

NCAA 2026 Basketball Championship

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Keith Gill

Chairman NCAA Men's Basketball Committee
News Conference



THE MODERATOR: At this time I would like to turn it over to Keith Gill. He'll have an opening remark before we take questions from the media. Keith.

KEITH GILL: Great. Thank you, Dave, and good morning, everyone. It's a tremendous honor to be sitting in the selection room just a couple of hours away from the start of the 2026 selection meeting.

My colleagues and I are ready to get the process started at this meeting. It sets the stage for the road to the Final Four. The Selection Show will be Sunday at 6:00 p.m. eastern on CBS, and 48 hours later the tournament begins with the First Four. That starts the best three weeks on the sports calendar.

What an amazing year this has been, highlighted by storied championship programs having incredible seasons, memorable performances by a very talented freshman class, and viewership numbers suggesting that despite is sharing the spotlight with the NFL, college football, and the Olympics, college basketball is incredibly popular, in part because of the high level of play by several teams and players.

That is setting the stage for what should be a great tournament.

Of course, as you likely know by now, the Final Four will be played in Indianapolis as part of a basketball extravaganza. Eight games in five days with four champions crowned in three venues. The NIT semifinals will be played Thursday April 2nd at Butler's Hinkle Fieldhouse.

The men's Final Four semis are Saturday, April 4th, at Lucas Oil Stadium. The NIT Division II and Division III championship games are Sunday, April 5th, at Gainbridge Fieldhouse, and the 87th national champion will be crowned at Lucas Oil Stadium Monday night, April 6.

That's a month away, though.

Right now my colleagues and I are focused on selecting and seeding teams and then bracketing them on Sunday. With that, I would be glad to answer any questions you might have.

Q. My question is about the south region and placement. Houston was on the 2 seed line on the early reveal. When you have a situation where a team can play a regional just a few miles from campus, how does the committee go about handling that? Is there any precedent for how you approach that? Any insight you can provide?

KEITH GILL: Yeah, we would follow our general bracketing procedure. So the overall No. 1 seed gets to choose where they play the first and second round and the region. So if you are the No. 1 overall seed, you get that option and you choose it.

After that, you are placed where you are on the seed line and the closest venue to play those particular games, and we would walk through that, right? So if it ended up where that's the closest venue, they certainly could end up there, but someone else on the seed line could fill that venue for them, or this he may end up somewhere else.

So we wouldn't set aside our principles to try to do that. That's not something we've done in the past. We would follow our principles and let our process play out, and they would end up where they end up.

Q. Are there any recent examples of this happening that you can recall?

KEITH GILL: When you say --

Q. Where a team is playing at a regional so close to home.

KEITH GILL: In 2022 Houston played in San Antonio against Villanova, so there was some proximity there.

Q. And I guess you had Purdue last year in Indianapolis.



KEITH GILL: Purdue last year in Indianapolis.

Q. I'm curious, there's always something, just a main theme going around the bubble and which teams are going to be in and which teams are going to be out. I'm curious what kind of is the central storyline with the teams that are on the fringe of making the tournament this year?

KEITH GILL: I think the central storyline is just there's a lot of teams that are in consideration, right, and so when we start today, we will start with our kind of building our at-large board.

To get on that board, it is all but three eligible votes. At the same time, we'll build our under consideration board. That takes a minimum of four votes to get on that board.

Our goal is to make sure that we give every team its due consideration, and so that under consideration board is where we will do that. I think it will be kind of robustly populated with a lot of good stories and a lot of good basketball teams, and it will make our decision-making certainly challenging.

Q. I'm just curious, with some of the high-profile injuries that we've seen across the sport this year, what is kind of the balance that you take and that the committee is going to take in there to look at the overall body of work versus the sample size that you have for teams that are maybe going to be without one of their star players? How much does the number of games in that sample size either encourage you or discourage you from using that sample size in that debate?

KEITH GILL: Yeah, I think that's a great question. I think what we will try to do is essentially try to understand what we think the impact is and apply it appropriately, right?

I think that's for obviously the team that either lost the player or lost the player or got the player back, or whatever that scenario is, but it's also for their opponents, and try to put context around their résumé and their body of work.

In some cases we actually have a good sample of teams playing without maybe their star player that certainly will inform those decisions, and others we're going to have to kind of project and kind of make some determinations.

It's more art than science, I would say, in that regard, but we certainly are going to apply it to make sure that we use the right context to evaluate all the results that we're going to be considering.

Q. A quick follow-up, if I can, just with that injury process, when you start debating that, is that something that comes up when you are putting together these pods, or is that something when you go more team to team that you are debating that you are going to get more into that conversation?

KEITH GILL: Yeah, I really think all of the above. So when we do our conference monitoring when we walk through each conference and the teams in those conferences, we talk about the injuries and the impact at that moment.

So we do it obviously in that broad sense.

Obviously, when we're discussing kind of individual teams and we're comparing teams and doing those things, those conversation wills happen as well.

Q. Question for you just kind of along the lines of head-to-head. Did you learn anything from the bracket preview when you guys showed the top 16, sort of what this committee's appetite will be to incorporate head-to-head into evaluations of teams, especially when they're side-by-side and maybe how large of a gap a head-to-head result might be to overcome when you have teams next to each other?

KEITH GILL: Yeah, I think the committee has been very, very consistent, at least since my time on it, that head-to-head matters. It's not the only thing that matters. There's certainly at times if you looked last year, you know, Auburn was the No. 1 overall seed. Duke was right behind them on the seed line. Duke had beaten Auburn.

So you can certainly see elements where -- but it always matters. It's always something we're going to talk about. We're always going to consider it.

Whether it's the most compelling thing, you know, I think that that's based on the situation or the circumstances. I would say it absolutely is important, but it's another data point, and we'll use it in our evaluation.

Certainly sometimes it can put a team ahead of another, but it doesn't happen all the time.

Q. We saw an NCAA statement about the possibility of travel disruptions, charter flight disruptions this season in a memo they sent out. At this stage are you seeing kind of any real possibility of a serious logjam there that might affect teams' ideal days for getting where they want for games? A quick addendum to that, with that travel being a difficulty, will that factor at all into what regions you seed certain teams in for

feasibility of their getting there?

KEITH GILL: Yeah, I'll take the second question first. We haven't talked and don't intend to change our bracketing procedures based on kind of those travel concerns. That's not something we would do in midprocess, so we will continue to bracket the way we always have.

I would say that certainly we feel like it will be able to be managed, and certainly we sent that memo out just to give people some understanding, hey, please be patient.

We certainly think that the competitive process is really important, and travel certainly is a part of that. The experience is important. We're going to focus on making sure that people have the best experience they can.

We certainly understand that there are pressures on the system, but we hope they're not going to be too disruptive and really impact people's experiences. We'll do everything we can to mitigate that.

Q. What are you seeing with this memo coming out this year -- what are you seeing as the single biggest difference in pressure between this season and previous years? Because we've always had the spring break, the mid-March travel?

KEITH GILL: Yeah, one of the things that I've heard is ICE is taking up a lot of charter planes. I think the charter market is just demonstrably different than it has been.

I think there are some entities that are doing things that we haven't been up against in the past at a rate that's a little higher than we're used to. I think that's where the pressure is coming from.

Q. Keith, I wanted to ask, I understand the rising importance of the résumé, results-based metrics, whatever you want to call it. How did the committee come to use wins above bubble as a priority in that category as opposed to whether it would be KPI or strength of record or an average? How did wins above bubble come to become the most important of those?

KEITH GILL: Yeah, so I don't know that I would say it's the most important. I certainly think it's a very, very important metric that we use. What I would say, though, is one of the things that is really helpful, and for wins above bubble is it helps us compare schedules that in some ways you could argue are uncomparable, right?

So you've got a team from a conference where they have lots of different opportunities in Quad 1 or Quad 2. You have a team that maybe they don't have the same number

of those opportunities, so it helps us kind of make sense of comparing those teams. I think that's why it has been a valuable metric to the committee. That's why it's been an important metric to our work.

I don't know that I would say it's the most important, but it is one that we use and rely on.

Q. Just to kind of build up on the conversation around the bubble, there's been a lot of discourse around teams that maybe are near like the .500 mark in a sense of where they have around maybe 13, 14 losses at this point in the season, and there's been discussion about whether teams that have that many losses at this point should be even in the conversation, considering they're near the .500 mark. I'm curious, what is the committee looking at when they evaluate these teams that are that tight, but also, what makes them NCAA Tournament contenders just given the fact of whether it's a high net or things like that?

KEITH GILL: Yeah, I mean, I think that is the kind of million-dollar question for us, right, is we don't have any kind of principle that says you can't have this many losses or you must have this many wins.

We really try to evaluate every résumé and put it into the context of our kind of principles of evaluation. So that's why you're going to see every résumé can look different, particularly once you start getting outside of those top 16 on our seed list.

We really are trying to identify the best 37 at-large teams to go along with the 31 automatic qualifiers. So that's going to create some difference in looks, and so we try to be obviously consistent, but we don't have principles that say, hey, there are too many losses or there are too few wins or you need a certain amount of wins.

We'll look at the data. We'll try to put context into the season, and then we'll identify kind of those 37 best teams.

Q. Just a follow-up on that, you mentioned you want to pick the best résumé. Is there ever a consideration or a debate of best versus deserving in that sense?

KEITH GILL: Yeah, I certainly think that debate is -- I certainly think that goes a lot in the public. I think the committee, though, is pretty clear.

Our principle, we are looking for the 37 best, so I don't know that -- there's no debate about that here.

Now, what I would say is I think everybody defines that



differently. That's why there's 12 of us. That's why it's a good thing, right?

Because at the end of the day we come up with a collective kind of reasoning for a corrective definition for what the best is by our own individual definitions kind of combined as part of the whole in the 12.

But that is our north star, 37 best. I certainly know in the public discourse there's a lot of debate and discussion in that. In the committee room we're pretty clear what our principle is.

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