Sports

Photo of the Day | Basketball



A close up of an NCAA March Madness basketball. The UConn Huskies played the Syracuse Orange at Gampel Pavilion in Storrs, Conn. on March 23, 2026, winning with a final score of 98-45. PHOTO BY CONNOR SHARP, PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

ELLIOT' WEEKLY TIP-OFF:

INSIDE THE BRACKET, BREAKDOWNS OF THE SWEET SIXTEEN

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And then there was none.

The final perfect brackets have fallen after Tennessee upset Virginia on Sunday afternoon, but with upsets brewing, the anticipation could not be higher.

After four days of the tournament, we went from 64 teams to just 16. Teams are continuing to dance into the next round, and these upcoming matchups are some of the best.

On March 26, the West and South regions will play their matchups for a shot at the Elite Eight. Purdue will face the lowest seed remaining in the tournament, Texas, in San Jose, Calif. The Boilermakers won the Big Ten after beating top ranked Michigan and have continued their success into the tournament. They defeated Queens in the first round 104-71 and then UMiami 79-69 in the round of 32.

As for Texas, they qualified for the first four and had to defeat NC State before meeting up with BYU in the first round. They defeated the Cougars 79-71 despite AJ Dybantsa's 35 points. In the round of 32, the Longhorns took down Gonzaga 74-68 to pull off yet another upset. Their offense comes with all sorts of weapons with a different player leading in scoring in each game of the tournament so far. The versatility of the roster is one thing teams hate to matchup against since shutting down their offense has become much more difficult.

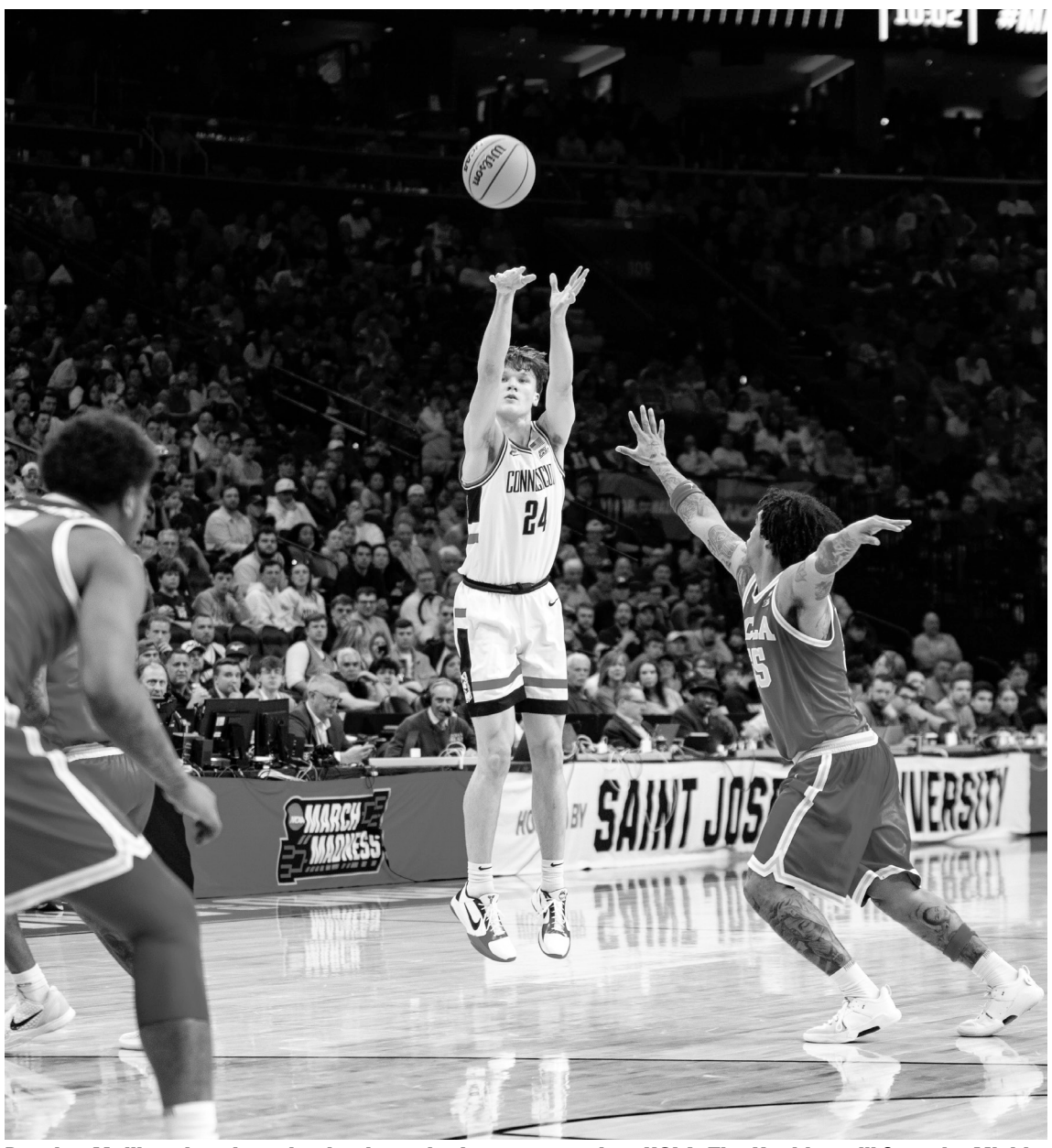
The biggest shocker in the tournament happened when Iowa took down the defending champion Florida in Sunday's round of 32 games. The Hawkeyes took the lead late thanks to an Alvaro Folgueiras clutch 3-pointer with 4.5 seconds left. The final minutes in the game went back and forth between the two after Iowa had a comfortable lead halfway through the second half. They were able to stay with the Gators and send the defending champions home knocking out the first one-seed of the tournament.

Their opponent will be Nebraska in a familiar Big Ten showdown. The two teams have split meetings this season, winning their respective home games. The Cornhuskers took down Troy and Vanderbilt so far in this tournament and are hoping to add rival Iowa to the list. Iowa won the first meeting at home 57-52 before losing the final game of the season on the road to Nebraska 75-84 in overtime. Fans should expect more of the same coming down to the wire in a tight matchup with the pressure of March and the tournament resting on players' shoulders.

Arkansas will face Arizona in a battle between two offensive heavy programs. The Razorbacks won the SEC tournament and are now averaging 96 points per game so far in this tournament. The Wildcats also won their conference tournament defeating Houston for the Big 12 crown. They defeated LIU and Utah State so far and are hoping to advance to the Elite Eight for the first time since 2022 where they lost to Houston. Expect an offensive heavy game with lots of points scored.

The nightcap on Thursday will be between Illinois and Houston. Both have cruised into the Sweet Sixteen and have not been tested so far in this tournament. The Cougars have won both their games by an impressive 31 points, and the Fighting Illini have won their games by an average of 28 points. With both these teams showing no signs of struggle so far, this matchup will be a good test when they face another dominant program.

On March 27, the second half of the Sweet Sixteen will take place with a slate of legendary programs taking the court.



Braylon Mullins shooting a basket in a winning game against UCLA. The Huskies will face the Michigan State Spartans on Friday. PHOTO BY MADISON HENDRICKS, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

St. John's will take on Duke in a bloodbath after both programs won their respective conference tournaments. The Red Storm defeated Northern Iowa comfortably in the first round before needing a buzzer beater layup to knock off Kansas in the round of 32. Dylan Darling was the hero for the Johnnies with the final second bucket being his only two points of the game. Rick Pitino's squad dispatched flawless defense against the Jayhawks, forcing turnovers as they struggled to inbound the ball and break the press.

The Blue Devils have had slower starts in both games this tournament after going down 11 against Siena in the first round. This marked the largest lead by any 16 seed over a one-seed at the half in tournament history. Duke eventually found their groove and defeated Siena by six. In the second round TCU gave the Blue Devils a run for their money in the first half with Duke only leading by four. Again, the second half team led by Cameron Boozer took flight and outscored the Horned Frogs by 19 in the following half.

These two legendary coaches meeting this early in the tournament is rare, but the east region has shown to be one of the toughest.

Perhaps the two most offensively dominant programs in the tournament will meet when Alabama takes on Michigan. This game might just have 200 points scored with Alabama averaging 90 so far and Michigan averaging 98. Alabama's defense has been slightly better than Michigan's holding teams to below 70. Both squads rely on scoring, which should make this one of the highest scoring games of the tournament.

Two more legendary coaches will meet in the east region when Tom Izzo and Dan Hurley's squads take the court.

Michigan State had a comfortable first-round win over North Dakota State before facing Louisville. Michigan State led the game for over 30 minutes, showing their dominance and consistency to keep the lead. This consistency was a problem UConn had for the first half against UCLA when they struggled to find their rhythm. Shots eventually started to fall for Alex Karaban and Braylon Mullins as they combined for 44 of UConn's 73. The Huskies are hoping for more shots to drop in their matchup with the Spartans as falling behind early could put them in a world of trouble.

The final game on display will be between Tennessee and Iowa State. The Volunteers defeated Miami OH in the first round comfortably before upsetting Virginia to knock out the final perfect bracket. The Vols have been led by Guard Ja'Kobi Gillespie, who has averaged 25 so far in this tournament and scored about a third of his teams' total points.

Iowa State faced a setback in the first half of the first round against Tennessee State when their All-American star, Joshua Jefferson, landed awkwardly on his left ankle in the opening minutes. Jefferson did not return and did not play in the next round against Kentucky. The Cyclones adjusted to this change and ended the first half 31-30 before exploding into the second half, scoring 51 points and beating the Wildcats 82-63.

Seasons will be on the line later this week with trips to the Elite Eight on the table. Sweet Sixteen matchups tip off, and the margin for error continues to dwindle. The final teams have shown they have what it takes to advance, but the madness is far from over.

This next weekend will show who the real title contenders are and if they will do what it takes to win.

What teams will continue to dance?