

The Duke goes dancing

The staff previews March Madness

There are 65 teams in the NCAA Tournament, but opinions on how it will play out number in the millions. Everyone fills out at least one bracket, from the office receptionist to President Barack Obama (he chose Kansas).

Adding a few more shouting voices into the void, writers from *The Duquesne Duke* weigh in on the strengths and weakness of the conferences.

Big East

If anything's a sure thing, it's Big East teams in the first round. Having evolved into college basketball's elite conference, the Big East sends eight teams to the Big Dance this year, seven of which will likely be involved in second-round action.

Notre Dame may be the odd team out. Inconsistent and overseeded, the Fighting Irish take on a very capable first-round opponent in Old Dominion. The Colonial Athletic champions have defeated Georgetown this season and come from a conference known for producing occasional surprises. George Mason-VCU, anyone?

Now, unless you're Clark Kellogg, you're probably looking for a few capable two or three seeds for your Final Four. Look no further than West Virginia and Villanova.

The Mountaineers have thrived under third-year coach Bob Huggins, who guided his alma-matter to their first conference title in school history.

Villanova struggled through the last month-and-a-half of the regular season, but the Wildcats compete in a weak region and their up-tempo, athletic offense could be a good match-up against Duke, should the two meet in the Elite Eight.

DON'T BE SURPRISED IF UTEP GIVES 'CUSE A TOUGH MATCHUP IN THE SWEET 16

Big Ten

The muddled mess of Midwestern teams, also known as the Big Ten, have struggled all year with consistency, and the conference is poised for a very average March.

The Evan Turner-led Ohio State Buckeyes have emerged as the conference frontrunner and are the only legitimate contender for late-round action. Their chances of getting past both Georgetown and Kansas en route to Indianapolis, though, are small.

The remaining Big Ten reps, Michigan State, Purdue, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, have not been consistent enough this year to be sure picks in your bracket, Purdue look especially vulnerable matched up against a likely-sleeper in the Siena Saints, who hope to advance to the second-round at the expense of a higher seed for the third consecutive year.



AP PHOTO

Freshman point guard John Wall (above) leads top seed Kentucky in the East region of the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament. Their stiffest competition in the region may come from Wellington Smith (right) and West Virginia.

Atlantic Coast Conference

As a conference, the ACC may help exemplify why this tournament is known for its madness; Florida State, Florida, Wake Forest and Clemson are all involved in some of this year's most intriguing first-round match-ups, which may also give you a headache when picking your bracket.

Florida St. and Wake Forest each find themselves locked in two of the four infamous eight-seed vs. nine-seed games that leave bracket-filler-outers perplexed every year.

With the Seminoles' size and physicality, give Florida St. the edge over a young Gonzaga team. As for Wake Forest-Texas, flip a coin.

Duke is the ACC frontrunner and is the conference's only strong chance for representation deep into tourney play. The selection committee made sure they give their favorite team an easy road to the Elite Eight, and the Blue Devils will happily cruise to their regional final in Houston.

- Will Dodds

Big 12

More than half of the Big 12 conference, including No. 1 overall seed Kansas, made it to this year's tournament. Kansas and Oklahoma State will face a tough road in the Midwest region, with potential lottery picks about on regional opponents like Ohio State, Georgetown and Michigan State.

Kansas State's elite backcourt duo of Jacob Pullen and Denis Clemente will give the Wildcats a big boost in a tournament that rewards superior guard play. Texas' do-it-all senior swingman Damion James is a nightly double-double threat, and he alone could give Kentucky a scare in the second round.

If you're a Big 12 fan, the South is the region for you. Fifth-seed Texas A&M's potential path could set up well for a deep run. If the Aggies can take advantage of a Robbie Hummel-less Purdue and an overrated Duke, we could easily see an A&M-Baylor Big 12 battle in the Elite 8.

Southeastern Conference

The SEC sent four teams to the tourney, including arguably the best team in the nation (Kentucky) with the best player in the country (John Wall), to wreak havoc. If hot-headed freshman DeMarcus Cousins can keep his temper in check, Kentucky is virtually a lock for the



AP PHOTO

regional final.

Florida appears to have snuck into the dance on namesake alone. The Gators stumbled in, having lost four of their last five. Billy Donovan's slumping lineup probably isn't the group of oxen you want to hitch your wagon to in this year's March Madness Trail.

Tennessee and Vanderbilt are unique in that they rely on scoring centers. Tennessee's Wayne Chism and Vandy's A.J. Ogilvy don't dominate the glass, but they can put up points better than most college big men.

But in a tournament where hot 3-point shooters rule, the Volunteers shoot just 31 percent from beyond the arc, crippling their chances for a deep run.

Pac-10

The usually competitive Pac-10 is shockingly

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Women prep for WNIT

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Pollino said last year's appearance in the tournament made the team look forward to post-season games this year.

"We knew our chances would be pretty good," Pollino said. "We all would have been pretty disappointed if we didn't make it."

Last year, the team lost in the first round 59-58 to Butler in a game that was decided in the last three seconds of play.

Pryor said the fact that it was the team's first post-season appearance may have had something to do with the loss.

"Last year, we didn't know what to expect," Pryor said. "It was definitely a learning experience for this year."

The Dukes went 20-12 in regular season. Northwestern went 16-14.

The Dukes play at 8:00 p.m. Thursday at Northwestern. The game will be televised on the Big Ten Network.

Title IX's bad rap

ANGLE — from page 8

really want to offer, but not give the real effort and consideration into those extra women's teams.

This argument is used to attack schools when women's programs are sub-par, or do not garner the attention some people wish they did.

The various Title IX arguments can be used to attack the actions of schools, whether those actions are at the disadvantage of men or women. If people are going to use this as a way to knock down schools regardless of their actions, the arguments hold little value.

That's like saying that my column is bad because it is both too serious and too comical. You can't just trot out Title IX whenever you want to bash a college for its athletic department's actions. The athletic departments have large, extremely complex budgets that take into account more things than the average Title IX basher even could think about.

I'm not saying that when schools cut funding for certain programs, Title IX is not part of it; I'm saying that people need to give this one law a break and go after the real reasons that the schools take their actions, whatever they may be.