

Men's NCAA Tournament

Syracuse rallies for win over Arizona St

Associated Press

DAYTON, Ohio — The last team to make the NCAA Tournament gets to play at least one more. Credit Syracuse's fabulous freshman forward and its legendary zone defense for getting a cringe-worthy win.

Freshman Oshae Brissett had his 13th double-double while leading Syracuse's second-half comeback, and the Orange — the last team to make the NCAA Tournament — held on for a 60-56 victory over Arizona State on Wednesday night in the First Four.

The 11th-seeded Orange plays No. 6 seed TCU (21-11) on Friday in Detroit in the Midwest Region.

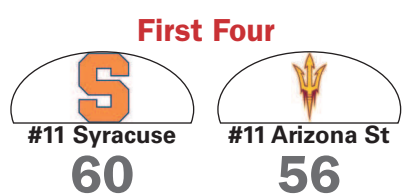
Syracuse (21-13) had to sweat out Selection Sunday and wound up as the last one to make the bracket, relegated to the First Four. The Orange prevailed in a matchup of teams that started fast and then faded onto the tournament bubble.

"Our offense struggles," coach Jim Boeheim said. "But I thought our defense has been good all year and that's where we hang our hats, on the defensive end."

Arizona State (20-12) opened the season with 12 wins, including victories over tournament No. 1 seeds Xavier and Kansas. The Sun Devils went 8-12 the rest of the way, and their high-powered offense got shut down in their biggest game.

Arizona State scored a season low in points — only the third time it's been held under 70 all season. The Sun Devils' previous low was 64 points.

"Usually we're scoring 56 in a half, and we ended up with 56," coach



Bobby Hurley said. "So there were limited possessions. It was a rock fight, and we just didn't make enough shots."

Brissett overcame a hard fall in the first half, scored 23 points and had 12 rebounds. He had a three-point play and a step-back jumper as the Orange overcame a seven-point deficit with 7 minutes left.

"I knew he was going to get back up," said Tyus Battle, whose 3-pointer put Syracuse ahead to stay. "He's hit some huge shots. He's done that countless times this year."

With a chance to take the lead, Arizona State's Shannon Evans II missed a 3-pointer with 2 seconds to go. Frank Howard got the rebound, was fouled and made both free throws to clinch it. Kodi Justice had 15 points for Arizona State, which hasn't won an NCAA Tournament game since 2009.

UP NEXT
Syracuse hopes to duplicate its 2016 tournament run. The Orange was a No. 10 seed and reached the national semifinals, where it lost to North Carolina.

Texas Southern routs NC Central 64-46

DAYTON, Ohio (AP) — Texas Southern got its first ever NCAA Tournament win, a 64-46 rout of North Carolina Central in a First Four game

on Wednesday night.

Damontrae Jefferson, a 5-foot-7 guard, scored 25 points and grabbed eight rebounds to lift No. 16 seed Texas Southern (16-19), which became the first team with a losing record to win a tournament game. The Tigers started the season 0-13 against a rough schedule and didn't win a game until Jan. 1. Now they move on face No. 1 seed Xavier on Friday.

A historically black college in Houston, Texas Southern slipped into the First Four by getting hot and winning the Southwest Athletic College Tournament. The Tigers then were paired with Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference Tournament winner N.C. Central, another historically black school that was making its second straight appearance in Dayton for a play-in game with a completely new starting lineup.

Both the conferences get an automatic bid every year but rarely have to play each other.

N.C. Central (19-16) was led by Raasean Davis with 19 points, part of a starting five that included a pair of true freshmen guards and a walk-on.

Texas Southern led by 10 at the half on Jefferson's 17 points. The sophomore, who along with Miami's Chris Lykes is the shortest player in the tournament, tied the score at 10 with a jumper, then fed an alley-oop pass to Trayvon Reed for a monster dunk and followed with a layup to cap an 8-0 run. The Tigers wouldn't relinquish the lead.

UP NEXT:
Texas Southern plays No. 1 Xavier in Pittsburgh on Friday.

TOURNAMENT: A lot of good matchups in West

Continued from 1B

Other things to watch in the West region Thursday:

DIOPVS. THE DAUMINATOR: The matchup between No. 5 Ohio State and No. 12 South Dakota State features two of the country's best forwards.

It pits Big Ten player of the year Keita Bates-Diop (19.4 points, 8.8 rebounds) against Summit League Player of the Year Mike Daum (23 and 10), aka "The Dauminator." Daum is one of only three Division I players to average a double-double this season.

The 5 vs. 12 upset has become so common it can't really be seen as an upset anymore. Especially not in this case. This game has been targeted by no fewer than a dozen pundits as ripe for a Jackrabbits win. South Dakota State is in its third straight tournament. Last year, it came in as a 16 seed and was playing nose-to-nose with Gonzaga for 35 minutes before falling 66-46.

This year: "Obviously, expectations are really different for us," Daum said. "We're a group of guys who play really well together."

COUGARS, AZTECS DANCE AGAIN: In Wichita, sixth-seeded Houston (26-7) will make its first NCAA Tournament appearance since

2010 when it faces No. 11 seed San Diego State (22-10).

The once-proud Cougars have been to five Final Fours, including three straight by the Phi Slama Jama teams of 1982-84, but have not won a game in the tournament since that last foray. But their coach, Kelvin Sampson, has some experience making deep runs, including a Final Four trip when he was with Oklahoma.

San Diego State is back in the tournament under Brian Dutcher, who's in his first season in charge but is no stranger to this stage. He was on Steve Fisher's bench for eight previous NCAA trips.

ROLLING WOLVERINES: Michigan earned the No. 3 seed in the West Region after five straight wins to cap the regular season and four wins in four days to win a second straight Big Ten Tournament title.

The streaking Wolverines (28-7) will face No. 14 seed Montana on Thursday night in Wichita.

Michigan is certainly familiar with this stage, featuring four players who were part of its Sweet 16 team a year ago. Among them are Moe Wagner, one of the tournament's breakout stars, and Muhammad-Ali Abdur-Rahkman, who also played in the previous season.

DUCKS: Hope to still be playing on March 30 at the Final Four in Columbus

Continued from 1B

"As soon as we took the lead in the conference we were the team that everyone was gunning for, and this group answered the challenge and they did it again in the Pac-12 tournament. I think we're going to be ready."

The Ducks traveled approximately 11,652 miles during last year's NCAA Tournament. Oregon, a No. 10 seed, upset No. 7 Temple and No. 2 Duke at Cameron Indoor Arena in Durham, N.C., before taking down No. 3 Maryland in Bridge-

port, Conn.

Graves will use his own team's journey to remind them that No. 7 Green Bay and No. 10 Minnesota, the two teams that meet in the other first-round game Friday in Eugene, are also capable of surviving and advancing to next weekend's madness in Spokane.

"We have the luxury of knowing we better come ready to play because we were in that same situation last year," Graves said. "As a 10 we had to beat a seven and then beat a two, so we've been through it. We know at

this point any game you can get beat if you don't bring it.

"I think we're going to be ready and focused."

Oregon's players were given last week off to rest and study after winning the conference tournament with a 77-57 victory over Stanford in the March 4 title game in Seattle.

Graves and his staff soaked up the selection show with some of the team's biggest fans Monday before diving into film study of Seattle and the two possible second-round opponents.

The Redhawks (18-14)

earned an automatic bid by winning the WAC Tournament. This is the program's first trip to the NCAA Tournament.

Seattle's leading scorer, Alexis Montgomery, is from Beaverton.

"My dad was hoping we would play Oregon because it's only an hour and a half drive away, so we should have lots of support and lots of good energy coming from the Northwest," Montgomery told the Seattle Times. "It's super exciting. I can't really describe it with words. We're super grateful

we just have the opportunity to play more than the regular season."

The Ducks and the long shots from Seattle both have a chance to make a run at the Final Four without leaving the Pacific Northwest. The regional's Sweet 16 is March 24 and the Elite Eight is March 26 at Spokane Arena.

"There's a ton of advantages, but we've worked really hard to gain those advantages. That's the way the system works," Graves said of hosting the first two rounds and potentially returning to Spokane, where

he was the longtime coach at Gonzaga. "We played 15 games against teams in the top 50. That's as many as anybody, and we won 11 of those."

"This team has been tested, no doubt, against national level and national championship level teams."

If the Ducks were to advance to the Final Four, which would require beating No. 3 Ohio State and No. 1 Notre Dame if the seeds hold, they would likely run into UConn again in the national semifinals on March 30 in Columbus, Ohio.

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