

What To Watch: NCAA Tournament, Elite Eight — Part 2



While Ohio State men's basketball saw its season come to a close last weekend, the madness continues on Saturday as two teams book spots in the Final Four in New Orleans. The Midwest and East Regionals will take place in Chicago and Philadelphia.

NO. 1 KANSAS vs. NO. 10 MIAMI

This season, Kansas was the only No. 1 seed to reach the Elite Eight, making the Jayhawks the tournament favorite from here. The team's success under head coach Bill Self is evident with three Final Fours, two title game appearances and a national championship in 2008.

Kansas struggled to produce consistent performances in the regular season. The Jayhawks couldn't pull away from the Bluejays, and they blew a 10-point lead against the Friars. However, when the collection of talent finds a rhythm, they can beat any opponent they face. That trend continued in the NCAA Tournament with its wins over Creighton and Providence.

Miami upset Southern California in the first round and shocked the college basketball landscape when they defeated No. 2-seeded Auburn, a national title favorite. The Hurricanes toppled Iowa State in the Sweet 16, 70-56.

This season, Miami has four players in their sixth year, and that experience is part of what has taken the program to the Elite Eight. Isaiah Wong, Charlie Moore and Kameron McGusty all made a significant impact in the team's first three games.

"We got picked to finish 12th preseason in our conference eight months ago," McGusty said after beating Iowa. "It's a long season, but at the beginning of the season if we would have told you we were going to the Elite Eight, everybody would laugh at us and look at us crazy."

NO. 8 UNC vs. NO. 15 ST. PETER'S

North Carolina has been to the Final Four six times in the last 22 seasons. The program has one of the most tradition-rich histories left in the NCAA Tournament, and this year could be feature another team that writes its names in the books.

According to seeding, the Tar Heels received the easiest road to the Final Four of any Elite Eight team.

However, a small Jesuit school from New Jersey called St. Peter's already reminded three programs that seeds don't matter. The Peacocks has upset No. 2-seeded Kentucky, No. 7-seeded Murray State and No. 3-seeded Purdue in the tournament, and they aren't looking to stop their run against North Carolina.

St Peter's fans packed the Wells Fargo Center against the Boilermakers and roared as their team made history, becoming the first No. 15 seed to reach the Elite Eight in NCAA Tournament history.

"Jersey City has been unbelievable for us," Peacocks Coach Shaheen Holloway said after their win over Purdue. "But I want to give a shout-out to our student-athletes and the whole student body. They're taking buses down here, they're doing videos, watch parties. It's been tremendous."

The Peacocks reminded college basketball fans that the tournament is called March Madness for a reason, allowing the nation to ride behind a program creating one of the best storylines in the sport's history. Can St. Peter's magical run last one more game?

"I've got guys from New Jersey and New York City," Holloway told reporters this week. "You think we're scared of anything?"