! North Texas loves its victory cannon. It's as much a part of the UNT family as Eppy, er, Scrapy the Eagle. They love that cannon so much, he even has a name! It's Boomer. Boomer the cannon. Boomer has been blowing his explosive wad to signal touchdowns since 1970. The original Boomer was retired in 1996 when the U.S. Field Artillery Association for Texas deemed him unsafe to fire, but the school promptly had him replaced. Which means that today's Boomer, a scale replica of a Civil War model, is actually Boomer II. The Son of Boomer. Boomer Strikes Back. The Wrath of Boomer. And so forth.

3. New To Hoops. Mean Joe reps UNT's respectable football program (they also have a decent soccer team, not that Leitch cares), but the Mean Green has never really been considered a national basketball powerhouse. This is UNT's first visit to the tourney since 1988, when they lost to second-seed North Carolina, which went on to the Elite Eight that year. The NBA standout to come out of their program is probably the mighty Lee Winfield and his 7.2 PPG through seven seasons with Seattle, Buffalo and Kansas City in the early 1970s. Things are looking up, though, with the Mean Green winning their first Sun Belt Conference title this season with a 23-10 record, the most wins by any UNT team.

—Mike Bruno



Central Connecticut State Blue Devils [16]

1. The Past. Central Connecticut State University, founded in 1849 as the New Britain Normal School, is the oldest public institution of higher education in Connecticut. "Famous" CCSU alumni in the world of sports include the good (Patriots salary-cap wiz Scott Pioli), the bad (deposed NFL head coaches Dave Campo and Mike Sherman) and the ugly -- literally (former Clipper Keith Closs). Another alumnus: current CCSU head coach Howie Dickenman. Prior to Dickenman's hiring in 1996, the Blue Devils had never appeared in the NCAA

Tournament. CCSU's victory over Sacred Heart in the Northeastern Conference championship game, in which the Blue Devils overcame a 10-point second-half deficit, clinched the school's third trip to the NAAs in the last seven years.

2. The Present. CCSU's best player is 6'3" guard Javier Mojica, who averages 17 points and seven rebounds per game and was named NEC Player of the Year. Mojica picked up more hardware in the NEC tourney; he was named the tournament's MVP after scoring 25 points against Sacred Heart, including a late 3-pointer that gave the Blue Devils the lead for good. Oh, and Mojica is a former walk-on who saved his mom's life in 1995 when he discovered her trying to hang herself in the basement. (In reference to that incident, Mojica has remarked that there was a "divine light on me" and that "a guardian angel was on my side.") Other Blue Devils to keep an eye on: 6'0" guard Tristan Blackwood (17 points and four assists per game) and 6'4" forward Obie Nwadike (15 points and 11 rebounds per game), both of whom join Mojica on the NEC's First Team and neither of whom has apparently ever walked on water, eaten bullets or shat out ice cream.

3. The Future. CCSU, named one of the "best 201 colleges" in the nation (a "compliment" one could fairly liken to being called "not unattractive") by some book called "Great Colleges for the Real World: Get In, Get Out, Get a Job," demonstrated incredible foresight in 2001 when it became the first university in America to offer a Master of Science program in data mining. So for all you Chloe O'Brian wannabes who daydream of opening sockets to Division and sending satellite images to Bill Buchanan's screen, get yo' ass to Hard Hittin' New Britain. And if you don't know what I'm talking about, that means you hate freedom and want the terrorists to win. Heck, you're so evil you might as well be rooting for those "other" Blue Devils. —Josh Blosveren