

NC State, Georgia ready for Final 4

As coach of an NCAA "Cinderella" team, North Carolina State's Jim Valvano is the happiest dancer at the Final Four ball.

"For me this is the ultimate," said Valvano, in his third year as Wolfpack coach and making his first trip to the Final Four.

"This is certainly the goal every coach in college basketball gets when you first get into this profession. This is my 16th year (of coaching) and obviously this is my biggest thrill."

"I'm the rookie of the group," he added, referring to the four coaches. "I think this is (Houston Coach) Guy Lewis' fourth. (Louisville's) Denny Crum, has made six or so, and it's the second for (Georgia Coach) Hugh Durham. It's also thrilling for me to be in with that caliber of coach."

No. 14 North Carolina State meets another Cinderella team in No. 15 Georgia Saturday in one semifinal with No. 1 Houston and No. 2 Louisville squaring off in the other game at Albuquerque, N.M.

Although North Carolina State, 24-10, is making its third appearance in the NCAA Tournament semifinals, excitement at the Raleigh campus is unprecedented due to the modest expectations at the season's start.

"In 1974 (when the Wolfpack won the tournament with All-America David Thompson), it was more of an expected thing," said Jim Pomeranz, the team's director of publications. "The atmosphere now is electric. It's been a continuous party since (winning) the ACC tournament."

The Wolfpack have walked a tournament tightrope, coming from behind late in all but one of their past seven games, and twice winning in overtime.

The Bulldogs, 24-9, who shocked St. John's and North Carolina in consecutive games last weekend, are 2-point favorites Saturday.

While North Carolina State features 6-foot-11 starters Thurl Bailey and Cozell McQueen, Georgia's tallest starter is 6-7 Terry Fair, who has enjoyed an outstanding tournament.

Durham, who has 320 career wins, won't try to teach his Dawgs any new tricks.

"We won't be doing anything different than we've been doing all year," Durham said. "In practice we work on fundamentals. We have no changes in strategy. Most teams this late in the year try to do the things they've done well all year. We're no different."

Louisville's Scooter McCray expects a lot of running and dunking when the nation's two top-ranked teams square off Saturday.

"Houston is pretty much of a mirror of Louisville except they have a 7-footer," McCray said.

The 7-footer is center Akeem Olajuwon. He and power forward Larry Micheaux have helped establish Houston, 30-2, as a 2-point favorite. The Cougars ran their winning streak to 25 games with an awesome 89-71 victory over No. 11 Villanova last weekend.

Micheaux, a bruising, 6-9 Houston product, scored a season-high 30 points against Villanova. He is the Cougars' only senior starter.

The Cardinals, 32-3, have used a swarming pressure defense to pull out victories over Kentucky and Arkansas, but Louisville will meet its match in speed and inside power Saturday.

Players, management meet again

NBA talks show signs of success

United Press International
NEW YORK — The National Basketball Association and Players Association have gone almost silent in recent days. It could be even more quiet Sunday.

Representatives for the league and its players union met for close to four hours Tuesday, seeking to reach agreement on a collective bargaining pact that would avert a threatened Saturday night walkout by the NBAPA.

The Boston Herald, in its Wednesday morning editions, reported both sides have reached an agreement in principle—including several points of compromise—to ensure play-off action will go on as scheduled.

The newspaper said there are three major sections to the compromise:

— A maximum annual salary cap per team that would be between \$3.5 and \$3.7 million.

— A minimum salary level of between \$3.2 and \$3.5 million per team.

— Teams would be able to match free agent offers made to their own players by other clubs without having the contract figure affect its salary cap.

But neither the NBA nor the NBAPA would comment. In fact, neither the league nor union would even confirm the latest meeting was even taking place until a statement from NBA commissioner Larry O'Brien was released at its conclusion.

"We met with the Players Association today," O'Brien said, "and we will continue our negotiations with another meeting tomorrow."

Larry Fleisher, the general counsel of the NBAPA, again refused comment other than to confirm the parties had met and will get together again today.

Earlier in the day, the NBA announced O'Brien will review the status of the talks at an NBA Board of Governors meeting Thursday morning in New York. The Board is comprised

of one representative from each of the league's 23 teams.

Tuesday's meeting between the league and NBAPA was the first since the sides met secretly Sunday for three hours. Sunday's talks came after negotiations broke off last Thursday after only 20 minutes. Fleisher,

angered by management's stance, maintained the league's bargaining stance was an attempt to eliminate free agency.

The union has reportedly agreed to let management impose payroll caps on each team after next season if the owners

are willing to establish a payroll minimum.

The union's threatened walk-out would come after the con-

clusion of Saturday night's eight-game slate. The regular season is scheduled to end April 17, with the first round of the playoffs beginning April 19.

Washington nips Bucks; Houston falls to KC

United Press International
The Washington Bullets won their sixth straight game Tuesday night, nipping Milwaukee 84-81 at Landover, Md. If the playoffs started today, however, Washington wouldn't be in them.

Washington, 35-36, trails Atlanta by two games and New York by three in the three-way battle for the final two Eastern Division playoff spots. The Bullets have 11 games left, while the Hawks and Knicks each have nine remaining.

Frank Johnson and Jeff Ruland each scored 24 points to pace Washington against the Bucks, who are one victory away

from clinching first place in the Central Division.

The Bullets broke the game open with a 12-2 third quarter streak that turned a 48-46 deficit into a 58-50 lead. Paced by Ruland's eight third quarter points, Washington stretched its lead 72-62 with a quarter to play.

In other games, Kansas City blasted Houston 111-95, Indiana routed Boston 130-101, Atlanta crushed Cleveland 95-82, Chicago nipped Philadelphia 97-95, San Antonio tripped Denver 136-129, Phoenix nipped Utah 115-107, Los Angeles blasted San Diego 127-109, Portland downed Detroit 114-107 and Golden State edged Dallas 109-106.

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