



Conference tournaments offer some great betting possibilities. The precursor to March Madness, the conference tournaments are like a really tasty appetizer before a good entrée. What's nice about the conference tournaments is that most of the teams playing against each other have already played twice, so a lot of information can be gathered from those two games. Also, you can guarantee max effort from the underdogs because it's win or go home. Both teams are in that situation, but the better team can overlook a lesser foe.

Last week I discussed halftime betting and why it could be profitable. Now, with conference tournaments, that is in play yet again. Some teams will have to win four games in four or five days to win their conference tournament. Teams who trail at halftime will have to play with maximum effort in order to climb back into the game. The frequency of fouling late in the game as a last resort could leave some totals a few points short.

A lot of times, the games are closer than the spread because of the "No Tomorrow" factor. A team that has been beaten by 20 twice already this season may cover a 12 or 13-point spread because they're playing with maximum focus and everybody wants to be Cinderella. On the flip side, for teams that will have a tomorrow, they're focused on conserving energy and slowing the game down. Being aware of situations and tournament formats is a good idea.

One of the hard parts of conference tournament betting is resisting the urge to bet on conferences that you aren't familiar with. These conferences can provide value, but you might as well be flipping coins if you don't know anything about either team.

Bigger conferences have tighter lines but you can watch the market for clues. Most of the big conferences play at neutral sites, so there's no home court advantage. The market will tell you who the better team is. Respected money will move these lines very quickly at open, so it's

important to be paying attention to where the money is coming in right from the start.

The nice thing about conference tournaments is that you can get a look at some of the mid-major teams that could have an impact during March Madness. Teams like VCU, Butler, Saint Louis, Wichita State, and the like. These are teams that are going to be trendy upset picks against bigger seeds at some point during the tournament. Isolating them as teams to play on against better competition or fade is advantageous.

Betting on the NBA at this stage in the season is rather futile. Teams are getting tired and aren't so much worried about each individual game as they are the big picture. Most of the teams know who is going to make the playoffs. Bad teams will get up for better opponents at home.

Getting a consistent effort level out of the NBA is a useless endeavor at this point. That's what makes betting postseason college basketball so attractive. You don't have to read between the lines to find out about effort. Both teams should come to play every night. Having a good showing in your conference tourney helps with geographic placement in March Madness. If you get to your conference championship game, you might be the #3 seed in the Midwest instead of having to go West. Better for the fans, for the players, for the boosters, and everybody involved.

If I had to give advice on how to bet conference tournaments, it would be to go with the half-by-half approach. Betting the full game allows too many intangibles to come into play, like foul trouble, an injury, or a coaching mismatch that you had previously glossed over. Teams who enter the tournament playing with confidence are more likely to have a good first half. Teams who aren't guaranteed bids to March Madness will play with more intensity in the first half and their effort level may wane if they are getting beat bad and it looks like they'll be destined for one of the other postseason tournaments.

Using a half-by-half approach allows you to adjust on the fly. Big leads tend to evaporate and are rarely held throughout the whole game. You can play on a lot of situations just by getting inside the heads of 20 year old kids. They're going to relax with a big lead. They're going to chuck three pointers when trailing. In the postseason, they are predictable.

Find a way to keep tabs on everything that's going on and your bankroll should grow over the next two weeks.