

from our viewpoint...

## Don't bet the farm on tornado 'season'

The February tornado outbreak points up a flaw in emergency planning for many Kansas counties: no one pays any attention to the sirens and other parts of the emergency warning system from November through February.

Most cities and counties wait until "tornado season" approaches in March before they test the sirens and put the system through its paces. That works fine. Most years.

And while it's true that the tiny Kansas town of Harveyville got no warning before it was hit because the tornado there literally dropped out of the sky, it requires a bunch of what-ifs to say that we don't need to worry about tornadoes in winter.

Nature, it seems, does not know about the "season" dates for her little productions. She sends out tornadoes when she darn well feels like it.

A huge tornado came over Colorado's Wolf Creek Pass a few years ago, laying waste to timber for miles and scaring the be-jebers out of some Texas elk hunters, who knew a twister when they saw one.

"Everyone" knew that none of that could happen: no tornadoes on the Continental Divide, no tornadoes in late October, no tornadoes in the Colorado high country. If it weren't for all those broken trees, people might have thought those hunters were imagining things.

Then a few years ago, a tornado west of Hays damaged houses in November, barely a week before Thanksgiving. Last year, a couple farmsteads by Brewster were hit by a tornado in October.

It's common to have tornadoes in the South in winter months. Storms that bring blizzards to the plains and ski weather to the mountains generate thunderstorms in warmer states.

But in Kansas? So here's the deal. Why not just test the tornado warning system the first Monday of every month?

The first test of March, just before Severe Weather Week, usually turns up a few sirens that stopped working over the winter. Why wait? Tornadoes don't know about Severe Weather Week.

There's no harm in cranking up the publicity in March, but weird as our weather can be, why take chances with the sirens? Why not be ready? — *Steve Haynes*



## NCAA bracket fun for first-timer

How do you make picks for a March Madness bracket when you know next to nothing about college hoops?

That's the challenge I took on along with my basketball-fan coworkers earlier this week. We all got brackets for the radio station contest.

I began my odyssey into the world of NCAA basketball where I always begin: the Internet. I decided not to look at anyone else's bracket first, but rather to research the teams a bit and listen to some analysis from the guys at ESPN and Sports Illustrated.

As you might know, I've never been much of a sports fan. The only reason I'm particularly interested this year is because my college, Colorado State University, is in the tournament for the first time since 2003 (just a few months before I started school there). So I looked the Rams up first.

Looking at their record, they have some good wins in the conference versus TCU, Air Force and the University of Colorado, who is also in the tournament. However, they lost to fellow March Madness teams UNLV and Duke. They got killed by Duke, but if my dad has taught me anything about basketball, it's that Duke is always good.

This will be the Rams' eighth trip to the tournament. They've won just three tournament games in those years. In 2003 they came up against Duke and nearly won.

Will they be the "Cinderella Story" of the tournament? I'm guessing not, but I did pick them over Murray State in the second round. Records of 20-11 versus 30-1 don't inspire confidence, but I had to go with my home team to win at least once out of loyalty. If they make it to the third round, I'm sure they'll lose to Marquette.

The Rams were set to play yesterday, so by the time you read this we'll likely know what happened.

I always joke about how CSU isn't good at anything, and for most sports it isn't really a joke. So I'm glad to see my school in the tournament, even if they don't make it very far.

I have no such sentiment for the other Colo-



### kevin bottrell

• simple tricks and nonsense

rado team in the tournament. I picked UNLV over the University of Colorado in the second round. I'm sure that would disappoint my predecessor (former editor Tom Betz is a CU grad), but the Rebels are a better team. They're third in the nation in assists per game and 24th in points per game, compared to the Buffs who are 267th in assists per game and 183rd in points. UNLV also beat North Carolina, the No. 1 seed in the Midwest bracket, back in November.

As for Kansas teams, I have Wichita State getting all the way to the Sweet 16, but losing to Kentucky. I have KU beating Detroit in the second and Saint Mary's in the third, but losing to San Diego State in the Sweet 16.

I have Kansas State losing to Syracuse in the third round. All the sports news on Tuesday was about how Syracuse would self-destruct after star player Fab Melo was ruled ineligible to play in the tournament, but I think they'll definitely still beat No. 16 seed Asheville and probably beat Kansas State. However I think they aren't going to be as good, and so I have them losing to Vanderbilt in the Sweet 16.

For the Final Four, I think we'll see Kentucky versus Missouri and Ohio State versus North Carolina. I think Kentucky will go all the way this year. I think they'll face Ohio State in the championship game and win.

I drew a few conclusions from research and listening to the experts. First, you can bank on the No. 1 and No. 2 seeds making it to the Sweet 16. There's a reason these teams are ranked high. On the other hand, you can't bank on upsets and underdogs, but there are bound to be a few surprises.

Where it seems to get tricky is with teams

that are closely seeded, like Memphis and St. Louis or Creighton and Alabama. I didn't know much about those teams going in and they usually don't get much mention on the news sites, who usually like to focus on the higher seeds.

In those games, I ended up going with Creighton, who is first in the nation in field goal percentage, over Alabama, who has a far worse record, especially in conference play. I also went with St. Louis over Memphis. The Tigers do look like the better team on paper, but on occasion you have to go with an upset.

However, I'm betting that both teams will fold when they come up against No. 1 seeds in the third round though.

After finishing my bracket, I looked at a few other folks' picks for comparison. A lot of people seem to have Kentucky on top, including some of my coworkers. That gives me hope. Nobody seems to share my hope for Colorado State though. We'll have to see if my Rams can overcome those low expectations. Syracuse is sort of the unknown. Lots of people going back and forth, but nobody really picking them to get past the Sweet 16.

ESPN had the president's picks again like they do each year. The Basketball-Fan-in-Chief and I have the same Final Four, but he has North Carolina beating Ohio State and going on to win over Kentucky. Of course, he's picked Kansas to win the last two years, and that's not gone well for him. He also has Syracuse going to the Sweet 16, which I don't think will happen now, but we agreed on Baylor beating Duke and Missouri beating Michigan State.

Obviously I, and anyone else filling out a bracket, could end up completely wrong. Syracuse could overcome their setback and make it to the Final Four. Murray State could continue their win streak or a team way at the bottom BYU could surprise everyone like they did with that 16-point rally in the First Four.

But that's all part of the fun, right?

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## Cat 'helps' make the bed

It's so nice to have help making the bed.

Now, I don't mean just throwing the covers back over things in the morning. I mean putting the mattress pad, fitted sheet, top sheet, two blankets and the comforter on after they've been washed each week.

And every week, I have help.

Not Steve. He's almost always able to find some job somewhere else. He hates to make the bed.

But April Alice is always there for me, lying in the middle of the mattress and just daring me to cover her up with the pad. Then she wiggles out while I'm securing the corners and gets ready for the fitted sheet.

By the time I'm up to the blankets, she's in full killer mode — biting and scratching at each layer as it covers her then slipping out and getting ready for the next.

April is the helpful cat in the family. She's also always ready to help with any work we do at the dining room table.

Sit down at your portable computer and before too long, she will be hopping up on the table — a total no-no, and she knows it — and sneaking up to try to get as close to the action as possible.

Believe me, it's really hard to type with a cat's head between your hands and the keys.

Sneaking is a specialty of our cats.

I love to read, and when I have the opportunity, I get comfortable in my recliner and dive into my latest mystery novel.

Many times as I start my book, a cat will



### cynthia haynes

• open season

crawl into my lap and start to purr up a storm. It's comforting, warm and relaxing. However, it's also a little unsettling when I come up for air after a chapter or two to find a different cat in my lap and realize I didn't even know I had been switched out.

While April is the helpful cat, her son Frank

is the lazy one.

He loves the bed. He thinks it's bedtime long before the sun goes down in the winter. Any time either of us goes upstairs to do anything, Frank is ready for bed.

He runs ahead and jumps in the middle with that expectant air of a cat ready for a nice nap.

If you walk off, he sulks. If you lie down, he curls up right next to you.

By morning, there usually are more cats than people in our bed.

I guess I shouldn't complain. We could raise St. Bernards.

### where to write

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