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## Golfdom's Joke of the Month



A guy is stranded on a desert island for 10 years. One day a beautiful woman swims to shore in a wet suit.

The guy says "Hi! Am I ever glad to see you!"

"Well, hello," says the woman. "It looks like you've been here a long time. How long has it been since you had a cigarette?"

"It's been ten years!" he says. At this, the woman unzips a slot on the arm of her wet suit and gives the guy a cigarette and a lighter.

"Thank you so much!" he says, taking a long drag.

"So tell me," the woman continues, "How long has it been since you had a drink?"

"It's been ten years," he admits. The woman opens a slightly longer zipper on her wet suit, comes up with a flask of whiskey and gives the guy a drink.

He takes a swig and sighs happily. "Thank you so much. You're a miracle!"

Finally, the woman starts to unzip the front of her wet suit and asks the guy leadingly, "So tell me, mister, how long has it been since you played around?"

He looks at her in disbelief and gasps, "Don't tell me you've got a set of golf clubs in there, too?!"

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# the brackets

**N**o other major sport squeezes in 63 games over three weeks and has as many nail-biting, buzzer-beating and giant-killing finishes as the annual NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament.

And no other major sporting event does more to transform casual fans into self-aggrandizing experts than that rite of March known as the NCAA Tournament pool. Be it at the office, among friends or now online, the task of prognosticating the results of all 63 games to capture prize money breeds greedy statistic crunchers, scouting report readers and armchair coaches full of bluster.

But before you complete the bracket for the pool and before you scan the special sports sections for a secret edge, it's paramount to keep the following in mind: If you win the cash, it has far less to do with you than what you think. You probably caught a few unbelievable breaks along the way.

This doesn't mean your basketball knowledge and gut feelings don't count, but like the tourney itself, scoring well in a pool is a function of funny bounces, swallowed whistles, split-second decision making and dumb luck. In other words, it's a crap shoot, which is precisely the reason it's so fun to participate. So here are a few pointers before you start penciling in your picks:

• **Know the score.** Unlike hoops, pools have a variety of scoring options. The most common is you score more points

DON'T LET MARCH MADNESS BEGIN WITHOUT PONDERING THESE

POINTERS TO HELP YOU WIN THE OFFICE POOL **BY MARK LUCE**



for correct picks in later rounds, something such as 1-2-4-8-12-24 or a similar variation. Some prefer to pick each round separately (with or without point spreads) and take a composite record. This is the most fun, but also the most work.

• **See the floor.** Before you start scrawling your choices, anticipate potential matchups. Try to determine which team is the best in each region.

Think of the brackets in terms of mini tournaments, which helps you break down the matchups.

• **Work backwards.** Pick your Final Four teams first, and fill in the blanks for them all the way back. Do the same for your Elite Eight teams and fill them in all the way back. Doing so helps you see the bracket better, as well as avoid the common problem of, "Hey, how did Joe's College end up in the Elite Eight?"

• **Choose your upsets wisely.** There are always a few shockers in the early rounds, and normally a few No. 2 and No. 3 seeds are eliminated by the end of the second round. While it's great to cheer for the underdog, it's usually a sucker bet. Why bet the farm on Alcorn State when it's only worth a point?

• **The key is in the 'tweeners.** Most people screw up brackets in the mid-level matchups — No. 5 vs. No. 12, No. 6 vs. No. 11. If you can win a majority of these games in the first round, you'll be in good shape.

• **Do your homework.** Before choosing teams based on their reputations, look at how a team got to the tournament and how experienced it is. Also consider potential matchups, common opponents and stuff like field-goal percentage, field-goal defense and rebounding. Teams that play solid D and hit the boards are normally the teams that win.

And, hopefully this year, my Kansas Jayhawks will be that team.

Happy picking and let the madness begin.

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