

SPORTS

NATIONAL CHAMPION TO BE DECIDED MONDAY

Final Four prepare to tip off Saturday

By Lee Brown
Sentinel-Voice

It all began two weeks ago as 64 teams took to the courts in 14 cities across the country, all in hopes of being a part of the prestigious "Final Four," as the NCAA men's basketball championship got underway. And as expected, a handful of underdogs, such as Princeton, Georgia, Arkansas and Louisville, whipped the pants off the likes of defending national champions UCLA, in addition to

a trip to East Rutherford with a convincing 83-63 win over 6-10 first-team All-American center Tim Duncan and Wake Forest in the Midwest Regional final.

Kentucky, with their talented backcourt of Tony Delk and Anthony Epps, found their way to the semi-finals after defeating San Jose State, Virginia Tech and Utah in the regionals. The Wildcats will now be put to the test as they take on the East Regional champs from Massachusetts.

The Minutemen of U-Mass, led by 6-11 junior center and Boost-Naismith College Basketball Player of the Year, Marcus Camby, sailed through the East Regional with wins over Central Florida, Stanford, Arkansas, and a game Georgetown

and second-team All-American John Wallace, who scored a total of 45 points and grabbed 24 rebounds in the Orangemen's consecutive wins over Georgia and Kansas, will face another long shot in Mississippi State Saturday.

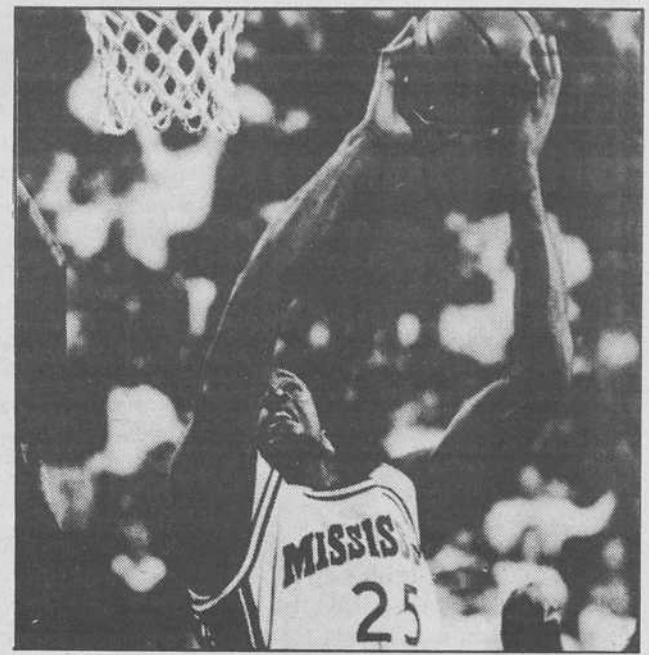
Mississippi State (26-7), said to have one of the best inside-outside games in the nation, beat Virginia Commonwealth, Princeton and Southeast Regional No. 1 seed Connecticut, before defeating 2nd-seeded Cincinnati 87-80 last

will be played on April 1st (April Fool's Day).

THE FINAL FOUR

At Continental Airlines Arena
East Rutherford, N.J.
National Semifinals
Saturday, March 30
Mississippi State (26-7) vs.
Syracuse (28-8), 2:42 p.m.

Massachusetts (35-1) vs.
Kentucky (32-2),
(30 minutes after first game)
NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP
Monday, April 1
Semifinal winners, 6:22 p.m.



Erick Dampier and the Mississippi State Bulldogs hope to muscle their way into the championship game Monday



Kentucky guard Tony Delk hopes he and the Wildcats can rise to the occasion

West Regional No. 1 seed Purdue, Villanova in the Midwest, and Penn State in the East.

Called "March Madness" for a reason, the tournament's final four teams have come down to two regional No. 1 seeds — Massachusetts in the East and Kentucky in the Midwest — and two teams not expected to make it this far — Mississippi State in the Southeast and Syracuse in the West.

No. 1 seeds Kentucky and Massachusetts; and Syracuse and Mississippi State will meet in semifinal action this Saturday, with the two winners squaring-off for the national championship on Monday, April 1 in East Rutherford, N.J.

The Kentucky Wildcats (32-2), back in the Final Four for the second time in four years, are right where many expected they'd be. The Wildcats earned

Hoya squad.

The Massachusetts-Kentucky match-up is being billed as one of the marquee games of the entire tournament, as the two had traded places at the top of the national polls for most of the regular season. The Minutemen, making their first trip to the Final Four in the school's history, handed Kentucky a 10-point loss in an earlier meeting last November. However, despite that win and a 35-1 record, Massachusetts is still an 8 1/2 point underdog at local sportsbooks.

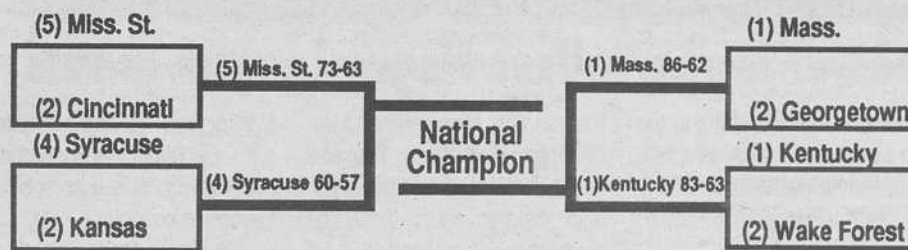
Not expected to get past No. 2 seed Kansas in the Midwest Regional finals, the Syracuse Orangemen (28-8) also defeated Montana State, Drexel and Georgia en route to their first trip to the Final Four since 1987 — nearly ten years.

Syracuse, led by 6-8 forward

Sunday. The Bulldogs, paced by 6-11 center Erick Dampier, 6-7 forward Dontae' Jones and point guard Marcus Bullard, would love to meet up with Kentucky in the finals, especially since they were the only other team besides Massachusetts to defeat the Wildcats this season — for the Southeastern Conference championship just over two weeks ago.

Though many believe that the national championship will actually be decided this Saturday when U-Mass takes on Kentucky, as neither Syracuse, nor Mississippi State have a chance of defeating either of the two powerhouses, don't believe the hype just yet. Remember, you've been reminded time and time again, anything can happen during March Madness, even though the championship game

1996 NCAA MEN'S BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP



Green named to 1996 U.S. National Team

WHITE PLAINS, N.Y. — Traci Green of Philadelphia, Pa. was named to the 1996 U.S. National Team, United States Tennis Association (USTA) Director of Coaching for Women Lynne Rolley announced recently.

The U.S. National Team, a facet of USTA Player Development, is composed of the nation's most talented junior players and is one of the highest honors for an American junior player.

Team members travel with USTA coaches and represent the U.S. in international junior and professional competitions. Players also receive coaching, training assistance and extensive sport science testing and

evaluations.

Green, 17 and a member of the 1995 U.S. National Team, joins Chanda Rubin and Mashona Washington as African American women who have been members of the U.S. National Team in the team's nine-year history.

She was a singles finalist and a doubles champion at the 1994 USTA International Tenal Grass Court Championships and competed at the 1995 Australian and U.S. Open junior championships. Next fall, she will enter the University of Florida.

"Traci struggled with some injuries last year but is looking forward to another stint on the

U.S. National Team," said Rolley.

"Traci is an excellent athlete and is a good serve and volley player. She will benefit greatly from increased international tournament experience this year."

Founded in 1881, the United States Tennis Association is a non-profit volunteer organization with 500,000 individual members and over 6,000 organizational members. As the official governing body for tennis in America, the USTA uses its \$112 million annual budget to train and encourage tennis players of all ages and skill levels. The USTA presents the U.S. Open and sponsors teams for Davis Cup, Fed Cup and the Olympics.

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