

## It's a fun fever to run

**By Larry Pritchett**

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To paraphrase Bruce Dickinson (Christopher Walken) of SNL fame, "Guess what? I got a fever, and the only prescription is more NCAA Basketball!" The good thing about this fever is that you can actually get more cowbell and basketball in the NCAA basketball tournament. Teams bring their bands and most of them have cowbell players. It can't get much better than that.

By the time this hits the paper, the NCAA tournament will be through the second weekend and down to the final four but we have had some decent games, some exciting games and some really bad basketball in the first weekend.

Like all tournaments there are upsets and this one has had some. Wichita State over Pittsburg was a nine seed over an eight seed and that isn't much of an upset, but then the Shockers knocked off a number one seed in Gonzaga and that was a much bigger upset.

LaSalle getting through the first two games over Kansas State and Ole Miss was kind of an eye opener, but the biggest shocker was Florida Gulf Coast defeating Georgetown and then San Diego State to make it to the sweet 16. The first ever a 15 seed has made it that far into the tournament.

The Florida Gulf Coast University has only been in place for 16 years and just started a basketball program six years ago and moved to Division 1 just a couple of years ago, so to make it this far in the tournament is something.

They run and gun, they dunk, they shoot and hit three's and are short on modesty at times so they fit right in with the other Florida schools. That might be harsh, but it is hard to think of a Florida University and not think of the Miami football of old.

I probably am not being fair about the lumping of all those into one group, but I will have to think about it before I change my mind.

The KU-North Carolina game of course featured Old Roy "Benedict" Williams that used to be the head man at Kansas and vowed that he wouldn't leave only to take off for North Carolina the next year and this year's Jayhawks.

Old Roy has had a problem beating KU since he left and the Jayhawk Nation has a long memory and love to put a little more volume in the Rock, Chalk, Jayhawk chant at the end of the game and they did a little of that again in this game.

In truth the first half of the game was just about the worst basketball that you could imagine at this level between two schools so rich in basketball tradition. At one time KU was something like 8-25 from the field and NC was 8-29. KU scored 21 points in the first half and was lucky to be down only nine. The Hawks came out and put 49 on the boards the second half while holding NC to 28.

Old Roy gets to take his team home and Coach Self needs to remind the Jayhawks that there

are 40 minutes in a game and it will take 40 minutes of good basketball to keep this winning streak going and that means each game not divided among the games left to play.

Thanks But Don't Let

### **The Door Hit You On The Way OUT**

The first weekend also got a couple of coaches fired. Coach Ben Howland at UCLA had a bad year. He won the Pac 12 regular season, got to the NCAA tournament, lost his best players in the Pac 12 tournament, but lost in the first round. In his first five years at UCLA he got to the Final Four three consecutive times, but the bar is high at UCLA.

There was this coach that won like seven consecutive National Championships and ten all together and that John Wooden expectation has got 10 every coach since Wooden retired.

Wooden won National Championships in 1950, 1951, 1952, 1953, 1954, 1955, 1956, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, 1965, 1966, 1967, 1968, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973, and 1975. Wooden was hired to coach at UCLA in 1948, so it took him 16 years to win a National Championship.

In today's world of coaching, he would have been fired before he ever got the winning streak going.

On Monday Tubby Smith at Minnesota also got the axe. He won a National Championship at Kentucky. He is a good coach. His Minnesota team beat Howland's UCLA team in the first round just a couple days ago, so winning just one game in the tournament isn't a job saver either.

Smith was 124-81 in his six years at Minnesota. He took over and restored some respectability to a school that had been hit with a cheating scandal inside the basketball program. He won 20 games a year and now the University in a prepared statement said something like, Coach Smith we thank you for playing and as a parting gift we have a buyout package of 2.5 million.

I hope you enjoyed playing the game. Universities do have some nice parting gifts!