

# NCAA Media Conference

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## Charles McClelland

Press Conference



CHARLES McCLELLAND: Good morning, everyone, and thank you for being with us today from the selection room at our location in Cromwell, Indiana, where over the next five days myself and my colleagues will put together the bracket that will determine the 85th national champion in the history of this terrific event.

A little more than three weeks ago, this committee revealed its top 16 teams through games of February 16, and at that time we were very certain, not only certain of the four teams that were worthy of being a No. 1 seed, but we were also certain that we had strong consensus in the order in which those four teams were ranked.

Since then, at least from my perspective, there's uncertainty with the sequence of the top teams, and there are more teams contending for a spot on that No. 1 line.

It will make for some interesting discussion and I imagine decisions regarding the seeding are now going to come right down to the wire on Sunday.

Now I would like to address the false notion that because the selection show begins at 6:00 p.m. on Sunday on CBS that games played on Sunday aren't factored into the selection, seeding and bracketing process. I can say definitively that nothing could be further from the truth. We do not start the bracketing process before mid-morning Sunday, and we will come up with as many brackets as necessary to account for changes to the seed lists that are based on outcomes of five championship games that take place.

By mid-afternoon, three of those games will be finished so we can start eliminating some of the brackets we've constructed, but a couple of those games conclude just before the start of the selection show, so we always must be very careful about which bracket gets submitted to our broadcast partners.

All the conference tournament games matter, though like we've always said, they don't matter more than any other individual outcome. These games don't carry more weight than a game played last month, but they are not ignored due to timing, either.

As we near the beginning of this year's selection meeting, I would like to speak on behalf of some of my colleagues on the city to express our concern with evaluating teams that have not played a strong non-conference schedule this year. There has been much written and said about this topic, therefore we believe it is worth me commenting on this matter.

First and foremost, as it pertains to the committee's objectives this week in selecting, seeding and bracketing, the 36 best at-large teams, along with the 32 automatic qualifiers, we will use the publicly shared resources we have at our disposal to assist with the evaluation process.

One of those resources is the non-conference strength of schedule. How each committee uses that data is a personal choice. It's important to note that we also will use the overall strength of schedule, which is inclusive of a team's entire body of work.

Nevertheless, the non-conference strength of schedule is a resource that has been in place for decades, a long-term concern is that poor non-conference scheduling, including teams playing multiple games against non-Division I opponents is not good for the health of college basketball, particularly the regular season.

A good non-conference game not only offers a team the opportunity to enhance their resume but also helps popularize the game in the early stages of the regular season. Teams that elect not to play a strong out-of-conference schedule make it difficult to evaluate them for an at-large berth to the tournament, particularly if they do not perform at a high level within their conference. This is a matter that the committee will certainly discuss this summer as part of its annual review.

**Q. Can you offer a little bit of insight on where you guys view Texas, and specifically with their Big 12 tournament run starting tonight, how much their resume and seeding could be enhanced with a win or two and maybe to their detriment if they were to lose tonight in the first round?**



CHARLES McCLELLAND: I would probably be able to answer that question a little bit better this afternoon. We haven't gotten into the room yet, but I can tell you our monitors have talked to the conference. We have seen Texas. We've evaluated their matrix. But I will have to defer giving specific information on Texas until all 12 members get in the room and we start the process.

**Q. Have Purdue, UConn and Houston cemented themselves as three of the top four No. 1 seeds?**

CHARLES McCLELLAND: They were a part of our top teams in the 16 unveiled three weeks ago. All have continued to play good basketball.

Again, I cannot say that they have cemented themselves. There's still a lot of basketball to be played. But certainly their resume is impressive, and certainly they will continue to be in line, as they are some of the top teams in the nation.

**Q. I wanted to ask about the impact of the mock bracket a month ago. North Carolina were fifth in the mock bracket back then. They have not lost since then. Will what you guys revealed a month ago have any sort of impact on where you guys start once you get into the room today?**

CHARLES McCLELLAND: You know, the good thing about the process is once we finish that top 16 unveil, we basically tear those documents up. We will evaluate these teams based upon where they are today, tomorrow, and throughout the course of the week.

That evaluation was as of that date. Clearly North Carolina has continued to play strong. They won, and as we talked about, we take the entirety of the season, so all of those games, all of those opportunities that they had, they have capitalized on, and we look to have some serious conversations about where North Carolina is supposed to be placed in the bracket.

**Q. Obviously Indiana State and Drake was one of the better conference championship games of the past weekend, and Indiana State is seen as being on the bubble. How tough of a decision is that when you have a team like that that had the win total but maybe as far as quad one goes doesn't have those numbers as maybe some other schools?**

CHARLES McCLELLAND: I anticipate that there's going to be a lot of discussion relative to Indiana State, a great basketball team. We recognize that one of the better players, Jayson Kent, missed most of their loss to Illinois State and all of the loss to Southern Illinois. Player

availability is something that we take into consideration for all of our teams.

Indiana State has garnered conversation. I think it will continue to garner conversation. I think that they will have the level of consideration based upon the season that they had. The committee is going to come in and really take into those factors.

We have had them on our radar screen all year. The conference monitor has had them on the radar screen all year, and I anticipate that they will continue to garner a significant amount of conversation this week.

**Q. When you guys unveiled the early bracket, and this is in relation to the top overall seed, the value of that has always been to sort of be able to choose your geographic path.**

You look at the three, we have Purdue, UConn and Houston, they're sort of all, right now based on the early mock, in regions that certainly are favorable in all regards. Is this unusual in terms of how that setup just basically with those three teams in terms of the proximity to where they are and how that sort of -- you almost get three top seeds out of this based on geographic and what their preference typically would have been anyway?

CHARLES McCLELLAND: You know, in my five years of being on the committee, and I've seen three of them, obviously the fourth would be on the 16 unveiled the first year. I did not get an opportunity to go through it. I can tell you that I breathed a sigh of relief as chair when we did the 16 because those regions geographically fit with those four teams.

To get the overall No. 1 seed is significant, and as you know, the team behind, the second team gets an opportunity to go to the next closest region, and it's significant not only for the teams but for the fans.

I would like to say that it is somewhat unusual for those to have fallen the way that they did before, but again, we get back into the room this afternoon, we are going to start putting teams into the tournament. As we start to seed and bracket, we definitely will be watching that closely.

**Q. Would the committee ever send three teams from a power conference all to Dayton, meaning that two teams that play each other in conference play would play one another in Dayton?**

CHARLES McCLELLAND: So the first way that I will answer that question is in our process, we stick to our principles. We have principles that talk about when a team

can play based upon their matchups in the regular season, and we will stick with those principles. But when we go through, we don't necessarily look at if a team is a Power Five, Power Four team or a Group of Five or a mid-major. We go based upon the order in which we select and seed our teams.

From that standpoint, our goal is to get the teams, the top 36 teams into the tournament that are not AQs and to significantly look at their resumes and place them ultimately where they need to be.

There are several instances where teams from those have played one another in the First Four, so again, we don't necessarily look at the teams per se, where they're going to be seeded -- excuse me, where they're going to be playing or who they're going to be playing against. We do 1 through 68, as our principles state, and however that falls is just where it falls.

**Q. Over the course of the last decade, there's been a lot less emphasis that was placed on how a team is playing in the run-up to Selection Sunday, and it's been more about overall body of work. Is how a team is playing in the run-up to Selection Sunday still a consideration?**

CHARLES McCLELLAND: Well, I think we consider each and every game individually. We take the entirety of the entire season.

I think ultimately where the significance comes in that run-up is if you have an opportunity to win games. That's part of what we look at. It's who you play, where you play and what you do. If you have games and if you win those games, it's going to help you in your chances of getting into the tournament.

Anytime you play and you win, it's going to help you. But our focus is on the entirety of the season. There are so many factors that go into a season, whether that's coach availability, player availability. We look at all of that. A game in November is just as important as a game in March and April.

**Q. In your opinion what can be done or would you like to be done for teams in power conferences to schedule tougher in non-conference?**

CHARLES McCLELLAND: Well, that's a decision based upon the individual schools. Again, we try to not look at it from a conference standpoint. Each individual institution has their own scheduling needs and their scheduling philosophies. Obviously being in Houston and your covering of those teams and power conferences as well as

AQ conferences, you know that each team, each coach has their different philosophy.

As a basketball committee we want teams to play a competitive schedule, and if you play a competitive schedule, it gives us more data to be able to make the best decision, and I think that's ultimately what we're asking for.

**Q. From the initial bracket release, specifically with Houston, Purdue and UConn, can you give us a little behind the curtain on -- was there a huge difference between those schools in terms of how the committee viewed them?**

CHARLES McCLELLAND: No, they were close. Again, we said that it was 12 for 12 in that order, but the difference between that order was very small.

We often like to use the terminology "razor thin," and that ultimately is what's separating those teams at the very top.

Again, there's a lot of basketball to be played. Those teams have an opportunity to enhance their opportunity in this bracket. It's razor thin, and all of those teams do have legitimate current opportunities to improve their resume.

**Q. When you scrub the bracket, so to speak, going into today, do you start at the top or do you kind of work your way up from the bottom, maybe the teams that are on the bubble in those last spots?**

CHARLES McCLELLAND: We start of the top and we work our way down. So we start at No. 1 and No. 2 and scrub down.

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