

Williams seeking first title

ATLANTA (AP) — When Dean Smith finally won his first national championship in 1982, no one was happier for him than Roy Williams.

The North Carolina assistant told his boss, "I'm so glad you won. Maybe this will put people up."

Williams is now the head coach at Kansas and he certainly can relate to the anguish that Smith endured through all those years when the Tar Heels kept coming up short in the Final Four.

"It's something I've got to live with it," said Williams, seeking his first national title with the Jayhawks. "If I win one, they'll move on someone else. If not, they'll keep coming after me."

He is not alone. It seems that every team in this year's Final Four has something to prove. Indiana coach Mike Davis is still trying to escape the omnipresent shadow of Bob Knight. Davis admits that he is thought of as a loser because of the burden placed on his family the last two seasons.

Maryland and Gary Williams overcame an imposing barrier last year by making the Final Four, but nothing less than the school's first national title will satisfy this time around.

Oklahoma has won plenty of championships on the football field, but is eager to demonstrate that the Sooners play some pretend good basketball as well.

Back to Roy Williams, who has made the Final Four 16 in eight of 13 years and is back to match with the Final Four for the third time. So far, all success has yet to add up to a national championship.

When it comes to perseverance, he was inspired by the master. Smith's first championship came in his 21st season at North Carolina — on his seventh trip to the Final Four.

After finally winning, Smith tried not to let overwhelm his legacy. "I don't know if I'm a better coach than I was 2 1/2 hours ago," said Williams.

Kansas is back in the Final Four for the first time since 1993. The top-seeded Jayhawks will meet fellow No. 1 Maryland Saturday before more than 50,000 fans at the Georgia Dome.

Oklahoma, which lost to Kansas (prelims) in the 1988 national title game, takes Indiana in the other semifinal. The championship will be decided Friday night.

Williams wants to savor this Final Four experience more than he did the last time.

Once I get ticket requests and room reservations all taken care of, it will be a lot of fun," the Kansas coach said Wednesday. "I'm pushing our team to win it."

Davis is finally enjoying his rocky tenure at Indiana.

Anyone who succeeded Knight — especially after the General was forced out

under nasty circumstances — was going to face resentment in the Hoosier Nation. Still, Davis let the criticism become a little too personal.

"I knew it was going to be a tough task," he said. "I just wasn't ready for how tough it's been. Now I understand it's not about me. It's about being the guy who followed coach Knight. I don't like criticism sometimes, but that's part of it."

Davis guided the Hoosiers to the NCAA tournament in his first season, but they were upset by Kent State in the opening round.

The pressure became even greater this season when Knight returned to coaching at Texas Tech, leading a remarkable turnaround.

But the tide began to turn when Knight's new team was beaten in the first round. His old team, meanwhile, shocked top-seeded Duke in the regional semifinals — prompting a very un-Knight-like celebration by Davis — on the way to its first Final Four since 1992.

"I had a lot of low points this year," Davis said. "It even got to the point where I thought if I could just leave the program in good shape ... and just move on to somewhere else, I would be happy."

A friend persuaded him to ride out the pessimism.

"He told me I should never leave because of

the fear of something," Davis said. "That made sense to me. If you move on, move on because you've got something better, not because you fear the criticism from people."

Despite a storied basketball history, Maryland had never been to the Final Four until last season. Gary Williams spent seven futile years chasing the elusive goal, falling short three times in the regional semifinals.

Finally, the Terps broke through. "That didn't bother me much as it bothered our fans," Williams insisted. "Some years, you're just not good enough. Other times, it's a one-game playoff situation and funny things happen. A lot of great coaches have not been to the Final Four."

Kelvin Sampson is there for the first time. In his first seven years at Oklahoma, the Sooners lost five times in the opening round.

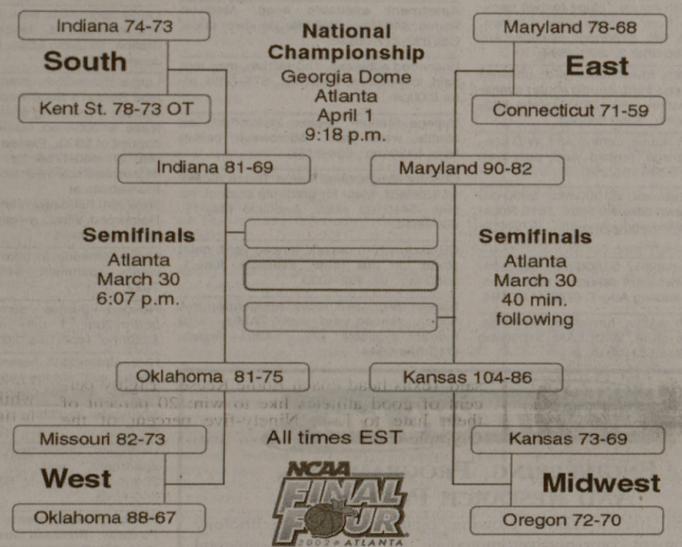
Making it even tougher to get recognized on campus: the Oklahoma football team finished No. 1 in the 2000 season.

"There's a reason why when you think Oklahoma, you think football," Sampson said. "I'm anxious to see how the fans react to our program now. They've always respected us. We've always been good. But we've taken another step up."

With two more wins, the Sooners will not have anything left to prove.

The other three schools feel the same way.

2002 NCAA Division I men's basketball championship Final Four: Hoosiers, Jayhawks, Terps, Sooners



SOURCE: NCAA

AP

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Chem 101	Part I Mon Apr 1 6pm-10pm	Part II Tue Apr 2 6pm-9pm		
Finc 309	Part I Mon Apr 1 6pm-8pm	Part II Tue Apr 2 6pm-9pm	Part III Wed Apr 3 6pm-8pm	Part IV Sun Apr 7 6pm-9pm
Finc 341	Part I Mon Apr 1 6pm-8pm	Part II Tue Apr 2 6pm-9pm	Part III Wed Apr 3 6pm-8pm	Part IV Sun Apr 7 6pm-9pm
Info 303* Anthony	Part I Sun Mar 31 6pm-9pm	Part II Mon Apr 1 6pm-9pm	Part III Tue Apr 2 6pm-9pm	Part IV Wed Apr 3 6pm-9pm
Info 305* Anthony	Part I Sun Mar 31 9pm-12am	Part II Mon Apr 1 9pm-12am	Part III Tue Apr 2 9pm-12am	Part IV Wed Apr 3 9pm-12am
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