

## WOMEN'S NCAA TOURNAMENT BRACKET

## 2021 NCAA TOURNAMENT



## Tournament

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History is on the side of the top teams. A one or two seed has won every women's tournament title since 1997, including the last eight by a No. 1.

Texas A&M coach Gary Blair, who led the Aggies to the 2011 national championship, said his advice is always to play the game with "no fear."

"That's how you advance in the NCAAs. If you come in thinking that this team is No. 1 or No. 2, you have no chance," said Blair, whose Aggies are a two-seed. "But if you come in with a no-fear attitude, Cinderellas happen all the time."

"I've been a lower-seeded team at Arkansas. I'm still the lowest-seeded team that ever made the Final Four when I was at Arkansas as a No. 9 seed. We had the opportunity out at Stanford to see a No. 16 beat a No. 1 ... That's always been a

great teaching lesson to me."

Even if that trend doesn't change, there are more teams capable of pulling off upsets and at least reaching the Final Four especially since there were fewer regular season games and practices than there would be during normal year.

The talent also seems to be more spread out now.

A look at the AP All-America team and for the first time ever there were 15 different schools represented on it. Throughout the season, the No. 1 team in the poll changed four times—the second most all-time. N.C. State and Stanford both lost games to unranked teams this season.

Also, with all the NCAA Tournament being played on neutral courts there's a better chance that there will be more upsets as lower-seeded teams won't have to win on a higher-seeded squad's homecourt to advance to the Sweet 16.

## Oregon's Sedona Prince spurs NCAA to upgrade weight rooms at tournament

The NCAA has improved the weight room at its women's basketball tournament in San Antonio after outcry over the disparity between the training rooms available to teams in the men's and women's postseason tournaments.

Oregon's Sedona Prince gave basketball fans a glimpse of the conditions Thursday with a TikTok video that went viral. The video displayed stark and eye-opening differences in the amount of training equipment provided to men's and women's teams.

The NCAA later apologized for not providing adequate equipment for women's basketball teams.

"We fell short this year in what we've been doing to prepare in the last 60 days for 64 for teams to be here in San Antonio, and we acknowledge that," Lynn Holzman, the NCAA's vice president of women's basketball, said during a press briefing Friday.

The NCAA followed up with several additions to the weight room, including more dumbbells, weight racks and mobility bands.

Prince posted a new video Saturday, celebrating the updated training room with her teammates and thanking the NCAA and her followers for making the change happen.

—The Oregonian

Any team that will make a deep run will have to deal with the mental aspect as well. A school that wins the national

championship will have spent nearly three weeks in San Antonio cooped up in their hotel. Stanford, the overall No. 1

seed, might be in the best position to overcome that. The Cardinal spent nine weeks away from home because of the virus. If they can, VanDerveer could win her first national championship since 1992.

"I think it helps," the Hall of Fame coach said. "We're used to testing every day and used to eating in our rooms. It has prepared us for this. We've been her done this, we can handle it."

VanDerveer tells her players their middle name has to be "flexible."

Some other things to watch for in the tournament:

## Fresh faces

There are a lot of talented freshmen and sophomores who are making their debuts in the NCAAs. Iowa's Caitlin Clark led the nation in scoring at 26.7 points per game and Paige Bueckers of UConn became the third freshman to ever earn first-team All-America honors.

South Carolina sophomore Aliyah Boston, also an All-American, will be playing in her first NCAA Tournament after last season's was wiped out by the pandemic.

## First timers

Four teams will be making their NCAA Tournament debuts, although they will all have a tough task to make it a long stay. Bradley, High Point, Stony Brook and Utah Valley. As an 11-seed Bradley has the best chance to make it out of the first round as the other three teams would need to pull off upsets as 15 and 16 seeds.

## Missing their leader

UConn, which has made the Final Four every tournament since 2008, will be missing coach Geno Auriemma for the first two games because he contracted the coronavirus last week. Auriemma should be back for the Sweet 16.

## Skiing

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As the first-run leader, Pinturault was the final starter in the second run on Saturday afternoon.

He had won the overall title two minutes before he began the run as Odermatt slipped down the leaderboard.

Still, Pinturault delivered a winning run to finish 0.20 seconds ahead of Filip Zubcic. Mathieu Faivre, the world championships gold medalist last month, was third, 0.21 back. Odermatt ended 1.28 back.

Pinturault also won the giant

slalom discipline title. The 100 points he earned with the win overtook Odermatt, who held a 25-point lead before racing.

"A bit sad now, but that's it," said the 23-year-old Swiss. "It's a beautiful season for me, but today I'm a bit frustrated."

Long predicted to be the best all-around skier, Pinturault was runner-up in the past two seasons.

He also had three third-place finishes when now-retired Austrian great Marcel Hirscher was winning a record eight straight titles from 2012 to 2019.

A 34th career win in World Cup races lifted Pinturault out

of a tie with Bode Miller and into eighth place on the men's all-time list.

Also Saturday: **Vlhova's 6th-place finish enough to claim overall title:** LENZERHEIDE, Switzerland — Making history for her nation, Petra Vlhova won the women's World Cup overall title on Saturday as the first Slovakian to be crowned the best all-around skier.

Vlhova needed only a top-14 finish in her specialist slalom event, and placed a distant sixth in a race that Katharina Liensberger won by 1.24 seconds.

"I won also for my country.

It means a lot" Vlhova said in an interview with Austrian broadcaster ORF. "I cannot believe it."

The race win earned Liensberger the season-long discipline title, edging Mikaela Shiffrin who also placed second in Saturday's race. Michelle Gisin was third, trailing Liensberger by 1.95.

The result gave the 25-year-old Vlhova an unbeatable lead of more than 100 points in the standings over Lara Gut-Behrami. The Swiss racer, who won the overall title in 2016, skips slalom but will compete against Vlhova in the season-ending giant slalom on Sunday.

A first giant crystal globe trophy for Vlhova offset letting her lead slip in the slalom standings.

She dropped to third in the season-long slalom standings, a discipline that she won last year.

"I'm a little disappointed how I was today because I lost the cup in slalom," she said, though adding that the overall title had been "the main goal this season."

Shiffrin is a three-time overall champion though chose to focus on technical events this season and did not start in super-G or downhill in the World Cup.



Marco Trovati/AP

**Slovakia's Petra Vlhova gets to the finish area after completing a World Cup slalom in Lenzerheide, Switzerland, on Saturday.**