



## Greeneville Gymnastics Academy Sends Two Teams To State

PHOTO SPECIAL TO THE SUN

The Level 3 and Level 6 teams at the Greeneville Gymnastics Academy have qualified for their state meets. These teams are coached by Robbie Foshie Bragdon and Nick Gudger.

The Level 6 team will compete on Friday, March 16 at Austin Peay University's Dunn Center at 8 a.m. Members of the team include: Heather Bramlett from Newport, Abigail Chestnut from Greeneville, Elizabeth Fillers from Greeneville, Seana Smith from Greeneville, Hailee Fletcher from Greeneville, Leo Klapheck an exchange student from Germany, and Lauren Doyle from Greeneville.

Level 3 team will compete at the state meet at Austin Peay University at the Dunn Center on March 24 at 1 p.m. The Level 3 team also got second place at Smokey Mountain Gymnastics Vacation Classic. The team members include: Callie Broyles from Greeneville, Molly Frazier from Morristown, Riley Coombs from Greeneville, Maddie Broyles from Greeneville, Lily Armstrong from Greeneville, Megan Hinkle from Greeneville, Macy Hinkle from Greeneville, Courtney Hinkle from Greeneville.

## S-E-C! League Lands Conference-Record 8 Teams In NCAAs

BY TERESA M. WALKER  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

NASVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — The Southeastern Conference's push to improve in men's basketball finally has paid off in record fashion.

The conference best known for cranking out national champions in football landed a league-record eight teams in the NCAA Tournament on Sunday. That easily topped the six teams the SEC has put into the tournament nine times, most recently in 2008.

SEC Commissioner Greg Sankey quickly took to Twitter to remind every-

one of the league's record haul.

"We are proud to have an @SEC record 8 teams in the 2018 NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament," Sankey wrote. "This achievement is a reflection of the commitment our universities have made to support men's basketball. Good luck student-athletes, coaches & fans during #March Madness. #ItJustMeansMore."

Tennessee, which split the regular-season title with Auburn, is the SEC's top-seeded team at No. 3 in the South. Kentucky, which beat Tennessee 77-72 on Sunday for the SEC Tournament title, wound

up seeded fifth in the same region. Auburn wound up seeded No. 4 in the Midwest Region.

Kentucky coach John Calipari said Sunday that he loved the SEC getting eight teams into the tournament, proof the league finally is past the point of a loss costing programs dearly. Calipari said the SEC helped itself by recruiting good players and with improved strength of schedules, something coaches and officials worked on across the league.

Calipari also cautioned against taking the SEC lightly a year after South Carolina was one of the

biggest surprises of the tournament. The Gamecocks reached the Final Four for the first time in school history last year.

"This league will do damage," Calipari said. "It's been doing damage. They just haven't let more teams in. We have teams borderline that should have advanced that didn't get in. Now we have eight teams in."

The SEC's other teams include ninth-seeded Alabama, No. 7 seed Arkansas, sixth-seeded Florida, No. 8 seed Missouri and No. 7 seed Texas A&M.

The Atlantic Coast Conference led all conferences by tying its own record

with nine teams in the tournament, and the ACC needed Syracuse squeezing in as the last team to match that mark.

The Big East landed two of the four No. 1 seeds with Villanova and Xavier among the conference's six teams.

The Big 12 thought the league would get nine teams in as well but wound up with seven with Baylor among the first four teams out. Oklahoma State also missed out — despite two wins over No. 1 seed Kansas — after losing to the Jayhawks in the Big 12 Tournament.

The Pac-12 tied the American Athletic Con-

ference and the Atlantic 10 with only three teams in the tournament but could wind up with only one team left standing among the final 64. UCLA is playing St. Bonaventure in the First Four in Dayton for a No. 11 seed a year after reaching the Sweet 16, while Arizona State plays Syracuse in Dayton after squeezing into the tourney.

Southern California was among the first four teams out of the bracket.

The Mountain West put two teams in with tournament champ San Diego State and regular-season champ Nevada earning an at-large bid.

## PIONEERS

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with his 237. Bennett Noe moved up five spots on the leaderboard finishing 62nd with 245 thanks to his 77 on Monday.

The Pioneers return to action this weekend when they host the 25th annual Tusculum Invitational at Link Hills Country Club. This year's event will be a 54-hole tournament for the first time with 36 holes being played on Saturday with the final 18 being contested on Sunday.

### TEAM RESULTS

PI Team 1st 2nd 3rd TOT  
1 UT Arlington 285 283 290 858  
2 Jacksonville St. 283 302 303 888  
3 USC Beaufort 291 303 297 891  
4 Appalachian St. 285 308 305 898  
5 Robert Morris 299 305 300 904  
6 Loyola-Chicago 294 303 312 909  
7 Wright St. 311 304 296 911  
8 TUSCULUM 310 308 296 914  
9 La Salle 311 330 318 959  
10 N.C. Central 321 316 326 963

## HUSKIES

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good group of guys who have really made this easy for me. I'm just blessed I get to go to work everyday and enjoy what I'm doing."

It took until around mid-January for the Huskies to really begin clicking this season, and since then they have ridden a 14-game win streak to Murfreesboro. Much of the early part of the season was spent figuring out personnel while the team adjusted to a new coach. Since Jan. 22, when Chuckey-Dolak topped the Huskies on a buzzer beater, North Greene has risen to every challenge thrown at them.

Most impressive is how under a first-year coach, the Huskies keep finding

a way to come up big in pressure-packed, postseason situations. In the District 1-A finals, North Greene had to go to overtime to beat Sullivan North. In the Region 1-A finals, the Huskies went back and forth with those same Raiders for 32 minutes before capturing a 48-44 win. And in the state sectionals they erased a 13-point, second-half deficit to beat Coalfield 79-75.

"It's been unbelievable to watch this postseason," Buchanan said. "Really over the last couple of years that has been our Achilles heel. The kids have been prepared well and they would play great, but they just did not have the experience when closing out those tough games. Sam has a calmness about him that he doesn't get rattled in close games. The moment does not get too big even though he's

a new coach. We are awful proud of how he has handled himself and these boys, and we are tickled they are getting to make this trip."

Buchanan and Tarlton have both been quick to point out that a big part of the team's success this year has been the way the players have bought in to what their young coach wants to do.

Every year the Huskies' four seniors have been on the roster their results have improved. It might have been easy to brush off some new schemes and think that they know how to win better than their first-year coach. Instead they embraced the change.

"I could not be more proud of our players, because there is always the potential for things to be difficult when you have a coaching change," Buchanan said. "You are used

to doing things one way, and the new coach does things a different way. I think it speaks well of the upbringing they have had. The community, the parents and the players all bought in."

While Tarlton may be young and new to running a program, he has been helped along the way by some veterans at his side. Danny Weems, who has been an assistant on the team for several years and his North Greene's softball coach, ran the team over the summer before Tarlton was hired. Tarlton's father, Richard, who has been a longtime coach at various levels in Washington County, is also on the bench providing guidance.

Plus there's Buchanan, who coaches North Greene's girls and has won a lot in his time running that program.

## UPSETS

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(Google that if so inclined). The National Science Foundation initially funded Jacobson for a project that used artificial intelligence to explore societal issues, such as whether government-sponsored programs to enhance job skills ultimately lead to higher incomes for workers.

After the funding ran out, Jacobson sought uses for his creation that could REALLY help people.

March Madness generates more than \$10 billion a year in wagering, much of which comes when players chip in \$10 or \$20 and fill out brackets for their office pools and collect points based on the number of correct picks.

Picking the eventual champion — No. 1

seeds Villanova and Virginia started at 5-1 odds to win it all, with No. 2 Duke at 6-1 — always helps. But sometimes the real difference makers are the correct upset picks in the early rounds. That's when the Buffalos and Wright States of the world beat Goliath and briefly restore faith in the gumdrops-and-lollipops notion that anything really is possible.

It's not, Jacobson assures us.

Still, his website, bracketodds.cs.ilinois.edu, gets thousands of hits a day this time of year. Among his other basketball-related projects are predicting which teams will make the tournament and where they'll be seeded. The computer didn't do so well this year — it had Louisville and USC comfortably in — in large part because, as Jacobson says, the selection committee "keeps changing the rules."

"You had a team like Arizona State that

got in despite some horrible home losses to mediocre Pac-12 teams, and then you have Louisville, which is the kind of team that typically gets in but didn't," Jacobson said.

But that was then.

Once the brackets were revealed, Jacobson set the computer's focus toward picking these upsets. Its track record since 2003 is hardly perfect, but still probably better than yours.

Using BOSS, the computer picks the two most likely upsets each year. Last season, not a single 13, 14 or 15 advanced, so it got 0 percent. Two seasons ago, there were three such upsets — Iona and Buffalo — but the computer didn't pick either of them.

But in 2015, BOSS picked Georgia State and UAB and went 2 for 2.

And since 2003, 10 of its 26 selected games have resulted in upsets. That's

38.4 percent, or double the expected number of correct selections a person would get by using a "weighted random selection method." In other words, double what you'd get by picking slips out of a hat, or choosing a team because you like the fight song.

For those placing faith in his science, Jacobson warns of the large gulf between predicting the future and forecasting what could happen.

"Nobody predicts the weather," he says. "They forecast it using chances and odds." Similarly, he says, "artificial intelligence looks at some outcomes that the human eye can't catch. The models we use give some indication of what the future may look like."

A few other caveats: Jacobson freely admits he does not gamble on basketball or anything else. Nor does he fill out a bracket.

## SEEDS

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host the opening two rounds at home.

Like the Huskies, the Irish are a No. 1 seed again. Notre Dame has been a top seed the last seven years. This might be one of coach Muffet McGraw's finest accomplishments as Notre Dame lost four pivotal players to injury, but only three games on the season. Two of those losses came to Louisville.

"A great reward for this team for what they've been through ... playing the toughest schedule and getting a No. 1 seed," McGraw said. "I'm so proud of this group and what they have

accomplished. (Being a No. 1) is quite an accomplishment for what we've been through all year long."

The Irish are in the Spokane Regional and open up against Cal State Northridge on Friday. If Notre Dame advances, the Irish would head out west to potentially face No. 2 seed Oregon.

"We've never been in the West bracket. I love playing Friday at 5. That's awesome," McGraw said.

The Ducks could stay out west and play in Spokane, where coach Kelly Graves spent many years as Gonzaga's coach. Ohio State and Texas A&M are the three and four seeds in that region.

Louisville won the Atlantic Coast Conference for

the first time this season. The Cardinals open up against Boise State and are one of eight ACC teams in the field. The Southeastern Conference has seven teams in the tournament, while the Pac-12 and the Big Ten have six.

"We're really excited about the opportunity," Louisville coach Jeff Walz said. "We're excited to host the first two at home against two very good basketball teams. If we're fortunate enough to advance, we get the opportunity to play in Lexington, which would be great for our fans."

The Lexington Regional is stacked with former NCAA Tournament winners by Baylor the three seed, Tennessee the three

and Stanford the four. While the Lady Vols have been in the NCAA Tournament every year since it began in 1982, Nicholls State, Northern Colorado, Mercer and Seattle will be making their first appearances.

Stanford potentially is headed to Lexington for the third straight year if it can advance.

Mississippi State is a No. 1 seed for the first time in school history. The Bulldogs won their first 32 games this season before losing to South Carolina in the SEC title game. With most of their players back from last season's runner-up finish — including Morgan Williams, who hit the game-winner in overtime to knock off UConn — the Bulldogs hope to make

another deep NCAA run.

The NCAA revealed Sunday night the final eight teams under consideration for the last four spots in the tournament. Buffalo, Creighton, Minnesota and Oklahoma got in. Purdue, Rutgers, Southern Cal and West Virginia were the first four teams out.

Oklahoma got in with a 16-14 record — the fewest wins for an at-large team since 2005 — a day after the Oklahoma men got an at-large berth with an 18-13 record and losses in 11 of their final 15 games.

"We spent almost seven hours on that decision of who those last four teams in and first four out were," NCAA women's basketball committee chair Rhonda Bennett said. "We went

through those resumes and their body of work. We took as long as it took to get those teams into the bracket."

Bennett said Oklahoma's strength of schedule, which was second best in the country, was a key to its selection.

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