

Collegian Sports

Rethinking March Madness



By REILLY MOORE
Sports Editor

It's almost time for the weekend that many sports fans consider to be the best of the year: The Final Four. March Madness gives college athletes the chance to become sporting legends, but maybe, just maybe, they deserve something more than a piece of the net.

The debate about whether college athletes should be paid has run its course before, but in March, when one coast-to-coast layup can cause millions of dollars to change hands, the athletes may have their best argument.

The economic impact of the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament is unparalleled in college sports. Revenue from last year's tourney was estimated at \$548 million, which represents 96 percent of all NCAA revenue, according to a recent Wall Street Journal article.

CBS alone forked over \$6.1 billion in 1999 to guarantee that the Madness would be available on America's Most Watched Network for 11 years. In turn, the network charges its corporate sponsors more than a million bucks for a 30-second ad during the title game.

Colleges and universities also benefit from the success of their star athletes. Though many Division I schools lose money on their basketball programs overall, the top teams have revenues exceeding

\$10 million per year. And for the tournament's Cinderellas, a successful season or a standout point guard can lead to big money.

Consider what may be the biggest surprise of this year's Final Four: Villanova. The Wildcats eliminated perennial powers UCLA and Duke before surviving against heavily favored Pitt thanks to an acrobatic last-second bucket from point guard Scottie Reynolds. Now, thanks to Reynolds, Villanova fans everywhere can log on to Villanova.com and order their official Final Four hoodies. Only \$45 plus shipping.

With all the money floating around the show that is March Madness, why shouldn't the entertainers get a cut?

One argument is that it would ruin the integrity of the game: that college sports are meant to be played for the love of the game, not the quest for the cash. That seems fair, but it just isn't the way things are.

Recruiting violations are becoming more frequent across college basketball. The University of Connecticut, one of college basketball's premier programs, now faces possible NCAA sanctions after allegations involving the improper courting of guard Nate Miles.

Maybe UConn athletic officials didn't know what they were doing wrong, or maybe they just didn't think they'd get caught. I'd guess the latter.

Oh, and by the way, Miles never played a game for the Huskies. He was arrested and then expelled after violating a restraining order against a female student. Oops.

Even smaller programs, such as the

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TWO-MINUTE DRILL

By Reilly Moore

- ◆ The Final Four is set for Saturday. Connecticut will take on Michigan State during the first national semifinal and North Carolina will play Villanova during the second game. Michigan State has home-court advantage and is the first team since Duke in 1994 to play in the Final Four in its home state. 72,000 fans are expected to fill Detroit's Ford Field for each game...The Spartans are hoping that the home crowd will prove to be more of an asset than it was for the Lions.
- ◆ Richmond's national championship football team will take the field at UR Stadium on Saturday afternoon for its annual Spring Game...The tailgate crowd will probably be small, but blow-up Spidey has agreed to give up his Pig Roast to be there.
- ◆ Last Sunday, Tiger Woods came back from five strokes down to win at Bay Hill, his first win since knee surgery last summer...I hope Augusta knows his jacket size by now.
- ◆ Major League Baseball season will start Sunday when the Philadelphia Phillies host the Atlanta Braves...The Phillies' World Series win last season made them the first team ever to beat the Tampa Bay Rays and actually have a reason to celebrate.



ELIZA MORSE/THE COLLEGIAN

FRIEND OR FOE

Senior Mandy Friend runs upfield during the women's lacrosse game against Duquesne University on Sunday at First Market Stadium. Friend scored three goals during the game, including a goal with 1:28 remaining during the second overtime period to lift the Spiders to a 14-13 win against the Dukes. The lacrosse team also won on Friday against St. Bonaventure University and is now 2-0 during Atlantic 10 games. Freshman Caitlin Fifield was named A-10 rookie of the week after scoring four goals during each of the Spiders' two victories. After starting the season 0-10, the Spiders have a chance to stay perfect in conference play tomorrow when they will travel to face the University of Massachusetts at 3 p.m. in Amherst, Mass.

To read the on-line game stories for both of the Spiders' weekend wins, log on to thecollegianur.com/sports.

Safe or soft: the new NFL



By JESSIE MURRAY
Assistant Sports Editor

Perhaps you are looking at the snapshot above and wondering to yourself: "Who is this Jessie Murray girl and what could she possibly have to tell me about sports?"

I will give you some insight into who I am and then you may understand. There are two children in my family -- my younger sister and me. Growing up that meant my dad had to breed at least one of us to like football since he had no sons and did not want to go to New York Giants games by himself.

He started bringing the two of us to games when I was about 5 years old. I was always the one who wanted to stay until the bitter end, even if the team was losing by 10, while my sister would be tugging at his arm during the second quarter saying: "Can we go yet? I'm bored."

I think you could guess who has been sitting at the Meadowlands with him ever since. After the Giants, came the Knicks, the U.S. Open and then the Yankees. My father was not pleased with the latter since he is a Mets fan.

So that's the short story and now you

know I am not completely ignorant. Now I will actually start my column for the week, and it should not surprise you that it is about football.

Last week, team owners from the National Football League met in California and passed a series of new safety rules.

These measures cover different areas of the game, including blind-side blocks, contact to the head, lunging on quarterbacks, kicking team formation during an onside kick and the "wedge" - a kickoff formation in which anywhere from three to five players line up and run full speed toward the kick returner.

All the rules have implications for the game and how it will be played, but I am going to focus on only two of them. These have been named the "Hines Rule" and the "Brady Rule."

Last October, Pittsburgh Steelers receiver Hines Ward made a blind-side block with his shoulder, leading with his head, which resulted in the broken jaw of Cincinnati Bengals linebacker Keith Rivers.

The Hines Rule states that the initial force of a blind-side block cannot be delivered by a helmet, forearm or shoulder to an opponent's head or neck. An illegal block will result in a 15-yard penalty. For those of you who do not know football, that is a pretty big penalty.

I can understand protecting the head. The risks of spinal, head and vertebrae injuries

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