

NCAA 2026 Men's Basketball Championship

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Keith Gill

Selection Show News Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome to tonight's teleconference with Commissioner Gill, who is going to talk about the selection seeding and bracketing process.

KEITH GILL: Thanks so much, Dave. Good evening, everyone. Thank you for joining us tonight.

A long five days concluded late this afternoon when we finished the bracket, and we are excited that in less than 48 hours the NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Championship tips off with the First Four in Dayton.

Last year we remarked about the depth of the 2025 field. There were four truly elite teams, and for only the second time in tournament history all four of them advanced to the Final Four. This year we think there are more than four elite teams, and there are several others that would surprise no one with a run to the Final Four.

There's been a lot of talk about a weak bubble, and this committee disagrees with this notion. I think it's fair to say that the gap between the country's elite and the teams on the bubble has appeared to grow, particularly in the past couple of years, but the bubble has teams capable of winning multiple games. As always, there were some quality teams that just missed out on getting a bid.

It all adds up to what promises to be another exciting tournament. Like all of you, we are anxious to start the journey down the road to the Final Four.

With that, I'm happy to take any questions you might have.

Q. I just wanted to see if we could get a little clarity on Miami Ohio. There seemed to be a little bit of confusion or misinformation about whether or not they were the last team in the field. I believe that was said on CBS, and then, Keith, you said that was not the case. I'm kind of wondering if you could put Miami in perspective for us?

KEITH GILL: Yeah, that's great. I appreciate the question. So Miami was not the last team selected into the field. So

the last teams selected in the field were NC State, Texas, and SMU.

When we seeded and we did our scrubbing, Miami ended up scrubbing down relative to their predictives, and so they ended up being the last at-large on the seed list, but they weren't the last at-large selected to the field.

Q. My question is about Louisville. You kind of mentioned on the show about injuries. I was wondering, what is the balance between a player like Mikel Brown Jr. being out for ten games and his possible availability for the tournament? How much did you guys consider the losses that they had in some of those marquee games when he was out, and also how much was consideration given that he will probably be back for the NCAA Tournament?

KEITH GILL: Yeah, that's a great question. We talked about it a lot. Obviously he's one of the premiere players in the country, so Louisville playing without him certainly is a different team. So we evaluated the losses that they had and put that into context.

Also, for seeding purposes, we wanted to make sure we were putting them in the right spot if he's going to be available and he's going to be with them. So we talked about that a lot, and not just with Louisville. With a lot of other teams as well. Player availability was something that was really kind of a theme throughout our conversations and throughout our bracket.

We tried to take that into consideration as we placed teams into the bracket to make sure that we kept bracket integrity and had teams in their rightful place.

Q. I'm wondering, a little bit further down the bracket, what are some of the challenges, and is there anything different in the seeding process when you talk about those automatic bids that come in the bottom fourth or so of the bracket? Do you take into account conference strength at all in addition to the analytics and the résumé that they have?

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KEITH GILL: You know, we do not. We evaluate teams individually. We go through the same seeding process at the top of the bracket that we do at the bottom of the bracket, and we are evaluating team's résumés and looking at teams on an individual, kind of a case-by-case basis based on the résumé.

When we're selecting teams in the field, we really are focused on what they accomplished, who did you play, where did you play, how did you do? When we're seeding, we're looking at predictives and those kind of things, as well as the other metrics as well.

But we look at the top and the bottom in a similar way and work through our seeding and scrubbing process according to our principles.

Q. I'm wondering about the 2, 3 seed line and particularly the teams from the Big Ten that were hovering around there with Purdue, Michigan State, and Illinois and kind of the genesis of how everybody ended up where they did?

KEITH GILL: Yeah, that's a great question. You know, the Big Ten Championship had an impact on our seed line. You specifically asked about the 3 line.

Prior to the championship, we had Purdue as 11 overall, so they would have been on that 3 line. But based on the results of the Big Ten Championship and Purdue getting that win, we scrubbed them, and they ended up on the 8 overall line, which puts them on the 2 line as the 8 overall seed. They scrubbed past Michigan State, Illinois, and Gonzaga.

They started at 11, ended up at 8 overall, and that got them from the 3 line to the 2 line.

Q. I'll start with one UNC-specific one. I know you have spoken just -- or actually just UNC and Duke specifically, if you don't mind. If you could just elaborate a little bit on this. I know you've touched on this, but how you factored in injuries to those respective teams in terms of their seeding?

KEITH GILL: Yeah, certainly. You know, we talked a lot about it with both teams. So when you looked at Duke, certainly the injuries to Caleb Foster and Patrick Ngongba were things that we were considering, but as we think about Duke heading into the NCAA Tournament, they're going to get closer to healthy in that regard.

They've certainly had wins without those two playing in that regard, so we considered it, but we still kept them as the No. 1 overall. They ended up winning the ACC

Tournament. They've won the regular season as well. It was something that we considered and talked about.

I would say that's the same with North Carolina. Obviously when you evaluate Caleb Wilson, one of the top players in the country, and who they are kind of with him and without him, those impacts were something that we considered. They certainly had some games where Wilson and Veesaar weren't available, because the important thing about player availability is it's certainly the team that lost the players, but it's also their opponents and trying to put the wins or losses that the opponents had in context as well as importance.

We talked a lot about player availability throughout the week here as we were trying to identify the bracket. It really had a powerful impact.

Q. If you could provide any insight on what went into the final No. 1 spot and also with the seeding locations with Houston being placed in the South where they could potentially play in Houston for the second weekend?

KEITH GILL: Yeah, so when you think about the No. 1 kind of seed line, those top 3 seeds were kind of solidly in place. I mean, the order was in question, but they certainly were solidly on the 1 line.

So when you get down to that last No. 1, that fourth No. 1, when we seeded on Wednesday, Florida was in that spot. They were in that spot throughout the week. Then they lost to Vanderbilt on Saturday.

There certainly was an opportunity there for Houston or UConn to scrub up and take that last No. 1, but what ended up happening obviously is Houston ended up losing as well in their conference championship, and then also UConn ended up losing in the Big East Championship.

When the committee scrubbed today, they really thought that Florida should be that last No. 1. So there certainly was an opportunity for one of those other schools to scrub up and get it, but at the end of the day, we thought it was best for Florida.

I think when you talk about locations, as we're bracketing, conference affiliation and geography are the two probably most important criteria when we're building the bracket. So as you think through, we're trying to use geography, and it turns out the 5th overall seed can't go into the same region as the 1 seed. Then the closest opportunity there would be Houston for Houston. That's how they ended up there.

So we follow our bracketing principles, and certainly you

remember last year Houston was a 1 seed and had to play Purdue in Indianapolis. Sometimes those principles can, yeah, get you those opportunities.

What I would say is, you know, it's the NCAA Tournament. You're going to have to win games away from home against really tough opponents, and that's why this is the best postseason in sports.

Q. I wanted to ask, I know that NCAA was kind of warning schools about a nationwide shortage of the charter aircrafts, possible travel disruptions. I was just curious, and it might not be in your preview, but how much did that reality factor into the committee's planning for the first weekend of the tournament in terms of location, logistics, things like that?

KEITH GILL: Yeah, you know, it didn't impact our bracketing at all. We followed our bracketing principles and did not deviate relative to the travel kind of issues that we outlined in a memo that we sent to our membership.

We were just trying to give folks some notice. We feel like we will be able to mitigate some of those issues relative to some of the guidelines that we outlined. We feel really comfortable that we're going to be able to provide a travel experience that will make sure people are in the best kind of competitive position to participate in the tournament.

Q. A question about St. John's. You've mentioned a few times the Big Ten Tournament seemed to impact seeding. It feels like maybe the Big East Tournament didn't have that same impact if you look at St. John's winning the Big East regular season, avenging the loss, the blow-out loss, to UConn in the final there, and then getting stuck at a 5 seed. What happened with St. John's there?

KEITH GILL: Yeah, I think when you look at St. John's, certainly we watched the Big Ten Tournament -- or Big East Tournament and certainly took it into account. They played well, and certainly that's a big win over UConn, but it really is a full body of work.

When we're thinking about it, we're looking at how these wins and losses impact a full résumé. One of the things I would say about St. John's is their results in the nonconference did not have kind of the same depth and quality of some of the folks that are ahead of them.

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