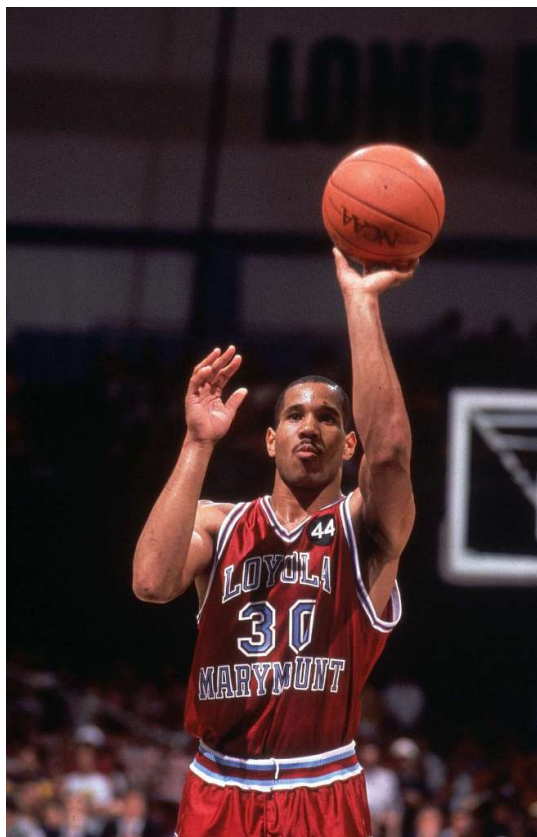


## A Very Sweet 16

Written by {ga=hermanfontenot}

Tuesday, March 23 2010 9:00 AM - Last Updated Saturday, March 27 2010 2:11 PM

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They're usually long out of the competition by the time the National Championship is decided, but it's the smaller schools that really give the NCAA Tournament its unique flavor. Like the old Indiana High School Basketball Championship before it was [ruined by classification](#), the Tournament is one-size-fits-all; everybody plays everybody, and a first-round win for a Hampton or a Weber State is as cherished as a sectional title to a cracker-box Hoosier high school. There is only one Champion, but each of the 64 teams in the bracket, big and small, has the opportunity to match skills with the best- and it's the opportunity that matters.

Since the Tournament expanded to 64 back in 1985 through this past weekend, twenty-three so-called mid-major schools have emerged from low-seeded obscurity to reach the Sweet 16. Five have reached the Elite 8, the doorstep of the Final Four. One has broken through that door and gotten all the way to the Final Four. Each of these stalwarts eventually ran into an opponent that was simply too big, too strong and too good to overcome; each earned glory in victory and in defeat. It's the opportunity that matters and each of these teams took advantage of their opportunities to the absolute fullest.

What are the ingredients for a mid-major run? Well, there's the obvious- good guard play. You need a guy who can score inside if you're serious about getting beyond a round or two deep- a guy like Calvary of Gonzaga, Gates of Kent State and Thomas of George Mason. You need good match-ups: Gonzaga's 1999 run, for example, kick-started in round one against a demoralized Minnesota team that was on its way to probation. You need the underdog's neutral-court advantage- or, in the case of Davidson in the 2008 sub-regional or George Mason in the '06 regional, a partisan home-court advantage. And you need some luck. But then again,

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so do the Champions.

Entries on the list meet two criteria to qualify for inclusion:

- They were a “low” seed going into the Tournament; 9<sup>th</sup> or lower. The 2006 Gonzaga and the 2007 Butler teams, for example, didn’t qualify because the former was a 3<sup>rd</sup>

seed, the latter a 5<sup>th</sup>

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- They hailed from one of the so-called “mid-major conferences”- i.e. any league besides the six BCS members, Mountain West, Conference USA and Atlantic 10. Obviously there is some fluidity in terms of conference affiliations and the mid-major designation. For example, Temple and Xavier of the A-10 can be considered major programs, while Fordham and St. Bonaventure can be considered mid-majors. And of course, the A-10 does fall below the [Red Line](#).

But in my thinking, no league that produces a #1 seed can really be considered “mid-major” and the A-10 has done so twice; Temple in 1988 and St. Joseph’s in 2004.

The list is distributed fairly evenly among college basketball’s more formidable mid-major leagues. The Missouri Valley and Mid-American Conferences lead the way with three entries apiece; the Horizon League, West Coast Conference, Southern Conference and Colonial Athletic Association each put two teams on the list; the Mid-Continent Conference AKA the Summit League has one, and one entry- the 1986 Cleveland State Vikings- hails from the defunct AMCU-8, whose former members are today scattered among four different leagues.

This year’s three mid-major Sweet 16 contenders- Northern Iowa, St. Mary’s and Cornell- are not included. Their stories aren’t over yet.

**16.) Southern Illinois, 2002:** It was the first year of the Tournament’s “pod” system and despite being the 11<sup>th</sup> seed in the East Regional the Salukies were ensconced in the friendly confines of upstate Chicago. They used their home-court advantage and strong performances by big man Jermaine Dearman and guard Kent Williams to surge into the Sweet 16 in impressive fashion. After beating Bobby Knight and Texas Tech handily in the first round SIU overcame a 19-point first-half deficit to shock 3<sup>rd</sup>

-seeded Georgia, 77-75. The ride came to an end in the Sweet 16 when 2

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-seeded Connecticut held the Salukies to 38.3 percent shooting and won easily, 71-59.

(Unless you count the Atlantic 10, the Missouri Valley is probably the most consistent mid-major league in the country. Eight of the Valley's ten teams- Indiana State, Bradley, Illinois State, Southern Illinois, Northern Iowa, Southwest Missouri State, Creighton and Wichita State- have won at least one Tournament game as a conference member since 1985, and five of those teams have reached the Sweet 16. From 1999-2007 the Valley annually got multiple teams in the Tournament. That's the *current* resume. The historical resume is a ways below.

**15.) Miami (OH), 1999:** The 10<sup>th</sup>-seeded Red Hawks took flight on the wings of all-everything swingman Wally Szczerbiak. The MAC Player of the Year tallied 43 of his team's 58 points in a one-point opening round win over 7<sup>th</sup>-seeded Washington and added 24 more as Miami shocked 2

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-seeded Utah, the national runner-up the year before. A 58-43 loss to 2

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-seeded Kentucky in the Sweet 16 didn't erase the luster of Wally World's performance- or that of his coach. Charlie Coles had

[nearly died at courtside](#)

of a heart attack during the 1998 MAC Tournament. A year later, the old man had his team in the Sweet 16.

(The 1999 Miami team is the last at-large invitee out of the Mid-American Conference to date. The MAC has sent multiple teams to the Tournament five times since it expanded to 64, in 1985, '86, '95, '98 and '99. The last three at-large teams- MiamiMichigan in '98 and Miami in '99- won at least their opening-round games. Six MAC members have won Tournament games since 1985- Kent State, Ohio, Ball State and the three directional Michigan schools. By the way, the University of Akron has *never* won an NCAA Tournament game. Just wanted to throw that out there.)

**14.) Butler, 2003:** A 25-5 regular-season record wasn't good enough to get the Bulldogs into the 2002 Tournament, but they made up for the snub with a superb run the following year as a 12<sup>th</sup> seed. Brandon Miller's jumper with 6.2 seconds left lifted Butler past 5<sup>th</sup>-seeded Mississippi State in the first round, 47-46, and two days later Darnell Archey hit on 8-of-9 from downtown as the Bulldogs sent 4

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-seeded Louisville home, 79-71. In the Sweet 16 Oklahoma's size and strength proved insurmountable; the Sooners out-rebounded the Bulldogs 37-20 and cruised to a 65-54 victory. Nevertheless the snubs were over for Butler, which has become one of the nation's model mid-major programs.

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(Butler has been to the Sweet 16 three times since 2003, but the Bulldogs spent a long time in the wilderness before their recent oasis of success. Prior to its first-round victory over Wake Forest in 2001, Butler's last NCAA Tournament triumph came in 1962. The Bulldogs went thirty-five years without a bid from 1962 to 1997. For at least two generations Butler was at best the fourth name in Indiana basketball behind IU, Purdue and Notre Dame. Now they've made it to the Sweet 16 more times since 2003 than any other school in that hoops-crazed state.)

**13.) Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2005:** Bruce Pearl's Panthers had played in only one NCAA Tournament in school history, but they performed like seasoned veterans in 2005. Slotted as a 12<sup>th</sup> seed, the Panthers led 5<sup>th</sup>-seeded Alabama virtually the entire way and rolled to an 83-73 victory over the Tide in round one. They kept right on rolling two days later, getting 23 points from forward Joah Tucker in an 83-75 triumph over 4<sup>th</sup>

-seeded Boston College. But once again a mid-major run ended at the hands of a top seed, as eventual runner-up Illinois took command early in the second half and knocked off the Panthers, 77-63.

(The Horizon League has proven to be one of the most consistent mid-majors over the last decade. The conference has sent at least one team to the second round ten times in the last thirteen years and every year since 2005. Butler is the bellwether, but Cleveland State, Detroit and Wisconsin-Milwaukee have also stepped up with wins since 1998. Only one current Horizon member still seeks its first Tournament appearance, let alone win: Youngstown State.

Speaking randomly here, shouldn't the four Northeast Ohio Division I hoop programs put together some kind of in-season series along the lines of Philadelphia's Big Five? Maybe a little pre-Christmas Tourney at the Q?)

**12.) Valparaiso, 1998:** The 13<sup>th</sup>-seeded Crusaders used one of the most iconic shots in Tournament history to advance in the first round, when Bryce Drew, son of head coach Homer Drew, [knocked down a three-pointer at the buzzer](#) to topple 4<sup>th</sup>-seeded Ole Miss, 70-69. Valparaiso continued to roll in the second round, getting 22 points from Drew to overcome 12<sup>th</sup>

-seeded Florida State, 83-77 in overtime. They played well in the Sweet 16 against 8<sup>th</sup>

-seeded Rhode Island, but the brilliant Ram guard tandem of Tyson Wheeler and Cuttino Mobley proved too much as the Crusaders fell, 74-68.

(The cloying Tournament theme song "One Shining Moment" is entirely appropriate when it comes to Valparaiso. The Crusaders have made seven appearances in March Madness. In 1998 they reached the Sweet 16; in their other six appearances they're 0-6, losing by an average margin of twenty-three points.)

**11.) Bradley, 2006:** Bradley's basketball history is a long and distinguished one, and in '06 the

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Braves gave their fans their biggest thrill since the team was competing for National Championships in the early '50s. Seeded a modest 13<sup>th</sup>, the Braves looked like anything but an underdog in the first round against Kansas, taking charge with a 13-0 half-spanning run and ousting the 4<sup>th</sup>

-seeded Jayhawks, 77-73. Two days later, with Patrick O'Bryant banging around for 28 points and 7 rebounds, they built a fourteen-point second-half lead and withstood a Pitt rally to overcome the 5<sup>th</sup>

-seeded Panthers, 72-66. The run ended in the Sweet 16 when top-seeded Memphis cracked open a tie game late in the first half and beat the Braves going away, 80-64.

(It's probably a bit of an injustice to label the Missouri Valley Conference as a "mid-major." Very few leagues have the basketball lineage and tradition of the Valley; from Bradley's 1950 NIT and NCAA finalist, to Cincinnati's back-to-back National Champions of the early '60s, to Drake [nearly upsetting Alcindor and UCLA](#)

in the '69 Final Four, to

[Larry Bird and Indiana State](#)

, all the way up to the present-day heroics of Northern Iowa. There are bigger and more prestigious conferences on the national landscape, but when it comes to the historical fabric of this game, the Valley takes a backseat to virtually no one.)

**10.) Chattanooga, 1997:** The 14<sup>th</sup>-seeded Moccasins didn't waste any time with introductions in the first round of the '97 Tournament against 3<sup>rd</sup>-seeded Georgia, blowing out to a 20-2 lead and outlasting the Bulldogs, 73-70. Then they took a giant second step. Angered by

[perceived pre-game disrespect](#)

on the part of 6<sup>th</sup>

-seeded Illinois, Chattanooga overcame a seven-point second half deficit and pulled away late to shock the Illini, 75-63. A loss to Providence ended their season, but not before the Moccasins had become the second and last 14<sup>th</sup>

seed to reach the Sweet 16.

(Chattanooga and Davidson have brought glory to the Southern Conference for winning in the NCAA Tournament; two other schools have brought glory to the conference for losing. In 1989 then-member East Tennessee State, led by the diminutive point guard [Keith "Mister" Jennings](#) nearly became the first 16<sup>th</sup>

seed to win a first-round game, leading Oklahoma by seventeen at one point before falling, 72-71. Seven years later 16<sup>th</sup>

-seeded Western Carolina took top-seeded Purdue down to the very last shot of the game before succumbing, 73-71.)

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**9.) Richmond, 1988:** The Spiders are the Tournament's model giant-killer- they've won games as a 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> seed- but they made their longest run in 1988 as a 13<sup>th</sup> seed. Once again Indiana was the foil in round one, as Dick Tarrant's team used a balanced attack (four players in double figures) to hold off the 4<sup>th</sup>

-seeded Hoosiers, 72-69. In the second round the Spiders used Peter Woolfolk's 27 points and stifling defense to surprise 5<sup>th</sup>

-seeded Georgia Tech, 59-55. Richmond's next assignment was a Sweet 16 showdown with top-ranked Temple. It was too tall of an order. The Spiders hung around for a while, trailing by only six at half, but the Owls had too much Mark Macon (24 points) and too much defense for a comeback. Temple pulled away in the second half to end Richmond's dream run, 69-47.

(Very few Goliaths have proven more vulnerable to the slingshots and jump shots of would-be David's than Indiana. Since 1986 the Hoosiers have lost first-round games to, among others, Cleveland State, Richmond, Pepperdine and Kent State. Other famed mid-major multi-victims include Arizona, downed by 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> seeds in 1992-93, South Carolina, downed by 15<sup>th</sup> seeds in 1997-98, and of course, Kansas.) and 14

**8.) Ball State, 1990:** The 12<sup>th</sup>-seeded Cardinals got their 1990 run off to a dramatic start in the first round against 5<sup>th</sup>-seeded Oregon State when Parris McCurdy converted a three-point play with no time remaining to top the Beavers, 54-53. The Cardinals then jumped out to a huge lead over 4<sup>th</sup>-seeded Louisville in the second round before hanging on to win, 62-60. Top-ranked UNLV was next in the Sweet 16, and no one played the eventual National Champion Runnin' Rebels closer. Going toe-to-toe with Larry Johnson, Stacey Augmon and Co., muscling and, [dunking](#) on even terms, the Cardinals trailed the Rebels 69-67 and had a chance to tie or win in the last seconds before a botched lob pass sent them down to defeat.

(That Ball State team could also talk trash with the voluble Rebels. The teams woofed all night and continued their chatter after the buzzer with a heated exchange in the bowels of the Oakland Coliseum Arena. Cardinal coach Dick Hunsaker was infuriated with the conduct of the Rebels, [labeling them](#) "a bunch of thugs." But his own team gave as good as it got. In the first round against Oregon State the Cardinal trash-talk so unnerved Beaver All-American Gary Payton-who shot 3-of-12 and fouled out- that one of the game's legendary mouths complained to the officials about it.

And their performance against UNLV still stands as one of the most valiant by a mid-major in the history of the modern Tournament. The Runnin' Rebels weren't your garden-variety Champion. Three of their starters- Larry Johnson, Stacey Augmon and Greg Anthony- were first-round NBA draftees. UNLV beat its five other 1990 Tournament opponents by an average

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of twenty-two points, and its 103-73 burial of Duke still stands as the greatest rout in title-game history. The Rebels were an all-timer of a college hoops team. But Ball State of the Mid-American Conference had them on the ropes.)

**7.) Southwest Missouri State, 1999:** It wasn't just that the 12<sup>th</sup>-seeded Bears reached the Sweet 16; it was the manner in which they got there, by dominating a pair of schools from college basketball's sexier set. They completely stymied 5

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-seeded Wisconsin in the first round, holding the Badgers to 25.5 percent shooting and a microscopic 32 points in an easy win. Southwest Missouri then did itself one better in the second round, overwhelming 4

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-seeded Tennessee, 81-51. Alas, top-ranked Duke was made of sterner stuff than the Badgers and Volunteers; the Blue Devils broke it open in the second half and cruised to a 78-61 decision.

(The Bears now reside in the Missouri Valley Conference, but they're alum of the old Association of Mid-Continent Universities, a league with a nice little tradition of its own. Five of the eight original AMCU-8 members- Cleveland State, Valparaiso, Wisconsin-Green Bay, Northern Iowa and Southwest Missouri State- have won NCAA Tournament games. Speaking of Cleveland State...)

**6.) Cleveland State, 1986:** Head coach Kevin Mackey sprang his full-court, Run 'n Stun attack on Indiana and his 14<sup>th</sup>-seeded Vikings stunned the 3<sup>rd</sup>-seeded Hoosiers in the opening round, 83-79. It was the first win ever by a 14-seed, albeit by a few hours (Arkansas-Little Rock took down Notre Dame the same day.) Mackey then sprang the Mouse, and Kenny McFadden nibbled and scampered for 23 in another upset, this time of 6

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-seeded St. Joseph's in round two. Facing David Robinson and the Naval Academy in perhaps the Tournament's most unlikely Sweet 16 pairing, Cleveland State led by as many as five late in the second half. But the Admiral banked in a follow shot with six seconds left and the Midshipmen moved on in a thriller, 71-70. The Vikings would have played number one-ranked Duke in the East Regional Final had they hung on against Navy.

(The Navy game has long stung in the craws of Cleveland State's players, who know they let the opportunity of a lifetime- a crack at the nation's number-one team with the Final Four in the balance- slip through their fingers. Kevin Mackey [believed it was a mistake](#) to bring the team back to Cleveland before the Sweet 16- the players had become local celebrities and the constant attention blunted their finely honed edge.

[Point guard Shawn Hood opined](#)

that the Vikings almost focused too much on David Robinson and underestimated the Admiral's solid supporting cast. For most of the teams on this list there's a sense of closure; they got as

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far as they possibly could and the regrets are few and far between. For Cleveland State, however, there is the bittersweet sensation: they got further than anyone thought they might... but not as far as they believed they should have.)

**5.) Kent State, 2002:** A first-round winner as a 13<sup>th</sup> seed in 2001, the now 10<sup>th</sup>-seeded Flashes used experience, superior guard play and the x-factor of Antonio Gates to roll impressively to the Elite 8. They dominated 7

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-seeded Oklahoma State and 2

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-seeded Alabama in the opening rounds, jumping to double-digit first-half leads and winning both games going away. Then, led by the brilliant Trevor Huffman, they ground past Pitt in an overtime classic to move on to the South Regional Final. Awaiting them was a familiar foe- Indiana, whom Kent had upset in the first round in 2001. The Hoosiers remembered that loss very well and were determined to avenge it. They swished their first eight three-point attempts, an incredible 15-of-19 on the night, and ended Kent's dream ride one game short of the Final Four, 81-69.

(I can remember being pleased when Indiana shocked Duke in the South Semifinals just before the Flashes took the floor with Pitt. The Blue Devils were top-ranked and as good of a defender as Demetric Shaw was, I had "some" doubts about his ability to handle Mike Dunleavy. Kent had dominated Indiana down the stretch in the 2001 Tournament, and most of the cast of both teams were back for the sequel. I knew Kent could beat Indiana because I'd seen them do it. But I'd seen them do it on a neutral floor with a crowd that favored the underdog by instinct. I hadn't seen them do it on the road.

And the 2002 South Regional Final was a road game for Kent. Rupp Arena was partisan and packed with red-clad Hoosiers and their team, already hyped by the occasion, fed off their emotion. I'd also underestimated the psychological backlash of Kent's victory over the Hoosiers the year before. The Flashes had humiliated proud- well, formerly proud- Indiana, and you don't wound the pride of the prideful without consequences. Kent just wasn't meant to win that game.)

**4.) Gonzaga, 1999:** The 10<sup>th</sup>-seeded Bulldogs burst onto the national scene in '99 with a smooth backcourt of Matt Santangelo and Richie Frahm and a skilled inside force in Casey Calvary. Going inside and out, they defeated 7

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Minnesota in the first round then put themselves on the map with an 82-74 whipping of 2

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-seeded Stanford in the second. They kept themselves there in the Sweet 16 against 6

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-seeded Florida as Calvary's last-second

[put-back won it for the Zags, 73-72](#)

. Next up was top-seeded Connecticut with the Final Four at stake. Although Gonzaga performed valiantly the Huskies, on their way to the title, were too much. Connecticut survived a series of Bulldog rallies late to hang on, 67-62. Despite all their success in the decade since, 1999 represents Gonzaga's only appearance in the Elite 8.

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(Calvary didn't make his only appearance in the circle of game-winning Tournament players. Two years later, his put-back with seconds to go lifted the 12<sup>th</sup>-seeded Bulldogs past 5<sup>th</sup>-seeded Virginia in the first round. In consecutive years from 1999-2001 Gonzaga made it at least to the Sweet 16 as a 10

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seeds along the way. That's giant-killing.

By the way, it didn't take very long for the Zags to be knocked off the perch they'd built for themselves. In 2002 they were awarded the 6<sup>th</sup> seed in the West- a reward for the 29-3 record they'd built pummeling the competition in the West Coast Conference. Some of the players and coaches on that team were open in their protestations that the 6

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spot was beneath them. In the first round the Zags were trucked by 11

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seeded Wyoming. Maybe they weren't under-seeded after all.)

**3.) Loyola Marymount, 1990:** Loyola's Elite 8 drive was fueled by unthinkable tragedy.

All-American big man Hank Gathers collapsed and died of a heart attack during a conference tournament game, and his teammates, especially Hank's fellow Philadelphian Bo Kimble, responded with one of March's most memorable runs. Their 149-115 second-round annihilation of defending National Champion Michigan, featuring 21 three-pointers, 33 assists and 84 second-half points, was the most sensational offensive exhibition in Tournament history. After a narrow victory over 7<sup>th</sup>-seeded Alabama in West Regional Semis, Loyola was only one win from the Final Four. But UNLV ended the Cinderella story with a thud, running the Lions off the floor in the West Regional Final, 131-101.

(For a small huddle of Jesuit schools, none with an enrollment of over 8,972, the West Coast Conference has quite a basketball tradition. San Francisco won back-to-back titles behind Bill Russell in 1955-56, while six of the WCC's eight members- Gonzaga, St. Mary's, Santa Clara, Pepperdine, Loyola Marymount and San Diego- have won Tournament games since 1985.)

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**2.) Davidson, 2008:** Usually a mid-major run ends at the hands of an opponent that has all the match-up answers in size, speed and talent. And so it went for Davidson in 2008. But no one ever really had an answer for Stephen Curry, who was otherworldly in picking up the 10<sup>th</sup>

-seeded Wildcats and carrying them within an eyelash of the Final Four. Curry's 40 points- 30 in the second half- were the catalyst in a first-round upset of 7<sup>th</sup>

-seeded Gonzaga, and his 25 second-half points triggered a rally from 17 down and [a second-round win over 2<sup>nd</sup>](#)

[-seeded Georgetown](#)

. Curry kept firing in the Sweet 16, and his 33 points and stiff team defense led the Wildcats to a 73-56 rout of 3<sup>rd</sup>

-seeded Wisconsin. Top-seeded Kansas couldn't stop Curry either, but they did contain him with 25 points on 9-of-25 shooting, and closed out the game with a 12-6 run to win narrowly, 59-57.

(There was an added twist of the knife to Davidson's Regional Final loss. Had they hung on against Kansas, the Wildcats would have gone on to a Final Four confrontation with in-state behemoth North Carolina. Old North State bragging rights would have been at stake... not to mention a long-awaited opportunity for revenge. Twice in a row, in 1968 and '69, Davidson reached the final eight of the NCAA Tournament. Both times they were knocked out by North Carolina.)

**1.) George Mason, 2006:** Prior to '06 every mid-major Tournament run had ended short of the Final Four. That year George Mason took the next step- and did it by beating some of the biggest face cards in the college basketball deck. Widely regarded as an undeserving at-large as the fracas opened; the 11<sup>th</sup>-seeded Patriots proved their worth in a hurry dominating 6<sup>th</sup>-seeded Michigan State, 75-65. In the second round George Mason fell behind 3<sup>rd</sup>

-seeded North Carolina 16-2 but came back to stun the Tarheels, 65-60. The East Regionals were in the Verizon Center in Washington, just a half-hour from GMU's campus, and the Patriots made themselves at home. They easily defeated 7<sup>th</sup>

-seeded Wichita State in the Sweet 16, faced top-ranked Connecticut in the Elite 8- and this time, the glass slipper fit perfectly. Trailing by as many as twelve in the first half, [Mason rallied to shock the Huskies in overtime, 86-84](#)

, and punch its ticket to the Final Four. Eventual Champion Florida ended their season in the semifinals, but not before the Patriots had become the first bona-fide mid-major to reach the biggest stage since the Tournament expanded to 64 teams.

(Mason may have lost fairly decisively to that great Florida team, but the Patriots still fared better than the other low-seed mid-major that reached the Final Four since seeding began. In 1979 the Penn Quakers took the East Regional title as a 9<sup>th</sup> North Carolina and Syracuse along

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the way, and headed to Salt Lake City to take on Magic Johnson, Greg Kelsner and Michigan State. The Spartans jumped out to a 38-8 first-half lead on the way to a 101-67 demolition that was every bit as lopsided as the final score would indicate. Magic's line that night: 29 points, 10 rebounds, 10 assists. There weren't any guys like that in the Ivy League.)

And through the first weekend of this topsy-turvy '10 Tourney- the best in quite a while, if I do say so myself- the smaller fry have once again proven themselves more than capable of performing on the big stage. Three of them will dance into the Tournament's second weekend wearing glass slippers. The 9<sup>th</sup> seeded Northern Iowa Panthers are in the Sweet 16 on the heels of their upset of top-ranked Kansas. The 10<sup>th</sup> seeded St. Mary's Gaels flew all the way to Rhode Island and ambushed Eastern foes Richmond and Villanova to qualify for the regional rounds. And 12<sup>th</sup>

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seeded Cornell dominated the 4

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seeds in its region to become the first Ivy League school since those '79 Penn Quakers to advance beyond the opening weekend.

It's highly unlikely that any of these three David's will slay Goliaths all the way to the National Championship. It's possible that none of them will even survive to the Elite 8. But that's the beauty of the NCAA Tournament. There may only be one Champion. In March, you don't have to win it all to be a winner. Just ask any fan of one of those smaller schools that earned their opportunity in March- and ran with it.