

# All eyes on St. Louis as the Final Four arrive

ST. LOUIS (AP) — Rick Pitino and Roy Williams. Overachieving Michigan State and almost-undefeated Illinois.

The Final Four teams will have to put on quite a show if they're going to match the excitement of possibly the best NCAA tournament ever. But these marquee coaches and programs haven't had trouble entertaining thus far this tournament.

"I think it's the best ever," said Purdue's Gene Keady, one of the dozens of coaches who came to the Final Four city of St. Louis on Thursday. "The closeness of the games and how what they call the mid-majors really aren't mid-majors anymore. Anybody can beat you."

Vermont's upset of Syracuse and Bucknell's shocker over Kansas defined the first crazy week, and the madness continued into an even more dramatic set of regionals.

**FINAL FOUR**  
At Edward Jones Dome  
St. Louis  
**National Semifinals**  
**Saturday, April 2**  
Illinois (36-1) vs. Louisville (33-4), 6:07 p.m. (ET)  
North Carolina (31-4) vs. Michigan State (26-6), 8:47 p.m. (ET)  
**Championship**  
Monday, April 4  
Illinois-Louisville winner vs. North Carolina-Michigan State winner, 9:18 p.m. (ET)

Three regional finals went into overtime, the first time that's happened. The opponents in Saturday's first semifinal, Illinois and Louisville, each overcame double-digit deficits to force overtime and advance.

"These young people, under the

influence of pressure, how they accomplish what they accomplish is amazing," Pitino said.

Pitino became the first coach to lead three different programs — Providence, Kentucky and Louisville — to the Final Four, and there's no denying his touch on the bench made a difference.

With West Virginia on an unbelievable shooting tear, Pitino somehow kept the Cardinals within reach. He scrapped the 2-3 zone he'd been using to compensate for his team's lack of depth this season, told his players to press and trap and disrupt. The Mountaineers eventually cooled off, and the Cardinals (33-4) found themselves within a couple baskets.

And by the time overtime was winding down, Taquan Dean and Larry O'Bannon were celebrating and Louisville was winning going away.

"We've seen it all season from this team," Pitino said. "So many times, it looked like we were going to get knocked out. They're very resilient, very tough-minded and they're tough kids. I'm just a pussycat following their coattails. I just sit back and marvel at what they've accomplished."

Illinois (36-1) trailed Arizona by 15 with 4:04 left, then Bruce Weber's team staged one of the most stirring comebacks in tournament history.

Luther Head made a pair of 3-pointers and had a steal and layup to lead the rally. The Illini survived a tight overtime and made it to where they've been pointed since December, when they moved to No. 1 in the Associated Press poll — a perch they haven't been pushed from since, even when they lost their only game, to Ohio State on March 6.

"St. Louis has been the goal, but we've had that No. 1 for so long that that's been our outlook for the whole year," forward Jack Ingram said. "We want to bring this program to a level that no one else has ever done and winning some games in the Final Four will do that for us."

Also trying to break new ground is Williams, the Kansas-turned-North Carolina coach, who has accomplished virtually everything in college basketball except the national title. The Tar Heels (31-4) face Michigan State (26-6) in Saturday's second semifinal.

Two years ago, when he took the Jayhawks to the national final but lost, Williams recalled a conversation with his mentor, Dean Smith, after Smith won his first title with the Tar Heels in 1982.

Williams said he told Smith he was so happy for him, to have finally won a title. Smith replied that he didn't think he was any better a coach than he had been 2 1/2 hours before.

Williams spearheaded a remarkably fast turnaround when he arrived at North Carolina last season. Now, for the fifth time in his career, he finds himself two wins away from winning the elusive title.

"It definitely will happen, if not

this year, another year," Pitino said of Williams. "Those programs are too strong not for it to happen. It just takes time and patience, a little luck along the way, and it will happen."

Michigan State and Tom Izzo got their championship in 2000, when the "Flintstones" — Flint natives Mateen Cleaves, Morris Peterson and Charlie Bell — wore the green and white.

This was supposed to be something of a rebuilding year for the Spartans, and when they lost to Iowa in the first round of the Big Ten tournament, the season seemed to be slipping away.

As a motivational ploy, Izzo took a hammer and smashed the game tape from that loss. Four wins later — including a double-overtime victory over Kentucky last Sunday — and the Spartans are at the Final Four for the fourth time in seven seasons.

And this is, by most accounts, their most unexpected trip.

"It's been a unique group," Izzo said of the team led by Maurice Ager, Paul Davis and Alan Anderson. "I think there will be some memories that will come from this that will last a lifetime."

Joining the many this tournament has already created.

## High school all-stars in spotlight Sunday

By Tom (TD) Dreiling

Free Press Publisher

If you are a fan of high school basketball, then the Colby Community Building is the place to be on Sunday.

But remember to move your clocks up one hour before going to bed Saturday night (the time change officially kicks in at 2 a.m. Sunday), or you'll miss out on some of the action.

Sunday's the day for the 12th annual "Sports Shoppe/Colby Bowl All-Star Classic" featuring some of the best senior basketball players in the state. The women's game is set to tip-off at 5 p.m. with the men's game to follow.

Here is the roster::

**WOMEN (Light Jerseys)** — Emily Sloan (Colby), Monica Walker (Lucas-Luray), Karee

Ubelaker (Osborne), Jacie Hoyt (Hoxie), Mona Shaffer (Tribune), Anna Irvin (LaCrosse), Ashley Kraft (Western Plains), Dayna Crawford (Natoma), Ariel Dunker (Rawlins County) and Courtney Cox (Beloit).

**WOMEN (Dark Jerseys)** — Darcel Gronewoller (Beloit), Ashley Gasper (Tipton), Nicholl Weigel (LaCrosse), Kaylaen Dittmer (Tribune), Toni Fuller (Smith Center), Stef Randa (Hays), Courtney Riedel (Trego), Andrea Horney (Brewster), Veronica Kuhlman (Oakley) and Whitney Giesick (Leoti).

Coaches for the women are Bill Braun (LaCrosse) and Keith Wineinger (Waconda East).

**MEN (Light Jerseys)** — Matt Augustine (Colby), Jared Dinkel (Colby), Lance Fortin (Oberlin),

Jordan Vickers (Hoxie), Heath Baird (Brewster), Tyson Spears (Lucas-Luray), Ryan Stoppel (Lucas-Luray), Paul Flanders (Brewster), Mark Johnson (Healy) and Grady Kessler (Quinter).

**MEN (Dark Jerseys)** — Austin Panter (Kensington), Chad Baalman (Oakley), Ryan Maddy (Norton), Tyler Turner (Phillipsburg), Matt Koelsch (Phillipsburg), Wade Knapp (Trego), Nolan Cox (Weskan), Beau Cox (Weskan), Jessie Miller (Golden Plains) and Casey Miles (Hays).

Coaches for the men are Brent Flanders (Brewster) and Parker Christensen (Golden Plains).

The women's game will be telecast on KSNK-TV on Sunday, April 10, at 10:35 p.m., and the men's game on Sunday, April 17, also at

10:35 p.m.

For more information contact Tom Stephens, head women's basketball coach at Colby Community College at (785) 462-3984, ext. 269.

## Colby Eagle baseball 1-1 in opener

The Colby High School Eagle baseball teams opened its season with a triangular at Russell on Tuesday. The Eagles came away from the day's action with a 1-1 mark.

**Game 1 vs. Scott City**  
**Colby 6, Scott City 5**

Colby scored three runs in the third inning. Heath Bieker got on with a triple. Joseph Heier walked. Brett Wilson got to 1st on a ground ball to load the bases. Mitchell Gatz scored two runs with a double, and a Scott City error allowed the third run.

Scott City tied the game in the top of the 4th. Colby scored the go-ahead run in the bottom of the 4th when Jeremy Dietz scored. Scott City scored two runs in the 5th inning to take the lead for the first time, 5-4. Scott City held Colby until the bottom of the 7th. Jordan Cranston led off with a single and Matt Augustine followed up with a home run to put Colby on top, 6-5, and earned a win as the starting pitcher.

**Game 2 vs. Russell**  
**Colby 7, Russell 13**

Colby took an early lead against Russell on hits by Wilson, Dietz and Bieker, making the score 3-0. Jor-

dan Cranston pitched the first five innings and allowed only one run on two hits. Cranston had closed the Scott City game, and by the end of the 5th inning had tossed over 100 pitches.

He was relieved by Heath Bieker, Jeremy Dietz and Michael Ackerman. the relievers struggled on the mound, and during the bottom of the 6th, Russell scored 12 runs on four hits and nine walks.

Colby tried to start a rally in the 7th but scored only one more run, and the finals scored was 13-7 Russell.

Colby's varsity lineup is Brett Wilson, Mitchell Gatz, Jordan Cranston, Matt Augustine, Heath Bieker, Jeremy Dietz, Travis Powell, Michael Ackerman, Kyle Withington and Joseph Heier.

Kevin Cox is head coach and is assisted Rick Williams and Dustin Rorabaugh.

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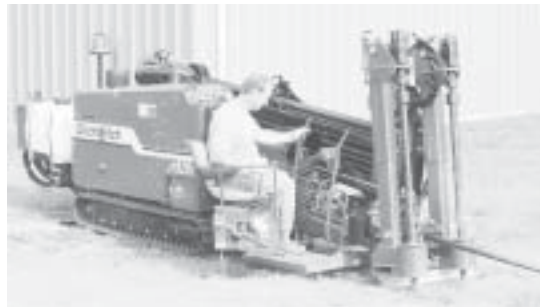
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## STRIKE ZONE

**League  
Bowling  
Results**

### March 24 - King Pin League

Team	Won	Lost	Place
5 Pony Men	96	72	1
Orschelns	93	75	2
Colby Bowl & Fun Center	86	82	3
Colby Automotive	85	83	4
Thunderballs	74	94	5
T - J's Tire	70	98	6
First high Individual game: Brent Menges, 231			
First high Individual series: Gordon Berry, 622			

### March 25 - Ten Pin League

Team	Won	Lost	Place
Hurt Enterprises	10	2	1
JJ Tools	8	4	2
Comfort Inn	7	5	3
Colby Bowl	6.5	5.5	4

### Cal Williams

Classic Trojans	6.5	5.5	5
Lantern Park Manor	6	6	6
Don's Electric	3	9	7
First high Individual game: Linda Nelson, 213	1	11	8
First high Individual series: Mary Hurtt, 444			

### March 23 - Powderpuff League

Team	Won	Lost	Place
Golden Harvest Seed	22	14	1
Weiser Insurance	20	16	2
Nightmares	19	17	3
The Whirlwinds	18	18	4
Farm Credit	15	21	5
Service Oil	14	22	6
First high Individual game: Monica Miller, 192			
First high Individual series: Monica Miller, 507			

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