

Sports

Final Four finally here

OK, college basketball fans, this weekend is for you. It's Final Four time! The pathetic mismatched early round games have finally separated the men from the boys, and it's time to play ball.

The four lucky participants are the North Carolina Tarheels, Kansas Jayhawks, Kentucky Wildcats and Michigan Wolverines. They will converge on New Orleans this weekend to decide who will reign supreme as king of the college basketball world.

The first game Saturday afternoon matches teacher against student. North Carolina, led by coaching legend Dean Smith, plays Kansas, who is coached by former UNC assistant Roy Williams. Dean Smith's Tarheels will be looking to avenge a 1991 Final Four loss to Williams' Jayhawks. Look for the master to even the score against his pupil. Put UNC in the championship game.

The Tarheels used their tremendous height and strength advantage to breeze through the weak East Region, as expected. Their only competition came from the feisty Cincinnati Bearcats in the regional final.

UNC was frustrated by Cincinnati's tough press for most of the game, forcing the game into overtime. In the extra session, the Tarheels deep bench pulled away from the Bearcats.

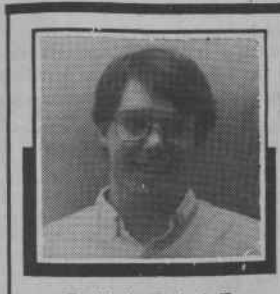
If there is a surprise in this year's Final Four, it would be Kansas. The Jayhawks struggled through much of the regular season and were overlooked throughout much of the tournament even though they were the No. 2 seed in the Midwest Region.

Just ask Bobby Knight how forgotten the Jayhawks were. Kansas shocked Knight's Indiana club in the Midwest Regional final. The Hoosiers were many people's pick to win it all this year. Several people, including myself, lost money in the betting pools on that game.

I do, however, have to praise Bobby Knight on the way he handled his team's defeat. He is losing just as many good, if not better, players than a certain other cry-baby coach that resides in Durham, N.C. (see Krzyzewski).

The second game Saturday night is a matchup of attitude versus attitude. Kentucky's flashy sharpshooting takes on Michigan's arrogant showboating. This game will be one that Temple Head Coach John Chaney will not want to miss.

Don't tell Kentucky's head man Rick (GQ Smooth) Pitino



CHARLIE TISDALE

that this is supposed to be the "age of parity" in college basketball. His Wildcats have been totally destroying everyone that has stepped on the court with them. They are on a pace to break a tournament record for average margin of victory.

The 'Cats have been led by all-everything forward Jamal Mashburn. The "Monster Mash" could have singlehandedly beaten several teams in the tournament. Remember Wake Forest. His three-pointing shooting sunk the Demon Deacons early in the first half. He has a lock on tournament MVP should UK win the championship.

The other egomaniacs playing in the second game are the Michigan Wolverines. They have not been nearly as overwhelming as Kentucky, but they have been playing just well enough to win. They have been pushed to the limit by UCLA, George Washington and Temple. Every one of these games went down to the wire.

Although the Wolverines have not been impressive so far in this tournament, they do have the most talented five individuals on any one team in the country, but that is their biggest problem. The Fab Five play more like individuals looking for highlight reels than teammates looking for the open shots. Their cocky style and constant taunting of opponents will cost them when they play a legitimate championship contender.

Kentucky is one of those teams. Michigan's hot-dogging and poor free-throw shooting will cost them against Kentucky.

The 'Cats advance to the finals.

If all goes as expected (or at least how I expect it), then North Carolina will face Kentucky for the title. If I were a betting man, then I would have to put my money on Kentucky to win. How can anyone overlook the way UK has been playing? But thanks to Indiana, I have no more money to bet anywhere, so I will go with my heart and take the Tarheels to cut down the nets and bring the title back to Chapel Hill!

Men's tennis team sweeps Wake Forest

By TONY SANTORI
Staff Writer

The USC men's tennis team played one of their most impressive matches of the year Wednesday, soundly defeating the Wake Forest Demon Deacons 7-0.

The Gamecocks were never challenged as they swept all six singles matches and won eight of the nine total matches played.

Number one seed, sophomore Jim Panagopoulos, got Carolina rolling with a 6-4, 6-2 victory.

Junior Johan Sandberg followed with a 6-2, 6-2 victory at the No. 2 position.

The No. 3 and 4 seeds, Mark

Palus and P.J. Langone, both defeated their opponents by identical 7-5, 6-2 scores.

Junior Johan Whig was the first Gamecock to be challenged at No. 5, taking three sets to win his match. The Oslo, Norway, native dropped the first set before continuing his outstanding play and rallying to victory, 3-6, 6-3, and 6-2.

Jose Frontera, playing at the No. 6 spot, split the first two sets before taking the match with a 6-4 third-set decision.

Sandberg and Panagopoulos teamed up for a 8-4 win at No.1 doubles in the eight-game pro-set format.

Senior Rich Lynch and sophomore Ben Cook squeaked out a 9-7 victory at No. 2 doubles.

The lone Gamecock loss of the day was suffered by Palus and Panagopoulos at No. 3 doubles. They fell to Batheja and Huff from Wake Forest by an 8-3 count.

With the victory, USC improved to 8-6 on the season. They play host to Auburn at 2 p.m. today.

In other action, Coach Arlo Elkins' Lady Gamecock tennis team dropped a deceiving 5-1 match to the ninth-ranked Georgia Bulldogs.

The Lady Gamecocks trailed only 3-1; however, both Heather Coburn and Victoria Davies lost

tough three-set matches. The loss leaves USC at 8-8 overall on the year, and 4-5 in the SEC.

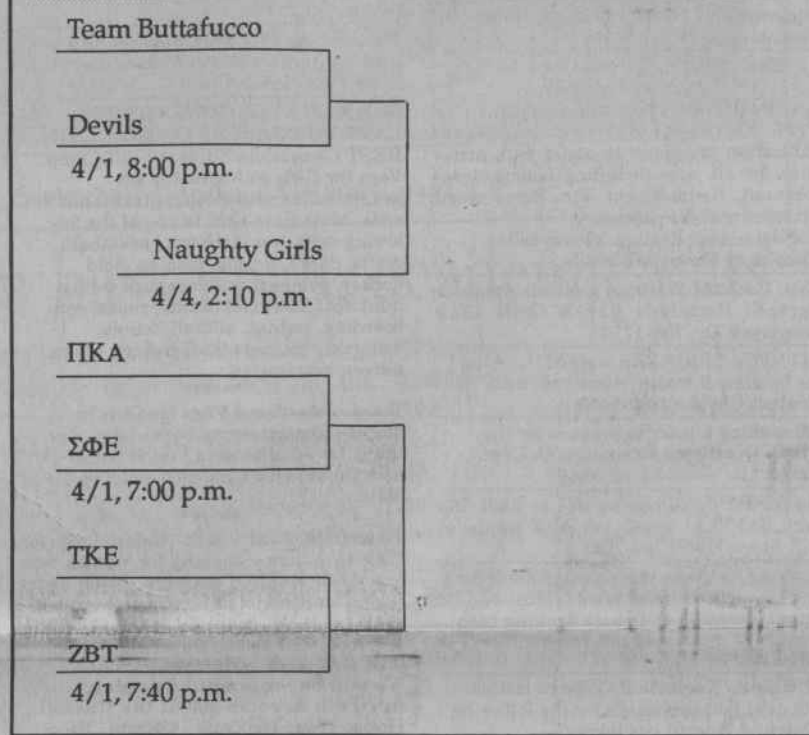
The Lady Gamecocks have a tough task ahead as they play back-to-back matches versus South Florida and the University of Florida on Saturday and Sunday respectively.

The Lady Gamecocks travel to Gainesville Sunday to take on the Lady Gators, who are ranked No. 4 in the nation. USC has not defeated Florida since 1982, with the Gators having the overall series advantage, nine matches to two.

The USC-Florida match will be televised on the SportSouth cable network at 2 p.m.

Intramural championships ended Thursday night with competition between the Naughty Girls and the Bomb Squad. Floor hockey semifinals continue through April 4. Softball playoffs will begin April 5 and continue through April 27. The intramural track meet will be held April 25.

FLOOR HOCKEY SEMIFINALS



INTRAMURAL ACTION

BASKETBALL CHAMPIONS

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------|
| MEN'S A LEAGUE | Rockers |
| MEN'S B-1 LEAGUE | (TBA) |
| MEN'S B-2 LEAGUE | Dream Team |
| RESIDENCE HALL LEAGUE | Razzmatazz |
| MEN OVER 30 | Lakers |
| FRATERNITY LEAGUE | ATΩ |
| CO REC LEAGUE | Primal Scream |
| WOMEN'S LEAGUE | Studs |
| SORORITY LEAGUE | ΔΔΔ |

Chris Muldrow/The Gamecock

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