

Friars' appearance in Final Four not big surprise to some coaches

From the Associated Press
 After a flurry of upsets spiced the first two weekends of action, Providence, lightly regarded when the NCAA picked the 64 teams to vie for the basketball title, is in the Final Four.
 But Providence's feat was not that much of a surprise to Hugh Durham of Georgia and North Carolina State's Jim Valvano, whose teams were the surprise of the 1983 Final Four, with the Wolfpack winning the title.
 "We did basically what they did," Durham said. "We upset two teams — St. John's and North Carolina — and to do that we had to have a pre-game good team. For (Providence) to do what they have done, they just put it together at the right time."
 "That's what we did, and back in 1983 when North Carolina State won, they did pretty much the same thing. They lost nine. That was a lot of losses at that time."
 Valvano remembers and agrees. "I still have my slipper," Valvano said. "On my mantle. Size 11."

"I think right now they (Providence) are the only legitimate Cinderella team. ... A legitimate Cinderella has to have more losses in a weekend than most of those (other teams in the Final Four) have in a year."
 "You have (Providence Coach) Rick Pitino, who's only in his second year," Valvano said. "They certainly were ugly when he got there and now they're beautiful, so they are the Cinderella."
 A preseason pick to finish about fourth in the Big East Conference, Providence, 25-8, built its early season record with victories over teams like Rhode Island, Brown, Siena, Rider, Howard, Maine and Hofstra — not exactly basketball powers.
 But the Friars were ready when Big East play began, beating Villanova twice, St. John's twice and splitting home-and-home games against Georgetown. In the Big East post-season tournament, Providence stopped St. John's for a third time before losing to Georgetown.
 And it was Georgetown standing

in the way of a Final Four spot when Providence gained the Southeast Regional title game. This time it was Providence 88-73.
 "We probably saw Providence one too many times this season," Georgetown Coach John Thompson said. "They play with the kind of intensity I respect."
 According to the seedings, Providence wasn't supposed to be around to beat Georgetown. The Friars were supposed to be second-round losers to third-seeded Illinois.
 But Illinois was upset in the first round by Austin Peay, a team Providence nipped 90-87 in overtime. Then came Alabama, seeded second behind Georgetown in the regional. Bombing from the outside with 3-pointers, Providence stopped Alabama 103-82, then toppled Georgetown.
 "They only lost five games (actually eight), so you know they played real good all year," Durham said. "They are not a surprise team."

Chemistry fuels UNLV to Final Four

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (AP) — Two weeks ago, Nevada-Las Vegas Coach Jerry Tarkanian paced nervously among his players and talked about heart. He said it was a key ingredient they would need to advance through the NCAA basketball playoffs.
 It took a lot of heart to rally and beat Iowa Sunday, and Tarkanian said his Runnin' Rebels will need more of the same when they meet Indiana Saturday in the Final Four at New Orleans.
 "We've got to play well, we've got to play with heart, and we've got to be lucky," Tarkanian said Monday in assessing his team's chances against the Hoosiers. "We've got to get the best bounce of the ball."

The Rebels overcame a 19-point deficit to edge Iowa 84-81, relying on the 3-point field goals that have helped carry the club to a 37-1 record. The Rebels ended the season ranked No. 1 in The Associated Press poll, a position they held for 12 weeks.

"I think this is without a doubt the best team we've ever had," said Tarkanian, in his 14th season with the Rebels. "What makes them so good is their chemistry, their work ethic, their heart. We've had other teams with more raw talent. But these kids just work so hard and want to win so bad."

Tarkanian's last trip to the Final Four came in 1977 when his club lost to North Carolina 84-83 in the semifinals. His roster that season included eight players who eventually played professionally.

The raw talent found in the Class of '77 may be missing in the Class of '87, but the determination is there.
 "Our kids have just played their hearts out all year," Tarkanian said. "They've got the ability to (play) pressure (defense) and when they get behind, they can revert to that. They've got more mental toughness, more heart, they work harder than any team I've ever had."

The Rebels demonstrated their defensive tenacity in Sunday's comeback, holding Iowa to 23 points in the second half after giving up 58 in the first half because "we got a little tricky, instead of sticking to the basics," Tarkanian said.

The Rebels' record is their best ever and ties the record for the most wins in a season, set last year by Duke. The record year represents a mix of talent, luck and determination, Tarkanian said.

"We were lucky . . . yesterday (Sunday), but most of the season we were just better than most of the teams we played," he said.

Blackman powers Dallas to first victory ever in Philadelphia as Mavericks edge 76ers

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Rolando Blackman scored 38 points Monday night as the Dallas Mavericks won in Philadelphia for the first time ever, defeating the 76ers 103-100.
 Dallas had lost all six games in Philadelphia since entering the NBA in 1980-81.
 The Mavericks led 98-93 on two free throws by Blackman with two minutes remaining. Steve Colter then hit a jump shot and

David Wingate's steal and layup with 51 seconds to go cut the Dallas lead to 98-97.
 But Blackman made a 14-footer with 33 seconds remaining and his two free throws 15 seconds later sealed Dallas' victory.
 Philadelphia took its first lead of the second half 85-83 on a layup by Wingate with 8:17 to play. After another field goal by Wingate, the Mavericks scored eight straight points and led 91-

87 on Derek Harper's layup with 4:44 remaining.
 Sam Perkins added 14 points and Roy Tarpley and Harper 13 each for Dallas, which won its sixth game in its last seven outings. Charles Barkley had 24 points and Tim McCormick 22 for Philadelphia, which had a three-game winning streak ended. Wingate added 18 points and a career-high 13 assists.

Pistons slide by Rockets 114-110 as Thomas sinks 21 free throws

HOUSTON (AP) — Detroit guard Isiah Thomas hit two of his 21 points from the free-throw line with 33 seconds left to seal a 114-110 win Monday night over the Houston Rockets.
 Thomas also added 12 assists, while Adrian Dantley scored 18 of his 25 points in the first period and center Bill Laimbeer contributed 17 points and 19 rebounds for the 45-2 Pistons.
 Houston, now 36-33, lost the seventh of its last nine games despite Mzem Olajuwon's 38 points and 14

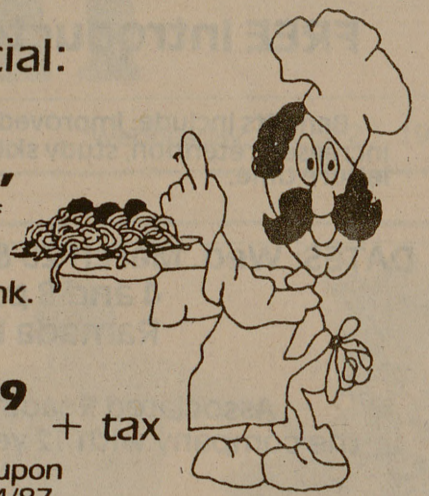
rebounds. Six Rockets were in double figures.
 Detroit was ahead only 93-92 going into the final period when a 10-2 surge was fueled by three baskets from Vinnie Johnson, who came off the bench to finish with 16 points.
 The game started off with Dantley scoring 18 of Detroit's first 40 points, while Olajuwon contributed 11 for Houston in the first period.
 During the second period, the Pistons fell to 50-44 but rebounded on a 22-9 run and took a 66-59 advan-

tage on Laimbeer's layup. Detroit had a 68-62 halftime edge.
 With seven minutes remaining in the third period, Jim Petersen pulled the Rockets even at 76 on a 10-foot corner shot. Houston led briefly 92-91 on two free throws by Robert Reid with a minute left in the third period.
 It was the Rockets only lead in the second half.
 Detroit's Sidney Green and Olajuwon each had 10 points in the third quarter.

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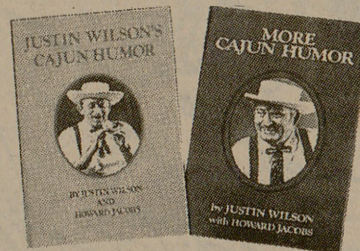


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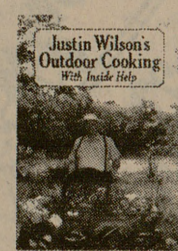
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