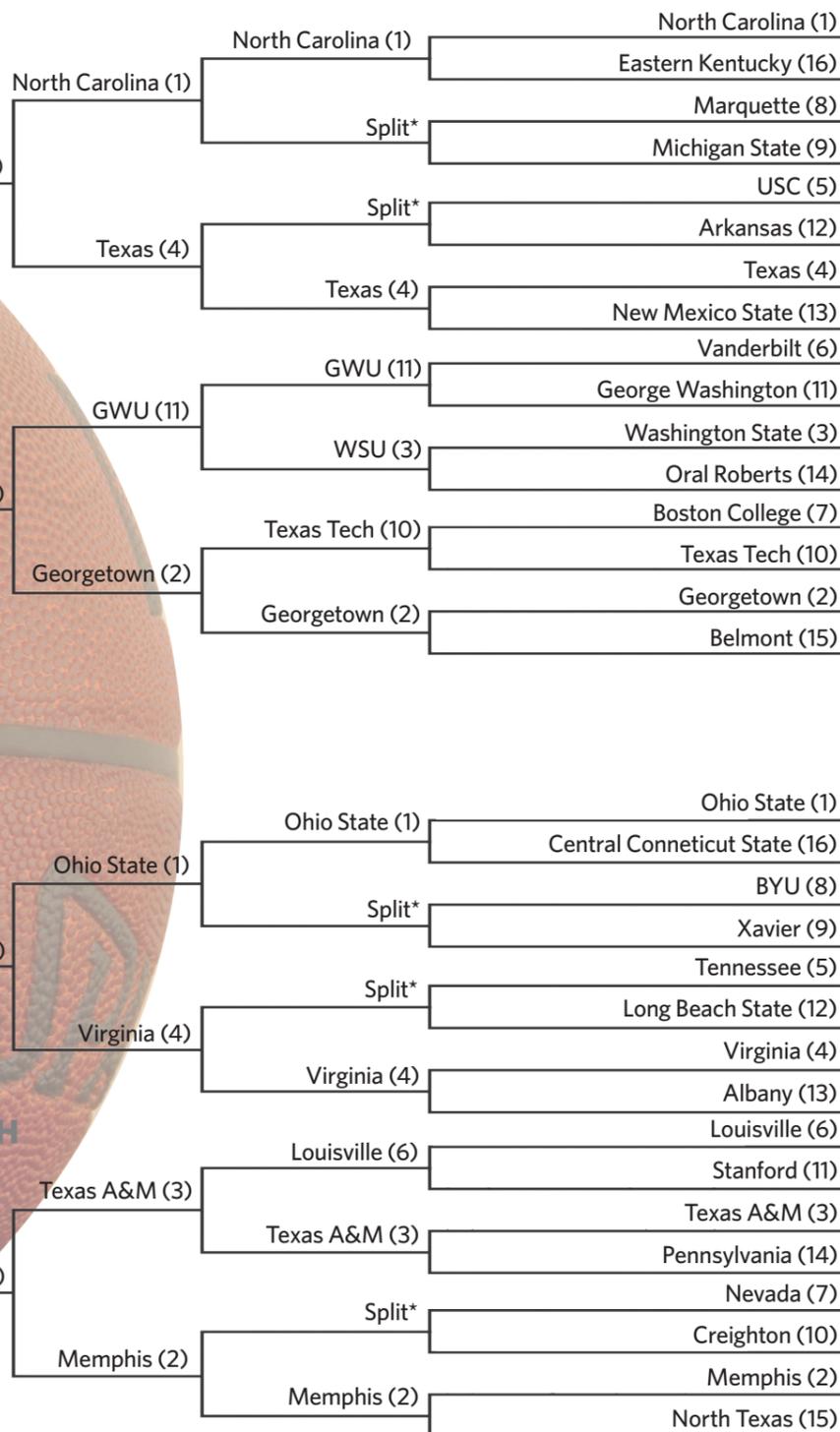
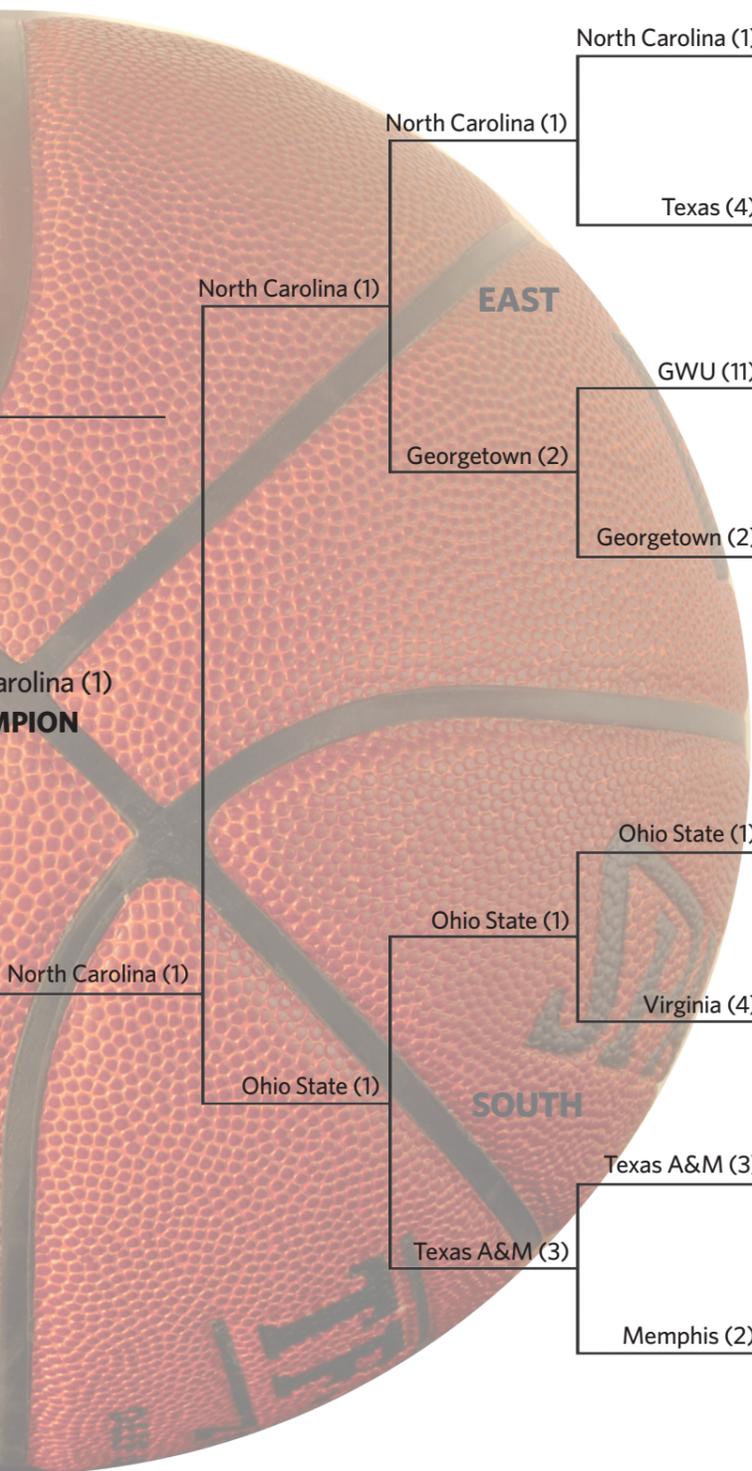


THE BRACKET

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for NCAA March Madness



*No consensus could be reached on split matches, but by our numbers, neither stands a chance against their opponent in the next round.

>> Matches we'd like to see

UNC/Texas in the Sweet 16

You've got a potentially classic matchup in the post, as Tyler Hansbrough from UNC will try to contain the versatility of Texas' super-frosh Kevin Durant. The sure-fire lotto pick (if he chooses to leave) will probably win the battle between the two, but look for UNC to win the war. The Tar Heels are almost custom-made for March Madness, and with Roy Williams as their coach North Carolina can feel confident entering the tournament as the top-ranked seed. They're solid, but I don't see Texas surviving the shit storm that the tournament brings about. Carolina on the other hand, have sails on deck that are made of three-ply toilet paper. The winds of shit will hit both teams, but the Tar Heels will be the only team standing after the storm subsides.

OSU/Texas AM in the Elite Eight

Texas A&M will undoubtedly try to push the pace against the Buckeyes, but Ohio State should counter by pushing the ball inside to Greg Oden and allowing him to control the game. Should it still be close in the final minute, Mike Conley Jr and Acie Law IV are two of the best clutch shooters in the country this season. A&M's uptempo attack and Ohio State's methodical approach can't coexist, so whoever wins that war will be the team that advances.

Pittsburgh/Kansas in the Elite Eight

It's always intriguing to watch matchups that feature two teams that should be considered on their heels. In Kansas' case, it's because of their first-round exits two years running, and for Pittsburgh, it's because they suffered most of their losses heading into the tournament. With both of these teams feeling as though they have something to prove, the desperation factor should play a key role in making this potential matchup an edge-of-your-seater. Look for Brandon Rush and Mario Chalmers to be big factors should this matchup happen. However, Pitt will counter with a heightened readiness to play on both sides of the ball—something they should do all tournament long. Aaron Gray will step up and be the leader and motivator that the Panthers so desperately need to make the Final Four.

Florida/Arizona in the second round

While 'Zona has been disappointing this year, they are easily the most talent of the eight and nine seeds. And with Florida playing like the shakiest of first seeds, a matchup between the two could mean an early exit for the defending champs. The Wildcats will counter Florida's experienced lineup with veteran point guard Mustafa Shakur and freshman forward Chase Budinger. If the duo get hot from beyond the arc, they could catch the Gators off guard and signal an early exit for the Gainesvillains.

is one of the most well-rounded swingmen in the country, and Roy Hibbert, a 7'2" centre, is the latest in a long line of standout big men from Georgetown. The Hoyas' downside, however, is that neither of those guys has the ability to win the tournament single-handedly for his team, and their supporting cast is nowhere near as strong as the four earlier teams on this list.

University of Pittsburgh

The Panthers were soundly defeated by Georgetown in the Big East final, but they should have fewer matchup problems with their potential opponents in the West bracket. Led by senior centre Aaron Grey, Pittsburg will have to play lockdown defence and play efficiently on offence to have hope of making it to Atlanta for the Final Four. Also against them is that they're 2-6 against ranked opponents this season, though the two wins did come in the Big East tournament.

Texas A&M University

The Aggies have played some of the competition in the country this year: Texas, UCLA Kansas and LSU. While they bowed out early in the Big Twelve tournament, Acie Law IV is still one of the more

entertaining guards in the tournament, and the Aggies have experience in the Big Dance, upsetting Syracuse as a twelve-seed last year. Law will hit the big shots for A&M if they keep it close late into games.

University of Texas

The Longhorns are a contender for one reason alone: Kevin Durant. The 18-year-old has been the best player in the country this year, averaging 25.6 points and 11.3 rebounds per game, and throwing up ridiculous box scores like 37 and 23 against Texas Tech, 37 and 16 versus Colorado, and 37 and ten in the Big Twelve final against Kansas, which was in his third game in three days. If fellow freshman DJ Augustin plays in control and head coach Rick Barnes remembers that he has the most dominating college basketball player in the country on his team, then Texas could be playing into April.

>> Upset Specials

Winthrop University

The Eagles came close to knocking off highly touted Gonzaga last season, and this year they're back with

another veteran squad. Michael Jenkins is one of the best and most frequent three-point shooters in the NCAA, and the Eagles have an athletic squad and a coach who aggressively pressures other teams with his full-court defence. With a weak bracket and a first-round meeting with Notre Dame, the Eagles have legitimate Sweet 16 dreams.

George Washington University

The Colonials had a very good squad last season that many believed would make a lot of noise come tourney-time. Instead, GWU made barely a whisper as they exited in the second round. This year, no one has any expectations on the Colonials, who had a much less impressive season. But, they still retain many of the players from last year, including leading scorer Maureece Rice.

Virginia Tech

It's kind of hokey to call a five-seed an upset special, but the Hokies have been bracket busters all year. They beat Duke in Durham and UNC twice, including in Chapel Hill. Of course, VT has been upset their fair share as well, but if they make it far enough, they could be the team to knock off Kansas.

