The Eight Signs of March Madness

Richard C. Crepeau
University of Central Florida, richard.crepeau@ucf.edu

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It is March Madness in America.

How can we tell? Consider these eight signs of madness.

First, here in Florida the college students have arrived for spring break. They have begun drinking enough to try diving off the balconies at motels in search of the swimming pool. Thus far at least two have failed to locate the pool. T-shirts proclaim this the "2001 NCAA Outdoor Balcony Diving Championships." MTV may have the exclusive TV rights.

Second, at Texas Tech University in beautiful and scenic Lubbock, Texas, where the aesthetics of tumbleweed can provoke weeklong philosophical and theological debates, they are considering hiring Robert Knight, well-known professor of basketball. The President of this fine institution of higher learning called a press conference last week to discuss the possible hiring of the aforementioned Professor Knight to lead the Tech basketball program to the paydays of March Madness.

Tech President David Schmidly defended his interest in Knight saying that Professor Knight's entire record needs to be considered not just a few incidents. Certainly this is a reasonable request and Charles Manson may want President Schmidly to appear at Chuck's next parole hearing.

Professor Knight's career is laced with madness that is not isolated to March. If one starts researching his career at the Puerto Rican courts and then follows along chronologically to the latest suit against the University of Indiana one may note a pattern indiscernible to President Schmidly.

Third, Professor Knight will spend three days in Lubbock this week where nearly sixty faculty have already signed a petition against hiring the much-maligned former coach at Indiana. Obviously they too have not considered the entire record. Reacting to the petition Professor Knight protests that he would make no judgement about these faculty without ever having met them, and he wishes they would accord him the same consideration. It might not be unreasonable to
point out that Professor Knight has not been reading about the transgressions, bullying, and uncontrollable actions of these faculty members for the last several decades.

Others have voiced supported the President, as T-shirts appeared on the Tech campus this week proclaiming: "Techsans for Knight! Supporting discipline and the American Work Ethic!" One can only assume that this does not include self-discipline.

Fourth, at spring training sites across the Sunbelt optimistic fans of even the weakest of teams are claiming that a trip to the World Series is all but wrapped up. Simultaneously the baseball owners and executives are trashing their sport in what is now a yearly ritual.

Fifth, in order to give some credibility to this trashing players like Frank Thomas and Gary Sheffield are making public statements about their financial woes. They signed their contracts a few years ago instead of last week and now feel underpaid. Sheffield's erratic and bizarre statements have led to a joke that is receiving wide circulation. It is said that we should quit picking on Gary because three cities are named after him: Gary, Indiana, Sheffield, England, and Marblehead, Massachusetts.

Sixth, the NCAA will soon be suing someone for using the name "March Madness" without authorization. I saw an ad for a "March Madness Furniture Sale" and expect the owners of that firm to be served with a cease and desist order any day now.

Seventh, March Sadness took place last week. This is when meaningless conference tournament games are played for pure greed by the institutions of higher learning keeping the fabled student-athletes out of classes and away from campus for an additional weekend of milking those TV and ticket revenues.

Eighth, my favorite event of March Madness has just concluded in Alaska. The Iditarod has always appealed to me. It just sounds like fun to get out there on the trail and mush those Huskies across the barren tundra in freezing temperatures. I think I would like to have this sort of fun, but then of course I would never really actually join in this form of March Madness unless I had first gone totally and stark raving mad. I have similar feelings about
skydiving. It looks like great fun, I can imagine myself floating through the air like some sort of crazed bird, but then I can never picture myself doing anything so irrational as jumping out of an airplane.

What makes March Madness, the NCAA Tournament variety, fun is the fact that there will be some small schools that will defeat teams from some big schools. There will be low seeds that beat high seeds. There will be a great deal of intensity on display on the floor and in the stands. As a bonus Dick Vitale will not be in our face or our ears during the entire CBS telecast.

I must admit however that I am disappointed that Winthrop has already been eliminated. A university named for the leader of the Puritans in Colonial America taking part in this carnival of consumption and decadence would have been a nice touch. Instead we will have to settle for young men and women thanking Jesus, God, or Allah for his or her intervention on the Road to Minneapolis, which of course will never be confused with the Road to Damascus.

On Sport and Society this is Dick Crepeau reminding you that you don't have to be a good sport to be a bad loser.

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