



FROM STARTS TO FINISHES AND ANYTHING IN BETWEEN

By Kerry Schmidt April 5, 2009

Sports stuff is finally starting to happen. But still, “miles to go before I weep...”

MM: Yesterday, the final four - North Carolina, Villanova, Michigan State and Connecticut was reduced to the two playing for the net cutting.

Only one will be left standing. Only one will climb up and partake in cutting the net down, the symbol of a National Championship.

For the other three, tears of what could have been.

I have never been a part of the many pools, thus I don't get excited until at least the Sweet 16.

Then the elite 8, the final 4 and the crowning of the nut, I mean net cutting business. Who, and why/how did this custom come to be? I mean, did some hick from French Lick just decide to take an old net home with him? Is this a “rim vasectomy?”

By now, you know which teams will be in the title game. I will pick N.C. and Connecticut, with UCONN upsetting the favored Tar Heels.

NOTE: Should that happen, and should the heavily favored UCONN women win also, you will have a first. MM champs from the same school.

Yes, the final 4 and the title game are a must see.

Also, let's look at some of the lesser known aspects of what is likely the BEST final end to a college season.

The economy is hitting ticket sales hard. Final 4 prices are down between 30% to 40%.

Last year, all 43,257 seats sold out immediately. Scalpers had a very good week end.

Not so this time. Some say there will be empty seats.

The average selling price for Final Four tickets through Wednesday was \$445, down 41% from last year, and tickets for the title game are down 34%, from \$442 to \$292. It is likely that some will walk up at game time and get a ticket for far less than any of the above prices. Times are tough, even for the best of college sports events.

NOTE: But money is not an issue when you want a good coach. Kentucky took John Calipari away from Memphis, for a \$35 million, 8-year deal. Thus, \$4.1 million per year.

NCAA President Myles Brand registered his discomfort with the salary. He said, “You have to ask some very hard questions, whether this is in tune with the academic side of our community?”

I don't know, but how much money does a professor putting students to sleep bring into the school? No, CBS does not pay the profs. many millions of dollars to teach.

Calipari will make more per game than a professor will make all year. But, see \$\$\$\$\$ above.

My question is this. He was in only the 4th year of an 8-year deal with Memphis. How can they just say, “screw you,” and walk out of a contract?

Even in bad times, the city hosting the event will come out very well. Several million are spent on hotels, food, what all, and, big bucks on booze!

A great “Bang for your Buck” is the court costs. They can put down the official Final Four and Title game floors for \$90,000 each. But the final dollar amount produced at the last 3 final fours and title game(s): \$45 million!

I pointed out that the 1979 title game between Michigan State – Magic and Indiana State – the Bird man, was the highest rated game ever, by far. A 24.1 rating.

Last year's exciting overtime game, won by Kansas over Memphis – who could not make any free throws, had but a 12.1 rating.

Most believe it was the Magic vs. Bird story that captured the country.

One interesting side story.



Until the NCAA required that players stay at least one year or to the age of 20, several went straight to the NBA.

Kobe Bryant was one. He said this week, "Every time MM comes around, I regret not being a part of it." He added, "I never even took a single trip to a college. I regret not at least doing that." Libran James likewise, but come 2010, when his old contract is up, he can probably buy the college of his choice.

I can only assume that the millions Kobe took home soothed the anguish.

Other greats who never tasted the moment: Tony Parker, James – I think he could have gotten in at 14, Kevin Garnett and Dwight Howard.

For an "All-Time" best team of active players, you had Chris Paul, Wake Forest; Dwayne Wade, Marquette; Paul Pierce, Kansas; Tim Duncan, Wake Forest (he played much earlier than Paul, so not on the team together) and Coquille O'Neal, LSU.

One final highlight. UCONN has 7'3" junior center, Hasher Thaabeet, 22 years old. He was the Big-East co-player of the year.

His story is goose bumper. He "escaped" from his home country of Tanzania. I wonder if he had gone to Duke, would he be the Tanzanian Devil?

A soccer player, he only took up basketball at 15. No one in the US had even heard of him.

He emailed many coaches he found on a Google search. When asked how many proper courts there were in his native land, he quickly said, "none."

While only one of every 100 citizens can use the internet there, 6 of every 100 are HIV-positive. The average life expectancy is 50.

Many tell him to stay in college, others say go to the NBA. "They just can't understand how much more money there is in basketball than football (soccer)." Most predict he will be taken in the first round if he goes. To the poor people of Tanzania, he is almost "God-like."

MLB kicks off the forever long 2009 season tonight. And like MM, ticket sales are down 1 million for opening day (all games). Again, the economy is the culprit.

MLB has the lowest priced average ticket, at \$26.64. The NBA is next, at \$72.97.

The Yankees? HA! Average price for a stub there is \$106.44. That average is trumped up due to the "new, deluxe" seats that go for a measly \$2,568 per game!

The Yankees are in their new, \$1.6 billion stadium, partly paid for by NY taxpayers.

Last year, the Stienfuchs shelled out \$387 million worth of contracts for 4 new players. This year? They forked over an additional \$423.5 million for all-star pitcher CC Sabathia and two others.

Remember two seasons ago, when Joe Torre was "let go?"

Son of boss man, Hank Steinfuch, said with all the talent the Yankees had (in 2007), that they should have won the WS. "We gave him the best players (money could buy), but he failed."

So, see the 387 mil they added for Torre's replacement, Joe Girardi. With all this new talent, Girardi failed to even get the Yankees TO the playoffs! First time in 13 years.

He is expected to win the WS this year, given all the new money thrown at his new pitchers.

I hope they bomb out. NOTE: I wonder if they footed A-Rod's steroid bill.

For what it's worth, Sports Illustrated has the Angels beating the Yankees in the ALCS, and then, to rub salt in the wound, they have the cross-town Mets winning the Series! Now I would love that! Headline: Stein-FUCHS, PUKES.

Time to get caught up with a new TV spin-off of the CIS stuff. This one will be NFLCIS. As is NFL Criminal Investigation Service.

We currently have a three-some winding their way through the legal system.

Cleveland's Donte Stallworth is the latest genius to screw up his life.



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

He runs over an immigrant from Honduras – with this BENTLY! And to further his IQ ratings, he admitted to the police that he had been drinking. At 7 in the morning. Quite a breakfast. (reader Don and I can relate to that!)

His DA was .126, with .08 being legally blottoed.

And he had just signed a multi-year, \$35 million deal with Cleveland.

I wonder how fast the Browns' front office can stop payment on those checks.

He has a score of good attorneys, but some legal beagles in FL said that if he was drunk, he is screwed.

And, the NFL may come down on him. He had been relegated to a substance abuse program before his year with the Patriots in '07. Thus, repeat offender. Not good.

Most legal beagles say his best bet is to challenge the results of his sobriety tests.

He was with the Saints when I was covering them. He had great talent, but always had hamstring problems, as he did at Tennessee. Also, he had a tendency to drop balls. NOT GOOD for a WR.

Now, back to Michael Vick. Looks like he will get out of the hoosgow in May, and then home confinement for 3 months.

His future is up in the air. He has filed for bankruptcy, a complicated one, given all he owns and his suit vs. Atlanta to keep most of his bonus.

Here is a neat part. Michael Blumenthal, one of his attorneys, told the judge the Vick has an offer from a construction firm to work 40 hours a week at \$10 an hour.

Enter Joel Segal, his agent. He told the court that Vick could make a lot more money playing in the NFL. DUH! Segal said, "I hope Mike will be playing football in September. Segal says his plan is to put together a very incentive laden contract, wherein he can make plenty of money if he meets the goals.

Of course, Segal is only looking out for Vick. An agent gets between 6-10% of the money his client makes. So, another DUH, Segal can't handle 10% of 10 bucks an hour, thus the big contract.

But first, he must be reinstated by Commissioner Roger Goodell. Goodell says Vick "must show genuine remorse." Now I have no idea how he can show this remorse. Maybe he needs to kiss the back sides of 40 or 50 pitt bulls, you know, to show his love.

In Webster's, remorse means, "deep regret," or "sorrow," or "unhappiness."

OK, that should be no problem. I'm sure he truly does feel deep regret, unhappiness and sorrow – all of those simply because the dumb bastard got caught!

We shall see.

Then we have the Big Apple wonderkind, Plaxico Burrell. You remember him. Brilliant guy. Stuck an unlicensed gun in his waist pants and promptly shot himself in the leg.

Benjamin Brafman, his attorney, says they are working on a plea deal.

Perhaps he could plead guilty to being as dumb as a slug and they could make him go on that TV show, "Are you smarter than a 5th Grader?" He'd probably fail, but at least he's back on TV.

One thing for sure. If all three of them wind up in the same slammer, they could do a remake of "The Longest Yard." Cons would have a hell of a team.

Of the three, I think Vick has the best chance to be back in the NFL, possibly as early as this season, or maybe at the half way point of the season, since he had completed most of his jail sentence.

As to the two WR's, well, they could be receiving something from the back-side that they do not want. Stay tuned.

I'll close on a bright note. Boring, but bright.



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

Every year, since 1992, Sears has given out an award for the college whose overall athletics program is the best. Men's and women's combined. They are graded on the number of "wins" they have in all the 32 sports.

Also, grades count for 10%.

OK, which powerhouse athletic school do you think is a shoo-in? Florida?

Ohio State? USC?

Nope. For the last 16 straight years, Stanford is the college with the best and most successful athletic program.

Now if Burrell, Stallworth and Vick had attended Stanford, they would most likely not be in the, well, at least in Vick's case, "In the Dog House."

Single Malt time! Stoked. I usually have a wee dram of 15-year old McCallan, but tonight I will treat myself to the dark, peaty taste of 18-year old Langauvalin. Very hard to get, and very expensive, but hey, I'm showing genuine remorse.