



The 2011 NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament is still a week or so away, but STO's Greatest NCAA Cinderellas Tournament is well underway, with one round already in the books. It started with 32 of the most memorable dark horse teams from the past 32 years competing for the right to be called March's Most Miraculous. Your votes have now cut the field in half, as we're down to the Sweet Sixteen. So, what happens when every team in a bracket is a pesky, relentless overachiever? Are there really any upsets when each match-up features a pair of upset specialists? Do local legends Cleveland State and Kent State deserve to see another day? Time to find out. Round 2 of the Cinderella Bracket is here.

Again, the word "upset" is a bit of relative term when you're talking about two Cinderella schools meeting each other outside the limitations of time and space. But still, there were some surprises in Round One of the brackets. The biggest came from the Dark Horse Regional, where 7-seed Chattanooga (1997) snuck by 2-seed LSU (1986). A few 5-seeds advanced, as well, with Davidson (2008) beating Temple (2001) and the aforementioned Kent (2002) and CSU (1986) getting the local love over 4-seeds Xavier (2004) and Boston College (1994). This brings us to our eight Sweet Sixteen match-ups, and suffice it to say, voting for the more impressive Cinderella story is going to be a good bit tougher this time around.

In case you're late to the party, the teams selected for this tournament only included schools that played in the modern seeding era, 1979-2010. Each team's been given a special seeding for this fake tournament (based on how far they advanced on their Cinderella runs), but their original real-life seedings are also indicated.

Greatest Cinderellas of the NCAA Tournament: Round 2 Dark Horse Regional



(1) North Carolina State 1983

vs

(5) Davidson 2008

Match-Up: NC State had no problem bouncing their first round opponents Bradley, but they've got a much tougher test awaiting them in Steph Curry and Davidson. While the Wolfpack are one of three teams in this tournament who went all the way to a National Title on their Cinderella run, they are still an ACC school, and that recruiting advantage might lose them sympathy points when it comes to a battle of fairy tale vs. fairy tale. Even so, Davidson's Elite Eight appearance isn't likely to be remembered 20 years from now, while NC State's victory over Phi Slamma Jamma is etched in gold.

North Carolina State 1983

1983 - Seed: #6 / Finish: National Champion

Cinderella Bracket: def, Bradley (2006) in Round One.

Jim Valvano's "Cardiac Pack" nearly lost to #11 Pepperdine in Round 1 and narrowly edged #3 Utah and #1 Virginia by one point each. But it was Lorenzo Charles' buzzer beater over #1 Houston (and the ensuing pandemonium) that has remained an indelible moment in NCAA history.

Davidson 2008

2008 - Seed: #10 / Finish: Elite Eight

Cinderella Bracket: def. Temple (2001) in Round One.

The Southern Conference champs had lost 6 straight NCAA tourney games dating back nearly 40 years. But that was before Stephen Curry came along. The sophomore put on a show for the ages as Davidson bounced #7 Gonzaga, #2 Georgetown, and #3 Wisconsin before losing to #1 Kansas in an absolute nail biter, 59-57.



(3) Dayton 1984

vs

(7) UT-Chattanooga 1997

Match-Up: The Mocs of Chattanooga stunned the 2-seed LSU Tigers of 1986 (by a few votes) in arguably a bigger upset than the two they pulled off in real life back in the 1997 tourney. Obviously, people recognize the considerable Cinderella resume of any school that wins two games as a #14 seed. It's only been done twice, after all. And fittingly, if Chattanooga manages to take down the '84 Flyers here, they'll be the lowest seed to win two games in this Fantasy Bracket, as well. Can't stop the Mocs!

Dayton 1984

1984 - Seed: #10 / Finish: Elite Eight

Cinderella Bracket: def. Miami of Ohio (1999) in Round One.

Having already ousted #7 LSU, the Flyers became the talk of the tournament when Roosevelt Chapman dropped 41 points in a 89-85 win over #2 Oklahoma. Dayton beat #6 Washington, as well, before running into Patrick Ewing and Georgetown.

Tennessee-Chattanooga 1997

1997 - Seed: #14 / Finish: Sweet Sixteen

Cinderella Bracket: def. LSU (1986) in Round One.

Behind the skills of Johnny Taylor, Southern Conference champion Chattanooga upended #3 Georgia and #6 Illinois, joining the '86 Cleveland State Vikings as the only #14 seed to make the round of 16.

Underdog Regional



(1) Villanova 1985

vs

(5) Cleveland State 1986

Match-Up: Well, this certainly ought to be interesting. Villanova coach Rollie Massimino eventually wound up at Cleveland State, of course, for a less than memorable tenure as Vikings coach. He got that job mostly on the basis of what he did with this amazing Nova team in '85. How can you vote against them? They beat two #2 seeds and two #1 seeds on their way to the National Championship. But then again, if we're judging on miraculousness, does a title run by an 8-seed necessarily beat a Sweet Sixteen run by a 14-seed? CSU should really be a long shot here, but if they'd managed to get that last bucket against Navy, you'd have more reason to proudly vote with a local bias.

Villanova 1985

1985 - Seed: #8 / Finish: National Champion

Cinderella Bracket: def. Milwaukee (2005) in Round One.

Much like NC State two years earlier, Nova's miracle run began with a squeaker first round win (51-49 over Dayton). From there, Rollie Massimino's boys ran off an incredible string of upsets, eliminating #1 Michigan, #5 Maryland, #2 NC, #2 Memphis State, and finally and most famously, Patrick Ewing and #1 Georgetown.

Cleveland State 1986

1986 - Seed: #14 / Finish: Sweet Sixteen

Cinderella Bracket: def. Xavier (2004) in Round One.

For Clevelanders, this legendary CSU squad is practically synonymous with the word Cinderella. Making their NCAA tourney debut, Kevin Mackey's Summit League champs became the first #14 seed to reach the Sweet Sixteen, knocking off Bob Knight's #3 Indiana Hoosiers and #6 St. Johns. In the end, only an admiral could stop the Vikings (barely), as David Robinson and Navy prevailed 71-70 in round three.





Match-Up: This is another brutal decision to have to make so early in the tournament. Somebody's emotional run is going to be cut short this time, so you have to decide-- under the circumstances, which Cinderella showed more grit against incredible odds? With their coach mourning the loss of his son, Providence advanced all the way to the Final Four in '87. But they were still a #6 seed. Loyola Marymount, meanwhile, was a smalltime #11 seed that had just watched its best player perish tragically just a week before the tournament began. Remember Bo Kimble shooting free-throws left-handed to honor his late friend Hank Gathers? Remember the Lions racing up and down the floor and laying waste to mighty Michigan? Awfully hard to vote against that squad.

Providence 1987

1987 - Seed: #6 / Finish: Final Four

Cinderella Bracket: def. UAB (2004) in Round One.

The best Cinderellas pull at the heart strings, and the run Providence made following the death of coach Rick Pitino's infant son was extremely emotional. Led by guard Billy Donovan, the Friars blew out #2 Alabama and #1 Georgetown before falling to #2 Syracuse at the Louisiana Superdome.

Loyola Marymount 1990

1990 - Seed: #11 / Finish: Elite Eight

Cinderella Bracket: def. Lamar (1980) in Round One.

In one of the most emotional storylines not just in the tournament but all sports history, Paul Westhead's high-octane Lions overcame the tragic death of star Hank Gathers to make an astounding postseason run, crushing #6 New Mexico State and #3 Michigan, and nipping #7 Alabama. Bo Kimble and his teammates ran out of magic against #1 UNLV, but their story still inspires people 20 years later.

Longshot Regional



(1) Butler 2010

vs

(5) Kent State 2002

Match-up: Much like the Nova-CSU game, this will likely come down to a matter of rationality vs local bias. There's no denying that Kent State's Elite Eight run in '02 was one of the most impressive of the last decade, and certainly the greatest achievement ever for a MAC basketball team. And yes, as a #10 seed, they were easily more of a longshot than the Bulldogs. But when you stop and realize that a Horizon League school was very nearly crowned college basketball's National Champion, it's hard to say they're anything but the favorite in a Cinderella tournament.

Butler 2010

2010 - Seed: #5 / Finish: Finals Runner-Up

Cinderella Bracket: def. Richmond (1988) in Round One.

With a 28-4 record, the Bulldogs were given a decent #5 seed, but they were still a Horizon League school looking up at a glass ceiling. Consider the glass shattered. Butler took down #1 Syracuse, #2 Kansas State, and #5 Michigan State before coming one buzzer beater short of what would have been a monumental National Championship win in their own backyard of

Indianapolis.

Kent State 2002

2002 - Seed: #10 / Finish: Elite Eight

Cinderella Bracket: def. Boston College (1994) in Round One.

If not for a ridiculous barrage of Indiana three-pointers, the Golden Flashes would have likely beaten George Mason to the punch as a mid-major in the Final Four. Stan Heath's squad, led by a sure handed forward named Antonio Gates, rolled past #7 Oklahoma State, #2 Alabama, and #3 Pitt, putting together the greatest postseason run ever by a Mid-American Conference team. They fought the Hoosiers tooth and nail, as well, but fell to the #5 seed 81-69 in the round of eight.



(2) Virginia 1984

vs

(3) Penn 1979

Match-Up: Unlike LSU '86, Virginia '84 survived to the second round of the Cinderella bracket despite being a major conference program up against a scrappy Northern Iowa squad. It's deserving, too, since the Cavaliers made their unlikely '84 run the year AFTER their superstar

Ralph Sampson went pro. Meanwhile, the oldest team in the bracket, Penn '79, held on against the ever-popular Valpo '98, setting up a match-up of two Final Four teams. When you look at both teams' row of wins, it's almost a toss-up. But as a 9-seed out of the Ivy League, my money's gotta go on the Quakers.

Virginia 1984

1984 - Seed: #7 / Finish: Final Four

Cinderella Bracket: def. Northern Iowa (2010) in Round One.

Everyone remembers the classic '84 Final between Houston and Georgetown, but the Cavaliers (who had finished just sixth in the ACC) came one basket away from beating Phi Slamma Jamma and playing Georgetown themselves. Team captain Rick Carlisle helped lead Virginia past #2 Arkansas, #3 Syracuse, and #4 Indiana.

Pennsylvania 1979

1979 - Seed: #9 / Finish: Final Four

Cinderella Bracket: def. Valparaiso (1998) in Round One.

In a legendary tournament that ushered in the current seeding system and saw Magic and Bird ignite their rivalry, the amazing run by Pennsylvania gets overlooked. The Ivy League champs took out #1 North Carolina, #4 Syracuse, and #10 St. Johns (a Cinderella in their own right). But Magic Johnson and Michigan State sent the Quakers home in a 101-67 semi-final rout.

Sleeper Regional





(1) Kansas 1988

vs

(4) Gonzaga 1999

Match-up: Since both of these schools have been perennial powers in the 21st century, it's a bit hard to picture them as underdogs deserving of the all-time Cinderella crown. But you gotta look at these teams within the year they represent and the level they reached. Kansas-- an unranked team running the gauntlet to the National Title. Gonzaga-- a virtual unknown advancing to the Elite Eight. A championship and a return to greatness is hard to overlook when you're talking fairy tales. That's how any good Disney movie is supposed to end, anyway. But Gonzaga may have accomplished something greater-- they built a whole program on the foundation of that 1999 season. In other words, which do you prefer? A comeback story or a coming-of-age tale?

Kansas 1988

1988 - Seed: #6 / Finish: National Champion

Cinderella Bracket: def. Cornell (2010) in Round One.

The Jayhawks are no strangers to NCAA success, but in 1988, they were unranked heading into the Dance. Thanks to Danny Manning and a bit of an easy early draw, though, Larry Brown's crew got on a historic roll. They beat #4 Kansas State in the quarterfinals, took out #2 Duke in the semis, and bested #1 Oklahoma in an epic, inner-conference Championship Game stunner in Kansas City, 83-79.

Gonzaga 1999

1999 - Seed: #10 / Finish: Elite Eight

Cinderella Bracket: def. Missouri (2002) in Round One.

Before 1999, Gonzaga was known as the alma mater of John Stockton, and that's about it. Today, they're a perennial postseason threat, winning at least one tournament game 9 of the last 12 years. It all started in '99, when the upstart Bulldogs whipped #7 Minnesota, #2 Stanford, and #6 Florida before losing a heartbreaker to top seed and eventual champ Connecticut.



(2) George Mason 2006

vs

(3) Wisconsin 2000

Match-up: With all due respect to the Badgers, it's hard to say any Big Ten school could ever snugly wear the Cinderella slipper. If you make the Big Dance out of the Big Ten, you've played against elite competition and shown your worth. If you play in the Colonial Athletic, meanwhile, you understand what it's like to be the overlooked, overworked younger sister. Other schools have made equally impressive runs, but when it comes to schools from the truly obscure corners of college basketball, it's hard to say anybody pulled off a more shocking feat than the '86 George Mason Patriots.

George Mason 2006

2006 - Seed: #11 / Finish: Final Four

Cinderella Bracket: def. Ball State (1990) in Round One.

Jim Larranaga's club hadn't even won the Colonial Athletic conference title (they lost to Hofstra). And when they beat #6 Michigan State, most people still had no clue where George Mason was even located (Fairfax, VA). After the Patriots eliminated #3 North Carolina and #1 Connecticut to reach the Final Four, however, their status was sealed as all-time Cinderella

legends.

Wisconsin 2000

2000 - Seed: #8 / Finish: Final Four

Cinderella Bracket: def. Nevada (2004) in Round One.

Both the Badgers and North Carolina reached the Final Four as #8 seeds in 2000, but while NC was simply finally living up to its preseason expectations, Wisconsin had never been ranked all year. They finished sixth in the Big Ten and barely made the Dance at 18-14, and yet they somehow managed to extinguish #1 Arizona, #4 LSU, and #6 Purdue. Eventual champs Michigan State finally stopped them in the semis.