

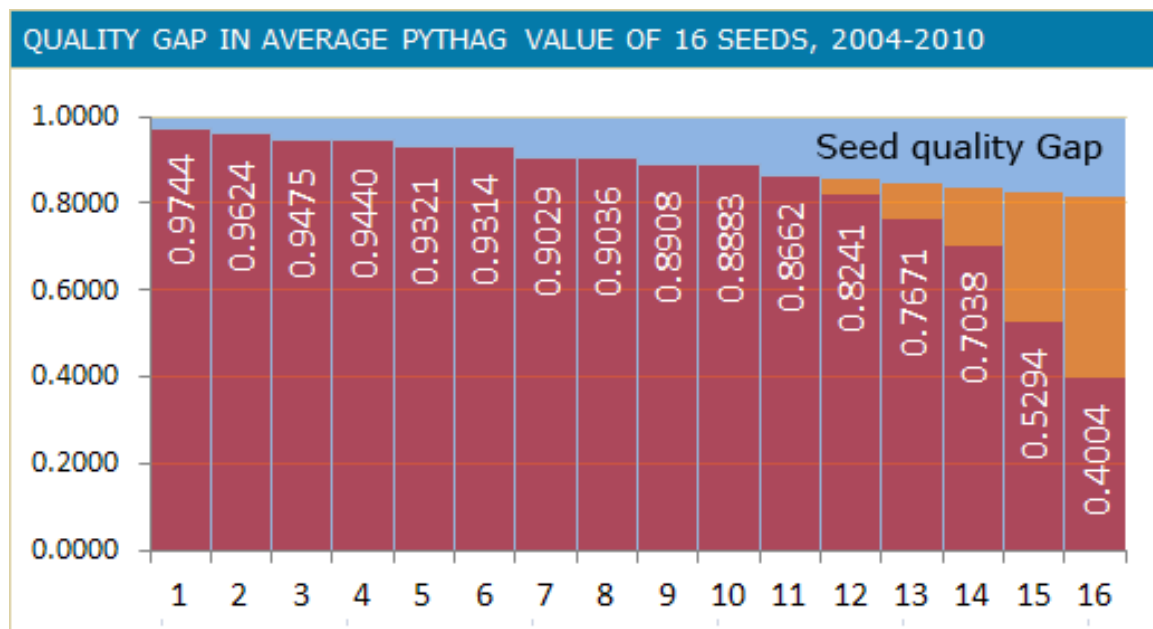
If you consult only one source to make your bracket picks this year, this is it. Every seed matchup that has ever occurred in the 26-year history of the 64-team era is analyzed here. Want to know the factors that lead to upsets in each matchup -- or which favorites are most likely to stave off dark-horse uprisings? Check out the round-by-round matchup analyses here.

ROUND 1 | ROUND 2 | SWEET 16 | ELITE EIGHT | FINAL FOUR | FINALS

ROUND 1

1v16 | 104-0, 1.000 | Higher seed scoring margin: +25.3 ppg

For 26 years and 104 games, top seeds have maintained their perfect record of dominance against 16 seeds. Rather than credit the quality of top seeds, however, efficiency numbers suggest that we should blame the ineptitude of 16 seeds. Based on Ken Pomeroy's Pythag statistic, the measure of a team's overall possession-based scoring and defensive efficiency, 16 seeds are disproportionately weaker than their nearest low seeds. Take a look at this chart of the average Pythag values for each seed heading into the tourney between 2004 and 2010:



What if Duke played Michigan last year, with Manny Harris, DeShawn Sims and their collection of grind-it-out three-shooters, instead of Arkansas-Pine Bluff? That's who the sixty-fourth most efficient team was on Selection Sunday. Could they beat the Wolverines 104 times in a row?

Near Misses: Purdue 73, West Carolina 71 (1996). Michigan State 75, Murray State 71 OT (1990). Oklahoma 72, East Tennessee State 71 (1989). Georgetown 50, Princeton 49 (1989...and Tiger partisans still insist Mourning's last-second block was a foul).

2v15 | 100-4, .962 | Higher seed scoring margin: +16.8 ppg

Once every six years or so, a 15 seed shocks a two seed. The last victim was Iowa State...ten dances ago. Robert Morris came oh so close to upsetting Villanova last year, losing in overtime, 73-70. The Wildcats then proceeded to tank against to tenth-seeded St. Mary's in the second round. While the time might be ripe for another upset, I wouldn't pencil it into your bracket. I refer you back to the chart with the average Pythag values of the seeds. While the gulf between one and 16 seeds is huge, it's also pretty big between two and 15 seeds. With 15 seeds, we're still talking about teams that didn't make the tourney on performance quality.

Upset watch: All the 15 seed Cinderellas came into the tourney winning nine of their last ten games and at least three in a row. They all had regular-season records between .600 and .800, indicating that they played their share of tough teams. They scored more than 69 and had a scoring margin of three or more per game. They all had at least one senior starter and got more than 70% of their points from the starting unit. And they all got balanced scoring from the back- and frontcourt, averaging between 37 and 58% of their scoring from guards. 15 seeds satisfying all these attributes were 4-7 against their two seed opponents. The rest of the 15 seeds were 0-93.

Upset History: Hampton over Iowa State, 2001. Coppin State over South Carolina in 1997. Santa Clara over Arizona, 1993. Richmond over Syracuse, 1991.

3v14 | 88-16, .846 | Higher seed scoring margin: +11.2 ppg

Two out of every three three seed tourneys are bad news for three seeds. Last year's Georgetown Hoyas can attest to that, as can the 2006 Iowa Hawkeyes and 2005 Kansas Jayhawks. Three seeds are four times more prone to first-round upsets than two seeds. More amazingly, they're less likely to win one game in the tourney than top seeds are to win two. (Only 13 top seeds have failed to reach the Sweet Sixteen.) But it still doesn't make any sense to pick three seeds to lose in round one. Too many have made deep runs to eliminate them early.

Upset watch: The 14 seeds most likely to spring upsets are high scoring squads (averaging more than 76.5 points a game) coming into the tourney with solid momentum (more than six wins in their last 10 games and at least three straight victories). They're 13-24 (.351) while their lower scoring counterparts are just 3-64 (.081). If you further refined your criteria to teams relying on unbalanced scoring (more than 55% of scoring from either the frontcourt or backcourt), you'd improve your upset-picking odds to 41% (11-16).

The tell-tale sign of a three seed victim is a tight margin of victory and a so-so record. Three seeds that score less than 17% more than their opponents, have a winning percentage lower than .840 and have won fewer than nine of their last ten games are more prone to upsets (13 losses in 46 tries for a 28.2% upset rate) than all other three seeds (only three losses in 58 tries for a 5.2% upset rate).

Last year, both Georgetown and Pittsburgh possessed the attributes of third-seeded victims. The Hoyas lost to Ohio, while the Panthers cruised past Oakland.

Recent Upsets: Ohio over Georgetown, 2010. Northwestern State over Iowa, 2006. Bucknell over Kansas, 2005. Weber State over North Carolina, 1999. Richmond over South Carolina, 1998

4v13 | 82-22, .788 | Higher seed scoring margin: +9.2 ppg

Four seeds perform almost as solidly as three seeds -- and far better than five seeds. With nearly 80% of four seeds advancing to round two -- and less than one per tourney getting upset, it's too risky to pick a 13 seed in round one. That said, 13 seeds have been a thorn in the side of four seeds lately. Last year, Murray State edged Vanderbilt; 2009 saw Cleveland State knock off Wake Forest; and two Cinderellas surprised four seeds in 2008: Siena knocked off Vanderbilt and San Diego shocked UConn. Even with all those surprises, you still would've gone 12-4 by giving four seeds an automatic pass to the second round.

Upset watch: The key indicators of a 13 seed Cinderella are balance, momentum and scoring margin. Thirteen seeds that 1) are led by coaches who've been to the dance before, 2) get between 32 and 67% of their points from guards, 3) have an average scoring margin above 4.7 points and 4) win between seven and nine of their last 10 pre-tourney games are 13-17 (.433). All other 13 seeds are 9-65 (.122).

The four seeds most likely to be victimized get less than half of their points from guards and have a winning percentage worse than .840. They get upset 34.8% of the time (16 of 46 games). Four seeds with better backcourts and records have only been upset six times in 58 matchups -- a 10.3% upset rate.

Last year, Murray State had the qualities of a 13-seed dark horse, and none of the four seeds had the vulnerabilities of victims. The Racers opponent, Vanderbilt, did, however, own a so-so record of .750. What happened? Murray State surprised the Commodores.

Recent Upsets: Murray State over Vanderbilt, 2010. Cleveland State over Wake Forest, 2009. Siena over Vanderbilt, 2008. San Diego over Connecticut, 2008. Bradley over Kansas, 2006. Vermont over Syracuse, 2005.

5v12 | 69-35, .663 | Higher seed scoring margin: +4.8 ppg

The 5v12 matchup marks the point in round one where it no longer pays to give higher seeds a free pass in your bracket. Over the last nine years, five seeds are just 23-17 against their lower seeded opponent. Last year, only Cornell assumed the mantle of 12 seed Cinderella, knocking off Temple. But the year before, three 12 seeds sprung upsets -- Arizona beat Utah, Wisconsin snuck past Florida State, and Western Kentucky surprised Illinois, the Hilltoppers' second straight 12 seed surprise.

Upset watch: The two factors that matter most in identifying 12 seed spoilers are team experience and frontcourt scoring. Twelfth-seeded teams that have been to the tourney the previous year are 19-15 (.559) against five seeds; all others are 16-54 (.228). Twelve seeds that get 55% to 75% of their scoring from forwards and centers are also 19-15 (.571). In fact, 12 seeds that possess both factors are a solid 11-3 (.786).

To pick a five seed victim, look at backcourt scoring and a lack of momentum. Fifth-seeded squads that get between 25 and 50% of their points from guards and are coming into the tourney with fewer than three straight wins are just 21-20 (.512); the rest are 48-15 (.762).

In 2010, none of the five seeds stumbled into the dance with weak guards. But Cornell had both the team experience and frontcourt dominance of a Cinderella...and they wound up surprising Temple. Utah State had the experience but not the frontline scoring to qualify as a solid upset pick.

Recent Upsets: Cornell over Temple, 2010. Arizona over Utah, 2009. Wisconsin over Florida State, 2009. Western Kentucky over Illinois, 2009. Villanova over Clemson, 2008. Western Kentucky over Drake, 2008.

6v11 | 71-33, .683 | Higher seed scoring margin: +4.2 ppg

Six seeds are more likely to advance to round two than five seeds, but that doesn't mean you should automatically ink them into your bracket. Sure, six seeds are 22-10 over the last seven years -- and they're notorious three seed killers in round two. Still, tourney pool success usually comes from accurately identifying the 11 and 12 seed surprises. Last year, there were two sixth-seeded victims: Marquette and Notre Dame. With West Virginia's early exit in 2009, that makes three straight Big East disappointments from the six seed position.

Upset watch: Offensive punch, scoring margin percentage, winning rate and starter experience are the keys to success for 11 seeds. Teams that score more than 73 points a game and 8% more points than they allow with a record better than .640 and at least one senior starter are 24-19 (.558). All other 11 seeds are nearly four times worse at 8-52 (.133).

Sixth-seeded upset victims tend to be high scoring and led by veteran coaches. Six seeds that average more than 74.7 points a game and have a coach that's been to the dance more than two times are just 18-18 (.500) in round one; the rest are 53-15 (.768).

Last year, Washington was the only 11 seed that had the Cinderella stats to spring an upset, while Notre Dame had the vulnerabilities of a six seed victim. The Huskies wound up stunning Marquette...and the Fighting Irish stumbled against Old Dominion.

Recent Upsets: Washington over Marquette, 2010. Old Dominion over Notre Dame, 2010. Dayton over West Virginia, 2009. Kansas State over USC, 2008. Virginia Commonwealth over Duke, 2007. Winthrop over Notre Dame, 2007.

7v10 | 62-42, .596 | Higher seed scoring margin: +2.5 ppg

As close as these seeds are, it's surprising that seven seeds have been so dominant in this matchup. They win nearly 60% of the time, but they have struggled in the last two tourneys, losing six of eight matchups against their tenth-seeded opponents. In fact, since 2007, seven seeds own just a 9-7 record against 10 seeds. This is truly a tossup game.

Upset watch: Tenth-seeded teams that: 1) get over 3% more points than their opponents, 2) get at least 30% of their points from guards, 3) have gone to the dance less than three years in a row and 4) are led by coaches who've made fewer than six tourney trips are 25-20 (.556); all other 10 seeds are 17-42 (.288).

The most victimized seven seeds lack offensive punch and backcourt scoring. Squads that score no more than 76 points a game and get less than 56% of their points from guards are just 13-20 (.394); the rest of the seven seeds are 49-22 (.690).

Last year, none of the seven seeds showed signs of being a victim. But St. Mary's and Missouri both had the numbers to succeed as ten seeds. They were two of the 10 seeds that snuck up on seven seeds; the other was Georgia Tech.

Recent 10 seed wins: Georgia Tech over Oklahoma State, 2010. Missouri over Clemson, 2010. Saint Mary's over Richmond, 2010. Michigan over Clemson, 2009. USC over Boston College, 2009. California over Maryland, 2009. Davidson over Gonzaga, 2008.

8v9 | 48-56, .462 | Higher seed scoring margin: +0.2 ppg

The 8v9 matchup is the closest thing to a pick-'em contest in the opening round. While eight seeds hold a razor-thin scoring margin of 0.2 points per game, it's the nine seeds that hold the upper hand in the win/loss column. It's somewhat of a surprise that this isn't more of a 50/50 matchup -- and that the lower seed prevails so often. Don't be tempted by the record, however, into giving nine seeds too much credit; they have a gruesome 4-52 record against top seeds in round two. Of course, nobody's going to predict either of these seeds to knock off a top seed...so the value of correctly predicting this matchup is usually restricted to four points in the first round. (Yeah, yeah...Northern Iowa was a nine seed last year when they stunned Kansas. But tell me this: did anyone in your pool get that game right?)

Tossup tips: The key performance indicator for this matchup is team experience and scoring margin. Eight seeds from Power or Mid-Major conferences that have been to the tourney the previous year with a coach that's gone to the dance, a margin percentage of over 7% and no more than a single loss heading into dance are 25-13 (.658); all other eight seeds are 23-43 (.348).

On the other hand, nine seeds with fewer than three straight tourney trips that beat their opponents by an average of less than six points are 5-13 (.278); the rest are 51-35 (.593).

Last year, Gonzaga, California and Texas all had the KPI's of eight seed victors. The Bulldogs and Golden Bears won, while the Longhorns lost to Wake Forest, the only nine seed that had the earmarks of a victim. All in all, you would've been 3-1 in these tossup picks by adhering to this guidance. Pretty good.

Last Year's Matchups: Wake Forest (9) over Texas (8). Gonzaga (8) over Florida State (9). California (8) over Louisville (9). Northern Iowa (9) over UNLV (8).

ROUND TWO

1 8 9 16 BRACKET head-to-head records, 1985-2010										
SEED	Vs 1		Vs 8		Vs 9		Vs 16		Total	W%
1			39-9	.813	52-4	.929			91-13	.875
8	9-39	.188					NA	NA	9-39	.188
9	4-52	.071					NA	NA	4-52	.071
16			NA	NA	NA	NA			NA	NA

Round two is made up of four gateway matchups to the Sweet Sixteen. The 1|8|9|16 bracket is easily the most predictable. Top seeds advance an astounding 88% of the time. Eight and nine seeds pull off upsets every other tourney. Before Northern Iowa stunned Kansas last year, the eights and nines hadn't slain a top seed since 2004, when they did it twice (thanks to eight seed Alabama and their in-state brethren nine seed UAB). Despite NIU and the infamous Ali Farokhmanesh, it's not really worth picking lower seeds in this mini-bracket.

1v8 | 39-9, .813 | Higher seed scoring margin: +9.7 ppg

Unlike nine seeds, eight seeds offer up a modicum of resistance against top seeds in round two. In eight of the last 26 tourneys, at least one eight seed has made it to the Sweet Sixteen (two made it in 2000 -- North Carolina and Wisconsin). What are the characteristics of these eighth-seeded giant killers? They're experienced, having gone to the tourney the previous year; they're battle-tested, with an average victory margin less than six points; and they have decent guard play, getting at least 33% of their points from the backcourt. Eight seeds satisfying these conditions are 7-8 (.467); all the rest are 2-31 (.061). The most likely one-seed victims are either offensively challenged or inexperienced. Top seeds that either have a rookie coach and didn't go the previous year's dance or that score fewer than 80 points a game with an average margin of less than 13.3 points are just 4-5 (.444) while their counterparts are 35-4 (.897). Last year, no eight seeds had the qualities of a Cinderella and no top seeds showed signs of being a victim.

Recent Upsets: Alabama over Stanford, 2004. UCLA over Cincinnati, 2002. North Carolina over Stanford, 2000. Wisconsin over Arizona, 2000.

1v9 | 52-4, .929 | Higher seed scoring margin: +14.1 ppg

Incredibly, nine seeds are about as likely to upset top seeds in round two as 15 seeds are liable to knock off two seeds in round one. With all apologies to Northern Iowa, it would be a bracket killer to advance a nine seed to the Sweet Sixteen. But if you happen to get in a debate over which nine seed is most likely to knock off a top seed, pick a team that has an average scoring margin more than 7.5 points a game, has won between five and eight of their last ten games, and has a veteran starting five, averaging at least two senior and three junior starters (that is, 3.4, where a freshman = 1, sophomore = 2, junior = 3 and senior = 4). These ninth-seeded squads are 4-4; the rest are a big, fat 0-48. Northern Iowa had the right numbers to spring an upset last year; Wake Forest did not -- and lost by 30 to Kentucky.

Upset History: Northern Iowa over Kansas, 2010. Alabama-Birmingham over Kentucky, 2004. Boston College over North Carolina, 1994. UTEP over Kansas, 1992.

4 5 12 13 BRACKET head-to-head records, 1985-2010										
SEED	Vs 4		Vs 5		Vs 12		Vs 13		Total	W%
4			28-27	.509	16-11	.593			44-38	.537
5	27-28	.491					11-3	.786	38-31	.551
12	11-16	.407					7-1	.875	18-17	.514
13			3-11	.214	1-7	.125			4-18	.182

This is the most difficult of the Sweet Sixteen gateway brackets to predict. No other bracket has three seeds so evenly matched. Only .037 separates the winning records of the four, five and 12 seeds in round two -- and four seeds actually have a lower winning percentage than five seeds. True, the pressure of getting this mini-bracket right is relieved by the fact that the winner plays the top seed in round three -- and consistently takes it on the chin, losing 82% of the time. But you don't have to look any further than last year to find a fifth-seeded team that knocked off a top seed to reach the Elite Eight. That would be Brad Stevens' Butler Bulldogs, who downed Syracuse on their amazing run to the finals.

4v5 | 28-27, .509 | Higher seed scoring margin: +0.5 ppg

While four seeds have held a slim advantage in this matchup since 1985, five seeds have actually won 12 of the last 16 games. Last year, the two seeds split: five seed Michigan State beat Maryland, while four seed Purdue edged Texas A&M in overtime. Four seeds with an experienced tourney coach that went to the previous dance, have a margin percent less than 20% and get more than 18% of their scoring from the bench are 14-6 (.700); all other four seeds are 14-21 (.400). Meanwhile, five seeds with an experienced tourney coach that score more than 77 points a game and haven't lost two or more consecutive games entering the dance are 14-6 (.700); all others are 13-22 (.371). Last year, both four seeds had the right stuff to be on the winning side and neither five seed did. Purdue succeeded, while Maryland failed.

Recent Five-Seed Wins: Michigan State (5) over Maryland (4), 2010. Purdue (5) over Washington (4), 2009. Michigan State (5) over Pittsburgh, 2008.

4v12 | 16-11, .593 | Higher seed scoring margin: +3.1 ppg

This matchup is closer than the disparity in seed positions indicates. The most reliable four seeds score more than 72 points a game, have won at least five of their last ten pre-tourney tilts and have coaches with more than three tourney trips. They're 16-5 (.762) while other four seeds are 0-6. That includes Wisconsin, which lost to Cornell last year. The Badgers averaged just 67.5 points a game. The most surprising 12 seeds: 1) have won fewer than 10 games in a row, 2) get less than 60 percent of their points from guards, 3) aren't led by a snakebitten coach (five or more trips with no Elite Eight runs); and 4) aren't a Small conference team that didn't go to the previous dance. Twelve seeds fulfilling these conditions are 11-6 (.647); other 12 seeds are 0-10. Last year, Wisconsin had the earmarks of a victim and Cornell had met the criteria for a victimizer. And look what happened.

Recent Upsets: Cornell over Wisconsin, 2010. UW-Milwaukee over Boston College, 2005. Butler over Louisville, 2003. Missouri over Ohio State. Southwest Missouri State over Tennessee, 1999.

5v13 | 11-3, .786 | Higher seed scoring margin: +6.6 ppg

Unlike four seeds, five seeds have little trouble in their Cinderella mismatch against 13 seeds. The last 13 seed Cinderella was Bradley, which beat Pitt in 2006. Still, there's little reason to pick against five seeds -- particularly if their backcourt shoulders more than 38% of the scoring load. Guard-dominant five seeds are 9-1, while more frontcourt-oriented fifth-seeded teams have struggled (2-2, .500). If you get a wild hair and feel like picking an upset in this matchup, go for 13 seeds that get less than 48% of their points from guards, score more than 70 and give up less than 66 points a game, have at least two senior starters and have won fewer than nine of their last ten games. These thirteenth-seeded spoilers are 3-2; all other 13 seeds are 0-9. Last year, Butler had the guard play to fend off an upset bid, and Murray State didn't have the qualities of a Cinderella. The Bulldogs prevailed in a close one, 54-52.

Upset History: Bradley over Pittsburgh, 2006, Oklahoma over Charlotte, 1999. Richmond over Georgia Tech, 1988.

12v13 | 7-1, .875 | Higher seed scoring margin: +7.9 ppg

The longshot seeds in this bracket have squared off against each other more often than any other longshot pairing (9v16, 10v15, 11v14) in the second round. Surprisingly, 12 seeds treat 13 seeds like pushovers, prevailing 88% of the time. In 2009, twelfth-seeded Arizona cruised past Cleveland State. In 2008, for the first time in the 26-year modern era, there were two 12v13 matchups -- Villanova versus Siena and Western Kentucky versus San Diego. In both cases, the 12 seed prevailed. What did the one 13-seed victor have that the victims didn't? Team experience. Valparaiso had been to the tourney three straight years when it knocked off Florida State in 1998. The seven 13-seed losers had fewer than three appearances -- with only Indiana State having gone to the previous year's tourney.

Recent Matchups: Arizona (12) over Cleveland State (13), 2009. Villanova (12) over Siena (13), 2008. Western Kentucky (12) over San Diego (13), 2008. Gonzaga (12) beat Indiana State (13), 2001. Valparaiso (13) beat Florida State (12), 1998.

3 6 11 14 BRACKET head-to-head records, 1985-2010										
SEED	Vs 3		Vs 6		Vs 11		Vs 14		Total	W%
3			32-26	.551	21-9	.700			53-35	.602
6	26-32	.449					11-2	.846	37-34	.521
11	9-21	.300					3-0	1.000	12-21	.364
14			2-11	.154	0-3	.000			2-14	.125

The 3|6|11|14 bracket is perhaps the most difficult pairing to figure out in the second round. That's because sixth-seeded teams are such surprising performers. While fewer six seeds make it to round two than three seeds (71 to 88), their winning percentage isn't too far behind that of their higher-seeded rival in the second round. In fact, they win with nearly the same regularity as four or five seeds. Eleventh-seeded teams aren't slouches either. Odds are that the four teams advancing from this bracket pairing will be comprised of nearly as many lower seeds as three seeds. One other reason why this bracket is so difficult: the stakes for getting it right are higher. Almost twice as many teams (43) will advance to the Elite Eight as the 4|5|12|13 bracket (22 teams). Last year, three seed Baylor and six seed Tennessee reached the Elite Eight.

3v6 | 32-26, .551 | Higher seed scoring margin: +2.6 ppg

This used to be one of the most hotly contested matchups in the second round -- four tourneys ago. Up until the 2005 dance, the two seeds had split their 48 contests. Since then, three seeds have won eight of ten. Despite this surge, the 3v6 tilt deserves more scrutiny from bracket pool players. I usually give one and two seeds automatic passes to the Sweet Sixteen. And I'm less concerned about the 4v5 games since the winners are served up to top seeds in round three. That leaves this mini-bracket as the most important one to get right in round two.

If you're looking to pick a six seed in this matchup, consider teams with coaches who've: 1) been to the dance between one and five times, 2) won between five and nine of their last ten games -- but have less than seven wins in a row, and 3) rely on guards for less than 65% of their points. Six seeds with these three attributes are 17-8 (.680); the rest are 9-24 (.273). Last year, Xavier had the qualities of a sixth-seeded victor -- and they downed Pittsburgh. Meanwhile, less experienced three seeds hold serve better than tourney-grizzled squads. Third-seeded teams who've been to the dance fewer than six times in a row are 27-16 (.628); the rest are 5-10 (.333). Pitt had gone to the dance nine straight years, so they fit the bill for victimization.

Recent three seed victims: Xavier over Pittsburgh, 2010. Vanderbilt over Washington State, 2007. Texas Tech over Gonzaga, 2005. Utah over Oklahoma, 2005. Vanderbilt over North Carolina State, 2004.

3v11 | 21-9, .700 | Higher seed scoring margin: +7.6 ppg

It isn't exactly a "gimme" when three seeds square off against 11 seeds in round two. Just ask New Mexico, which was victimized by Washington last year. The best performance indicators to explain why 11 seeds spring upsets are pre-tourney momentum and offensive output. Eleventh-seeded squads that have won between five and eight of their last ten contests while averaging more than 68 points per game are 9-10 in this matchup (.474); all other 11 seeds are perfectly inept at 0-11. The tell-tale sign of faltering three seeds is team experience. Third-seeded squads that either didn't go to the tourney the previous year or are tourney fixtures (more than six straight appearances) are 13-1; all others are 8-8. Last year, Washington had the offensive firepower to be an 11 seed Cinderella, but Old Dominion did not. Meanwhile, both New Mexico and Baylor had not gone to the previous dance. The Lobos got upset by the Huskies, while Baylor handled ODU.

Recent Upsets: Washington over New Mexico, 2010. George Mason over North Carolina, 2006. Southern Illinois over Georgia, 2002. Temple over Florida, 2001. Loyola-Marymount over Michigan, 1990.

6v14 | 11-2, .846 | Higher seed scoring margin: +5.8 ppg

If you went out on a bracket limb and advanced a 14 seed into the second round, you'd be smart to eliminate them in round two. Then again, logic would've dictated that you never advance a 14 seed in the first place. So if you're still feeling reckless with this matchup, take the 14 seeds that beat their opponents by more than 12 points per game. They're 2-0 against six-seeders; the rest of the 14 seeds are 0-11. That includes Ohio, which lost to Tennessee last year, 83-68.

Upset History: Tennessee-Chattanooga over Illinois, 1997. Cleveland State over St. Joseph's, 1986.

11v14 | 3-0, 1.000 | Higher seed scoring margin: +14.7 ppg

Anyone who's contemplating an 11v14 matchup in their bracket probably isn't reading this article to begin with -- and doesn't care that 11 seeds have never lost to 14 seeds in the second round. Washington beat Richmond in 1998, Connecticut handled Xavier in 1991 and Minnesota stopped Siena in 1989.

2 7 10 15 BRACKET head-to-head records, 1985-2010										
SEED	Vs 2		Vs 7		Vs 10		Vs 15		Total	W%
2			44-17	.721	23-16	.590			67-33	.667
7	17-44	.279					1-0	1.000	18-44	.290
10	16-23	.590					3-0	1.000	19-23	.452
15			0-1	.000	0-3	.000			0-4	.000

By all rights, the 2|7|10|15 bracket should be a no-brainer -- and most bracket pool players pick it that way, giving two seeds an automatic pass to the Sweet Sixteen. But second-seeded squads aren't nearly as reliable as top seeds in advancing beyond the second round. On average, one and a half seven or 10 seeds per tourney will take the place of two seeds. Last year, tenth-seeded St. Mary's was the surprise advancer, shocking Villanova. You can go the safe route, cross your fingers and advance all the two seeds. Or you can be a rebel, observe the tell-tale signs of seven and 10 seed victors, and advance a Cinderella. The bigger the pool you're in, the more likely it is that the winner will go against the grain.

2v7 | 44-17, .721 | Higher seed scoring margin: +5.9 ppg

Despite being the closer competitor by seed position, seven seeds are surprisingly more prone to getting beat by second-seeders than 10 seeds are. Last year, there was only one 2v7 tilt, and second-seeded Kansas State defeated Jimmer Fredette's BYU Cougars. Seventh-seeders that offer the stiffest resistance are tourney tested but not fixtures, having been to the dance two to eight straight years; they're led by experienced tournament coaches; and they beat their opponents by more than six points a game. These seven seeds are a respectable 9-10 (.474); others are 8-34 (.190).

Which second-seeders are most likely to tank in this matchup? Steer clear of two seeds whose coach has made no more than one Elite Eight appearance. They're just 18-14 (.563) against seven seeds; teams with more successful tourney coaches are 26-3 (.897). BYU actually met the criteria of a seven-seed surpiser, while Frank Martin's thin tourney resume made the Wildcats a potential victim. Despite this, Kansas State got by the Cougars.

Recent Upsets: West Virginia over Duke, 2008. UNLV over Wisconsin, 2007. Wichita State over Tennessee, 2006. Georgetown over Ohio State, 2006.

2v10 | 23-16, .590 | Higher seed scoring margin: +6.0 ppg

Amazingly, 10 seeds beat two seeds at more than a 40% rate in the second round. Of course, the odds of a 10 seed winning its first two games are still just 22%, so it's not worth getting too excited about their propensity to topple two seeds. That said, you only need to look to last year's Cinderella run by St. Mary's to know that 10 seeds can be dangerous. Then again, there were three 2v10 contests last year (for

the second year in a row; amazingly 1999 had four such matchups), and the higher seed prevailed in two of three contests.

Which 10 seeds have the best odds of reaching the Sweet Sixteen? Look for 10 seeds that score more than 72 points, beat opponents by more than five points a game and rely on starters for at least 72 percent of their points. These teams are 13-9 (.591), while other ten seeds are just 3-14 (.176). Last year, St. Mary's had the numbers to spring an upset while Missouri and Georgia Tech did not. The results went perfectly to form.

Recent Upsets: St. Mary's over Villanova, 2010. Davidson over Georgetown, 2008. North Carolina State over Connecticut, 2005. Nevada over Gonzaga, 2004. Auburn over Wake Forest, 2003.

7v15 | 1-0, 1.000 | Higher seed scoring margin: +11.0 ppg

A seven seed has only played a 15 seed once in round two. In 1993, seventh-seeded Temple beat 15 seed Santa Clara.

10v15 | 3-0, 1.000 | Higher seed scoring margin: +11.0 ppg

Tenth-seeders have pushed their round-two record almost to .500 by beating 15 seeds in all three of their matchups. Georgetown beat Hampton in 2001, Texas beat Coppin State in 1997, and Temple handled Richmond in 1991.

SWEET 16

TOP SEED BRACKET head-to-head records, 1985-2010																
SD	Vs 1		Vs 4		Vs 5		Vs 8		Vs 9		Vs 12		Vs 13		TOT	W%
1			27-10	.730	28-6	.824					17-0	1.000	3-0	1.000	75-16	.824
4	10-27	.270					2-3	.400	2-0	1.000					14-30	.318
5	6-28	.176					0-2	.000	1-1	.500					7-31	.184
8			3-2	.600	2-0	1.000					0-1	.000	1-0	1.000	6-3	.667
9			0-2	.000	1-1	.500					NA	NA	NA	NA	1-3	.250
12	0-17	.000					1-0	.1000	NA	NA					1-17	.056
13	0-3	.000					0-1	.000	NA	NA					0-4	.000

You wouldn't go too far wrong to advance top seeds to the Elite Eight. More top seeds advance to the quarterfinals than two seeds get to the Sweet Sixteen -- or five seeds win in round one! Heck, more first-seeders get to the Elite Eight (75) than two and three seeds combined (74). More than 72% of top seeds -- almost three per tourney -- win their first three games. The only other seeds worth considering in this bracket are four, five and eight seeds. They've graduated 27 teams -- about one per tourney -- to the fourth round. The three lower seeds have only advanced two teams.

1v4 | 27-10, .730 | Higher seed scoring margin: +6.8 ppg

On the top-seed side of the Sweet Sixteen bracket, the most frequent matchup pits the two highest seeds against each other. One and four seeds are involved in 36% of the games, with top seeds winning nearly three out of four contests. That might sound like a lock, but it's the worst performance by a top seed in any of its matchups over the first three rounds. Four seeds thrive when they beat their foes by more than 10 points a game. They're 7-8 (.467); less dominant four seeds are 3-19 (.136). In last year's only 1v4 matchup, Purdue had the scoring margin to make them a potential Duke killer, but it didn't happen. Of course, the Boilermakers 10.2 point margin probably would've been much lower without Robbie Hummel for the whole year...and their odds against the Blue Devils would've been better with him. One thing my database doesn't take into consideration: crushing late-season injuries to top players.

Recent Four Seed Victories: LSU (4) over Duke (1), 2006. Villanova (1) over Boston College (4), 2006. Louisville (4) over Washington (1), 2005. Ohio State (4) over and Auburn (1), 1999. Arizona (4) over Kansas (1), 1997.

1v5 | 28-6, .824 | Higher seed scoring margin: +7.4 ppg

Given their seed proximity, you'd think that five seeds would do nearly as well against top seeds as four seeds. In fact, they're fairly easy marks for the big guns, pulling off upsets less often than eight seeds do against top seeds in the second round. What distinguishes the six top seeds that got upset? Interestingly, it's the tourney fixtures that tend to fare worse. Top seeds that have been to the tourney at least five straight times or have a coach with more than 20 trips are just 14-5 (.737); the less experienced top seeds are 14-1 (.933). Here's another sign of a top-seed victim: their name is "Duke." Three of the last four one seeds to get upset by five seeds were the Blue Devils -- in 2000, 2002 and 2005. On the dark horse side of the matchup, fifth-seeded Cinderellas have won more than five of their last pre-tourney games, score more than 70 points a game, and get balanced scoring, with

guards contributing between 35 and 70 point of their teams points. These teams are 6-13 (.316); their counterparts are 0-15. Last year, Syracuse was saddled with the experience stigma of an upset victim and Butler had the numbers of a Cinderella. The matchup went to form, with the Bulldogs beating the Orange, 63-59.

Upset History: Butler over Syracuse, 2010. Michigan State over Duke, 2005. Indiana over Duke, 2002. Florida over Duke, 2000. Mississippi State over Connecticut, 1996. Virginia over Oklahoma, 1989.

1v12 | 17-0, 1.000 | Higher seed scoring margin: +14.8 ppg

Given how dominant top seeds are in the first three rounds of the tourney, it's not surprising that they're a perfect 17-0 against 12 seeds. It is a little eye-opening, however, that they handle their underdog opponents so easily. Top seeds have beaten 12 seeds by an average of 14.8 points, with only four of the 16 games getting settled by single digits. Ball State came the closest to springing an upset in 1990 when the Cardinals lost to UNLV 69-67. 2008 was the only dance in the 26-year modern tourney era that featured two 1v12 tilts. Both of them were reasonably competitive games: UCLA beat Western Kentucky, 88-78, and Kansas slipped by Villanova, 72-57. Last year, on the other hand, Kentucky had no trouble with Cornell, 62-45 -- but at least the Big Red slowed down the Wildcats. In 2009, Louisville absolutely ran over 12 seed Arizona, 103-64.

Recent Matchups: Kentucky over Cornell, 2010. Louisville over Arizona, 2009. Kansas over Villanova, 2008. UCLA over Western Kentucky, 2008. Illinois over UW-Milwaukee, 2005. Oklahoma over Butler, 2003. Michigan State over Gonzaga, 2001.

1v13 | 3-0, 1.000 | Higher seed scoring margin: +15.3 ppg

In the three Sweet Sixteen matchups between these seeds, the top seed has held serve against its longshot opponent. Memphis rolled over a surprising Bradley squad in 2006, Michigan State took care of Oklahoma in 1999, and Temple dispatched Dick Tarrant's pesky Richmond Spiders in 1988.

4v8 | 2-3, .400 | Higher seed scoring margin: +0.4 ppg

Once every five years or so, a four and eight seed go head-to-head in the Sweet Sixteen. The Cinderella eighth-seeders are tough teams that keep the score low and close, averaging less than 80 points a game and winning by no more than eight points. Teams with these qualities are 3-0. The other two eight seeds have fallen to their fourth-seeded foes.

Matchup History: North Carolina (8) over Tennessee (4), 2000. Wisconsin (8) over LSU (4), 2000. Syracuse (4) over Georgia (8), 1996. Arkansas (4) over North Carolina (8), 1990. Auburn (8) over UNLV (4), 1986.

4v9 | 2-0, .000 | Higher seed scoring margin: +14.0 ppg

The only two times these seeds have met in the Sweet Sixteen, the favored four seeds have prevailed. Bill Self's Kansas Jayhawks beat Mike Anderson's UAB Blazers in 2004. And Bob Huggins Cinci Bearcats beat Clem Haskins' UTEP Miners in 1992.

5v8 | 0-2, .000 | Higher seed scoring margin: -6.0 ppg

Eight seeds have upset five seeds both times that they've squared off against each other. Mike Gottfried and his Alabama Crimson Tide were the most recent school to do the trick, toppling Jim Boeheim's defending champion Orangemen in 2004. And the first upset came in the very first year of the modern 64-team era, when Rollie

Massimino masterminded an upset win over Lefty Dreisell's Maryland Terps on his way to the 1985 championship.

5v9 | 1-1, .500 | Higher seed scoring margin: -1.0 ppg

Nine seeds have played five seeds in the Sweet 16 just twice. One of them was last year, when Michigan State dispatched ninth-seeded Cinderella Northern Iowa, 59-52. The 1994 Boston College Eagles, coached by Jim O'Brien, has the distinction of being the only nine seed to reach the Elite Eight. They achieved the feat by knocking off Bobby Knight's fifth-seeded Hoosiers.

8v12 | 0-1, .000 | Higher seed scoring margin: -9.0 ppg

In 2002, Quin Snyder's Missouri Tigers upset Steve Lavin's UCLA Bruins in the only 8v12 matchup of the modern tourney era.

8v13 | 1-0, 1.000 | Higher seed scoring margin: +6.0 ppg

The only matchup pitting these seeds against each other occurred in 1998 when Jim Harrick's Rhode Island Rams beat Cinderella Valparaiso, led by coach Homer Drew and his son, guard Bryce Drew.

TWO SEED BRACKET head-to-head records, 1985-2010																
SD	Vs 2		Vs 3		Vs 6		Vs 7		Vs 10		Vs 11		Vs 14		TOT	W%
2			21-12	.636	19-6	.760					8-1	.889	NA	NA	48-19	.719
3	12-21	.364					6-2	.750	8-4	.667					26-27	.481
6	6-19	.240					3-3	.500	4-2	.667					13-24	.343
7			2-6	.250	3-3	.500					0-3	.000	1-0	1.000	6-12	.333
10			4-8	.333	2-4	.333					NA	NA	1-0	1.000	7-12	.389
11	1-8	.111					3-0	1.000	NA	NA					4-8	.333
14	NA	NA					0-1	.000	1-0	1.000					0-2	.000

On the two-seed side of the Sweet Sixteen bracket, the competition is much more balanced than the one-seed side, where top seeds advance 72% of the time. While two seeds are the most common winners, claiming 46% of the Elite Eight positions, the likelihood is that some other seed will advance. Three and six seeds prevail in 38% of the matchups. In the other bracket, the four and five seeds only get to the quarterfinals 30% of the time. Even the seven, 10 and 11 seeds get into the act, advancing 17 teams -- more than twice as many as the eight, nine and 12 seeds in the other bracket. On the other hand, two seeds are the only seed on this side of the Sweet Sixteen bracket with a winning record.

2v3 | 21-12, .636 | Higher seed scoring margin: +2.3 ppg

Of all the matchups with a single seed position difference in the first three rounds (8v9, 4v5, 6v7 and 12v13), this one is amazingly the second-most lopsided, behind only 12v13 (7-1). It gets more lopsided if you concentrate only on two seeds that get imbalanced scoring -- more than 60% of their points from either the backcourt or frontcourt. These squads are 15-4 (.789); the more balanced scoring two seeds are just 6-8 (.429). If your heart's set on picking a three seed, go with one whose coach isn't a tourney rookie but has fewer than 10 trips to the dance. These three seeds are 9-8 (.529), while their counterparts are 3-13 (.188). Last year, there were no 2v3 games for just the fifth time in the 26-year, 64-team era. This comes a year after the only tourney in which all four regions had a 2v3 matchup.

Recent Matchups: Michigan State (2) over Kansas (3), 2009. Oklahoma (2) over Syracuse (3), 2009. Villanova (3) over Duke (2), 2009. Missouri (3) over Memphis (2), 2009. Texas (2) over Stanford (3), 2008. Louisville (3) over Tennessee (3), 2008.

2v6 | 19-6, .760 | Higher seed scoring margin: +5.4 ppg

This matchup happens almost as frequently as the 2v3 matchup -- a testament to the resilience of six seeds in the first two rounds. Unfortunately, that resiliency doesn't seem to help them against two seeds. In fact, 17 of the last 19 2v6 tilts have gone to the favored seed. One of those two upsets, however, happened just last year, when Tennessee took down Ohio State. The six-seeders that escape defeat tend to be Big Six schools that: have won at least five of their last ten pre-tourney games, have gone to the dance no more than five straight times, and have a tourney-tested coach. Teams with these two qualities are 6-8 (.429); the rest of the six seeds are 0-11. Last year, Tennessee had the right numbers to spring an upset over the Buckeyes -- and beat them, 76-73.

Upset History: Tennessee over Ohio State, 2010. USC over Kentucky, 2001. Michigan over Oklahoma State, 1992. Minnesota over Syracuse, 1990. Villanova over Kentucky, 1988. Providence over Alabama, 1987.

2v11 | 8-1, .889 | Higher seed scoring margin: +6.7 ppg

This matchup comes around about once every three years -- and is nearly always won by the two seed. The only 11 seed triumph came way back in 1986, the second year of the modern tourney era, when Dale Brown's LSU Tigers knocked off Georgia Tech. What did LSU have that the other 11 seeds didn't? Tourney experience. They're the only 11 seed that had been to the tourney more than two years in a row. Last year, Washington had just two straight trips to the dance, and lost to West Virginia. Here's a weird little fact: Connecticut or Washington have been involved in all four of the last 2v11 matchups dating back to 1991.

Recent Matchups: West Virginia (2) over Washington (11), 2010. Connecticut (2) over Southern Illinois (11), 2002. Connecticut (2) over Washington (11), 1998. Duke (2) over Connecticut (11), 1991. Duke (2) over Minnesota (11), 1989.

3v7 | 6-2, .750 | Higher seed scoring margin: +1.8 ppg

Four of the eight 3v7 matchups happened in the first decade of the tourney. The other four have happened in the last seven dances. In 2008, third-seeded Xavier edged seven seed West Virginia in overtime; in 2007, three seed UCLA beat UNLV; in 2006, three seed Florida beat Georgetown; and in 2004, Xavier knocked off three seed Texas. What separates the third-seeded winners from losers? Pre-tourney momentum. Three seeds that come to the tourney neither too hot nor too cold -- that is, winning either seven or eight of their last ten games -- are 6-0. The other two third-seeders got upset.

Recent Matchups: Xavier (3) over West Virginia (7), 2008. Oregon (3) over UNLV (7), 2007. Florida (3) over Georgetown (7), 2006. Xavier (7) over Texas (3), 2004.

3v10 | 8-4, .667 | Higher seed scoring margin: +1.7 ppg

Nearly every other tourney pits a three seed against an underdog 10 seed. The best guidance to the outcome of this matchup hinges on the team experience of the Cinderella. The four tenth-seeders that were making a return trip to the dance all

won -- that includes Davidson in 2008. The eight that didn't go to the previous tourney all lost -- including St. Mary's, which got blown out by Baylor last year.

Upset History: Davidson over Wisconsin, 2008. Kent State over Pittsburgh, 2002. Temple over Oklahoma State, 1991. LSU over DePaul, 1987.

6v7 | 3-3, .500 | Higher seed scoring margin: +2.5 ppg

This matchup has been a tale of two eras. Six seeds won the first three games and seven seeds have won the next three. One dynamic has remained fairly consistent through all six head-to-head battles: the team that allows the fewest points per game has a solid 5-1 edge.

Recent Matchups: West Virginia (7) over Texas Tech (6), 2005. Michigan State (7) over Maryland (6), 2003. Tulsa (7) over Miami (Fla.) (6), 2000. Memphis State (6) over Georgia Tech (7), 1992.

6v10 | 4-2, .667 | Higher seed scoring margin: +6.8 ppg

Since 2000, six seeds have asserted their dominance in what was once an even matchup. The tell-tale sign of a sixth-seeded winner is team experience. Schools that have been to the tourney more than five straight years are 4-0; the other two schools are 0-2. The mark of a tenth-seeded victor is scoring punch. Both 10 seeds that scored more than 78 points a game were 2-0 while their more offensively challenged counterparts were winless.

Recent Matchups: Wisconsin (6) over North Carolina State (10), 2005. Purdue (6) over Gonzaga (10), 2000. Temple (6) over Purdue (10), 1999. Gonzaga (10) over Florida (6), 1999.

7v11 | 0-3, .000 | Higher seed scoring margin: -7.3 ppg

Seven seeds have had a rough time with 11 seeds in the Sweet Sixteen. They've lost all three times the two seeds have gone head to head -- in 1990 when offensive juggernaut Loyola-Marymount upset Alabama, in 2001 when Temple beat Penn State, and in 2006 when George Mason upset Wichita State.

7v14 | 1-0, 1.000 | Higher seed scoring margin: +1.0 ppg

The only 7v14 matchup of the modern tourney era came just one year after the field expanded to 64 teams. A 1986 Navy squad led by David Robinson held off Cleveland State.

10v14 | 1-0, 1.000 | Higher seed scoring margin: +6.0 ppg

In the only game pitting these two low seeds against each other, Pete Gillen's tenth-seeded Providence Friars avoided an upset at the hands of Tennessee-Chattanooga in 1997.

ELITE EIGHT

ELITE EIGHT head-to-head records, 1985-2010														
SD	Vs 1	Vs 2	Vs 3	Vs 4	Vs 5	Vs 6	Vs 7	Vs 8	Vs 9	Vs 10	Vs 11	Vs 12	TOT	W%
1		18-18	11-8			6-2	4-0			4-0	2-2		45-30	.600
2	18-18			2-3	0-3			2-1	NA			1-0	23-25	.479
3	8-11			2-1	1-1			1-0	1-0			NA	13-13	.500
4		3-2	1-2			2-1	1-0			2-0	NA		9-5	.643
5		3-0	1-1			1-0	NA			1-0	NA		6-1	.857
6	2-6			1-2	0-1			0-1	NA			NA	3-10	.231
7	0-4			0-1	NA			0-1	NA			NA	0-6	.000
8		1-2	0-1			1-0	1-0			NA	NA		3-3	.500
9		NA	0-1			NA	NA			NA	NA		0-1	.000
10	0-4			0-2	0-1			NA	NA			NA	0-7	.000
11	2-2			NA	NA			NA	NA			NA	2-2	.500
12		0-1	NA			NA	NA			NA	NA		0-1	.000

A funny thing happens on the way to the Elite Eight. The matchup the brackets were designed to yield -- the 1v2 battle -- happens only 35% of the time. The second most likely matchup, a 1v3 game, happens in just 18% of the regions. Top seeds do their part, appearing in 72% of the quarterfinal games. It's the other side of the bracket that's splintered. As for which seed will advance in this round, one seeds get to the Final Four as many times (45) as two, three, and four seeds combined. And these top four seeds account for 90 of the 104 Final Four combatants. So when you're slotting teams into your semifinal brackets, you wouldn't be too far wrong to pick two top seeds and two of the next three seeds. That said, last year's Final Four featured two five seeds, Butler and Michigan State. Even if you include five seeds in your list of semifinal candidates, the big questions remain: Which of these top-seeded teams should you choose? And which two through five seeds should you have join them in the Final Four? In 2008, the answers to these questions were simple: just advance all the top seeds and forget about every other seed. For the only time in 26 years, the "all-top-seed" strategy yielded perfect results. But lightning didn't strike twice in 2009, as two top seeds (North Carolina and UConn) were joined by a two seed (Michigan State) and three seed (Villanova). Then came 2010 and there was just one top seed (Duke) a two seed (West Virginia) and two fives. What's the right approach this year? These matchup breakdowns should provide some guidance.

1v2 | 18-18, .500 | Higher seed scoring margin: +1.2 ppg

More one seeds have their tourney run ended by two seeds in the Elite Eight than by any other opponent in any other round. Considering that only 13 top seeds lose in round two and 16 in the Sweet Sixteen, this matchup is somewhat of a Waterloo for top-seeded teams. They manage just a split here against two seeds -- performing the best when facing inexperienced squads with coaches that lack tourney seasoning. Second-seeders with fewer than four straight tourney trips or coaches who've been to the dance less than three times are 2-12 (.143); the more tourney-tested two seeds are 16-6 (.727). Careful not to rely too much on this rule, however. The two second-seeders to buck the trend did so within the last five tourneys. In 2007, Georgetown toppled top seed North Carolina, despite having fewer than four straight bids. And in 2006, UCLA also accomplished the feat, beating Memphis. Last year,

however, the two-seed inexperience exclusion rule got the lone matchup right. Second-seeded West Virginia, with veteran coach Bob Huggins, beat Kentucky, which hadn't gone to the previous dance.

Recent Matchups: West Virginia (2) over Kentucky (1), 2010. North Carolina (1) over Oklahoma (2), 2009. Michigan State (2) over Louisville (1), 2009. Memphis (1) over Texas (2), 2008. Ohio State (1) over Memphis (2), 2007. Georgetown (2) over North Carolina (1), 2007. UCLA (2) over Kansas (1), 2007.

1v3 | 11-8, .579 | Higher seed scoring margin: +1.6 ppg

Here's more proof that there's no difference between the top three seeds in the Elite Eight: like two seeds, three-seeders give top seeds all they can handle. The one seeds that lose in this matchup tend to be sputtering heading into the tourney. Top seeds that have won less than nine of their last ten pre-tournament games are 3-6; those that have notched nine or ten wins are 8-2. The tell-tale sign of a triumphant three seed is coaching experience. Three seeds with coaches who've been to the dance more than six times are 6-3; those with less experienced coaches are 2-8. Last year, this rule correctly picked top seed Duke to down Baylor and inexperienced coach Scott Drew.

Recent Matchups: Duke (1) over Baylor (3), 2010. Connecticut (1) over Missouri (3), 2009. Villanova (3) over Pittsburgh (1), 2009. Florida (1) over Oregon (3), 2007. Florida (3) over Villanova (1), 2006.

1v6 | 6-2, .750 | Higher seed scoring margin: +8.5 ppg

When they're not struggling with two and three seeds, top seeds are 15-4 against the rest of the field -- 9-2 if you back out their performance against six seeds. In this matchup, the difference between a top-seeded winner and loser is frontcourt scoring. The six top-seeded victors got at least 50% of their points from forwards and centers; the two losers leaned on their backcourt for more than 60% of their scoring. Both the sixth-seeded squads that won (Michigan in 1992 and Providence in 1987) were high-scoring teams, averaging at least 78 points a game. The six seed victims all scored fewer than 78 points per game.

Upset History: Michigan over Ohio State, 1992. Providence over Georgetown, 1987.

1v7 | 4-0, 1.000 | Higher seed scoring margin: +9.0 ppg

Top seeds have no trouble with seven seeds, but this matchup may be a curse for the favorites. None of the top seeds in this showdown have gone on to win the tourney. The seven seed that came closest to springing an upset was Xavier, which lost by just three points to Duke in 2004.

Matchup History: Duke over Xavier, 2004. Texas over Michigan State, 2003. Michigan over Temple, 1993. Duke over Navy, 1986.

1v10 | 4-0, 1.000 | Higher seed scoring margin: +2.8 ppg

Top seeds have ended the Cinderella stories of four 10 seeds in the Elite Eight. The games have served as a good tune-up for the top seeds; three of the four victors have gone on to win the tourney. Indiana did it first in 1987. Then UConn used a 10 seed as a tune-up for the 1999 championship. And in 2008, Kansas did the same thing with Davidson.

Matchup History: Kansas over Davidson, 2008. Connecticut over Gonzaga, 1999. North Carolina over Temple, 1991. Indiana over Louisiana State, 1987.

1v11 | 2-2, .500 | Higher seed scoring margin: +8.3 ppg

Top seeds have as much trouble in the Elite Eight with eleventh-seeded long shots as they do with two seeds. That's because there have been only four matchups -- and the underdog seed has split the series. LSU's victory over Kentucky in 1986 stood as the biggest late-round upset in the 64-team era -- until George Mason duplicated the feat in 2006 by knocking off UConn. What did the two Cinderellas have that the two losing 11 seeds didn't (not that you'd ever pick an 11 seed to advance this far)? Both George Mason and LSU had lost one game before entering the tourney; Temple and Loyola-Marymount had winning streaks coming into the dance.

Matchup History: George Mason (11) over Connecticut (1), 2006. Michigan State (1) over Temple (11), 2001. UNLV (1) over Loyola-Marymount (11), 1990. Louisiana State (11) over Kentucky (1), 1986.

2v4 | 2-3, .400 | Higher seed scoring margin: -0.6 ppg

Once every five years or so, a two seed plays a four seed in the Elite Eight -- like Texas did in 2006 when they squared off against fourth-seeded LSU. The outcome of the game usually hinges on pre-tourney momentum. The team that's won more of their last ten games before entering the dance is 4-1, with only fourth-seeded Oklahoma State bucking the trend in 1995 when they beat a hotter Massachusetts squad. If you put more stock in recent tourney results, however, you might as well just pick the four seed in this matchup. They've won the last three games against two seeds in the Elite Eight.

Matchup History: LSU (4) over Texas (2), 2006. Syracuse (4) over Kansas (2), 1996. Oklahoma State (4) over Massachusetts (2), 1995. Arkansas (2) over Virginia (4), 1995. Duke (2) over St. John's (4), 1991.

2v5 | 0-3, .000 | Higher seed scoring margin: -7.7 ppg

As close as these seeds are, you'd think there would be more than three games over the last 26 years. You'd also think that two seeds would do better. Five seeds have won all three matchups, including last year's Butler/Kansas State tilt. The other two games occurred in 2005, when Michigan State upset Kentucky, and 1996, when Mississippi State beat Cincinnati.

2v8 | 2-1, .667 | Higher seed scoring margin: +4.0 ppg

Over the last 24 years, a two seed has squared off against an eight seed only once, when Connecticut held off Alabama in 2004. The other two 2v8 matchups happened in the first two years of the modern tourney era. Villanova is the only eighth-seeded squad to come out on top against a two seed. They knocked off North Carolina on their improbable way to the 1985 championship. What set Villanova apart from the other two eight seeds was that their coach, Rollie Massimino, had been to the Elite Eight before.

Matchup History: Connecticut (2) over Alabama (8), 2004. Louisville (2) over Auburn (8), 1986. Villanova (8) over North Carolina (2), 1985.

2v12 | 1-0, 1.000 | Higher seed scoring margin: +6.0 ppg

In 2002, second-seeded Oklahoma put an end to the longest tourney run by a 12 seed when the Sooners beat Big 12 rival Missouri.

3v4 | 2-1, .667 | Higher seed scoring margin: +9.3 ppg

On those rare occasions when a three seed goes up against a four seed in the Elite Eight, the older team in terms of class composition has won each time. All three winners -- Georgia Tech, Ohio State, and Seton Hall -- had more juniors and seniors in their starting lineup than their opponents.

Matchup History: Georgia Tech (3) over Kansas (4), 2004. Ohio State (4) over St. John's (3), 1999. Seton Hall (3) over UNLV (4), 1989.

3v5 | 1-1, .500 | Higher seed scoring margin: +12.5 ppg

Three and five seeds have split their two games against each other in the quarterfinals. In 1989, three seed Michigan beat fifth-seeded Virginia on its way to the championship. In 2000, five seed Florida beat three seed Oklahoma State, advanced to the finals, then lost to Michigan State.

3v8 | 1-0, 1.000 | Higher seed scoring margin: +2.0 ppg

Three and eight seeds have met just once in the Elite Eight. In 1998, third-seeded Stanford ended Rhode Island's long shot run.

3v9 | 1-0, 1.000 | Higher seed scoring margin: +8.0 ppg

The only Elite Eight matchup involving a nine seed occurred 17 tournaments ago, in 1994, when third-seeded Florida beat Boston College.

4v6 | 2-1, .667 | Higher seed scoring margin: +6.7 ppg

Once they slip by top seeds in the Sweet Sixteen, four seeds are a pretty resilient bunch. In addition to going 4-4 against two and three seeds, they're a solid 5-1 against lower seeded opponents. The only lower seed to win was Kansas in 1988 when the sixth-seeded Jayhawks and Danny Manning beat their rival, fourth-seeded Kansas State and Mitch Richmond. In the other two matchups, four seed Georgia Tech versus six seed Minnesota in 1990 and four seed Cincinnati versus six seed Memphis State in 1992, the higher seed held sway. In all three 4v6 matchups, the team that allowed the fewest points per game prevailed.

4v7 | 1-0, 1.000 | Higher seed scoring margin: +8.0 ppg

The 2005 tournament saw the only 4v7 quarterfinal matchup in the 26 years of the 64-team era. Fourth-seeded Louisville (actually a one or two seed in disguise) burst seven seed West Virginia's bubble.

4v10 | 2-0, 1.000 | Higher seed scoring margin: +3.5 ppg

It's been 13 tournaments since a four and 10 seed have squared off in the quarterfinals. In 1997, fourth-seeded Arizona knocked off Pete Gillen's tenth-seeded Providence Friars. Then the Wildcats went on to win their only championship of the modern era. In the other 4v10 matchup seven years earlier, four seed Arkansas beat 10 seed Texas.

5v6 | 1-0, 1.000 | Higher seed scoring margin: +1.0 ppg

A five and a six seed have faced each other only once in the 64-team tournament era -- and it was last year, when Michigan State edged Tennessee, 70-69.

5v10 | 1-0, 1.000 | Higher seed scoring margin: +12.0 ppg

A five seed has played a 10 seed only once in the Elite Eight. In 2002, fifth-seeded Indiana ended tenth-seeded Kent State's Cinderella run, and eventually lost to Maryland in the championship game.

6v8 | 0-1, .000 | Higher seed scoring margin: -4.0 ppg

Here's another matchup that's only happened once. In 2000, eight seed Wisconsin upended Big Ten rival Purdue.

7v8 | 0-1, .000 | Higher seed scoring margin: -4.0 ppg

In the only Elite Eight matchup between these two middle seeds, eighth-seeded North Carolina beat seven seed Tulsa in 2000 -- the same year that eight seed Wisconsin beat Purdue in the only 6v8 matchup. Eerie.

FINAL FOUR

FINAL FOUR head-to-head records, 1985-2010										
SD	Vs 1	Vs 2	Vs 3	Vs 4	Vs 5	Vs 6	Vs 8	Vs 11	TOT	W%
1	11-11	6-4	2-4	4-1	1-0	NA	1-0	NA	25-20	.556
2	4-6	1-1	3-2	1-0	0-1	1-1	0-1	1-0	11-12	.478
3	4-2	2-3	NA	1-0	NA	NA	NA	1-0	8-5	.615
4	1-4	0-1	0-1	NA	1-0	0-1	NA	NA	2-7	.222
5	0-1	1-0	NA	0-1	1-1	NA	1-0	NA	3-3	.500
6	NA	1-1	NA	1-0	NA	NA	NA	NA	2-1	.667
8	0-1	1-0	NA	NA	0-1	NA	NA	NA	1-2	.333
11	NA	0-1	0-1	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0-2	.000

The semifinals mark the point in the tourney where seeding offers little guidance to the outcomes of matchups. For one thing, 13 of the 52 Final Four games in the modern era have involved like-seeded opponents. Secondly, of the 39 remaining games, the higher seed is just 24-15 (.615) -- not solid enough to give them an automatic pass. In matchups where the gulf between opponents is one or two seeds, the higher seed is just 14-11; in games where the difference in seed position between opponents is more than two, the higher seed holds a solid 10-4 record. The keys to predicting the like-seeded matchups with 90% proficiency are conference affiliation, playing location and winning record. In general, Big Six conference teams with lesser records playing closer to their campus prevail. For tossup games, where the seed difference between teams is one or two positions, frontcourt scoring accurately predicts the outcome in 16 of the 25 matchups.

1v1 | 11-11, .500 | Average point spread: +10.2 ppg

Of the 52 semifinal games played in the modern tourney, only 11 have pitted top seeds against each other. That might be reason to avoid penciling too many top seeds into your Final Four. Then again, just three tourneys ago, both semifinal games featured top-seed matchups. If you had observed the following rules in order, you would've picked all 11 of these matchups right: 1) take any top seed whose average points scored are at least 15 higher than its opponent, 2) take any top seed with at least a 15-game winning streak, 3) take the top seed playing significantly closer to its campus (a gulf of at least 150 miles), and 4) take the top seed that gets a higher percentage of scoring from guards.

Recent Matchups: Memphis over UCLA, 2008. Kansas over North Carolina, 2008. Maryland over Kansas, 2002. Duke over Michigan State, 1999. Kentucky over Minnesota, 1997.

1v2 | 6-4, .600 | Higher seed scoring margin: +2.6 ppg

Top seeds hold a two-game edge over two seeds in the Final Four. The key performance indicators in the ten matchups have been coaching experience, momentum and frontcourt strength. Avoid any team with a coach who hasn't made at least three Elite Eight appearances. Next, pick against any team coming to the dance with two or more pre-tourney losses in a row. Then, pick the team that gets the higher percentage of scoring from its frontcourt. By following these guidelines, you'd pick nine of the ten games correctly. The only exception occurred in 1991, when Duke ruined UNLV's perfect season en route to the championship. The Blue

Devils relied more on their backcourt for points than the Runnin' Rebels. As for last year, West Virginia's Bob Huggins had only three Elite Eight runs at the time (while Coach K had 11) -- and the Blue Devils upheld the rules.

Recent Matchups: Duke (1) over West Virginia (2), 2010. Michigan State (2) over Connecticut (1), 2009. Florida (1) over UCLA (2), 2007. Ohio State (1) over Georgetown (2), 2007. Connecticut (2) over Duke (1), 2004.

1v3 | 2-4, .333 | Higher seed scoring margin: -1.2 ppg

The toughest matchup for top seeds in the entire tournament is in the semifinals when they face three seeds. They've only won twice in six tries, when Duke broke the curse in 2001, upending third-seeded Maryland -- and in 2009, when North Carolina beat Villanova. The key to this matchup, as with the 1v2 Final Four showdown, is frontcourt scoring. The team that relies on forwards and centers for the higher percentage of its scoring load is a perfect 6-0. In 2009, the Tar Heels got nearly half their points from the frontline, while Villanova only got a third.

Matchup History: North Carolina (1) over Villanova (3), 2009. Syracuse (3) over Texas (1), 2003. Duke (1) over Maryland (3), 2001. Utah (3) over North Carolina (1), 1998. North Carolina (3) over Kansas (1), 1991. Michigan (3) over Illinois (1), 1989.

1v4 | 4-1, .800 | Higher seed scoring margin: +7.0 ppg

What a difference one seed makes. Whereas top seeds struggle against three seeds, they have little trouble with four seeds, winning all but one of the five matchups. The only fourth-seeded squad to rain on a top seed's parade was Arizona in 1997, which parlayed a Final Four upset over North Carolina into a national championship. What did the Wildcats have that the other four seeds lacked? An explosive offense. Arizona was the only four seed in this matchup that actually averaged seven points per game more than their opponent.

Matchup History: Illinois (1) over Louisville (4), 2005. Connecticut (1) over Ohio State (4), 1999. Arizona (4) over North Carolina (1), 1997. UCLA (1) over Oklahoma State (4), 1995. UNLV (1) over Georgia Tech (4), 1990.

1v5 | 1-0, 1.000 | Higher seed scoring margin: +16.0 ppg

The North Carolina/Michigan State Final Four game in 2005 marked the first time that a five seed played a top seed for the right to advance to the championship. The Tar Heels stomped the Spartans, 87-71.

1v8 | 1-0, 1.000 | Higher seed scoring margin: +12.0 ppg

Michigan State was also involved in the only 1v8 semifinal game. The top-seeded Spartans beat Big Ten rival Wisconsin on their way to the 2000 championship.

2v2 | 1-1, .500 | Average point spread: +7.0 ppg

Amazingly, two seeds have squared off against each other in the Final Four only once in the 26 years of the modern tourney era. It happened in 1995, when Arkansas beat North Carolina. Just like with the 1v1 matchup, proximity was a reliable guide in predicting the outcome of this like-seeded game. Arkansas was playing closer to home than North Carolina and prevailed by seven points.

2v3 | 3-2, .600 | Higher seed scoring margin: +2.8 ppg

Surprisingly, the 2v3 matchup occurs almost as often in the Final Four as a 1v3 game. Two seeds prevail in the best-of-five series, but by the slimmest of margins. If

you took the two seed in every situation except when the three seed was from the ACC or Big East, you'd be a perfect 5-0 in predicting outcomes.

Matchup History: Georgia Tech (3) over Oklahoma State (2), 2004. Kansas (2) over Marquette (3), 2003. Kentucky (2) over Stanford (3), 1998. Duke (2) over Florida (3), 1994. Seton Hall (3) over Duke (2), 1989.

2v4 | 1-0, 1.000 | Higher seed scoring margin: +14.0 ppg

Amazingly, the 2006 UCLA/LSU clash marked the only time that a two seed has faced a four seed in the Final Four. The second-seeded Bruins had no trouble dispatching the Tigers, 59-45.

2v5 | 0-1, .000 | Higher seed scoring margin: -9.0 ppg

In 2002, Indiana sprung a mild upset when the fifth-seeded Hoosiers upended Oklahoma in the only 2v5 matchup of the 64-team era.

2v6 | 1-1, .500 | Higher seed scoring margin: +3.5 ppg

These seeds haven't played each other in the Final Four since 1988, when Kansas and Danny Manning upset Duke on its way to Larry Brown's only NCAA championship. The year before that, two seed Syracuse staved off Providence.

2v8 | 0-1, .000 | Higher seed scoring margin: -7.0 ppg

The first four years of the modern tourney era saw some of the Final Four's funkiest matchups. Here's another one: in 1985, eight seed Villanova beat two seed Memphis State before its date with destiny against Georgetown.

2v11 | 1-0, 1.000 | Higher seed scoring margin: +11.0 ppg

One year after the improbable Memphis State/Villanova matchup, 11 seed LSU lost to two seed Louisville, which went on to beat Duke in the 1986 final.

3v4 | 1-0, 1.000 | Higher seed scoring margin: +14.0 ppg

In 1990, just six years into the 64-team era, the only 3v4 semifinal matchup saw three seed Duke holding off Arkansas. Duke's reward for the victory was the privilege of getting steamrolled by UNLV, 103-73, in the finals.

3v11 | 1-0, 1.000 | Higher seed scoring margin: +15.0 ppg

If you thought it was amazing that 2006's 2v4 matchup was the only time the two seeds squared off in the 26-year history of the modern era, how's this for uncanny? The other matchup in the 2006 Final Four was also a first. In the only 3v11 semifinal matchup of the 64-team era, third-seeded Florida trounced 11 seed George Mason, 73-58.

4v5 | 1-0, 1.000 | Higher seed scoring margin: +8.0 ppg

In 1996, four seed Syracuse beat Mississippi State in the modern tourney's only 4v5 semifinal matchup. The Orange lost to Kentucky in the finals.

4v6 | 0-1, .000 | Higher seed scoring margin: -4.0 ppg

In 1992, Michigan's Fab Five -- a six seed that could've been a two seed -- beat fourth-seeded Cincinnati. The Wolverines then got trounced by Duke, 71-51, in the finals.

5v5 | 1-1, .500 | Average point spread: +2.0 ppg

The only like-seeded matchup in the semifinals that didn't involve one or two seeds occurred just last year, when fifth-seeded foes, Michigan State and Butler squared off. Playing in their backyard, the Bulldogs got past Izzo's Spartans, 52-50.

5v8 | 1-0, 1.000 | Higher seed scoring margin: +12.0 ppg

2000 marked the only year of the modern tourney era that had two eight seeds in the Final Four. In addition to the 1v8 matchup between Michigan State and Wisconsin, fifth-seeded Florida squared off against eight seed North Carolina and beat them by a dozen. The Gators wound up losing to MSU in the finals.

CHAMPIONSHIP

CHAMPIONSHIP head-to-head records, 1985-2010									
SD	Vs 1	Vs 2	Vs 3	Vs 4	Vs 5	Vs 6	Vs 8	TOT	W%
1	5-5	5-1	1-0	1-1	3-0	1-1	0-1	16-9	.640
2	1-5	NA	3-2	NA	NA	NA	NA	4-7	.364
3	0-1	2-3	1-1	NA	NA	NA	NA	3-5	.275
4	1-1	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	1-1	.500
5	0-3	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0-3	.000
6	1-1	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	1-1	.500
8	1-0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	1-0	1.000

As little an impact as seeding had on Final Four outcomes, you'd think it wouldn't make a difference in the finals. Not so. Of the 20 championship games involving teams with different seeds, the higher seed has won 14 of them. Since 1990, higher seeds are 13-3 against their lower seeded opponents. Another surprising fact about the finals is that the matchup the brackets were intended to yield -- a 1v1 showdown -- has happened only five times in 26 years. Then again, it's occurred in two of the last four years, with Kansas beating Memphis in 2008 and Florida downing Ohio State in 2007. The only other like-seeded matchup involved three seeds Michigan and Seton Hall in 1989. The Wolverine's frontcourt scoring was a key to their victory -- as it was in four of the other five like-seeded showdowns. The bottom line: if you went with the higher seed in championship games and the team with the better front line in like-seeded battles, your prediction rate would be 73% (19-7).

1v1 | 5-5, .500 | Average point spread: +6.0 ppg

About one in five tournaments features two heavyweight top seeds going toe to toe. Since it happened in 2008 with Kansas/Memphis and the year before with Florida/Ohio State, the law of averages says it won't happen for a few seasons. Which statistic points to the top-seeded victor? Pre-tourney winning streak. In every instance but one, the team that had the shorter streak going into the tourney prevailed in the championship. That one exception was 2008, when both Memphis and Kansas came to the dance with seven straight wins. So when in doubt, pick the team with the better frontcourt; the deeper you go in the dance, the more that big men make a difference.

1v2 | 5-1, .833 | Higher seed scoring margin: +6.7 ppg

Strange that seeding should have such an impact between two close seeds in the finals. Top seeds treat two seeds like one of those lowly seeds they face in the early rounds, beating them 83% of the time. The only two seed to buck the trend was Louisville, which beat Duke in the 1986 championship game. Actually, the more reliable performance indicators in this matchup are coaching experience and scoring margin. Teams with coaches that haven't been to the Elite Eight in a previous year are 0-2. In the remaining four matchups, the team with the higher scoring margin has always prevailed...like in 2008, when the Tar Heels (17.4 ppg margin) beat the Spartans (9.0 ppg margin).

Matchup History: North Carolina (1) over Michigan State (2), 2009. Duke (1) over Arizona (2), 2001. UCLA (1) over Arkansas (2), 1995. Arkansas (1) over Duke (2), 1994. Indiana (1) over Syracuse (2), 1987. Louisville (2) over Duke (1), 1986.

1v3 | 1-0, 1.000 | Higher seed scoring margin: +30.0 ppg

You'd think a 1v3 championship game would've happened more than once. For Duke fans, once might be enough, considering how soundly UNLV throttled them, 103-73, in the 1990 finals. The Blue Devils would get their revenge the following year, when they ruined UNLV's perfect season in the 1991 semifinals.

1v4 | 1-1, .500 | Higher seed scoring margin: +2.0 ppg

The two 1v4 championship games happened in successive years -- and they both involved a top-seeded Kentucky squad. In 1996, Kentucky took care of Syracuse, but the following year, the Wildcats were upset in overtime by fourth-seeded Arizona.

1v5 | 3-0, 1.000 | Higher seed scoring margin: +7.0 ppg

The three 1v5 finals matchups happened in the last 11 tourneys. Michigan State beat Florida in 2000, Maryland handled Indiana in 2002, and Duke foiled last year's classic near-miracle upset-bid by Butler. I still think that had Hayward made his last-second half-court heave, this matchup would've gone down as the best basketball game ever -- college, pro, high school or elementary school...truth or fiction (better even than Hickory's win over South Bend Central in *Hoosiers*).

1v6 | 1-1, .500 | Higher seed scoring margin: +3.0 ppg

If it weren't for Villanova's upset of Georgetown in 1985, Kansas could lay claim to springing the biggest championship upset of the modern tourney era. The Jayhawks beat top seed Oklahoma in 1988. Four years later, Michigan's Fab Five tried to duplicate the feat but were thumped by Duke.

1v8 | 0-1, .000 | Higher seed scoring margin: -2.0 ppg

In the first year of the modern tourney era, the championship game saw its most unlikely matchup -- and most surprising outcome. Eighth-seeded upstart Villanova toppled overwhelming favorite Georgetown, 66-64, playing a near flawless game that included 90% shooting in the second half.

2v3 | 3-2, .600 | Higher seed scoring margin: +1.2 ppg

Florida's 2006 win over second-seeded UCLA tightened this matchup, which, along with 1v2 final games, is the most popular championship seed pairing. The first three seed to beat a two seed in the finals was Syracuse, which knocked off Kansas in 2003. (Syracuse also holds the distinction of being one of only two champions that hadn't gone to the previous year's tourney; the other was Louisville in 1986.) The key to this matchup is scoring balance. The squad with the smallest percentage gap between its frontcourt and backcourt scoring has won all five games.

Matchup History: Florida (3) over UCLA (2), 2006. Connecticut (2) over Georgia Tech (3), 2004. Syracuse (3) over Kansas (2), 2003. Kentucky (2) over Utah (3), 1998. Duke (2) over Kansas (3), 1991.

3v3 | 1-1, .500 | Average point spread: +1.0 ppg

The only other like-seeded finals matchup of the 64-team era besides the five 1v1 tilts saw Michigan squeak by Seton Hall in overtime in 1989.

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Peter Tiernan has been using stats to analyze March Madness for 21 years. His insights into the NCAA basketball tournament can help you build a better bracket. Email him at bracketscience@comcast.net or visit bracketscience.com.