

# Sports

NCAA WOMEN'S BASKETBALL FINAL FOUR SET

## Familiar foes UConn, Notre Dame join Ducks, Baylor in Final Four

By Doug Feinberg  
AP Basketball Writer

NEW YORK — Geno Auriemma and his UConn Huskies will face a familiar foe in Notre Dame on the game's grandest stage.

The two teams, who have had the best rivalry in the sport over the past decade, will square off on Friday night in the Final Four.

It's the second consecutive year that they will play in the national semifinals. The Irish won a thriller last year, topping UConn in overtime on a last-second shot by Arike Ogunbowale.

She hit a similar shot two nights later at the buzzer to help Notre Dame win its first national championship since 2001, capping off one of the greatest Final Fours in NCAA history.

"Well, last year's game was a great finish, so I wouldn't mind seeing that again. But they're a great team," Notre Dame coach Muffet McGraw said. "They played really well against Louisville in the final yesterday. They're a team that has so many weapons. Katie Lou (Saumelson) looks like she's back in good form. Napheesa (Collier) has had a fabulous year. (Crystal) Dangerfield is a great defender, and she can score, as well. They have a lot of weapons. And similar to us, they don't have a very deep bench, so I think there's a lot of similarities between the teams."

"Going back to the first game, we really lost our composure in that game, so hopefully we've learned a lot of lessons since then."

UConn and Notre Dame have played six times in the Final Four or national championship game since 2011. They have split the six meetings with the Irish going 3-1 in the semifinals. Baylor will play Oregon in the first game of the Final Four.

The Huskies continued their remarkable record run, making the Final Four for the 12th consecutive year. Auriemma was at a loss for how his team has been able to reach the national semifinals every year.

"I don't think it's supposed to happen," Auriemma said of the incredible run. "Not in

### Oregon's Ionescu first-team All-American

NEW YORK (AP) — Napheesa Collier has had an incredible senior year so far, leading UConn back to the Final Four for a 12th consecutive year.

The senior forward averaged 20.9 points, 10.5 rebounds and shot 61.4% during the regular season for the Huskies to earn a spot on The Associated Press women's basketball All-America team.

"There haven't been a lot of players like her that I've seen, a few, but not a lot," UConn coach Geno Auriemma said.

She was joined on the All-America team Monday by Iowa's Megan Gustafson, Oregon's Sabrina Ionescu, Louisville's Asia Durr and Mississippi State's Teaira McCowan. Voting was done before the NCAA Tournament by the 28-member national media panel that votes on the AP Top 25 each week.

While Gustafson has been a double-double machine, Ionescu has rewritten the NCAA record book for triple-doubles and helped the Ducks reach the Final Four for the first time. She has 18 triple-doubles in her career, including one in the second round of the NCAA Tournament against Indiana. She averaged 19.6 points, 7.5 rebounds and 8.1 assists during the regular season for the Ducks. What's impressed her coach Kelly Graves is her competitiveness.

"She's defined our program since she got here. The fortunes of our program have turned since she got here," he said. "To go to the Elite Eight and what she's done that three years, that's crazy. We had only won five total NCAA games in the history of the program. She doesn't take plays off and hates to lose."

Oregon's Ruthy Hebert and Oregon State's Destiny Locum were named to the honorable mention team.

— Doug Feinberg, AP Basketball Writer

today's world the way things change and teams keep getting better and better. It's not normal. It's something that's hard to describe because even if you're writing a book and making it up, people would say it doesn't happen in real life. It has happened in real life, I'm still boggled, my mind doesn't get how it can happen this many years in a row with a different cast of characters that change so often. No it's not normal, it's not normal."

This one was a little different as UConn was a No. 2 seed for the first time since 2006. There is less pressure on the Huskies who have lost in the semifinals the past two seasons. UConn was undefeated the past two years heading into the final weekend of the season and lost both times on last-second shots. This season UConn has lost twice — to Baylor and Louisville.

Notre Dame was the team

that came into the season with the pressure, returning most of the national championship team and adding Brianna Turner, who missed last year with an injury. The Irish lost to the Huskies by a shocking 18 points in December. They also lost two games in the ACC regular season before hitting their stride. They were down seven at the half to Stanford in the Elite Eight before rallying for the win.

While UConn and Notre Dame have been Final Four mainstays the past decade, Baylor is making its first appearance since 2012 when the Lady Bears finished off a 40-0 season with the national championship.

The overall No. 1 seed has run through the NCAA Tournament so far, winning by an average of 36 points. After falling short in the NAAs the past few years, coach Kim Mulkey was thrilled for her seniors such as Kalani

*"We started from scratch, so to speak. We had a plan. We stuck to it, recruited really well... I think our student-athletes are real ambassadors."*

— Oregon coach Kelly Graves, whose Ducks take on No. 1 Baylor Friday at 4 p.m. in the Final Four

Brown, who will get a chance to play in the national semifinals.

"Certainly, you start with seniors. I am so happy for those seniors," the coach said. "I am so happy for those players, and I'm happy for Baylor University. I'm happy for Baylor University. Plaster that on the front page of every national newspaper. It doesn't get any more positive than this."

They'll face a Final Four newcomer in Oregon. The Ducks had made the Elite Eight the previous two years falling in the regional final each time. Sabrina Ionescu wouldn't let it happen a third straight season. The Ducks junior All-American guard had 31 points, eight assists and seven rebounds.

"All I gotta say is we're not done yet," she said after the 88-84 victory Sunday over top-seeded Mississippi State.

It's been a meteoric rise under coach Kelly Graves since he took over five years ago. The Ducks went from 10th place in the Pac-12 the year before Graves took over to winning the conference regular-season title this year and now reaching the Final Four for the first time.

"We started from scratch, so to speak," Graves said. "There were great kids in the program, really good players. We weren't quite the championship level yet. I give my staff a ton of credit. They worked their butts off. We had a plan. We stuck to it, recruited really well. ... I think our student-athletes are the real ambassadors."

"When young women come on campus, they see what it's like, we talk family. A lot of people profess, hey, their culture is about family. Well, they see it and they believe it because it's there."

## Durant ejected, but still leads Warriors

By Janie McCauley  
AP Sports Writer

OAKLAND, Calif. — Kevin Durant's brilliant night on both ends got cut short by an ejection.

Durant emphatically showed who is still No. 1 in the West, delivering a pair of jarring dunks late in the first half and finishing with 21 points and six assists before being tossed to lead the Golden State Warriors past the Denver Nuggets 116-99 on Tuesday night in a matchup of the top teams in the conference.

"The energy in the crowd at that point was incredible. When he attacked like that and hammered those two dunks down you could feel the power in the arena, you could feel our home crowd, you could feel the energy of our players," coach Steve Kerr said. "Those two plays kind of broke the game open and gave us a lot of life. I thought Kevin was tremendous tonight. It's unfortunate he

didn't get to play more."

DeMarcus Cousins had a season-best 28 points, on 12-for-17 shooting, 13 rebounds, five assists and two blocks for the Warriors (53-24), who have a two-game lead and the tiebreaker on Denver (51-26) with five games to go in the chase for the Western Conference's top seed and home-court advantage throughout the playoffs. Golden State lost out on the No. 1 spot to Houston last year, but still went on to capture a repeat title.

Durant was ejected with 8:21 left in the third. He became furious wanting a foul call when he airballed a 3-point shot over Paul Millsap, then pointed at and yelled toward official Zach Zarba. Cousins stood between Durant and Zarba, who wasted no time tossing the two-time reigning finals MVP.

"I thought he deserved the first technical I didn't think he deserved the sec-

ond one. I was very surprised. I watched the whole thing. I didn't think he deserved to be ejected," Kerr said. "I think Zach Zarba's one of the best officials in the game so I've got no complaints with Zach, he knows what he's doing."

Those were his 14th and 15th technicals, meaning he is one away from an automatic suspension. Cousins was ejected against Charlotte on Sunday, when the Warriors clinched their fifth straight Pacific Division crown.

"I think we can be better at keeping our poise, myself included," Kerr said. Before that, Durant dazzled.

He rebounded Jamal Murray's missed 3 and drove the court, dribbling with his left hand through the paint before switching hands to deliver a powerful one-handed slam. Durant had another moment before halftime, driving the baseline for a two-handed dunk as the Warriors grabbed a 59-43 halftime lead.

## Short-handed Blazers top Timberwolves

Portland moves into third place in Western Conference despite playing without 2 of its top 3 scorers

By Tyler Mason  
Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — With two of their top three scorers sidelined with injuries, the Portland Trail Blazers are relying on contributions from many different players.

That balance was on display Monday in Minnesota, and it yielded another win for the Blazers.

Evan Turner had 13 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists off the bench,

and the Blazers moved into a tie for third place in the Western Conference with a 132-122 victory over the Timberwolves.

Rodney Hood led Portland with 21 points. Enes Kanter added 20 points and 11 rebounds for the Blazers, who joined the idle Houston Rockets at 49-28.

"I really thought this game kind of exemplifies the way we need to play," Portland coach Terry Stotts said.

Turner completed the fourth triple-double of his career and his first with Portland on a rebound in the fourth quarter. Turner's teammates celebrated on the bench.

"I think that says a lot about our team," Turner said. "I think we all are genuinely happy when each other sees different parts of success."

Turner was a perfect 5 of 5 from the floor, making his triple-double just the seventh in NBA history to happen on five or fewer field goal attempts. He played all 12 minutes of the fourth quarter and had eight points and eight rebounds in the period.

Portland led by as many as 19 in the first half after going 10 of 16 from 3-point range before halftime.

Andrew Wiggins had 21 points for Minnesota, while Gorgui Dieng scored 18 on 7-of-8 shooting.

Portland's lead disappeared in the second half as Minnesota went ahead in the third quarter. The Timberwolves went on a 16-6 run, including eight points from Wiggins, to chip away, then closed the period with a 12-0 run to take a 100-97 lead into the fourth.

A 10-2 run put Portland up 124-114 with 4:29 remaining. Seth Curry had eight of the Blazers' 10 points during the run.

"We just keep digging ourselves a hole in the first half," Wiggins said. "We fight back. But the majority of the time, we're not going to win fighting back."

Kanter has seen his minutes increase since the season-ending injury to center Jusuf Nurkic. Kanter played 26 minutes on Monday, his second-most since joining the Blazers in mid-February.

Portland outscored Minnesota 35-22 in the fourth quarter as the Wolves couldn't make stops on defense after taking the lead.

"It feels like Groundhog Day right now," said Timberwolves interim coach Ryan Saunders. "It's got to hurt when somebody scores on you, too. We've got to get to that point."

Portland bounced back after a loss to Detroit on Saturday snapped a six-game winning streak. The Trail Blazers are 10-2 in their last 12 games.

Portland's bench scored 60 points, including 19 from Curry.

"There was just a lot going well offensively for most of the guys who played," Stotts said.

## Mariners now 7-1

By Terry Blount  
Associated Press

SEATTLE — Marco Gonzales and Scott Servais had a little argument after the eighth inning. Gonzales, Seattle's No. 1 left-hander, wanted to finish what he started. As his manager, Servais wasn't looking to push Gonzales' pitch count too early in the season.

"We had a discussion," Gonzales said. "It ended with me saying I want it. He looked me in the eyes and said, 'It's your game.' There was no doubt in my mind I was going back out."

Gonzales pitched into the ninth but couldn't quite finish up after Dan Vogelbach hit a tiebreaking homer an inning earlier. Anthony Swarzak, coming off the injured list, finished up the Mariners' 2-1 win over the Los Angeles Angels, which propelled them to 7-1 for the first time in franchise history.

Gonzales (3-0) was hoping to pitch the first complete game in baseball this season, but a one-out walk to Mike Trout and a single to center by Andrelton Simmons ended his night.

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