

Cellar dweller games hated by all involved

NEW YORK (AP) — Fans hate them. So do players, coaches and the media. The dreaded opening-round games of college basketball conference tournaments. You might know them as "8-9 Games."

Or, as the inside wags call them, "The Games of the Weak." The Big East has been saddled with just such an animal since Pittsburgh joined the league in 1983. Miami's entrance last season meant two opening-round games.

The only conference members never to be subjected to these pre-tournament games were Georgetown and Syracuse. That was until this season.

Georgetown plays Miami in tonight's matchup of the eighth and ninth seeds. Boston College, the seventh seed, meets Villanova.

The Western Athletic Conference has its quarterfinals today, following Wednesday night's qualifying doubleheader.

Georgetown (15-11) is usually only worried about NCAA seeds at this time of the season. This year, the Hoyas would need to reach the championship game to earn serious consideration for an at-large berth. Three of their wins this season were over non-Division I schools and don't count to the selection committee.

Georgetown starts three freshmen and the Hoyas have struggled through some rough offensive times. They did win their last two games to finish 8-10, one game out of a four-way tie for fourth place.

Miami (10-16, 7-11) had the conference's second-best home record at 7-2 and the Hurricanes shocked Pitt in last season's 7-10 game.

Boston College (15-11) was in nice shape for an NCAA bid in January. The Eagles, however, closed with six losses in their last eight games and might need a quarterfinal win to make the field if they beat Villanova (8-18).

MEN'S

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tournament, and they were the seventh seed."

Tonight, the Ducks will try to avoid the distinction of finishing last in the Pac-10 against a Cardinal team which has an identical conference record.

Stanford (2-14, 7-21) defeated Oregon earlier this season 71-66, and the two teams have been lodged in the cellar of the conference ever since.

Green said although the teams have the same records, the Cardinal has been playing better of late, which is not saying much considering the Ducks' miserable performance Saturday against Oregon State.

"Stanford has played well lately," he said. "They beat USC two weeks ago, and they played tough against Arizona and Arizona State last weekend. If we hit 2 of 20 shots and shoot 30 percent for the game,

we're not going to beat anybody in the Pac-10."

NCAA tournament-bound California (8-6, 17-8) comes into McArthur Court Saturday having won seven of its last eight games, including a win over Arizona last Thursday.

The Golden Bears came into the season with high expectations, largely because of freshman guard Jason Kidd. Since Todd Bozeman took over in midseason for the fired Lou Campenelli, Cal has lived up to its preseason hype.

Kidd is averaging 13 points and seven assists a game and is among the national leaders in steals. Green said he's believed all along that the Bears were one of the top teams in the Pac-10 even though they start two freshmen and two sophomores.

"They started out a little slow because they are such a young team," he said. "But they've been continually

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— Jerry Green, men's basketball coach

improving, and they have tremendous young talent."

Oregon's task this weekend will be further complicated if it is without a point guard. Johnnie Reece and Andre Collier have been unable to practice all week, and look doubtful for tonight's game. That leaves the duties to inexperienced Jon Mitchell.

Collier is nursing a nerve problem in his shoulder and Reece is having problems with his back.

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