

# Get this man a padded room, with a CBS-enabled TV

Case No.: 64064.

Admit date: March 21, 2003.

Release date: No earlier than April 8, 2003.

Overseeing physician: Dr. Nantz.

Diagnosis: Mr. Hockaday appears to be suffering from an acute case of *dementia marchus*, more commonly referred to as "March Madness." Symptoms include frequent heart attacks, nightmares of large machines with 64 metal prongs and hoarseness of voice from frequent yelling.

This case, as with many others of its kind, can be traced back to the abuse the patient has suffered for many years. It seems that the patient has been following college basketball since he could say "Gonzaga," and even passes himself off as an "expert" scribe for much of the year. However — and this came out only after hours of interviews and much soul-searching — he has never won

an office pool. Shoot, he's never even come close! Sorry, I just think it's funny. He knows everything about the matchups; he knows who's got the senior leadership, who's hot going into the tournament, who's got a coach that can take you far. Hell, he even knows which teams have the best waterboys! But he loses these pools every year. Every year! Oh, that's a stitch.

Anyway, back to the subject at hand. The patient's abuse is consistently worsened by the type of peo-

ple who actually win the pools every year. You know the type. Usually a pool-member's girlfriend. Picks Creighton and Dayton to meet in the final because it just has a wonderful cadence. Liked Maryland last year because a Terrapin is a turtle and turtles are just so cute and I had a turtle once and it was the best pet I ever had and so Maryland will beat, oh, I don't know, Indiana in the final. I like Indiana because they don't have names on their uniforms and that's just such an *endearing* thing in this world where athletes are just so *mean* to each other.

The patient finds that his condition is worsened further when the tournament actually starts. Seeing his bracket crumble like the Roman Empire in front of him, the patient is also torn when the games provide more heart-pounding moments than "The Ring." For example, last year



**Peter Hockaday**  
Two minutes for crosschecking

the patient picked a veteran-laden USC team to make it to the Elite Eight. A fair enough assumption, considering SC had Sam Clancy, who was as automatic as a Ford Explorer, and an easy draw. But no, here comes lowly UNC-Wilmington. Here comes overtime as the West Coast crowd goes bonkers. Here comes the pounding heart, and the patient actually finds himself secretly rooting for UNC-Wilmington. This will *kill* his bracket.

These contradictions have driven the patient to near madness. He's tried everything. He tried flip-flopping every pick. He tried all No. 2 seeds in the Final Four. He tried letting ESPN's pundits fill out his bracket. But none of it's worked.

Of course, the patient loves the pain. Don't they all? He longs to hear CBS' theme song, pines for "one shining moment." The dark-

est days of his life come in February, and not just because he's girl-less. They are the days of famine in between football and madness. He wakes up in the middle of the night screaming "Austin Peay! Austin Peay!" People stare as he mumbles in class about RPI and bubble teams and bracketology.

There is, it seems, little hope to stop him from spiraling out of control. However...

**Recommended treatment:** We advise the patient spend as much of the next three weeks as possible watching CBS, drinking steins of Budweiser and eating bags of chips.

That is, of course, the only known cure for March Madness.

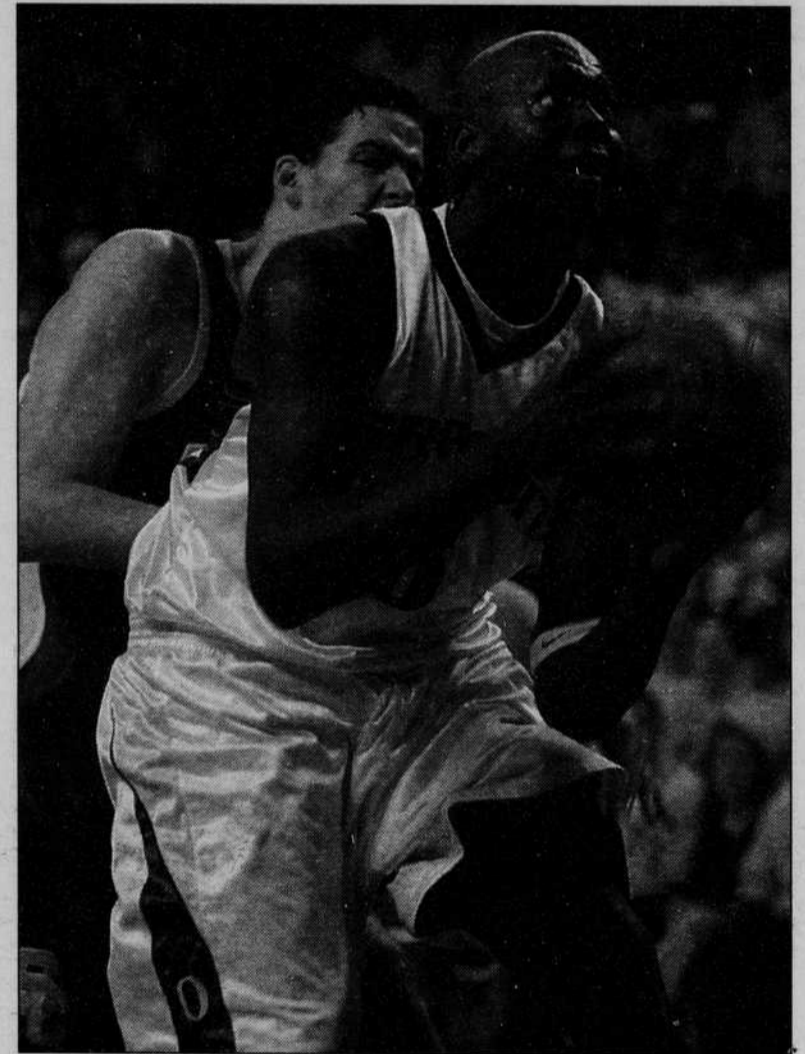
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Adam Amato Emerald

Oregon senior forward Robert Johnson and the Ducks face Utah in the first round.

## Midwest

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IUPUI beat Valparaiso, which had won seven of the last eight MCC titles, 66-64 Wednesday. That was after Valpo beat IUPUI twice during the regular season.

### No. 9 Utah

This is the team Oregon fans will be most interested in, mostly because the Utes are the Ducks' first-round opponent.

Utah (24-7, 11-3 Mountain West Conference) is a bit of an enigma. The Utes reeled off a 10-game win streak from mid-January to mid-February, but went 3-3 in their final six games, including a loss to UNLV in the MWC Tournament semifinals Saturday.

That 64-41 loss was Utah's worst pounding of the season. It was so bad, in fact, that Utah coach Rick Majerus didn't care to see the end of it. With 15 seconds left, the fiery Majerus walked to the UNLV bench, shook Rebel coach Charlie Spoonhour's hand and exited the tunnel before the final buzzer sounded.

But Utah's season hasn't been all ugly blowouts. The Utes moved on the bubble after their loss to UNLV

but made it into the NCAA Tournament on the strength of wins over Alabama and Arizona State, and two wins over Brigham Young.

### The rest of the Midwest

The Midwest bracket isn't as stacked as the West or other regions, but there are still potential traps waiting for anybody coming out of the Nashville sub-regional.

Pittsburgh is the No. 2 seed in the Midwest, and the Panthers are one of the hottest teams in the nation heading into March Madness. Led by point guard Brandin Knight, Pittsburgh is riding a nine-game winning streak into the tournament.

Marquette is the No. 3 seed, and despite being shocked by Alabama-Birmingham in the quarterfinals of the Conference-USA Tournament, the Golden Eagles are also hot. Marquette was 15-1 in its last 16 games before the loss to UAB.

Of course it's hard to predict who will be hot when the tournament finally rolls around. As Elvis would say, the NCAA Tournament is a heartbreak hotel for many teams.

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