

March Madness

13

Thursday, March 11, 1999

PLAYING AT INDIANAPOLIS

#1 Auburn (27-3)

Conference: Southeastern
Coach: Cliff Ellis (94-58 in five seasons at Auburn.)

Bid: At Large

Starters: G-F Bryant Smith, 6-5, Sr. (11.0 ppg, 6.3 rpg, 1.3 apg, 1.5 spg); G Doc Robinson, 6-2, Jr. (11.1 ppg, 2.8 rpg, 5.1 apg); G Scott Pohlman, 6-2, So. (11.8 ppg, 2.3 rpg, 1.9 apg); F Chris Porter, 6-7, Jr. (16.5 ppg, 8.8 rpg); C Mamadou N'diaye, 7-0 jr. (7.5 ppg, 7.2 rpg).

Who woulda thunk it? Unranked in the preseason, Auburn jumped out of the gates with a 25-1 record, floated around the top-five and have locked up its first NCAA bid since 1988.

Skeptics may point to that as a sign of inexperience. Even without a tournament past, Auburn definitely has one thing going for it: athleticism. In fact, they may be the most athletic team in the nation. Leading the Tigers is forward Chris Porter, a JUCO transfer who became the 1999 SEC Conference player of the year. This surprised everyone in the nation except those from 'Bama who have been licking their chops ever since he signed with the team.

Need another surprise? How about sophomore shooting guard Scott Pohlman? He's a kid who looks more like the kid running the projector at practice than the SEC's most deadly three-point marksman

Auburn has already ripped the monkey of its back and beat it into the ground like many opponents it has faced. After a disappointing SEC tournament, the Tigers could be looking for some payback. Maybe taking aggressions out on their next-six opponents will finally get them some attention.

—Randy Monty

4 Ohio State (23-8)

Conference: Big Ten

How they got in: At-Large

Coach: Jim O'Brien (31-30 in two seasons at OSU)

Starters: G Michael Redd, 6-6, So. (19.1 ppg, 5.5 rpg, 2.2 apg); G Scoonie Penn, 5-10, Jr. (17.2 ppg, 4.1 apg); C Ken Johnson, 6-11, Jr. (6.2 ppg, 6.1 rpg, 2.6 bpg); F Jason Singleton, 6-5, Sr. (9.0 ppg, 4.6 rpg); F Jon Sanderson, 6-7, So. (5.7 ppg, 3.5 rpg).

The Buckeyes come in hoping to silence the critics who have said that they're overrated. They certainly didn't convince anyone in their last game, a 79-77 loss to 13th-seeded Illinois in the Big Ten Tournament. Nevertheless, don't look past Ohio State.

Guard Scoonie Penn returns to the tournament with Ohio State after playing for Boston College in the dance two years ago. Guard Michael Redd, who averages 19 points per game, is maybe one of the best one-on-one players in the country. On the downside, the Buckeyes have not been to the NAAs since 1992, but the leadership and experience of Penn should help with that.

—Jason Waldman

See SOUTH, page 14 ▶



Brian Totin /Staff Photographer

DO OR DIE TIME: The Orangemen prepare to meet the Cowboys of Oklahoma State today at 12:25 p.m. in Indianapolis's RCA Dome.

First-round shoot out in Hoosier country

Boeheim gives his team a vote of confidence before today's noon stand-off with the sharpshooting Cowboys in the first round of the NCAA Tournament.

By Sean Patrick Bowley
SPORTS EDITOR

The challenge came subtly. But it came straight from the headmaster. It came straight from the mouth of Syracuse coach Jim Boeheim.

"There's nobody in the tournament that we can't beat if we play well," he said to the tape-recorders and the cameras while one of his players, Ryan Blackwell, sat next to him. "There might be an exception or two there. But certainly, we can play with anybody."

For starters, Boeheim and his Orangeboys will start the Big Dance in a hoe-down with Coach Eddie Sutton and his Cowboys today in the first round of the NCAA Tournament at 12:25 p.m. The Orangemen drew the eighth seed in the South Region. Oklahoma State is the nine-seed.

The exceptions Boeheim spoke about, of course, have to be Duke and Connecticut, the favorites to advance to the finals of the NCAA Tournament. But

the Orangemen need not worry about either team unless they happen to advance to the Final Four for the second time this decade and the fourth time in school history. Both the Blue Devils and the Huskies are the number one seeds in different regions.

"Nobody is looking to play Duke, I guarantee you," Boeheim said. "Every guy that was watching that board go up there was hoping they wouldn't be in the East. There's no question about that. They're the best team in the country."

But that doesn't mean Syracuse has an easy road out of Indianapolis. The winner of this game will likely face first seed Auburn, considered the lesser of the four No. 1s, for the rights to advance to the Sweet 16 in Knoxville, Tenn. Auburn (27-3) stunned the nation by running the early part of its schedule before being knocked from the ranks of the unbeaten by Kentucky. The Tigers enter the tournament after losing to Kentucky in the semifinals of the SEC tournament. Since the

Please turn to **PREVIEW**, page 14 ▶

THE 'CUSE VS. THE COWBOYS



Syracuse
(21-11)

Conference: Big East

Bid: At Large (Lost to UConn 71-50 in quarterfinals of Big East Tournament)

NCAA Tournaments:
25th (37-25)

Coach: Jim Boeheim (549-192 in 23 seasons at SU)
Starters: G Jason Hart, 6-3, Jr. (13.8 ppg, 4.5 apg, 3.1 spg); G Allen Griffin, 6-0, So. (8.3 ppg, 3.2 apg); C Etan Thomas, 6-9, Jr. (11.6 ppg, 7.2 rpg, 4.0 bpg); F Ryan Blackwell, 6-7, Jr. (11.7 ppg, 7.9 rpg); F Damone Brown, 6-8, So. (9.6 ppg, 5.3 rpg)

Bench: C Elvir Ovcina, 6-11, Sr. (3.0 ppg, 3.2 rpg, 1.8 apg); G Tony Bland, 6-4, Fr. (4.5 ppg, 1.4 rpg, 1.7 apg); G Preston Shumpert, 6-6, Fr. (5.6 ppg, 2.5 rpg)

Best 3-point Shooter : Hart, 47-127 (37.0%)

Who to foul: Thomas (57.6 FT%)

Who not to foul: Brown (75.0 FT%), Hart (74.7 FT%)

Coach: Eddie Sutton (201-87 in nine seasons at OSU, 631-251 in 29 seasons over all).

Starters: G Adrian Peterson, 6-4, Sr. (18.1 ppg, 6.0 rpg, 1.3 apg, 1.3 spg); G Doug Gottlieb, 6-1, Jr. (4.6 ppg, 8.5 apg); G Joe Adkins, 6-2, Jr. (11.3 ppg, 4.6 apg); C Alex Webber, 6-10, Jr. (6.7 ppg, 4.9 rpg, 0.7 bpg); F Desmond Marson, 6-7, Jr. (15.5 ppg, 7.7 rpg)

Bench: G Glendon Alexander, 6-5, Jr. (8.6 ppg, 1.3 apg); F Brian Montonati, 6-9, Jr. (7.0 ppg, 4.3 rpg); F Fredrick Jönzén, 6-10, Fr. (2.6 ppg, 3.0 rpg)

Best 3-point Shooter : Peterson, 63-158 (39.9%)

Who to foul: Gottlieb (43.5 FT%),

Who not to foul: Alexander (81.4 FT%), Adkins (76.6 FT%).



Oklahoma State
(22-10)

Conference: Big 12

Bid: At Large (Lost to Kansas 53-37 in Big 12 finals)

NCAA Tournaments:
16th (26-14)

Location: RCA Dome, Indianapolis, Ind. Today, 12:25 p.m.

Media: WTVH-5 (CBS), 570AM WSYR, 88.3 FM WAER

REGIONAL PREVIEW

East

FAVORITES: If anybody believes that **Duke** is not the favorite to win the East, then they are either



crazy or have been locked in solitary confinement--or both.

The Blue Devils blew through the ACC with an undefeated record and now seem poised to capture their third national title. Coach Mike Krzyzewski and Duke bring a 27-game winning streak into the tourney that doesn't look like it's going to end soon. The only two teams that might stand a chance of knocking off the Devils are **Miami** and **Cincinnati**, but that's a big stretch.

DARK HORSES: Coach John Kresse and the **College of Charleston** must feel like



Rodney Dangerfield. They don't get no respect. After

going 28-2 and beating North Carolina during the regular season, the Cougars were rewarded with an eighth seed and a possible second round match-up with Duke. **Temple** might be another surprise, if the Owls can ever get consistent. Sometimes, they look like a team that was touted as a top 10 team at the start of the year. Other times, they look lost on the court.

CINDERELL AS: **Southwest Missouri State** was one of three Missouri Valley Conference teams



to get in, and the Bears feel they have to prove they

belong. SWMSU plays sound basketball and also faces a first round opponent, **Wisconsin**, that has stumbled down the stretch. The other slipper could fit **Delaware**. The Fightin' Blue Hens are in the tourney for the second year in a row. Delaware comes in having won 13 in a row by an average of 13 points. Their first round opponent,

Tennessee, has also been inconsistent and might be ripe for a rude awakening come Friday. Even Kent, which upset Miami (Ohio) to win the MAAC tournament, is a team to watch.

PLAYER TO WATCH: This could be the last time you see All-American **Elton Brand** in a Duke uniform. The Duke sophomore center is the star in a lineup that rivals some NBA clubs.

—Jason Waldman

West

FAVORITES: Anyone who thinks **Connecticut** will be at a disadvantage to reach its first Final Four by crossing three time zones didn't watch the Huskies destroy second-seeded Stanford at Maples Pavilion back in February.

See **REGIONS**, page 14 ▶