

2026 NCAA Basketball Pool - Opening Notes

There were 454 entries this year, slightly down from last year's total of 472.

Please review the initial composite (available on my website) and let me know if I missed any of your requests or if you think a mistake has been made.

The total prize pool is \$2,270 (454 x 5). I am paying out places 1 thru 8 this year:

1st: \$500 (up to \$630), 2nd: \$400, 3rd: \$300, 4th: \$250, 5th: \$200, 6th: \$180, 7th: \$160, 8th: \$150

The remaining \$130 (\$2,270 minus the payouts shown above) will be used to round up any ties for the last paying position to get them as close to \$100 (my targeted minimum) as possible. Any remaining amount will then be added to the first-place prize. For example: 2 people tie for 8th place. Instead of getting \$75 each, I'll use \$50 from the excess fund to round them up to \$100 each. I would then add the remaining \$80 from the excess fund to 1st place. So the 1st place payout will be a minimum of \$500 but could be high as \$630.

The Initial Composite is listed in alphabetical order of the entrant's name, so you can see your initial picks together. Subsequent composites will be based upon total points earned up to that point.

Some miscellaneous notes about this year's pool:

As usual, there was a hidden commentary in my sample team selection example on the Rules page. Everyone knows Syracuse has been my favorite team but no longer, I'm "Done With SU". Ooh, that would be a great commentary, so why not! And with that weight lifted off my shoulder, I made finding it as simple as it gets: Just take the 1st letter of the 10-point team, the 2nd letter of the 9-point team, the 3rd letter of the 8-point team, I think you can figure out the rest, and you get "DoneWithSU".

10: Dayton 9: Creighton 8: Alabama 7: Stanford 6: Georgia Tech
5: Marquette 4: Cornell 3: Delaware 2: Arkansas St 1: Connecticut

BUT if you were really observant, you would also notice that there is no letter "S" or "U" in the spelling of any my example teams. Except for the 2 teams I used for the S and U in my message as it would be almost (?) impossible to find the letters S or U in any word that didn't actually contain them.

- A big thanks to Mark Britt who not only sent me his entry fee but also intentionally included an extra \$5 for an entry for me. I don't feel right about playing an entry with someone else's money so I have decided to split any winnings from that entry with Mark. Of course since I play multiple entries, as long as I don't cash on all of them, he'll never know which entry was our partnership one (and there's a really good chance it will be one of the losers).
- **On a very sad note**, if you remember from last year's notes, my sister Florence passed away on Feb 15, 2025. Well, it continued to be a bad year as my sister Lois passed away on Oct 28, and then my brother Dick died on Feb 15th, 2026 (yes, exactly one year later than my sister Florence). And then to add to all this, Jeff Burr (son of my old buddy Roy) who has played in this pool for all the previous 39 years, also passed away. So needless to say, it's been a tough year. Hate all these kinds of opening notes but I guess when you are in the 40th year of the pool, people start getting older. Fortunately I'm not - at least I don't think so.
- Lois won this pool back in 1989, a feat matched by her son Tim (2009) and her son Keith in,..., hmmm, that's right, he's never won it. Though I have to give him credit in that he is 3rd on the all-time money list (yes, one spot ahead of me and 2 spots ahead of his other brother John). But as I always look for patterns, I'd say he has a chance to win it in 2029 (assuming I'm still capable of running the pool in 3 years).
- And as for my dear departed friend Roy Burr, who I mentioned earlier, it is now 19 years of my making picks for him in hopes of getting him that elusive first cash. Eschewing (wow, how about that word? See I'm not just another pretty face. Now let me look up its' meaning) my normal wild ideas, I have decided to go the route of the tournament committee's choices and put all #1 seeds in the Final Four. It worked last year and it's happened twice in the past 40 years so I think a repeat is very possible. Well maybe not, but it can't be any worse than my past years' picks.

- Mike Burr let me know that he was submitting an entry for his brother Jeff and also one for his dad Roy. That means for the first time there will be 2 entries for Roy, doubling his chances of winning (though 2 times 0 is still zero). This could be the start of a great pattern for future years. If we can get one other person each year to submit an entry for Roy, then I think he has a good chance to cash in, let me do some quick calculations based upon the well-known Burr-Algorithm, made popular by Zager & Evans. Yes, the answer is “in the year 2525, if man is still alive, if woman can survive”.
- Tim Britton has rejoined the pool after missing these past few years due to an email address change. I’m not bringing up his name because of past success (actually he’s never cashed) but because his signature block caught my eye. I looked up the word “Alaris” and it is derived from Latin, meaning “of the wings” or “winged”. Describes how Kodak simply flew out of Rochester based upon some idiot CEO who thought that digital would never make it and that Kodak should focus on silver halide film. Looking at my picks and George Fisher’s decision, I see a striking similarity: “what the hell were you thinking?”

Tim Britton
Kodak Alaris
 Retail Operations
 Software Engineer
 Retailer Customization

 Rochester, New York USA
timothy.britton@kodakmoments.com
- As I always do each year, my picks were sent to someone else ahead of the deadline to ensure the integrity of the pool. I wasn’t sure who to send them to until I got a note from Jim Bolt who said that his family was questioning why he continued to play in this pool without winning anything. Well, “Jim Bolt’s family” I beg to differ, he cashed just recently. It was, uh..., oh yeah, here it is: 2010. That’s pretty recent (in dog years). Jim mentioned that he would be spending all day Friday watching games, eating pizza, and drinking beer (not necessarily in that order of importance) with two others that play in the pool: Steve DiPaola and Brian Barringer. Friday? Hell, I know Steve will already be mathematically eliminated by then and you other 2 will be close to that (that’s where the importance of drinking beer comes in). HOWEVER Jim, you have the bragging rights of the group in that both of those 2 haven’t cashed since 2005 (hell, I was even considered young back then. Okay maybe not young but at least not old). But keep your hopes up, remembering that old adage “even a blind squirrel finds an acorn once in a while”. I am proof positive of that as I finished 2nd in 2024 to that !?#@!&! Sean Panella by one lousy point (not that I’m bitter or anything).
- While at the baseball game this afternoon, I was told that Duke was losing by 11 at halftime. Would have been the first time I had been mathematically eliminated from the pool before I even sent out the initial composite and notes. Fortunately they won and now all I have to depend on are all my sleeper teams Wisconsin, St Mary’s, and BYU to win and I’m golden. Can’t see how any of them could lose - this pool just keeps getting easier and easier!
- Well, good luck to all ...