

How-to (maybe) win your bracket pool

How knowing less about college basketball is the key to bracket success

By Zach Silva
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I have a love-hate relationship with March Madness brackets.

In the days between Selection Sunday and the first NCAA tournament game, there has always been a bubbling hope inside me believing this will be the year my bracket does well. The world is a glowing place until this pure joy quickly turns sour when one of my Final Four teams inexplicably loses on the first day of the tournament.

But not this year.

This year is different because this year I have figured out the secret to success: know less.

In year's past, I naively believed my knowledge of college basketball was on my side. This year I am done with knowledge. I have quit knowledge. (Or maybe not quit knowledge but now am no longer in college and have a job that focuses on high school sports [thx Sentinel] and so I have not been able to focus on the college games.)

I have been an avid student of the college game. From the start of the season to the conference tournaments, I was plugged in to the intricacies of college basketball. Not just Pac-12 teams but across the nation. I fell in love with a rag-tag St. John's team, I was confounded by how Kansas' Perry Ellis was still in college and through it all, my bracket always flopped.

Every year my sister Abe, who can stare at basketball game on TV and not know what is happening, beats me. Her knowledge, which stems from jersey colors and the fact that Kansas has a cute mascot, has overpowered me every time.

I once had a goldfish (RIP Collin 2010-2017) who I had fill out a bracket. I put a piece of tape down the middle of his bowl and then counted to 10. If he was on the left side, I wrote down the team on the top line and if he was on the right side, the bottom. I repeated this until he crowned a champion.

After the Elite Eight, sweet Collin was in the 99th percentile on ESPN's brackets while my bracket that I filled out – me, a human being who had been paying attention closely all season – was in the bottom .7 percentile.

Brackets are clearly not my expertise. Until this year.

With all thought suspended and the knowing brackets are arbitrary exercise in randomness and luck, I filled mine out on Sunday night with a wide-eyed ignorance. Teams I knew next-to-nothing about were suddenly popping up in my Sweet 16 and beyond. I was nearly swayed by NBA-talent of Oklahoma's Trae Young and Alabama's Collin Sexton to pull off upsets, but thought better of it.

As I sat back and admired my work, I am proud to say that I am now a true believer in Villanova basketball. And maybe, just maybe, these picks will let me be better than my old goldfish.

Springing into action: spring sports return



A member of the Elkton/Yoncalla softball team fields a grounder last week in preparation for the upcoming season. Area teams began playing yesterday.

PHOTO BY ZACH SILVA/CG SENTINEL

With spring sports, comes spring weather

Coaches make sure they are prepared for the rain, sun and everything in between

By Zach Silva
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No matter the classification or the sport being played, the spring sports teams across Oregon are brought together by a single common thread: the (often rainy) weather.

"You're watching weather reports constantly," said Cottage Grove boys golf coach Kent Russo.

"I probably check the weather 10 times a day at a minimum. You get to know where it's coming from, what it looks like, how long you have," said Cottage Grove baseball coach Dan Geiszler.

Living in an environment where the weather can flip from 71 and sunny to 48 and rainy in a day (see: earlier this week), coaches who are dependent on dry conditions have become amateur meteorologists as they find out when they can practice. Last season's constant rain still looms in the coach's minds as they prepare for the upcoming season.

"It was a huge issue; it was the big issue. It was by far the worst spring that I've been a part of; it was awful. It really has changed how I am going to go about things practice-wise because we were on the field five times through April," said Geiszler. "That's two months we were on the field five times. That's not including games."

Geiszler was not the only one who remembers the rain that came in last season. "Last year may be the worst weather we've had in a baseball season in my time. In 30 years or something. We were swamped all year. We ended up games backed up," said Elkton baseball coach Bill Shaw.

"But if you're going to play baseball in Oregon, you're going to have to get used to getting wet. That's just how it goes."

WEATHER continued on B3



Take a look at this week's special Sports Preview insert in this paper for an inside look at the local spring sports teams.

Football champions celebrate with ring ceremony



A group of football players admire their championship rings on Tuesday night in the Cottage Grove cafeteria.

PHOTO BY ZACH SILVA/CG SENTINEL

Team, fans and community celebrate Cottage Grove football team

By Zach Silva
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While some of the Cottage Grove football championship rings will be put on display, some are destined for a less prominent placement.

"I have this Nike shoebox and it has all my awards in it from high school and I believe it will go in the ring holder in the box in my closet," said senior Nate Farrell.

Regardless of where the rings will end up, it was a celebration on Tuesday night as the 2017 4A football champions received their championship rings – that they purchased – in the Cottage Grove High School cafeteria in front of over 150 family, friends and community members cheering in the audience.

"There are a lot of great people in this town. It's one of the reasons why this thing has been so special is because of the support – the people that have supported us," said head coach

Gary Roberts. "And hopefully it will continue and hopefully we'll get groups of kids that want to emulate the kids that are here now. It's been fun."

Roberts led the ceremony on Tuesday night with an introduction. A championship game highlight video was played and he then handed out rings to each member of the team. Bohemia Mining Days festival coordinator Cindy Weeldreyer also came to the podium where she announced that after the team did not receive a parade, that the championship team will be the grand marshals of this year's Grand Miners Parade on July 21.

"The whole community is very proud of what y'all have accomplished. The first football championship in school history, I mean that is so amazing. And at Bohemia Mining Days, we're all about history, that's what we do," she said before making the announcement. The rings themselves – that were \$175 and paid for by the families – were designed by the seniors of the team and were inspired by past championship rings from Sheldon and Marist.

"They gave us ideas because we had no idea," said Farrell.

RINGS continued on B3

Athletes of the Week



This week's athletes of the week are Cottage Bowl's Butch Cardoza and Natalie Clark. The owners of the Cottage Bowl, the pair was recently recognized as proprietors of the year and were honored at city council on Monday night.



BLACK
YELLOW
MAGENTA
CYAN