

Men: Arizona, Kentucky in the final

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ian would do in the NCAA Tournament.

So without further ado, I present for your perusal my picks. Please address all hate mail and/or notes of ridicule to the Emerald.

Early-round upsets

First off, don't forget to include a No. 13 seed beating a No. 4 in the first round. It happens at least once almost every year, and this one should be no exception. Earl Boykins and Eastern Michigan should beat their neighbors from East Lansing, Michigan State.

This year is even more intriguing than most, as two No. 14 seeds have decent shots at knocking off No. 3s. Look for College of Charleston to beat Stanford, and don't be surprised to see Richmond upset South Carolina in their first-round matchup in the East.

Past that, No. 12 South Alabama has a fair chance of beating No. 5 Illinois in the West, and Miami (Fla.) could surprise a struggling UCLA.

One guaranteed win by a lower-seeded favorite: No. 5 Princeton will beat No. 12 UNLV. The

run-and-gun, athletic Rebels are the dream matchup for the Tigers and their textbook, backdoor offense.

Favorites

Another mistake to avoid is taking all four No. 1 seeds too deep in the tourney. North Carolina should ease past No. 6 Xavier in the final of the relatively easy East Region, and I have Arizona making the Final Four after beating No. 7 Temple in the final out West.

But the other two regions are trickier. Both No. 1 Duke and No. 2 Kentucky should have no problem qualifying for the final of the South Region, but I like the Wildcats to upset the Blue Devils. As North Carolina proved last weekend, Duke does not have that special player that can carry the team when it is struggling, and Kentucky should make the Devils struggle. The South is by far the toughest bracket, though, so expect some surprises.

Finally, my upset special of the year: the aforementioned Horned Frogs beating Florida State, Mississippi and Kansas before falling to Purdue, which will make the Final Four after beating Charleston in the Sweet 16.

Final Four

I'm left with the Boilermakers, Kentucky, North Carolina and Arizona.

Kentucky will have no problem with Purdue, but Carolina-Arizona is another intriguing game. Antawn Jamison and Vince Carter form a formidable presence at forward for the Tar Heels, and Ed Cota joins Shammond Williams in a very good backcourt.

But superior guard play wins the tournament in my eye, and that's why I have Mike Bibby, Miles Simon and the Wildcats beating North Carolina in the Final Four, then Kentucky in a reprisal of last year's final.

Conclusion

Keep all this in mind when filling out your bracket in the back of that enthralling sociology lecture. And remember, after being wrong on both the World Series and Super Bowl, I'm due to pick a winner in something.

Extremely due.

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Women: Oregon won't make it past Iowa State

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first loss of the season to oh-so-mighty Arizona State (10-17 overall, 6-12 Pac-10). Then, with a lot on the line late in the season, the Huskies lost to a struggling Southern California team that finished the season 12-15 overall and 7-11 in the Pac-10.

And you'd think if the Huskies were as good as they — and apparently the voters who left them in The Associated Press top 25 for much of the season despite a rapidly declining record — think they are, they would have a little more success against the top teams in the standings.

The Huskies were swept by Stanford, UCLA and Oregon and had just one win against the top four teams in the conference, albeit an impressive one over Arizona that might have helped push them in the tournament door.

So no, I don't think the Huskies deserved a bid to this season's tournament.

Nonetheless, they are in and will take on Purdue on Saturday in West Lafayette, Ind., so I might as well make a guaranteed prediction on their fate.

Washington's 38.7 percent shooting from the field for the season will catch up to it, as will guard Jamie Redd's wildness once the Huskies fall behind early. Count on them to get blown

out of the building and make at least this reporter happy.

While we are on the subject of tournament predictions, let's take a look at how the other four Pac-10 teams could fare in the tournament.

Stanford and Arizona are obviously in a favorable position by getting to host the first two rounds and not having to deal with traveling all over the country.

The one question mark for Stanford is the status of Vaneesa Nygaard, who injured her knee late in the Cardinal's win over Oregon State on Saturday.

Regardless, the Cardinal has enough firepower to advance quite far into the tournament. In a bit of an upset, Arizona, after getting past Santa Clara in the first round, will lose to Virginia (18-9) in the second round.

UCLA will continue a good season with a first-round win over Michigan (19-9) but will fall to No. 11 Alabama in the second round.

And the one you've all been waiting for: Oregon will get past Rutgers in Saturday's first-round game before falling in a close battle with No. 24 Iowa State in the second round. Home-court advantage pushes the Cyclones past the Ducks.

Alex Pond is a sports reporter for the Emerald.

Some useless facts about the NCAAs

Seventeen facts about the 1998 NCAA Tournament that you have probably never thought about

By Jim O'Connell

The Associated Press

The number most associated with the NCAA Tournament is 64 because that's how many teams make the field.

That's far from the only number connected with this year's tournament, which starts Thursday. Here are some figures that could be interesting, might be surprising and will change by this time next year:

0 — times all four No. 1 seeds have advanced to the Final Four.

3 — times in the '90s the scoring champion has played in the tournament (Bo Kimble of Loyola Marymount in 1990, Glenn Robinson of Purdue in 1994 and Charles Jones of Long Island University in 1997).

3 — games won by No. 15 seeds (Coppin State over South Carolina in 1997, Santa Clara over Arizona in 1993 and Richmond over Syracuse in 1991).

4 — teams making their first NCAA Tournament appearance — Illinois-Chicago, Northern Arizona, Prairie View and Radford.

6 — No. 1 seeds for North Carolina since the field expanded to 64 in 1985. Kansas and Kentucky are next with five each.

6 — schools to repeat as national champion, with Arizona trying to make it seven.

7 — the longest current streak of NCAA appearances to be snapped this year when Wake Forest didn't get an at-large bid.

8 — schools from last year's Sweet 16 that did not even make this year's field.

8 — the lowest seeding of a national champion (Villanova in 1985).

9 — No. 1 seeds that have gone on to win the national championship since 1979.

9 — teams ending at least a 10-year drought since their last NCAA appearance.

11 — lowest-seeded team to reach the Final Four (LSU in 1986).

14 — teams with losing records that have played in the NCAA Tournament. Prairie View joins that group this year.

14 — tournaments that have had fields of 64.

16 — former NCAA champions that are in this year's field.

16 — teams in the field that did not beat another NCAA Tournament team this season, with only No. 5 Princeton among the top half of field.

24 — consecutive appearances by North Carolina to extend its own record. Arizona and Georgetown are next with 14.

SPORTS BRIEFS

Men's basketball awards announced

The Oregon men's basketball team capped a 13-14 season with its annual awards banquet on Monday night.

Senior Henry Madden was named the winner of the Steven J Award for the team's most valuable player. Madden led the squad in rebounding and blocked shots, was second in scoring and third in steals and three-pointers.

Junior Terik Brown won the

John Warren Award as the most inspirational player.

In a surprising twist, the entire 1997-98 Oregon team won the award as most improved after finishing fifth in the Pacific-10 Conference.

Finally, A.D. Smith received the Harry Ritchie Scholar-Athlete Award for being the team's third-leading scorer while maintaining a 3.50 grade-point average in Business Administration, while fellow sophomore Donte Quinine was named the team's top defender.

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