

FIRST ROUND <i>MARCH 15-16</i>	SECOND ROUND <i>MARCH 17-18</i>	REGIONAL SEMIS <i>MARCH 22-23</i>	REGIONAL FINALS <i>MARCH 24-25</i>		REGIONAL FINALS <i>MARCH 24-25</i>	REGIONAL SEMIS <i>MARCH 22-23</i>	SECOND ROUND <i>MARCH 17-18</i>	FIRST ROUND <i>MARCH 15-16</i>
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- (1) Virginia
- (16) UMBC
- (8) Creighton
- (9) Kansas St
- (5) Kentucky
- (12) Davidson
- (4) Arizona
- (13) Buffalo
- (6) Miami
- (11) Loyola - Chicago
- (3) Tennessee
- (14) Wright St
- (7) Nevada
- (10) Texas
- (2) Cincinnati
- (15) Georgia St
- (1) Xavier
- (16) NC Central / Texas SO
- (8) Missouri
- (9) Florida St
- (5) Ohio St
- (12) South Dakota
- (4) Gonzaga
- (13) UNC Greensboro
- (6) Houston
- (11) San Diego St
- (3) Michigan
- (14) Montana
- (7) Texas A&M
- (10) Providence
- (2) North Carolina
- (15) Lipscomb

- (1) Villanova
- (16) LIU Brooklyn/Radford
- (8) Virginia Tech
- (9) Alabama
- (5) West Virginia
- (12) Murray St
- (4) Wichita St
- (13) Marshall
- (6) Florida
- (11) St Bonaventure/UCLA
- (3) Texas Tech
- (14) SF Austin
- (7) Arkansas
- (10) Butler
- (2) Purdue
- (15) CS Fullerton
- (1) Kansas
- (16) Penn
- (8) Seton Hall
- (9) NC State
- (5) Clemson
- (12) New Mexico St
- (4) Auburn
- (13) Charleston
- (6) TCU
- (11) Arizona St/Syracuse
- (3) Michigan St
- (14) Bucknell
- (7) Rhode Island
- (10) Oklahoma
- (2) Duke
- (15) Iona

SBNATION

2018 NCAA MARCH MADNESS BRACKET

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SOUTH
ATLANTA, GA

EAST
BOSTON, MA

NATIONAL CHAMPIONS

FINAL
APRIL 2ND

FINAL FOUR

MARCH 31ST SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

WEST
LOS ANGELES, CA

MIDWEST
OMAHA, NE

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BY MIKE RUTHERFORD @CARDCHRONICLE

1. Don't get cute and pick a 16 seed.

Maybe the most well-known NCAA tournament fact is that a No. 1 seed has never lost to a No. 16. Since the tournament expanded to 64 teams, No. 1 seeds are a perfect 132-0 in their first round games. Sure, college basketball has been weird this season, but there's a limit. Pick all four No. 1 seeds to win at least one game.

2. Don't get too crazy with your wildcard Final Four pick.

Riding all four top seeds to the national semifinals might not be the way to go, but you shouldn't get too wild with the team or teams you pick to make the Final Four in their place. Only four double-digit seeds have ever been to the Final Four: three No. 11 seeds — LSU (1986), George Mason (2006), and VCU (2011) — and No. 10 seed Syracuse in 2016. None of those teams won a game after advancing out of regional play.

3. Look back at the conference tournaments before settling on a national champion.

No team has ever lost the first game of its conference tournament and gone on to win the NCAA tournament. If you're backing a squad that went one-and-done in its league tourney to win the Big Dance, you may want to reconsider.

4. Be careful when picking a Big Ten or West Coast team to win it all.

One of the longest-running debates in college basketball is when a team from the West Coast or Big Ten will win its next national title. A Big Ten team hasn't won it all since Michigan State in 2000, and a West Coast squad hasn't cut down the nets since Arizona stunned Kentucky in 1997. Gonzaga came one win away from ending that streak last season.

5. Don't pick a No. 5 seed to win it all.

You're going to hear a lot about this being a "wide open tournament," and that's understandable given the madness of the first four months of the season. This might lead you down the path of picking a team not seeded 1 or 2 to win the whole thing, which is fine. Just make sure you're not riding with a No. 5 seed. Every seed line from 1-8 has produced at least one national champion besides the five-seed line. No. 5 seeds have made it to the title game three times, but have never been able to be the last team standing.

6. Pick at least one 12 seed to win in the first round.

The 12/5 upset is a March Madness tradition unlike any other. In 29 of the last 33 years, at least one 12 seed has advanced out of the first round of the tournament. Over the last 10 years, 12 seeds actually own an impressive overall record of 19-21 against five seeds. It almost always happens at least once, so pick a 12 seed you like and go ahead and move them onto Round 2.

7. Avoid the trendy 8/9 team.

Every year on Selection Sunday, there is an underachieving major conference team that gets thrown into the 8/9 "death game" and leaves everyone predicting that they will upset the No. 1 seed in Round 2. That team almost always gets caught looking ahead (or just isn't as good as people want them to be) and doesn't make it out of the first round. Don't fall for the hype.

8. Don't automatically move all four No. 2 seeds to the second weekend.

In 20 of the last 21 years, at least one No. 2 seed has been knocked out of the tournament before the Sweet 16. Last year, both Duke and Louisville bit it in the second round.

9. Believe in at least one "First Four" team.

Even though the "First Four" — those four games in Dayton on Tuesday and Wednesday featuring the lowest-seeded four teams in the field and the last four at-large teams to get in — has been fairly controversial and often mocked since its inception in 2011, a team coming out of Dayton has won at least one game in the tournament's "main draw" in every year since the First Four became a thing. That trend continued last season when USC defeated Providence in Dayton, then moved on to upset SMU two days later. The First Four has also produced three Sweet 16 squads and a Final Four team in VCU. Pick one that you like and ride it to at least the second round.

10. Take a close look at the 13/4 matchups as well.

We just talked about the frequency of the 12/5 upset in the NCAA Tournament, but how about some love for the work the No. 13 seeds have been putting in over the past decade? It may not have happened in 2017, but at least one 13 seed has won a game in the tournament in seven of the last 10 years.

11. Be wary of the No. 1 overall seed.

The NCAA tournament selection committee began designating a No. 1 overall seed in 2004. Since then, that team has gone on to win the national championship just three times — Florida in 2007, Kentucky in 2012, and Louisville in 2013. The best team doesn't always win this thing, and in fact, the odds are against it.

12. Roll with at least one surprise Elite Eight team.

You might not want to get too crazy with your Final Four, but at least make sure your Elite Eight has some flavor. In each of the last seven seasons, at least one team seeded seventh or worse has played in a regional final.

13. Have at least one non-top seed in your Final Four.

It's tempting to go chalk and wind up with a Final Four of nothing but No. 1 seeds, but history shows that's not the way to go. The last weekend of the tournament has featured all four No. 1 seeds just one time (2008) since the event expanded to 64 teams. Three No. 1 seeds making it to the Final Four has been nearly as unique, happening just five times. Plus, picking all four No. 1 seeds is boring anyway.

14. Pick at least one "major" upset.

Even if you don't like any of the 12 or 13 seeds this year, pick at least one stunner in your bracket. At least one top four seed has lost in the first round of nine of the last 10 NCAA tournaments.

15. Conference records do matter. Sort of.

There will likely be at least one or two teams in this year's tournament that had losing records in conference play. Those teams typically don't last long in the Big Dance. A team with a losing conference record hasn't won more than one game in the tournament since 2005 (NC State) and hasn't won more than two games since 1987 (LSU).

16. Don't feel bad about picking a No. 1 seed to win it all.

Even if you're not going with the overall No. 1 seed (see rule No. 11), don't let anybody shame you for picking a top seed to cut down the nets. Since seeding the field began, No. 1 seeds have won more national titles (21) than all other seeds combined (17). That trend continued last season with No. 1 seed North Carolina taking down fellow No. 1 seed Gonzaga to win the championship.