

# Back In Post-Season: Coyote Women To Face Utah State In WBI

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A rematch is in order for the University of South Dakota women's basketball team. This time, though, that opportunity comes in yet another post-season appearance. The Coyotes accepted an offer Monday night to play in the 16-team Women's Basketball Invitational (WBI) and will travel to Utah State on Thursday night. Full pairings and times were not released by press time Monday. It was three months ago that USD (17-15) dropped a 70-69 game in Logan, Utah, despite holding a plus-37 edge in rebounds. Now comes the challenge of rebounding in what will be the program's third consecutive Division I playoff appearance. "It's not very often that you get a second chance at a team that we felt like we

out-played most of the game," USD coach Amy Williams said Monday night. "Now we get a rematch. "We're excited to continue our season and still be playing." That possibility hinged on two post-season tournaments: The WNIT or the WBI, both of which the Coyotes have secured bids in the past two years. In 2011, USD accepted an invitation to the WBI with a 19-11 record — runner-up in the Great West Conference. The Coyotes came into the tournament with 10 wins in 12 games and advanced to the second round. A year ago, a 22-7 record and a solid RPI earned the Coyotes a berth in the WNIT, where they again fell in the second round. This year, though, an RPI of 182 — helped by advancing to last week's Summit League Tournament championship game — led to speculation about which tournament would come calling.

"This whole experience is new to me, but I felt so good about the way our team played in the conference tournament, that if any of those people watched us play, they'd think we were worthy," said Williams, whose team has won five of its past six games. "Even if they didn't, we felt good about the showing we had." Picked sixth in the pre-season Summit League poll, the Coyotes went on to finish third in the regular season and advanced to the tournament final, where they lost, 56-53, to rival South Dakota State. Nine days later, the Coyotes will head to Utah for their WBI opener. The four-year-old WBI utilizes an East-West format and does not require a bidding process. The teams are chosen based on RPI, strength of schedule, quality wins and "end of season trends." Home teams keep all the revenue and road teams get paid for their trip, according to the tournament website. The second

round would be played Saturday or Sunday at a site to be determined. The Coyotes will be aided in this setup by already having traveled to Logan, Williams said. "There's a comfort level there, but at this point, our kids are used to walking in new gyms and shooting the ball around," she said. On the other hand, USD doesn't exactly have the greatest memories of their trip to Utah State. In that meeting back in December, the Coyotes dominated the class with a 63-26 edge, but shot just 35 percent from the field and 4-of-22 on three-pointers. The Aggies got a three with 10 seconds left to secure the comeback. Utah State (18-13) boasts an RPI of 139, but went 14-4 in the Western Athletic Conference and lost in the tournament semifinals to eventual champion Idaho. The Aggies are coached by Jerry Finkbeiner, who came to Logan from Oral

Roberts. His program was already scheduled to make a return trip to Vermillion next season, Williams said. "It's becoming like a little miniseries," she joked. Another familiar sight for USD? Seeing its season continue past the regular season and conference tournament. The four seniors for the Coyotes (Tempestt Wilson, Alexis Yackley, Sam Mehr and Pam January) will close their careers with three consecutive post-season appearances. "It's a testament to the program here, the tradition, the history, that even through the transition process, they've been able to play in the post-season," Williams said. "We're hoping to lean heavily on our seniors' experience, and hope to make a run." You can follow Jeremy Hoeck on Twitter at [twitter.com/jhoeck](https://twitter.com/jhoeck)

# SDSU Women Draw South Carolina

BY DIRK LAMMERS  
Associated Press

BROOKINGS (AP) — South Dakota State women's basketball coach Aaron Johnston says South Carolina will be a tough opponent in the opening round of the NCAA tournament and is glad the game will be played at a neutral site. Johnston said South Carolina, the No. 4 seed in the Norfolk Region, is a strong, athletic and physical team that puts a lot of pressure on opponents and causes turnovers. The Jackrabbits also will have to be aggressive on the boards in the first-round game in Boulder, Colo., on Saturday night. "When you're playing an SEC team, that's a whole new level of rebounding," Johnston said Monday night. South Dakota State (25-7), the 13th seed, won an automatic bid to the tournament by defeating South Dakota 56-53 in the Summit League title game. South Carolina (24-7) earned an at-large bid after losing to No. 19 Texas A&M 61-52 in the Southeastern Conference tournament quarterfinals. Johnston said if the Jackrabbits are going to pull off a first-round upset, they'll need good perimeter play, especially from Ashley Eide and Megan Waytashek. He also wants to get Katie Lingle her touches, and he expects good things from sophomore guard Gabrielle Boever, who has stepped up her play during the last month. "She's never going to be a point guard — at least this year — who scores a ton of points," he said. "But she can get some baskets. She can handle pressure. She can create some turnovers herself with her defense."

South Dakota State played some physical games in the Summit League tournament, and Johnson expects more of the same in Boulder as officials from the major conferences tend to let players play. "Our style of play, I think, actually matches up pretty well with that," Johnston said. "We are a very physical team, inside and outside. I hope that's the way it's called. That can maybe be an advantage for us." The Jackrabbits are making their fifth straight trip to the NAAs. They won their inaugural game in 2009, but lost their first-round openers the past three seasons. The team wants to get deeper into the tournament, but it's not added pressure or nerves. "I think it's a real good positive sense of urgency," Johnston said. "At the end of the day, they want to say they've played their best basketball in every game they play form this point on. In the last couple years, we've fallen a little bit short of that."

**South Dakota State**  
Brookings, 19-13.  
**Nickname:** Jackrabbits. **Coach:** Aaron Johnston.  
**Conference:** Summit. **Bid:** Automatic.  
**Region:** Norfolk. **Seed:** No. 13.  
**Tournament Record:** 1-4, 4 years, **Last Appearance:** 2012.  
**Scoring:** (67.3); Ashley Eide 13.9; Megan Waytashek 13.8; Katie Lingle 8.9.  
**Rebounds:** (38.4); Leah Dietel 5.7; Katie Lingle

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South Dakota State celebrates after winning the Summit League women's basketball tournament on March 12. The Jackrabbits drew a 13-seed in the NCAA Women's Basketball Tournament, and will face South Carolina in the opening round on Saturday in Boulder, Colo.

# Baylor, Stanford, UConn, Notre Dame Earn Top Seeds

Brittney Griner and Baylor's path to a second straight national championship will have a familiar feel. Then again, so will the whole NCAA women's basketball tournament. For the first time ever, the top four seeds are the same for consecutive seasons. Baylor, Connecticut, Notre Dame and Stanford all earned No. 1 spots when the field was announced Monday night. Unlike the men's side, where it was a topsy-turvy season with major upsets seemingly every week, women's basketball hasn't had the same parity. The top six teams in the final Associated Press poll only had two losses outside of each other, the fewest by far since writers began voting for the AP's No. 1 in the 1994-95 season. "To think that the rest of the field is going to catch up to Baylor or Notre Dame or the top four or five teams in the country this year is probably unrealistic," UConn coach Geno Auriemma said. "But I think all those teams between five and 12 are way better than they've ever been." The women's basketball madness gets started Saturday — the first step en route to the Final Four, which begins April 7 in New Orleans. Baylor coach Kim Mulkey hopes to make it there with her Lady Bears, who will be trying to become the fourth different school to

win consecutive national championships, joining Southern California, UConn, and Tennessee. Mulkey grew up in Louisiana. Last season, Baylor was trying to becoming the first team to win 40 games in a season. Now they are just focused on the title. "Our goal is to win the six games and win the national championship," Griner said. Standing in the way could be Tennessee. The Lady Vols, who have made every NCAA tournament since it began in 1982, are the No. 2 seed in Baylor's region. This will be the first time that coach Pat Summitt won't be on the sidelines. Summitt stepped down after last season because she had been afflicted with early onset dementia, Alzheimer's type. "The whole season has been different, and at times, it's hard," said longtime assistant Holly Warlick, who took over this season and guided the Lady Vols to an SEC regular season title. "Other times, it's OK. But I still have her there. She's still around these young ladies. She's still there in spirit and everything else, and she's still a vital part of this team." While Tennessee set the standard in women's basketball, Stanford has been one of the most dominant teams lately. The Cardinal will try and reach the Final Four for a sixth straight season and end Hall of Fame coach Tara VanDerveer's 21-year

drought without a national championship. Led by junior star Chiney Ogwumike, Stanford may already have the most impressive win this season, ending Baylor's 42-game winning streak in November. That's the only loss that the defending national champion Lady Bears suffered this season. The Cardinal, who will open up against Tulsa at home on Sunday, could face No. 2 seed California in the regional final. The Golden Bears shared the Pac-12 title with Stanford this season after ending the Cardinal's 81-game conference winning streak in January. Notre Dame will be trying to make it back to a third straight national championship game. The Irish, led by senior guard Skylar Diggins, have already had an incredible season losing only to Baylor. Notre Dame won its first Big East tournament championship last Tuesday and also went undefeated in the conference in the regular season. Unlike the other three No. 1 seeds, who are playing at home, the Irish will open up on the road against Tennessee-Martin. Potentially they could face host Iowa in the second round. "Lower seeded team playing on higher seeded floors is part of our format," NCAA selection committee chair Carolayne Henry said. "We looked at putting Notre Dame in Columbus. But to make our bracket work we

weren't able to put Notre Dame there." Notre Dame coach Muffet McGraw said the Irish will just have to live with it. "It's disappointing that we didn't get a neutral site. I thought that the committee would take care of the No. 1 seed, but you've got to play good teams," she said. "If we're the No. 1 seed, we ought to be able to take care of business in the first round, at least." The Irish swept all three meetings with Connecticut and have dominated the series recently, winning seven of the past eight meetings, including the past two in the Final Four. To get to a third straight title game they'll likely have to beat UConn again. The Huskies will open on Saturday against Idaho, which will be making its first trip to the NCAA tournament since 1985. It's been a somewhat disappointing season for the Huskies, who didn't win either the Big East conference regular season or tournament title for the first time in 19 years. UConn lost four of its five games against the other top seeds, faltering down the stretch in each of the losses. One intriguing story line for UConn before a potential rematch with Notre Dame could be if Elena Delle Donne and Delaware

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# Augie Women Headed To Elite 8 After Win Over Emporia State

TOPEKA, Kan. — The Augustana Vikings survived a tough first half to beat Emporia State 75-74 for the Central Region Championship in the NCAA Division II Women's Basketball Tournament on Monday at Lee Arena. Augustana (27-6) advances to the national quarterfinals, March 26 in San Antonio. The Vikings will face Clayton (Ga.) State, the Southeast Region champion at 31-0, in the 11 a.m. quarterfinal. Tournament Most Outstanding Player Alex Feeney scored the final two of her game-high 24 points from the free throw line with 0.7 seconds left in regula-

tion to give the Vikings the win. She also had nine rebounds in the effort. Also for Augustana, Cami Koehn had 15 points off the bench and Lydia Nelson added 11 points. Merissa Quick had 18 points and eight rebounds, and Rheanna Egli had 17 points to lead Emporia State. Rachel Hanf scored 16 points and Laura Patrick had 14 points in the effort. Egli, Quick and Patrick were also named to the all-tournament team, as was Michelle Fisher of Southwest Oklahoma State.

BY DAVID BRANDT  
AP Sports Writer

Overall graduation rates improved among players at schools in this year's men's NCAA basketball tournament, and African-American players in particular did better, according to a study released Monday. The annual report by the University of Central Florida's Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport (TIDES) shows African-American players' graduation success rate increased from 59 percent in 2012 to 65 percent this year, while white players' rates increased from 88 percent to 90 percent. The overall graduation rates for programs in the tournament increased from 67 percent in 2012 to 70 percent. Six out of the tournament's 68

teams have an APR score that falls below the NCAA's new 930 line, which could lead to future penalties. Those teams are Southern, James Madison, Saint Louis, New Mexico State, Oregon and Oklahoma State. Richard Lapchick, the study's primary author, said the majority of the report contains good news. Information was collected by the NCAA from member institutions for the study. The institute reviewed the six-year graduation rates of each school's freshman class, or Graduation Success Rates, then calculated a four-class average or Academic Progress Rate. "In general, it's the most progress I've seen overall," Lapchick said told The Associated Press. "To be specific, every facet that we consider, everyone on the team, all the graduation rates increased. The APR scores increased significantly over

the past year. And the difference in rates between white and African-American players declined 3 percent, though that gap is still a major factor of concern." There is a 25 percentage point difference in the graduation gap between white and African-American players among tournament teams this year. Lapchick said more progress needs to be made in that area, though he noted the 65 percent graduation rate for African-American basketball players was significantly higher than the 38 percent for all male African-American college students. Lapchick said there were two major factors in the study's improving numbers: the NCAA's tightening academic rules and the recent involvement of U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan.

"The fact that teams can lose scholarships has been an extremely strong deterrent. Everything has improved consistently and continues to improve," Lapchick said. "Arne Duncan got involved and that's also been very important. He was a student athlete and the NCAA certainly doesn't want the federal government involved." The APR was developed by the NCAA in 2004 as a means to improve graduation rates and is a four-year rolling average of academic performance that takes into account academic eligibility and retention. The NCAA recently voted to increase its APR cutoff line for Division I programs from 925 to 930, which is roughly equivalent to a 50 percent graduation rate. The new standard is being phased into the NCAA's average starting this year.