



THE NARRATIVE OF THE 1987 NCAA TOURNAMENT

Indiana wins the school's fifth NCAA title
And the third under head coach Bob Knight.
Read how it unfolded game-by-game.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[PRELUDE](#)

[MIDWEST REGIONAL-OPENING WEEKEND](#)

[EAST REGIONAL-OPENING WEEKEND](#)

[WEST REGIONAL-OPENING WEEKEND](#)

[SOUTHEAST REGIONAL-OPENING WEEKEND](#)

[MIDWEST-SWEET 16 & ELITE 8](#)

[EAST-SWEET 16 & ELITE 8](#)

[WEST-SWEET 16 & ELITE 8](#)

[SOUTHEAST-SWEET 16 & ELITE 8](#)

[THE FINAL FOUR](#)

[EPILOGUE](#)

PRELUDE

The 1980s had been a roller coaster ride for Indiana basketball in general and Bob Knight in particular. In 1980, the school won a memorable Big Ten title with Mike Woodson returning from injury and leading a clutch stretch run. In the NCAA Tournament they lost to Purdue and watched their archrival, along with Iowa, be the Big Ten teams at a Final Four held in Indianapolis.

One year later Indiana won Knight's second national championship, five years on the heels of his undefeated team in 1976. That summer the program went through tragedy, when forward Landon Turner was paralyzed in a car accident.

The amazing highs followed by big lows continued in 1984. The Hoosiers shocked Michael Jordan's North Carolina in the Sweet 16, only to lose to a significantly less-talented Virginia team two days later.

That summer, Knight coached the U.S. Olympic team at the Summer Games in Los Angeles. Led by Jordan, it was the greatest amateur basketball team ever assembled and included IU's best player, sharpshooting guard Steve Alford. They won the gold medal and that fall Indiana was ranked in the preseason top five. But another low followed—a poor season, no NCAA Tournament berth and Knight throwing a chair on the floor in a home loss to Purdue, an act that has followed him to this day.

1986 was a bounceback season where a mostly undermanned Indiana team stayed in the hunt for the Big Ten title to the final day of the regular season. Then it came apart. They were taken apart by Michigan in a head-to-head battle for the conference title. In the days when the Big Ten did not play a league tournament, it was straight into the NCAAs where the 3-seed Hoosiers were upset by Cleveland State in the first round.

That was the stormy cycle this great coach and proud program had been on when the 1987 season began. They were more athletic than in recent years, with Knight having reached into the junior college ranks for the first time to add point guard Keith Smart and center Dean Garrett. Both players made a big difference. Smart and Garrett each averaged 11 points per game, with Smart providing dynamic athletic skill in the backcourt and the muscular Garrett getting nine rebounds per game.

The juco players were added to a core that was headlined by senior leader Alford. 1987 was the first year the three-point line was made standard across college basketball—previous years had allowed conferences to have their own rules and then abolished the arc in the NCAA Tournament. This year the line would be set at 19'9" and stay that way to the end. It was expected to be a boon to Alford and that's what happened. He averaged 22ppg. Alford was 107-for-202 from behind the arc all season long. The rest of the Hoosiers? 23-for-54.

Another key senior, power forward Darryl Thoms averaged 16 points/6 rebounds. Indiana knocked off NCAA-bound teams in Notre Dame and Kentucky in December. They also beat defending national champion Louisville, though this edition of the Cardinals would struggle and fail to make the NCAA field. The only blip early on was a loss to Vanderbilt, coached by Knight's friend and Olympic assistant C.M. Newton.

After a 5-0 start in Big Ten play, Indiana lost at Iowa 101-88. The Hoosiers came back with home wins over ranked teams in Illinois and Purdue. Then Indiana went through a three-game stretch where they flirted with danger against the conference's three worst teams. IU survived Northwestern 77-75. It took the Hoosiers three overtimes to get an 86-85 win at Wisconsin, a game memorable for Knight's postgame anger at the late start times (9:30 PM EST) due to television. A 72-70 survival against Minnesota completed a less-than-impressive three-game stretch. But Indiana had won them all and they would need all of those victories.

Iowa made a return trip to Bloomington and IU got an 84-75 win, but they lost road games at Purdue and Illinois. The result was Indiana slipping a game back of Purdue in the conference race. At stake was likely the #1 seed in the Midwest Regional and a spot in Indianapolis for the tournament's first weekend. Even more important in Big Ten Country was the prestige that comes with simply winning a conference title. No senior class in the Knight era had ever graduated without one and the group of Alford, Thomas and reserve forward Todd Meier were on the brink.

Indiana won its home finale over Ohio State and Alford would later recall signing autographs outside Assembly Hall and ecstatic students reporting the news that Purdue was getting crushed at Michigan. The Hoosiers and Boilermakers were co-champs of the Big Ten, and it was Indiana that got the Midwest's #1 seed and the spot in the Hoosier Dome. The opportunity was there to cap off a great year with a Final Four run...or would another great high be followed by yet another low?

The Big East was another conference race coming down to the wire, with Syracuse, Georgetown and Pitt all vying for the regular season title and later the tournament crown in Madison Square Garden.

Syracuse head coach Jim Boeheim had been at the helm for ten years. He's shared the regular season conference championship twice and won the league tournament once, but had yet to reach a Final Four. Boeheim's teams had lost in the Sweet 16 on four occasions and a year earlier they suffered a second-round loss to Navy and David Robinson—on their home floor in the Carrier Dome.

The Orangemen were loaded with future NBA talent. Sherman Douglas at the point knocked down 17ppg and was a brilliant floor leader. The post was ably manned by center Rony Seikaly (15 points/8 rebounds) and freshman power forward Derrick Coleman (12/9). Greg Monroe and Howard Triche filled out the starting lineup and were each double-digit scorers themselves. Syracuse got the season off to a 14-0 start before a loss to Georgetown.

Georgetown was only two years removed from its dynasty run with Patrick Ewing at center. From 1982-85, the Hoyas went to three Final Fours, won the 1984 national championship and only one of the great shooting performances of all-time, Villanova's 78 percent from the field in the 1985 NCAA final—stopped Georgetown from being the first time to repeat since the John Wooden Dynasty at UCLA ended in 1975.

Small forward Reggie Williams was the leader of these Hoyas and he poured in 24 points a game, grabbed nine rebounds and played the stellar defense that head coach John Thompson demanded. Williams got some help from forward Perry McDonald, who averaged 13/7. Georgetown finished the regular season 19-4, closing with seven straight wins. That stretch included a 65-52 win over Pitt on February 18 and a big 72-71 win over Syracuse on the regular season's penultimate Sunday. The Hoyas finished it by knocking off NCAA-bound Providence 90-79. .

Providence had a young head coach who had yet to make a name for himself—the man's name was Rick Pitino. The Friars also had a guard who was not a household name—that would be Billy Donovan. The Pitino-Donovan combo was reviving a program that had collapsed after head coach Dave Gavitt left to become the Big East commissioner in 1980. Gavitt's vision and leadership put the conference at the forefront of the college basketball landscape, but Providence was struggling.

Pitino, a former assistant under Boeheim at Syracuse, arrived in 1986 and quickly produced a winning season. In 1987, Donovan became a 20-ppg scorer and the Friars won 20 games in the regular season.

But none of these three teams were the ones that controlled the race for the conference championship on the final weekend of the season. Pitt had five double-digit scorers, led by a potent frontcourt combo of Charles Smith and Jerome Lane. They combined to average 33 points/23 rebounds per game. With a win at St. John's, the Panthers would claim the outright Big East title. They lost 76-74, and allowed Georgetown and Syracuse to join in as tri-champions.

St. John's was a decent team that would make the NCAA field, but their flaws became obvious the next week when Providence ran them out of Madison Square Garden in the tournament quarterfinals, 80-51. The tri-champions of the regular season all held serve on that opening Thursday night.

Pitt missed a chance to redeem themselves when they lost to Syracuse 99-85 in Friday night's semis. Georgetown kept their surge going, pounding Providence and then closing it out Saturday night with a 69-59 win over the Orange to grab a third tournament title in four years.

Georgetown was rewarded with the #1 seed in the Southeast Regional. Pitt was still a 3-seed, but sent out West. Providence and St. John's were both on the 6-line. And Syracuse? They got to stay in the East Regional, but settled for a 2-seed. If Boeheim was going to make his first Final Four, then a powerful North Carolina team would stand in his way.

Dean Smith had already taken North Carolina to seven Final Fours in what would be a Hall of Fame career. He won his breakthrough national championship in 1982 in a thrilling final against Georgetown. Over the ensuing four years, the Tar Heels reached the regionals each time, but lost twice in the Sweet 16 and twice in the regional finals. The last two tournament exits had come at the hands of the eventual champions, Villanova and Louisville.

By the standards of any other program this was excellence, especially when you tack on an outright ACC championship and two more shared regular season league season titles. By the standards Smith himself had set, there was a lingering feeling of disappointment. In a conference where major value is placed on winning the league's postseason tournament, Carolina hadn't done so since that 1982 championship year. And those ACC tourney failures were preludes to coming up short of the Final Four.

Smith had another stocked team in 1987. Kenny Smith averaged 17ppg and was a playmaker par excellence, as he would demonstrate by quarterbacking the Houston Rockets in their back-to-back NBA championship runs of 1994-95 before going on to become one of the best studio analysts in sports.

Smith was joined by a solid two-guard in Jeff Lebo and forwards Dave Popson and Joe Wolf. Collectively, these three chipped in nearly forty points a game, with Wolf and Popson being part of a big frontline. But the focal point of the frontline and the team overall was a freshman center in J.R. Reid.

In today's game, Reid is probably a one-and-done, or at the very least, asked about it every day. That wasn't the way it worked in 1987 and Reid was a physical inside presence that set North Carolina apart. Reid's stat line of 14 points/7 rebounds was actually a little lower than Wolf's 15/7, but Reid was the one in charge of patrolling the interior.

It worked to the tune of a dazzling 26-2 regular season, with the only losses coming outside the ACC, to UCLA and Notre Dame, both on the road. The Tar Heels knocked off Illinois and Purdue and then in what was a mostly down year for the ACC, rolled through the league undefeated.

North Carolina blew out a bad Maryland team to start the ACC Tournament, but then needed double-overtime to survive Virginia in the semis. The Cavs were a decent team that would get a 5-seed in the NCAA bracket, but they shouldn't have been that close to a UNC team presumably hungry to redeem themselves in March. Even so, when the other top contenders—Duke and Clemson, both headed for the 4-line, lost prior to the final, the door was open for the Tar Heels.

Instead, North Carolina was upset by Jim Valvano's N.C. State, who finished sixth in the regular season and needed to win the ACC's automatic bid just to make the NCAA field. Tar Heel fans could only hope it wasn't an ominous sign, as their team still got the #1 seed in the East.

Jerry Tarkanian had been the head coach at UNLV since 1974. He played a fast-paced style of basketball that fans on the Vegas Strip appreciated and he coached defense in a way his peers

appreciated. He also frequently clashed with the NCAA. "Tark The Shark", as he was called, didn't lack for color and the sight of the bald-headed coach chewing on a towel was a staple at UNLV games.

Tarkanian made a Final Four in 1977 and ten years later he had his best team. Armon Gilliam was a force at power forward averaging 23 points/9 rebounds. Freddie Banks was a two-guard that knocked down 20ppg, using the three-ball at a rate that was high for these early years of the trey's existence. Mark Wade finished the season with over 400 assists. Gerald Paddio at the small forward spot was a key contributor and double-digit scorer.

The Runnin' Rebels demolished people in what was then called the Pacific Coast Athletic Association (later re-named the Big West and its member schools were part of the evolution to the Mountain West). UNLV also won big games against national opponents. They beat Arizona and Oklahoma, both NCAA-bound, in a November tournament at home.

The most impressive win came over a tough Temple team. The Owls were well-coached under John Chaney and had an explosive guard in 19-ppg scorer Nate Blackwell. Tim Perry was a tough presence down low, averaging 13/9 and Mike Vreeswyk knocked down 15ppg from the wings Temple ended up a 2-seed in the NCAA Tournament, and UNLV's 78-76 win over the Owls was one of the more exciting moments of the non-conference schedule.

UNLV went on to knock off David Robinson and Navy 104-79 and beat an NCAA-bound team in Auburn. By the time all was said and done in the regular season and conference tournament, the Rebs were 33-1 and the only loss was by one point in a return trip to Oklahoma. UNLV's colorful style made them popular and Tarkanian's relationship with the NCAA gave the program a "love them or hate them" quality.

A popular song at the time, "Walk Like An Egyptian", was rewritten to sing "Walk Like A Tarkanian." [A video is still posted](#) that gives tribute to this team in music. Now they needed a national title and they began as an easy choice for the #1 seed in the West.

The stage was set. It was time to start the games.

MIDWEST REGIONAL-OPENING WEEKEND

Indianapolis

Indiana would start its run against little Fairfield, who finished the season 11-15 before going on a run to win the MAAC tournament and automatic bid. Jeff Gromos was a 20-ppg scorer for the Stags and he played to his average against the Hoosiers, with 21 points/9 rebounds. But this was a typical 1 vs. 16 game in the NCAAs. IU's frontcourt was in control, with Garrett and Calloway combining for 37 points and 15 rebounds. Indiana was up by 25 at the half and won 92-58.

The 8-9 game was Auburn and San Diego. The Tigers had reached the final eight a year earlier, beating UNLV in the process and only losing to national champion Louisville. Attrition had taken a heavy toll in the program though and the previous three years had seen them lose Charles Barkley and Chuck Person, the latter an NBA talent himself. They struggled to a 17-12 finish in 1987.

San Diego coach Hank Egan had spent 23 years on the sidelines. A graduate of Annapolis who went on to coach at Air Force before coming to SoCal, he had never made the NCAA Tournament until this season. The Torreos enjoyed a 24-5 season and won the West Coast Conference.

The game was a good one, with San Diego taking a five-point lead at halftime. In the end though, the Tigers still had too much talent. Chris Morris, a burly forward, and Jeff Moore, combined to get 25 rebounds. Mike Jones knocked down 11-of-16 shots from the field and Auburn escaped 62-61.

Two days later, Auburn would provide the first real test for Indiana in this tournament, and a test is exactly what the Tigers gave. They jumped out to a 24-10 lead in front of the shocked red-and-white clad crowd. Jones finished the game with 30 points and Moore went for 24/10. At the first timeout, Knight was furious with his team. The Hoosier players responded.

Indiana was able to keep Morris off the boards and they won the rebounding battle 44-33. They shot 60 percent, and Smart narrowly missed a triple-double. He scored 20 points and handed out 15 assists, but "only" got nine rebounds. Calloway added 18 and Daryl Thomas knocked down 27. And they were just the support pieces for Alford who poured in 31 points. The Hoosiers were up 53-48 by the half and pulled away to win 107-90. For the first time in four years, they were going to the Sweet 16.

Another team that didn't have far to travel was Xavier, though as a 13-seed, no one was talking up the Musketeers as a candidate to survive the weekend and get to a regional round that would be in their hometown of Cincinnati. The program had never won an NCAA Tournament

game in only two tries, though one of those chances had come in 1986 under first-year coach Pete Gillen.

Gillen's team was led by an excellent backcourt that started with 25-ppg scorer Byron Larkin (brother of future Cincinnati Reds' shortstop Barry and uncle to future Miami Hurricanes' guard Shane) and included 16-ppg scorer Stan Kimbrough.

Xavier met up with Missouri. Tiger forward Derrick Chievous averaged 24/8 through the season and led Mizzou past Danny Manning and Kansas to win the old Big Eight in the regular season. The Tigers underscored the point by knocking off the Jayhawks again in the conference tournament.

One of the first round's big upsets came about because Xavier simply outworked Missouri on the glass. The rebounding margin was 43-25. Even though Larkin shot 6-for-20 from the floor he still scored 29 points by repeatedly getting to the foul line. It was a theme for the game, with the Musketeers shooting 35 free throws to just 14 for the Tigers. The result was a 70-69 shocker.

Perhaps in retrospect it's not that big of a shocker. The hero of the game was 6'9" forward Tyrone Hill, who hauled in 13 rebounds Hill, a freshman, turned himself into a first-round NBA draft choice by 1990 and even made an All-Star Game in the course of his six-year pro career. As for the Xavier program, this was the second of seven NCAA Tournaments they would reach in a nine-year span and the first of five tournament games they would win.

Duke is one of college basketball's two pre-eminent staples each year in March, along with Kentucky. That wasn't the case in 1987. The Blue Devils enjoyed a tremendous year in 1986, reaching the national championship game, but they had lost four starters from that group. Mike Krzyzewski was still a guy with a difficult-to-pronounce Polish name and not simply "Coach K." The Duke program hadn't survived opening weekend in successive years for over two decades.

Texas A&M finished the regular season 14-13, in eighth place in the old Southwest Conference, before going on a run to win the league tournament. They were generously seeded 12th, along with the last of the power conference at-large teams. If Missouri felt like they got a tougher opponent than Duke in spite of a higher seed, they had just cause.



The Blue Devils took advantage of the bracket situation. They shot 56 percent from the floor and got 20 points from swingman Kevin Strickland in winning 58-51. The Duke-Xavier game in the second round was a good one. Both teams shot over 50 percent.

Each got good guard play. Larkin knocked down 18, but Blue Devil point guard Tommy Amaker (the future head coach of Michigan & Harvard) scored 20 points while playing the entire game. Duke won it 65-60.

Two old friends, Bob Knight and Mike Krzyzewski, were coming out of Indianapolis and would face each other in a few short days.

Rosemont Horizon, Chicago

In the late 1980s, DePaul was a traditional power. They had reached the Final Four in 1979 and been a #1 seed each year from 1980-82 and again in 1984. They also had a reputation for March failures, losing in the second round each of the first three years and in the 1984 Sweet 16. That season was the final year for venerable head coach Ray Meyer and his son Joey took over the reins of the program.

Meyer The Younger quickly made two straight NCAA Tournaments and got to the Sweet 16 in 1986. In 1987, DePaul looked ready to make another run at national significance. They ripped off a 26-2 season, losing only at Georgetown and at Notre Dame. They also beat Notre Dame in what was then a home-and-home series between Jesuit independents in the Midwest. The Blue Demons knocked off Louisville in December and had three outstanding players in Rod Strickland, Dallas Comegys and Kevin Edwards. They were well-balanced, with Strickland at the point, Edwards on the wings and Comegys down low. All three players would be first-round NBA draft picks over the next two years.

DePaul got the 3-seed in the Midwest Regional and was rewarded with a chance to open on their home floor. They began with a flourish, taking down Louisiana Tech 76-62. The Bulldogs had a good team that won 22 games and the Southland Conference, but the Blue Demons got 29 points/8 rebounds from Comegys while Strickland scored 25 more and handed out eight assists.

The more compelling game in this sub-regional's first round was St. John-Wichita in the 6-11 game. The Redmen had future NBA player/coach/broadcaster Mark Jackson at the point, a good option at small forward in Willie Glass and a big, lumbering center from Italy in Marco Baldi. Wichita had finished third in the Missouri Valley Conference and probably was NIT-bound until winning the MVC tournament.

St. John's controlled the glass to the tune of 32-21. They got 18 points from Glass and 15 more from Jackson. The Redmen shot 50 percent from the floor and held the Shockers to 42 percent. But St. John's only got to the free throw line six times and the game was tied 55-all in the closing moments.

The Redmen had the ball. Wichita made the logical decision to take away Jackson and Glass, while leaving Baldi open on the perimeter. It was the right choice, but Baldi came up with a 12-foot jumper with one second left to get the win.

A raucous crowd for the DePaul-St. John's game on Sunday gave the Blue Demons some home cookin' and they took a 42-30 lead at halftime. The Redmen controlled the second half though and took a 69-65 lead with 19 seconds left. It looked like March failure was at hand for Meyer's team.

Comegys came up with a big offensive rebound and got fouled on the putback. Hitting the free throw would cut the lead to one, but DePaul opted to have Comegys miss intentionally. It proved to be a good move. Edwards rebounded the miss and got it to Strickland who tied the game.

Jackson got a look from 12 feet for St. John's before the buzzer, but missed. We were going to overtime at 69-69.

DePaul took over the extra session and rolled to an 83-75 win. Edwards finished with 26 points. Comegys ended the game with 15 points/10 rebounds and Strickland scored 16. Though Jackson finished the game with 23, he was only 8-for-23 from the floor and had missed the big shot at the end of regulation. It was a bitter loss for St. John's and DePaul had avoided a major embarrassment.

Temple might not have had the home crowd, but they were the high seed of the teams at Rosemont, coming in at #2 in the Midwest. They drew Southern for the first round, who had two players that averaged 17 points/8 rebounds per game in Kevin Florent and James Faulkner.

This matchup might have been more interesting had Southern point guard Avery Johnson—a future NBA mainstay in San Antonio, later an NBA coach and currently the boss at Alabama—been available. But Johnson was out and Temple rolled to an easy 75-56 win behind 21 points and 17 rebounds from Tim Perry and 24 more from Nate Blackwell.

In the 7-10 game, LSU and Georgia Tech played what was a rematch of a Sweet 16 game from 1986. LSU had gone into Atlanta and upset 2-seed Tech that year on their way to an improbable Final Four run as an 11-seed. This year's result wasn't nearly as shocking, but it was still a case of the 10-seed Tigers winning as an underdog.

LSU got 28 points from guard Darryl Joe, 20 more from forward Anthony Wilson and 18 from talented center Nikita Wilson (no relation) in an 85-79 win, shooting 54 percent from the floor.

The same formula worked in the second round. LSU got 54 percent shooting against Temple. Joe and the two Wilsons combined for 56 points. The defense forced Blackwell into 6-for-19 shooting and held Perry to seven points. Nikita Wilson fought Perry to a draw on the boards and it enabled LSU to win 72-62.

For the second straight year, LSU was coming out of the first weekend as a double-digit seed. They and DePaul headed to Cincinnati to join Indiana and Duke for the Midwest regionals.

EAST REGIONAL-OPENING WEEKEND

Syracuse

For the second year in a row Syracuse got the opportunity to open up the NCAA Tournament at home and this time they took advantage, though it wasn't as easy as it should have been. 15-seed Georgia Southern had fought its way into the field of 64 by upsetting Arkansas Little-Rock—a team that had upset Notre Dame as a 14-seed in the 1986 NAAs—in their conference tournament.

Georgia Southern gave Syracuse a credible effort, shooting 55 percent and keeping it close. In the end, the Orange had too much muscle inside. Seikaly and Coleman combined for 38 points and 17 rebounds in a 79-73 win. But if you were a Syracuse skeptic—and they were numerous—the nature of the win offered plenty of ammunition.

West Virginia-Western Kentucky was the 7-10 game in this pod. The Mountaineers were at the end of a run where they made the NAAs five times in six years under long-time head coach Gale Catlett. Western Kentucky had reached the NCAA field in 1986 and head coach Clem Haskins departed for Minnesota. The Hilltoppers made it back by winning a Sun Belt Conference that included NCAA-bound Alabama-Birmingham.

Murray Arnold was the new head coach for Western and though the program ultimately declined, this game was his high point. The Hilltoppers made up for a rebounding deficiency with balance. Four players—Frank Tellis, Kannard Johnson, Brett McNeal and Bryan Asbery—combined to score 60 of WKU's 64 points and they pulled out a two-point win.

For one half in the second round, Syracuse's problems continued. They only led 42-40 at intermission and Coleman was having a poor game. Western Kentucky's quartet came through again, ultimately scoring 62 total points. But the Orange finally pulled away. They shot 65 percent. Seikaly was a beast inside, with a 23/10 game. Douglas stepped up his scoring and knocked down 27. Triche and Monroe each went for 20-plus and Syracuse won 104-86.

Florida is a regular in NCAA Tournament play today and they won back-to-back national championships in 2006-07. It might be hard to imagine what a novelty they were in 1987. The Gators were in the field for the first time ever. Norm Sloan, who had won a national championship at N.C. State in 1974, had come to Gainesville to escape the long shadow cast by Dean Smith in ACC Country. Sloan's Gators finished second in the SEC and were the 6-seed in this East Regional.

The committee showed its matchup creativity and made sure to put N.C. State against Florida and the committee would insist that it was entirely a coincidence that Sloan played his old team. I'm not sure why the NCAA powers-that-be deny this so fervently every year. The decision to

seed the Wolfpack on the 11-line and place them in the East Regional were both thoroughly defensible—as the decisions usually are in creative matchups like this. And the fans love them.

Sloan had reason to love this game. His best player was two-guard Vernon Maxwell, who eventually joined forces in the NBA with Kenny Smith as the starting backcourt for the Rockets' championship run. Maxwell poured in 28 points, Florida controlled the second half and advanced with an 82-70 win.

Purdue was the favorite in this sub-regional as the 3-seed, but the Boilermakers were licking their wounds after the season-ending beatdown from Michigan that cost them an outright conference championship. Purdue was annoyed at having been dropped all the way to the 3-line from what almost certainly would have been the 1-seed in the Midwest because of one poor game. And Gene Keady, always feeling the shadow of Knight, speculated that even had Purdue won, the committee would have found a way to get his team out of the spot at Indianapolis and get Indiana in.

None of that led to focus and preparedness and Purdue did not play good defense—usually a Keady trademark—in the first round. Northeastern, seeded #14, had a future NBA star in Reggie Lewis, who played with the Boston Celtics before a tragic death due to heart failure. The game turned into an up-and-down affair. Doug Lee, a 6'5" guard, ended up saving Purdue. Lee guarded Lewis and outscored him 29-19. Lee also grabbed 13 rebounds. Point guard Troy Lewis scored 20 more and passed for 10 assists. Purdue survived 104-95.

The survival was only temporary. The Florida-Purdue game in the second round was close for a half, but the Gators dominated in the second half. Maxwell capped his great weekend with a 24-point game. Florida's talented freshman center, Dwayne Schintzius—an eventual first-round draft choice four years later—scored 21. Lee's magic was gone and he struggled to a 2-for-9 shooting performance.

Purdue's outstanding season ended with a bad taste in the mouth, 85-66. Florida would join Syracuse at the Meadowlands the following week.

Charlotte

North Carolina enjoyed a homecrowd advantage, but any Tar Heel fan with a memory wasn't going to overlook Penn. In 1979, in this same city, the tournament's second round became known as "Black Saturday" in the region. The Quakers upset the top-seeded Tar Heels, then St. John's upset 2-seed Duke. Penn made an improbable run to the Final Four—the last Ivy League school to do so—before running into the buzzsaw that was Magic Johnson's Michigan State team.

This year's Penn team had won the Ivy for the second time in three years and for twenty minutes they ran right with the Tar Heels. The score was a sizzling 55-53 at the half. UNC's talent advantage finally asserted itself. They got 25 points from Wolf, 11 assists from Smith and nearly doubled Penn in total rebounds. The final was 113-82.

Navy and Michigan got an inordinate amount of attention for an 8-9 game. This was the last college ride for Middie center David Robinson. Following their magical run to the regional finals

a year ago, Navy had gone 25-5. With Robinson enjoying a national Player of the Year season, the Mids were competitive with good teams, losing close games to N.C. State and UNLV.

But the operative word there is still “losing”. In spite of Robinson’s heroics there was a ceiling this fine program would always run into and the first-round game against the Wolverines was a microcosm. Michigan had won the Big Ten in both 1985 and 1986 before taking a step back this season with the loss of center Roy Tarpley to the NBA. But as Purdue could attest, they were dangerous. Gary Grant and Antoine Joubert made up one of the most talented backcourts in the country. Sophomore Glen Rice was an electric scorer.

So in spite of Robinson dropping 50 points, Michigan was able to win. Grant scored 26 and Rice added 21, but the real hero was a role player named Garde Thompson. He hit 11-for-14 from the floor, scored 33 points and the Wolverines controlled the second half in a 97-82 win.

North Carolina and Michigan met on the weekend and there was no shortage of scoring. UNC had a 60-43 lead by halftime and ended up winning 109-97. The Tar Heels scored 50-plus points in all four halves of the opening weekend, but the defensive problems were obvious—they had given up 50-plus in three of those halves, none against teams as good as those who awaited in the Meadowlands.

But for now, it didn’t matter. Reid did the damage inside, with 27/10. He was 9-for-11 from the line, the best example of North Carolina’s biggest edge. They got 36 free throw attempts and turned them into 27 points. Michigan only got 14 attempts from the line, making 11. Reid and the free throws were the difference in a game where Smith and Grant each played well and canceled each other out.

Notre Dame was the 4-seed in Charlotte and looking to redeem themselves after the loss to UA-Little Rock a year earlier, a defeat that was part of another “Black” day in a basketball-proud region—Notre Dame and Indiana each lost as 3-seeds and Purdue lost as a 6-seed in the same first round of 1986.

The Irish were in the NCAA field for the 11th time under Digger Phelps, who had taken over the program in 1972. Their opponent was Middle Tennessee, a respected midmajor program. In spite of losing in the Ohio Valley Conference tournament, Middle Tennessee still got an at-large NCAA bid. They had impressed the committee by beating Michigan on a neutral floor and this was their third NCAA trip in five years.

But Notre Dame had the best player on the floor in point guard David Rivers, a junior who became a first-round NBA draft pick in 1988. Rivers scored 27, forward Donald Royal added 24 more and the Irish won 84-71.

TCU was the champion of the old Southwest Conference. This season was the Horned Frogs’ version of a magical ride. Head coach Jim Killingsworth was retiring after eight years in Fort Worth and this was his first trip to the NCAA Tournament. He had a tough draw in 12-seed Marshall, in the field for the third time in the four-year tenure of coach Rick Huckaby.

Carven Holcombe had been TCU's go-to guy all year and the 6'5" guard was the Southwest Conference Player Of The Year. He played all forty minutes in this game, shot 14-for-17 and went for 30 points. The Horned Frogs as a team shot 64 percent and they rolled to a 76-60 win.

It set up a good TCU-Notre Dame game that would be one of the best of the second round. Holcombe again played the entire game, though the Irish had some modest success keeping him off the ball—he "only" shot 7-for-13 and scored 17 points. Rivers had scored 23 points and the game was tied 57-57 as Notre Dame brought the ball up for one last shot.

Rivers was pressured by Horned Frogs' guard Jamie Dixon (the current head coach at his alma mater). Rivers looked to turn the corner on Dixon near the sideline and went sprawling, the ball going out of bounds. It could have been ruled a turnover. Instead, Dixon was whistled for a foul, [a call disputed later by TCU](#).

With four seconds left, Rivers went to the line for a one-and-one. He made the first, his 24th point of the game. Even though he missed the second, it was enough to preserve the 58-57 win.

Notre Dame would join North Carolina in the Meadowlands, along with Florida and Syracuse.

WEST REGIONAL-OPENING WEEKEND

Salt Lake City

UNLV looked to begin their run with a game against Idaho State, the fifth-place team from the Big Sky Conference who had gotten hot in the league tourney behind 19-ppg scorer Donn Holston. The game went as everyone expected. Even though Holston got his 20, all five Rebel starters were in double-figures, led by 23 from Banks. It was 46-27 by half and ended 95-70.

The other game in this pod also went as you would expect. Georgia and Kansas State were in the 8-9 seeds and they played a thriller. The Bulldogs were the higher seed and the third-place team out of the SEC. But Kansas State had what we now know is the name talent.

Mitch Richmond was the leader of the Wildcats and one year later he became a top-five pick in the NBA draft. Richmond went on to be Rookie of the Year, make six NBA All-Star games and be inducted in the Basketball Hall of Fame in 2014. And he wasn't even the leading scorer on the 1987 Kansas State team—that honor went Norris Coleman, who averaged 21ppg to Richmond's 19. The Wildcats were coached by Lon Kruger, who still coaches today and recently took Oklahoma to the 2016 Final Four.

Richmond played big in this NCAA Tournament, getting 34 points and 11 rebounds against Georgia. The Bulldogs' Willie Anderson answered with a 35-point game of his own. In a tight game the difference came on the free throw line. The Wildcats outscored the Bulldogs 18-12 from the stripe and they won in overtime, 82-79.

The free throw line would turn against K-State in their upset bid against UNLV. The Wildcats only made 9-of-17, while Vegas was a lights-out 18-for-19 from the stripe. In a game where Kansas State already needed everything to break right, it wasn't going to be enough.

Gilliam posted a 24/11 for the Rebels and Wade handed out thirteen assists. Richmond played well, with a 19/14 line himself and shooting a respectable 8-for-18 from the floor. But Coleman never really got untracked and UNLV gradually pulled away. They led by nine at the half and ultimately won 80-61 to punch a ticket to Seattle for the regional weekend.

Head coach Jim Brandenburg had enjoyed a good run at the University of Wyoming. After taking over in 1979, he reached NCAA Tournaments in 1981 and 1982, winning a combined 47 games and reaching the second round both times. Even though the next three years saw the Cowboys miss the Dance, they still averaged 16 wins a year. They were NIT-bound again in 1986, but this time with 18 wins and they reached the final of the consolation tournament.

Brandenburg had two big-time players to build around in 1987. Eric Leckner was a tough 6'11" junior center who became an NBA first-round pick by 1988. Leckner averaged 19 points/7

rebounds. He was joined by the explosive Fennis Dembo, who knocked down twenty a night, also averaged eight rebounds a game and won the WAC Player of the Year.

Wyoming went 18-9 in the regular season, won two more in the conference tournament and then played New Mexico in what was essentially a winner-take-all game for one NCAA bid. The Cowboys pulled it out, 64-62. They didn't get a ton of respect from the Selection Committee, being seeded #12 in the West, but they again had a chance to Dance.

As everyone who regularly picks an NCAA Tournament bracket knows, the 5-12 game is often a prime spot for an upset and as favorites, go 5-seed Virginia seemed particularly vulnerable. They had finished fourth in the ACC, but without any notable talent. Leckner and Dembo were the two best players on the floor for the first-round game and they combined for 38 points in a 64-60 win.

UCLA was the 4-seed and the favorite in this pod. They had one of the game's all-time great shooters in Reggie Miller and won the Pac-10 title in the third year under head coach Walt Hazzard. This was still Hazzard's first NCAA appearance in three years and simply winning the conference championship wasn't going to appease the hard-nosed boosters, who had the memory of the John Wooden Dynasty still only twelve years in the rearview mirror.

The Bruins faced MAC champion Central Michigan. The Chippewas had a future NBA mainstay in Dan Majerle, who scored 21ppg and led the team to both the regular season and tournament titles in their league. It might have been another prime spot for an upset pick, but Miller blew that out of the water. He scored 32 points and UCLA shot 63 percent from the floor as a team. The score was 53-21 by half and ended 92-73.

Beating UCLA was still the pride and joy of any program in the West and Wyoming now had the opportunity. To say Dembo and Leckner met the moment understates the case. Leckner controlled the inside, with 20 points and 14 rebounds. And Dembo? [He was simply electric](#), knocking down 41, grabbing nine rebounds and lead the way as the Cowboys controlled the second half. After trailing by six at intermission, Wyoming won 78-68.

Miller had played well, with 24 points, but it wasn't enough. Nor was it enough for Hazzard. He lasted only one more year in Westwood. Wyoming could celebrate and make travel plans for Seattle.

Tucson

Iowa isn't the first team you think of when the words "run-and-gun basketball" are spoken, but that's what the Hawkeyes were in 1987. First-year head coach Tom Davis had built a winner at Boston College and now brought his high-octane attack into the pound-it-inside world of the Big Ten.

Davis had the horses to make his system work. Point guard B.J. Armstrong eventually became a starter on the Michael Jordan-era championship teams with the Chicago Bulls. Small forward Roy Marble averaged 15ppg and was one of the best players in the conference. Kevin Gamble and Jeff Moe were double-digit scorers on the wings. The middle was anchored by center Brad Lohaus and his 11 points/8 rebounds, along with another aggressive rebounder in Ed Horton.

In mid-January, the Hawkeyes got some attention when they won consecutive road games at Illinois and Purdue. Iowa came home to face Indiana and dropped 101 on the Hoosiers. Davis' team was ranked #1 in the nation. They eventually lost at home to Purdue and on the return visit to Indiana, but still finished just a game back in the competitive Big Ten race. It was good enough to be the 2-seed in the West.

Even by the standards of the first round, Iowa had an easy matchup. Santa Clara went 12-13 in the regular season before getting on a run to win their conference tournament and automatic NCAA bid. This game was a mismatch from the outset. The Hawkeyes were up 51-22 by halftime. They shot 59 percent and doubled up Santa Clara on the boards in a 99-76 win.

Arizona was the 10-seed, but had homecourt advantage, getting the nod by the Selection Committee to play in Tucson. It wasn't exactly fair to UTEP. The Miners were a tough, overachieving team led by a legendary coach in Don Haskins—the coach of the 1966 Texas Western team (the school was later re-named Texas El-Paso) that became the first school to win the national championship with five African-American players.

UTEP won the WAC, but even with the 7-seed, had to play a road game against an Arizona team led by Sean Elliot, who was an All-American a year later, a starter with the San Antonio Spurs and now an excellent analyst for the Spurs on local television. The Wildcats also had future major league baseball centerfielder Kenny Lofton at the point.

Elliot went for 26 points, but UTEP showed their mettle. They hung in the game with 23 points from Jeep Jackson and a 26/8 showing from Quinton Gates. Trailing 79-77 in the closing seconds, the Miners got the ball to Chris Blocker outside. Blocker had come out of the Philadelphia high schools with unfair comparisons to Julius Erving, the legendary Dr. J. trailing him around. After kicking around in juco ball, Blocker came to UTEP.

In this moment he drilled what appeared to be a go-ahead three-pointer with a second left. Officials conferred and ruled Blocker's foot was on the line, but he had still sent the game to overtime at 79-79. UTEP had three starters fouled out, but that didn't stop them from rolling up 19 points in the extra period and winning 98-91.

Anyone who thought the Miners would rest on their laurels didn't know Haskins, a good friend of Bob Knight's and competitive enough that he was nicknamed "The Bear." The second-round battle between UTEP and Iowa was taut all the way, but this time Marble was too much for the gritty Miner squad. The Hawkeye star was good for 28 points and Iowa escaped with a 84-82 win to reach the Sweet 16.

Oklahoma was a 6-seed in Tucson's other pod, and no one could sleep on the Sooners. Head coach Billy Tubbs oversaw one of the most fast-paced teams in the country. Tim McCalister and Ricky Grace made up a potent backcourt, but the real talent on this team was its athletic frontline.

Harvey Grant, a junior transfer for Clemson, was growing into a player who turned into a first-round draft choice by 1988. Center Stacey King went on to the pros himself and was a starter on the Jordan-era NBA championship teams in Chicago in the early 1990s.

This was a core group that grew into the Final Four team and national finalist of 1988. In 1987 there were still questions about their consistency and those didn't subside after a first-round win over Tulsa. The Golden Hurricane were a good team that had won the Missouri Valley Conference, but they shouldn't have been able to compete with the Sooners. It took a big game from Grant, 21 points/17 rebounds, for OU to escape with a 74-69 win.

Meanwhile, 3-seed Pitt was taking care of business. They faced Marist, the champions of the ECAC Metro and a team with an outstanding center. Rik Smits had a good pro career ahead of him with the Indiana Pacers and he was a 28/8 man at the college level. The Panthers held him to just two rebounds as they controlled the glass. Charles Smith scored 22 points and Pitt coasted 93-68.

The Pitt-Oklahoma game produced some fantastic frontcourt play on both sides. Smith and Jerome Lane combined for 37/21 while Grant and King answered with 37/18. The difference would be in the backcourt and it's here that the Sooners stepped up and dominated. Grace knocked down 15 points, while Pitt point guard Curtis Aiken was unable to get on the board. McCalister poured in 28.

More important though, was what OU's pressure defense did. They forced Pitt into 22 turnovers, including five in the final seven possessions of a close game. The result was, that even though the Panthers outshot the Sooners from the floor, 56%-44%, the turnovers gave Oklahoma the edge in a 96-93 win.

The West Regionals in Seattle were set. Wyoming would take a crack at UNLV, while Oklahoma and Iowa got set for a game that would surely blow out the scoreboard lights.

SOUTHEAST REGIONAL-OPENING WEEKEND

Atlanta

Georgetown opened its tournament run against Bucknell. Even though Jim Valvano had coached the Bison program in the 1970s this was still their first appearance in the NCAA Tournament. The game was as big a mismatch as you might expect. The Hoyas won the rebounding battle 35-15 with Williams enjoying a 21/10 game. Georgetown cruised 75-53.

A pair of noteworthy head coaches squared off in the 8-9 game. Kentucky's Eddie Sutton had already made a name for himself by taking Arkansas to the 1978 Final Four and coming within a basket of upsetting Larry Bird's Indiana State in the final eight of the 1979 tournament. In later years Sutton would coach Oklahoma State to the Final Four in 1995 and 2004.

Ironically, Sutton's stop in Lexington was where he *didn't* reach the Final Four. His team had been upset as a 1-seed the year before by LSU in the regional finals and this year's team was a pedestrian 18-10 squad. They did have a heralded freshman in Rex Chapman. A local recruit so beloved in the state of Kentucky he was called "The Boy King", Chapman averaged 16ppg in 1987.

Ohio State's coach wasn't a big name in 1987, but Gary Williams most definitely became one. He established a reputation by following Tom Davis at Boston College and reaching the regionals in 1982. Williams would ultimately be remembered for his work at Maryland where he won the 2002 NCAA championship. Right now, he was trying to make the Buckeyes a national contender.

Dennis Hopson made Williams' life easier. An electric scorer that would go third overall in the NBA draft this year, Hopson scored 29ppg. He was a second-team All-American and in the rugged Big Ten, virtually carried Ohio State to the 8-seed in this NCAA Tournament.

He carried them again in the battle with Kentucky. Hopson shot 12-for-19 from the field and exceeded his season-long average by scoring 32 points. For one day he dethroned The Boy King, who struggled to a 4-for-16 shooting performance. Ohio State won 91-77.

Hopson played well again in the Georgetown game, going 8-for-16 with 20 points. Ohio State jumped out to a 39-29 lead and the Hoyas looked ready to be the first 1-seed to go down. But they were just deeper than the Buckeyes. Williams got his numbers, with 24 points. Point guard Charles Smith hit for 22, and the season-saving contribution came from Perry McDonald. Hitting eight of nine shots from the floor, McDonald scored 16 points. Georgetown needed all it could get in an 82-79 escape.

The program at Southwest Missouri State (now called Missouri State) began in 1983. One year later Charlie Spoonhour came on as head coach and the Bears began to string together winning seasons, including a 24-win campaign in 1986.

Southwest Missouri took the next step in 1987. During the season, they played Missouri close on the road, losing only 57-53. They scored wins over NIT-bound Arkansas and over NCAA teams in BYU and Arkansas Little-Rock. It didn't get them a lot of respect from the Selection Committee—the Bears were still seeded #13 in the Southeast—but they were in the field.

And it turns out that the seeding hurt 4-seed Clemson more than anyone. The Tigers had a good frontcourt, with future Chicago Bulls mainstay Horace Grant and center Elden Campbell. Clemson had finished second to North Carolina in the ACC race, but lost momentum with an early exit in the conference tournament.

They couldn't get their mojo back in time to play Southwest Mizzou. The Bears got 24 points from Winston Garland, a juco transfer who eventually spent eight years in the NBA. They turned Campbell into a non-factor. While Grant got 16/7, it wasn't enough to stop a 65-60 upset.

Kansas was the 5-seed in this pod and led by junior Danny Manning, fresh off a Final Four trip and with most of the players that would comprise a national title run in 1988. The Jayhawks met up with Houston. The Cougars were in the first year under new head coach Pat Foster and this was their first time in the tournament since the glory days of Akeem Olajuwon and three straight Final Four appearances from 1982-84.

Rickie Winslow had been a freshman on the 1984 team that Akeem (his name wasn't changed to Hakeem until he was in the NBA) that reached the NCAA final. Now, as a senior, he stepped up with 21 points against Kansas. Teammate Greg Anderson added 18 and the Cougars contained Manning, holding him to a 12/7 performance.

Under most circumstances, that would have been enough to beat Kansas and throw this sub-regional into complete chaos. But no other Houston player scored more than six points. The Jayhawks got 17 from guard Kevin Pritchard and double-digit games from Chris Piper and Cedric Hunter. Manning was the one who generally carried this team, but in this spot it was his teammates who avoided an embarrassing loss. Kansas won 66-55.

Manning repaid his boys for the favor in the second round. Southwest Missouri didn't take their Clemson upset and go quietly. Garland again knocked down 24 and Basil Robinson chipped in 18. For the Jayhawks, no player outside of Manning took more than five shots or scored more than six points.

But vintage Danny was on display for this one. He put on an electric performance, shooting 16-for-26 and scoring 42 points. Hunter ran the offense effectively with ten assists. It was enough to again beat back a determined underdog, this time 67-63.

Southwest Missouri had a lot of good times ahead of them. This was the first of four straight NCAA Tournament appearances and the success got Spoonhour the job at St. Louis and later UNLV. But Kansas was the team that would get a crack at Georgetown.

Birmingham

It was back in 1973 that head coach Lake Kelly got Austin Peay to the Sweet 16. The Governors' program began slipping and Kelly was summoned out of retirement for 1987. After a fourth-place finish in the Ohio Valley Conference, Austin Peay experienced the magic of March—three wins by a combined nine points, including over Middle Tennessee, and the result was an automatic NCAA bid. And the magic was just getting started.

Illinois had all the pieces for a deep tournament run. Ken Norman was one of the country's better frontcourt players, averaging 21 points/10 rebounds per game. The backcourt was excellent, with Doug Altenberger at the two-guard and Tony Wysinger running the show. The Illini had gone 23-7 against the grueling Big Ten schedule and they were the 3-seed in this regional.

Against the 14-seed Governors, Norman did his thing down low. He scored 17 points, grabbed 12 rebounds and keyed a decisive 38-29 edge for Illinois on the boards. Illinois outshot Austin Peay from the floor, 48%-42%. It was with good reason that ESPN's Dick Vitale, working in the studio, vowed to stand on his head publicly if Austin Peay won the game.

The introduction of the three-point shot would provide the needed magic for Peay. Darryl Bedford, a 6'8" forward, stepped out and drilled five treys. He finished with 24 points, while Lawrence Mitchell added 22. Austin Peay led 66-65 in the closing minute.

Wysinger hit a jumper with 13 seconds left to put Illinois back on top. Eschewing a timeout, the Governors raced up the floor. Tony Raye got the ball near the hoop and went up for the game-winner, but was fouled. It wasn't the worst trade-off for the Illini—Raye was only a 56 percent free-throw shooter.

But it was one of those days for the underdog. Raye hit both free throws. Illinois got Norman a decent look at the buzzer, but it was no good. Austin Peay had scored the most memorable first-round upset of the 1987 NCAA Tournament.

The Selection Committee didn't do Providence any favors. They paired the 6-seed Friars up with 11-seed UAB...which you may know stands for the University of Alabama-Birmingham. And you may have noticed further up in italics that this game was played in Birmingham. So much for being the higher seed.

UAB also had a decent pedigree in NCAA play. Their head coach, Gene Bartow, had been the successor to John Wooden at UCLA and gone to the 1976 Final Four before the pressure of the job forced Bartow to start what was then a new program at UAB in 1980. One year later he was in the Sweet 16 and the year after that he made the final eight, upsetting 1-seed Virginia and Player of the Year Ralph Sampson in the process.

This season marked Bartow's seventh straight year in the NCAA field and he had a total of six tournament wins under his belt. But he wouldn't add to it on this day. Donovan went off for 35 points, dished 12 assists and Providence thumbed its nose at the Selection Committee disrespect with an easy 90-68 win.

Maybe Providence didn't get as motivated for Austin Peay or maybe, as a 6-seed, they were just the kind of team prone to inconsistency. Whatever the reason, the Governors got in prime position to rattle the bracket even further. Peay dominated the glass, 55-38 and they led the game 75-65 with just under six minutes remaining.

The Friars could still hit threes though. They nailed eleven treys in this one, compared to just two for the Governors and it negated the interior edge of Austin Peay. Providence pulled even. The Governors had a chance to win, but Bob Thomas missed the front end of a one-and-one with two seconds to play.

In overtime, Providence was able to survive. Ernie Lewis finished the game with 26 points and Donovan knocked down 25. Austin Peay got 27 from Mitchell, though he only shot 8-for-23 in the process. Bedford added 19, but the Friars got the W, 90-87.

It was still a memorable weekend for Austin Peay and Vitale's televised promise got them national fame. [The TV analyst was as good as his word](#)—he went to a campus event at Austin Peay and in front of the entire student body, stood on his head.

Wimp Sanderson came to Alabama in 1981, stepping into the shadow of legendary Crimson Tide football coach Bear Bryant. Sanderson's timing proved to be good. Bryant retired a year later and the Alabama football team slipped from the national elite for several years. Meanwhile, Sanderson churned out what would be the glory days of Alabama basketball.

Alabama made the NCAA Tournament ten times under Sanderson, who retired following the 1992 season. The 1987 edition was his best—his only SEC regular season champion and the program's first since 1976, the year C.M. Newton led them into the Sweet 16 and had undefeated Indiana on the ropes in the closing minutes before falling.

The '87 tide were led by Derrick McKey, a brilliant 6'9" forward who was named the SEC's Most Valuable Player. McKey, the ninth overall pick in the NBA draft later that year, was one of five double-digit scorers. One of them included a future head coach in Mark Gottfried.

Alabama took a couple early losses, one at Florida State and another to Duke on a neutral floor. But the Tide got rolling, finished 23-4 in the regular season, cleared the field in the SEC by four games and then won Sanderson's second conference tournament. They were the 2-seed and were picked to go to the Final Four by some highly respected and knowledgeable analysts (okay, it was just me that picked them).

The 15-seed was North Carolina A&T, a dynasty at the level of the MEAC. Head coach Don Corbett put them into the NCAA field every year from 1982-88. He coached this program for fourteen years, won 64 percent of his games and was eventually inducted into the conference's Hall of Fame.

There was one thing that always eluded Corbett though, and it was that first-round NCAA upset. He wasn't going to get it against Alabama. McKey had a vintage game, 25 points/14 rebounds, while Jim Farmer knocked down 29 from outside. The Tide won 88-71.

New Orleans and BYU were the teams in the 7-10 matchup. BYU was led by Michael Smith, a 20/9 man at forward, and the Cougars were back in the NCAA field after a two-year absence. New Orleans had a fun team to watch, led by Ledell Eackles, who scored 23ppg. Benny Dees was the head coach and the fast-paced style gave them the nickname "Benny & The Jets." The Privateers were seen as a legitimate sleeper team in this regional.

The three-ball was the difference in this game. New Orleans hit eight, BYU only one. Smith went for 23/15, although the Privateer defense forced him into 8-for-25 shooting. Jeff Chatman had a big game for the Cougars, with 25/10, but Eackles led the way for a New Orleans team that controlled the pace. He scored 25 points, his team took an eleven-point lead at halftime and the Privateers hung on to win 83-79.

Two years earlier Dees had been on Sanderson's staff at Alabama, so this was one of those matchups that the Committee "coincidentally" set up for the second round. Dees later said he fully expected his New Orleans kids to win the game. It turns out he underestimated the boys he left behind at 'Bama.

Alabama sizzled, shooting a stunning 73 percent from the floor. McKey led the way, hitting ten of twelve shots and scoring 26 points. Gottfried added 20 more and the Tide defense forced Eackles into a 5-for-13 performance. The result was a 101-76 rout.

Dees got an offer to go to Wyoming and he took it. Alabama had the opportunity to go to Freedom Hall in Louisville for the regionals, and it was there they would join Georgetown, Kansas and Providence.

MIDWEST-SWEET 16 & ELITE 8

Cincinnati

Rick Calloway was a native Ohioan returning home with his Indiana teammates. Calloway was ready to play in front of his home crowd against Duke, knocking down 21 points. But this Blue Devil team, young though it may have been, didn't roll over.

Duke jumped out a 29-21 lead midway through the first half and even though Alford would finish the game with 18 points, he only shot 6-for-16. Indiana countered with eleven unanswered points in the first half to get the lead and Keith Smart knocked down 21 points of his own. The Hoosiers led 49-39 at the half.

The Blue Devils got as close as 57-53, led by 20-plus points from both Tommy Amaker and Danny Ferry. Indiana was led by its frontcourt though. They won the rebounding battle 36-25, with Garrett and Calloway combining for nearly half that and the athletic Smart grabbing seven more rebounds from his point guard spot. Daryl Thomas kicked in a couple clutch baskets to help push the Hoosiers to an 88-82 win.

LSU was getting a reputation for March Magic, coming off the improbable 1986 run to the Final Four. Dale Brown's team had spent much of the year mired in mediocrity. They were unranked the entire season and finished 8-10 in SEC play.

The only high point in the season was sweeping Kentucky, which as we've seen, didn't have a vintage year to begin with. But the Tigers won three straight in the conference tournament, including Florida and a double-overtime win over Georgia. Even though LSU lost to Alabama in the SEC Tournament final, the Tigers had played their way into the field and gotten some momentum.

What made LSU scarier was that they had the talent. Nikita Wilson was an athletic shotblocker, and his seasonal averages were 16/7. Anthony Wilson was productive all year in the backcourt, averaging 17ppg. You couldn't look at LSU's talent in comparison to this regional's top three seeds—Temple, whom they had beaten, and DePaul and Indiana, who lay ahead and feel the Tigers were mismatched.

Nikita Wilson demonstrated what he could do against DePaul, going for 24 points and outplaying Dallas Comegys. The latter had a nice game, 14 points/8 rebounds, but it wasn't enough to match up with Wilson or the fact that Strickland was held to nine points. Or that LSU just played more physical basketball. Oliver Brown and Bernard Woodside also crashed the boards, combining for sixteen more rebounds. Joey Meyer was unhappy after the game over the level of physicality permitted and he was unhappier with the result—LSU won 63-58.

The Tigers were one win from consecutive Cinderella trips to the Final Four, a feat which hadn't been pulled off before and wouldn't be again until Butler made the NCAA final in both 2010 and 2011. LSU hung with Indiana for the first half, trailing just 47-46 at intermission of the regional final.

Nikita Wilson was again playing terrific basketball, and he would finish with 20 points. Anthony Wilson, who had scored 17 against DePaul, knocked down 15 more in this game. Woodside, and freshman guard Fess Irvin each went into double figures. LSU took a 75-66 lead with 4:38 left and looked on its way to a hometown Final Four in New Orleans.

Indiana was a poised, veteran team though and they weren't bulldozed physically the way DePaul had been. Garrett and Thomas combined for 33 points and 22 rebounds, keying a glass edge for the Hoosiers. They came back, with an assist from Brown, who took his foot off the gas too soon and went to a spread offense.

LSU was no longer attacking, but playing passive on offense. And they turned the ball over four times in their final seven possessions. Indiana cut the lead to four when reserve guard Joe Hillman scored and was fouled. They cut it to 76-75 in the final minute and then put the freshman Irvin on the line for a one-and-one.

The free throw was missed and Indiana came up the floor with a chance to win. Alford, who had scored 20 points was the ideal candidate to take the shot. The LSU defense took him away and it was Thomas who got a shot in the lane. It came up an airball, but Calloway came swooping in for the rebound and putback.

LSU got one last look and it was a good one—a six-foot turnaround by Nikita Wilson off a long pass. But the shot hit the front of the rim and Indiana was going to the Final Four.

The aftermath of the game was bitter. In the first half, Knight had argued with an official and then gone over to the scorers' table where NCAA officials were to further plead of his case. The fiery coach hit an old-fashioned phone to make his point and it came popping up in the air. The visual was more colorful than anything—it didn't stop LSU from taking control of the game in the second half. But a furious Brown would later say that Knight had intimidated the officials and that cost the Tigers the game.

If you wanted to take a look at the scoresheet and saw that Indiana was 21/24 from the line, while LSU was 4/10, you might be inclined to agree with the LSU coach. The Hoosiers had enjoyed a similar margin in the win over Duke.

That ignores the fact that it isn't the job of officials to keep the number of free throw attempts even and a team like Indiana, one that moved constantly on offense and played disciplined on defense, was in fact likely to get to the line more frequently than the opposition.

Brown's anger might also have been misdirected frustration at his own decision to prematurely take the air out of the ball and cost his team momentum. [Knight fired back](#), saying that he was worried when his team fell behind, but as soon as he saw Dale Brown down the sideline that he (Knight) knew his team would be all right.

The good news is this—after the public feud, Knight and Brown got on the phone together, patched things up and both would later say they considered the other a friend. Their teams had staged a tremendous battle for a Final Four spot. Nikita Wilson's heroics got him the Most Outstanding Player award, even in defeat. And deservedly so. Indiana would get a chance at their head coach's third national title in New Orleans.

EAST-SWEET 16 & ELITE 8

Meadowlands

North Carolina and Notre Dame were very familiar with each other by the time they met in the Sweet 16. In 1985 they played a Round of 32 battle that went down to the wire. The Irish had the ball in a tie game with a chance to win before Rivers dribbled the ball off his leg, setting up an easy turnover and winning basket for the Tar Heels. In this season, Notre Dame knocked off UNC on February 1 when the Heels were #1 in the country.

If we go back a decade, they had met in the 1977 NCAA Tournament, with North Carolina again getting a tough two-point win. And if we go *ahead* almost three decades, the Tar Heels beat the Irish in a good game to reach the 2016 Final Four.

The 1987 edition of Notre Dame had shown their ability to play with top teams. They had beaten DePaul on February 25. Rivers, who averaged 15ppg, was as smooth a playmaker as there was in the country. Donald Royal averaged 16 points/7 rebounds at the forward spot. Were they as good as North Carolina? No. But, as had already been demonstrated, they could beat them one time.

That would presume the Tar Heels not being ready though, and that didn't happen. They shot 65 percent from the floor. Reid went off for 31 points while Kenny Smith passed for twelve assists. The Irish stars played well—Rivers scored 23 and Royal posted a 19/10 night, but North Carolina had too many weapons. They led by ten at the half and won 74-68.

Syracuse and Florida staged a great battle in the other regional semifinal. The stars were ready to shine. Seikaly scored 33 points and Coleman added 15 more. Each player grabbed nine rebounds. Douglass had ten assists. On the Gator side, the Maxwell/Moten combo was in gear, combining for 43 points.

The second half was back-and-forth, and with a little more than five minutes left, Florida nudged out to a 69-64 lead and had the ball. Moten drove to the hoop. Seikaly turned him away with a blocked shot that led to a fast-break basket, a foul and converted free throw. It was the turning point of the game.

In the second half, the Orange shot 65 percent. With the game on the line late, they scored on six straight possessions. The biggest difference was Seikaly's control of the game defensively. Schintzius couldn't get anything going and shot 3-for-10. The other difference was on the free-throw line, where Syracuse outscored Florida 17-7. Seikaly and Coleman combined to shoot 12-for-14 on the line. The Orange ultimately won the game 87-81 and set up a showdown of the 1-2 seeds in the regional final.

For reasons that would haunt Dean Smith, his team was not ready to play. Reid didn't get a single rebound in the first half. His final numbers of 15/6 weren't bad, but not up to what a player

of his caliber needs to do in a game like this. And nowhere close to what Seikaly was doing. The Syracuse center posted a 26/11 line.

Coleman was aggressive on the boards as well, collecting fourteen rebounds and the Orange completely dominated the glass. They were up by eleven at the half and the lead stretched to 55-38 with 1:54 left.

Kenny Smith didn't let his team roll over. The point guard scored 25 points and Joe Wolf posted a double-double, with 12/10. North Carolina made a furious rally and cut the lead to three, but Syracuse survived 79-75.

Smith was reported to be so upset that it was late summer before he could bring himself to look at the game tape. For Boeheim, it was sweet vindication. He was finally going to a Final Four.

WEST-SWEET 16 & ELITE 8

For one half, Wyoming's March ride continued. They led UNLV 39-38 at intermission and the Cowboy stars were playing like stars. For the game, Dembo went off for 27 points and grabbed nine rebounds, while Leckner was good for 18/7. Wyoming would shoot 51 percent from the floor against the tough Rebel defense.

But it was the Rebs who had Armon Gilliam on their side and the great power forward simply took the game over. He powered in 38 points, pulled down 13 more rebounds and helped his team take over in the second half. UNLV won 92-78.

The Oklahoma-Iowa game was as fast-paced and exciting as advertised. The Sooners were hoping their strong first weekend meant that the mojo of the early season, when they scored a combined 213 points in wins over BYU and LSU, was back. OU's record reached 21-5 coming down the stretch. But Oklahoma closed the regular season with three straight losses, including a March 1 non-conference date at Kentucky and another defeat to Kansas. The Sooners were then ousted in the semis of the Big Eight Tournament, dropping them to the 6-line, before they bounced back in the first two rounds of this NCAA Tournament.

But Oklahoma could play with anybody and they could certainly run with anybody. That became crystal clear in the first half when OU bolted out to a 16-point lead on Iowa.

McCalister was hot and he finished the game with 26 points, while David Johnson delivered a 20/12 night inside. But Iowa could blow the scoreboard lights out themselves and led by Kevin Gamble, that's exactly what they did. Gamble scored 26 on the night and the Hawkeyes scored nineteen unanswered points to close the first half.

The game stayed tight through the second half, but Oklahoma was missing opportunities at the foul line. The attempts were relatively even—Iowa shot 27 free throws for the game, OU got 24 tries. But the Hawkeyes turned that into a 20-12 scoring advantage. The game was tied in the closing seconds when Gamble blocked a McAllister shot to force overtime.

Iowa appeared in command, with a 90-85 lead in the extra session. Then the Oklahoma defense delivered, forcing consecutive turnovers and they went ahead 91-90. With eleven seconds left, Marble's shot for the lead missed. There was a scramble for the rebound. It was knocked out of bounds and stayed with Iowa.

Gamble was already 10-for-12 from the floor as the final play was being drawn up, which makes it somewhat mysterious that he was left all alone at the top of the circle. B.J. Armstrong dribbled right, drew the defense, quickly kicked the ball back to Gamble, who [calmly nailed the game-winning three](#). Ballgame and the Hawkeyes were advancing.

Iowa kept that momentum rolling for the first half of the regional final with UNLV. They took a 58-42 lead, with Armstrong and Gamble each knocking down 18 points for the game. They

forced Freddie Banks into a tough 5-for-20 shooting day and shot 56 percent from the floor themselves. This was the final game played on regional weekend and fans in the Midwest were getting ready for an Iowa-Indiana game in the Final Four.

UNLV responded by turning up the defensive heat. At halftime, Tarkanian took responsibility with the players for the poor defensive performance, saying he had given them a strategy that was too passive. Once the Rebs turned it loose on defense, they took the game over.

Gilliam, on his way to Most Outstanding Player honors, continued his dominant weekend, with a 27/10 performance. Paddio knocked down 20 and Wade dished 12 assists. The Rebs forced Marble into a 3-for-11 shooting game.

And of no small significance is that Gamble got in foul trouble for Iowa. With fifteen minutes to play, he picked up his fourth foul and went to the bench with his team ahead 64-52. He came back with ten minutes to go and in that timeframe, the Rebels took a 68-66 lead.

UNLV was up 82-78 with 0:35 left, but Gamble wouldn't let Iowa go quietly. He hit a three-pointer to cut the lead to one. Then it was the Hawkeyes' turn to crank up the defensive heat, and they forced a ten-second violation.

The decisive play of the West Regional put the ball in Gamble's hands, but he would pass. An alley-oop to Lohaus, who had a decisive size advantage on anyone UNLV could counter with was a good idea, but it didn't work. The pass went off the backboard. UNLV got the rebound, closed it out with a couple free throws and won 84-81. Tarkanian's push for his first national championship was still alive and going to New Orleans.

SOUTHEAST-SWEET 16 & ELITE 8

It had been an up-and-down year for Kansas as they came into Freedom Hall to take their shot at top-seeded Georgetown. Manning was an All-American, averaging 24 points/10 rebounds, but there wasn't a lot of help. Hunter and Pritchard were respectable in the backcourt, but the Jayhawks still lost non-conference games at Arkansas, and to Pitt and Ohio State. On January 6, they fell to in-state rival Wichita State and the record was down to 6-4.

Two days later, a home game with Temple was a turning point. Kansas won 67-64 and then went into Big Eight play and won nine of their first twelve league games. They were tied with Oklahoma for second place and just a game back of Missouri. Then the season again turned the wrong direction, with a loss to woeful Colorado and an NIT team in Nebraska.

The conference tournament provided a re-boot. Kansas reached the final game and then gave Missouri a good battle before falling 67-65. In this Sweet 16 game the Jayhawks weren't as good top-to-bottom as Georgetown, but they had the best player on the floor and in any one-game showdown, that's a big deal.

Manning looked every bit the best player on the floor in the first half, scoring 19 points. Reggie Williams was only a step behind for the Hoyas, with 17 first-half points, but Kansas still led 41-39 at the break.

Free throws went decisively in favor of Georgetown, the more athletic lineup. The Hoyas converted 27/37 from the line. The Jayhawks only got 16 attempts and didn't exactly make the most of them, missing eight. A 19-point differential on the foul line was too much to overcome.

Manning closed the game with a 23/12 night, but Williams had poured in 34. By next season, Manning's senior year, he would be able to lift his team all the way to a championship. This time around, with a 70-57 win, Georgetown was moving on.

Two of the regionals—East & West, ended in 1 vs. 2 showdowns. The Southeast wouldn't get there, thanks to some red-hot shooting from Providence and the disappearance of Derrick McKey. The Alabama star only took six shots and scored just 11 points. Meanwhile, Providence shot 14-for-22 from behind the arc. In our day, a team taking 22 treys isn't that uncommon, but in 1987 this was an insane display of long-range gunning.

Donovan finished with 26 points, while Delray Brooks scored 23. The Friars led by eight at the half and then just poured it on in the second half, winning 103-82.

A Big East battle was set in the regional final, though most observers figured this one would be a rout. It was, but not in the way anyone anticipated.

By halftime, Providence had a 17-point lead. While they shot the ball well, 54 percent from the floor, this was about defense and getting to the free throw line. The Friars held the Hoyas to just

34 percent shooting. While Reggie Williams got his numbers—25/9, he had to shoot 9-for-23 to get there. Perry McDonald and Charles Smith combined to go 7-for-25.

Georgetown did go after the boards, with McDonald's ten rebounds keying a 41-31 glass advantage. But Providence got to the free throw line 38 times and made 33. By contrast, Georgetown was 17-for-25. What the charity stripe gave the Hoyas in the Sweet 16, it took away in the Elite Eight.

Donovan was the region's Most Outstanding Player. He scored 20 in this game, though all but four were from the line. Today's surprise hero was Darryl Wright, who hit all four of his three-point shots and scored 20 points. Providence won 88-73 and Rick Pitino was the coaching star of the tournament for his innovative, up-tempo play. The Final Four had a Cinderella.

THE FINAL FOUR

New Orleans

Rick Pitino, Jim Boeheim and Billy Donovan have combined to win five national championships as head coaches. They were all novices to the Final Four when Syracuse played Providence in the early afternoon undercard game at the Superdome. While the Friars were a great story, this wasn't seen as a great battle, even with the conference rivalry in play. And it wasn't.

The Syracuse defense clamped down on the Providence shooters. Donovan struggled to 3-for-12, while Lewis went 2-for-12. Carlton Screen's 18 points made him the only Friar to get double figures and the team shot just 36%.

If Providence wasn't shooting, they weren't going to make it up anywhere else. The Orange were too physical and in control down low. The rebounding margin was a dominant 53-32 and it wasn't even Seikaly doing the damage. Douglass came from the point to get 11 boards and Triche got 11 more from his small forward spot. Coleman did his usual yeoman's work on the glass with 12.

All five Syracuse starters got double figures and the balanced attack saw all five of them range from 12-17 points. The Orange led by ten at the half and a quick 13-3 burst out of intermission put the game away. The only real excitement came when a punch was thrown at Coleman in a tussle underneath and the benches cleared. Order was restored and Syracuse closed the 77-63 win.

The national championship was now down to three heavyweights and the biggest of those heavyweights, the 1-seeds Indiana and UNLV were set to play in what was the highly anticipated game of Semi-Final Saturday.

Perhaps the game's biggest decision had already been made by the time the ball was tipped. Everyone was expected a battle of tempos, between the half-court offense of the Hoosiers and the fast-break attacking play of the Rebels. Knight threw the game plan out of the window. The Indiana coach felt his team might slow the game down and hold UNLV to 70-75 points, but in that circumstance would only score 60 themselves. To the surprise of the nation, Knight's Hoosiers came out ran with Vegas.

An early 16-4 spurt gave Indiana a seven-point lead. Alford was able to get free from the tough UNLV defense a little more easily in the open floor and he scored 33 points. Indiana led at the half 53-47.

Gilliam and Banks were coming up big for the Rebels. Gilliam delivered another sterling March performance, with 32 points/10 rebounds. As for three-point shooting, while Alford's marksmanship got the attention, it was Banks who was on fire from downtown. He hit *ten* treys on his way to 38 points.

But no one else stepped up for UNLV. Paddio struggled to a 2-for-13 shooting night. Knight had his defense completely back off Wade, to take away his passing lanes and dare him to shoot. The gambit worked. Indiana led 92-85 late in the game and appeared in control.

Banks hit a three to cut the lead to four. Steve Eyl was in the game for the Hoosiers for his defense. One thing he wasn't known for was foul shooting and he missed the front end of a one-and-one with a minute to go. Banks got another look from behind the arc. He missed. UNLV rebounded and Paddio got a chance from long range. He missed. Another offensive rebound gave Banks the opportunity to cut the lead to one. He missed one more time.

Indiana survived. They had shot 62% in comparison to UNLV's 43%. The final was 97-93 and with this win under their belts the Hoosiers were now the favorite to win it all. Oddsmakers installed them as a 3 ½ point favorite on Monday Night.

The game was a classic from the outset. Alford hit a three-point shot as the first half ended to give Indiana a 34-33 lead. To Bob Hammel, a Bloomington-based sportswriter that was a personal friend of Knight's, it was reminiscent of the 1981 title game when Randy Wittman hit a jumper from the right baseline as the half ended to give Indiana a one-point lead. Alford's shot had also come from the right corner. In '81, the shot was the lynchpin to a dominant second half as Indiana cruised past North Carolina. The second half in the championship fight of 1987 would decidedly not be on cruise control.

There were nineteen lead changes overall and ten ties. Syracuse pulled out to a 52-44 lead before Indiana answered with ten straight points. The Orange answered that with a 7-0 run of their own. Indiana pulled back even 61-61 as the game went down the stretch.

The interior players on both sides were excellent. Dean Garrett had ten rebounds for Indiana and Daryl Thomas scored 20 points. Seikaly posted an 18/10 line. And no one rebounded like the freshman Coleman, who attacked the glass and hauled in 19 rebounds. He was the reason the Orange ultimately won the rebounding battle 38-31.

Indiana made up for it by controlling the outside game. Or, more precisely, with Alford. The Hoosiers hit seven treys compared to just two for the Orange. Alford hit all seven of Indiana's three-point shots. He didn't score a bucket from inside the arc all night, save a couple free throws, finishing with 23 points.

But it was Alford's backcourt mate Smart that the night ultimately belonged to. After some ragged play in the first half he had been summoned to the bench with a firm admonition from his coach to settle down. He returned to be the signature player of the second half, and particularly the final five minutes when he scored 12 of his 23 points.

There was one miss by Smart that looked like it might be the difference, a short jumper from the right baseline with Indiana trailing 72-70. Triche rebounded with 0:38 left and went to the line for a one-and-one. He made the first and stretched the lead to three.

Boenheim kept his rebounders on the lane rather than pulling the defense back. He later expressed regret over this decision. Because it enabled to Smart to rebound the ensuing miss

and immediately sprint the length of the court for a bucket that made it 73-72. Boeheim's regret was not over Indiana scoring, but doing so with such speed.

The game's decisive moments had two plays [that stood out to Knight years later](#). The first came when Syracuse inbounded the ball. It went to Coleman, a poor free-throw shooter. Knight praised the alertness of Smart, who smelled the opportunity, made a beeline to Coleman and fouled him. The freshman went to the line with a chance to put finishing touches on a night that would have surely had him as the Most Outstanding Player if his team won. [But his first free throw missed badly.](#)

Indiana wanted to get the ball to Alford, but Douglas was chasing him all over the floor and making a good shot impossible. Daryl Thomas got the ball near the elbow of the foul line. It was here that Knight again remembers an understated moment.

The clock was ticking under ten seconds and it would have been reasonable for Thomas to take the shot. But the likelihood is that it would have been blocked or altered by Seikaly. Thomas stayed calm and shot-faked. He used the space created by the fake not to shoot, but to get the ball to Smart who was coming down the left side.

Smart took the pass and went up for the jumper from the left baseline. It wasn't far from where Michael Jordan had knocked down a game-winner for North Carolina in this same building five years earlier. Smart's shot was true. Indiana was ahead 74-73. There were four seconds left but the clock didn't stop until it was at :01 and no replays indicate that a Syracuse player tried to call timeout. Boeheim could only draw up a desperation play.

The last pass, appropriately ended in the arms of Smart, who flung it in the air. The Baton Rouge kid was a hero in his home region, just like the Ohio kid Calloway had hit the last-second shot for Indiana at the regionals in Cincinnati. It's as though as it was meant to be. Smart was an easy choice for Most Outstanding Player and [the image of him going up for his shot](#) at the end remains an iconic photo in American sports.

EPILOGUE

In retrospect, what's amazing about the 1987 Indiana Hoosiers is not simply that they won the national championship, but that they did so as a title-game favorite. Alford was the only Indiana player to make the NBA and he only lasted a couple years. By contrast, Syracuse sent Seikaly, Douglas and Coleman to the pro level and all had long careers.

Bob Knight's coaching was so stellar that not only could this undermanned team win a championship, but they could play at such a high level all year that some of the talk in the immediate aftermath of Monday Night was how well Syracuse had managed to hang with the favored Hoosiers. The victory was Knight's third national title, something previously achieved only by Adolph Rupp and John Wooden. In later years, Jim Calhoun and Mike Krzyzewski would later join the pantheon.

Indiana winning on a last-second shot seemed right out of the movies. It was even more appropriate in light of the fact that [the movie *Hoosiers*](#), starring Gene Hackman as a Knight-like basketball coach at the high school level, had come out this year. On the Monday of the national championship game, *Hoosiers* was up for several Academy Awards. Screenwriter Angelo Pizzo and director David Anspaugh opted not to attend the ceremonies. They were IU graduates. And they were staying in to watch the game.