

# March madness hits home

March Madness has tipped off and there is action taking place everywhere. Millions of brackets have been filled out by viewers and everyone will be watching to see how the tournament plays.

In a 68 team tournament, there are over, 32 chances to make a mistake. The chances of having a perfect bracket are one in 9,223,372,036,854,775,808. So it is anyone's guess who will win it all.

UVA has been a make or break team in the past five seasons of the tournament, since many teachers are alumni and students are applying to the university, it makes UVA a favorite.

UVA has disappointed a lot, being ranked No.1 in their tournament division and not getting very far. In the 2018 tournament, UVA was ranked No.1 in their group and lost to the 16 seed, the University of Maryland Baltimore College. This epic loss was the first time ever a 16 seed beat a first-seeded team and resulted in thousands of busted brackets.

This year has come down to a judgment call as the Cavaliers have been in a dog fight for first place in the ACC (Atlantic Coastal Conference) all year with the Duke Blue Devils. Duke has also been high in the rankings all season, and they rarely disappoint in the tournament.

Duke is known for having successful tournaments. However, with the recent injury to stud freshman Zion Williamson, the Blue Devil's game had a notable drop-off.

"When Zion Williamson went down it kinda changed everything and Duke fell off a little bit," freshman Maxwell Lanham said. The last time Duke won the National Championship was in 2015 against Wisconsin and they could very well do it again after knocking off UNC and Florida State in the ACC Championship tournament.

But then there's Gonzaga who can dominate any team on the west coast. Gonzaga is a big-time basketball team and they are definitely ready for this year's tournament. North Carolina

has huge hopes as well since they won in 2017 and definitely show up to play every tournament. Both of these teams are favorites to win this year.

Another team is Tennessee, the greater SEC (Southern Eastern Conference) team in the NCAA. They have really brought up their basketball program in the past few years.

"I didn't expect Tennessee to have such a good start," Lanham said.

They have been up and down all season being ranked everywhere between 10 and 1. Another SEC dominance is Kentucky, but they have been questionable the past few years not really shining out or blending in. You either get a good team or mediocre team, but even when they're mediocre they're better than most. Michigan, who really brought their basketball program up in recent years, has always fallen under Michigan State. MSU has always been the more dominant basketball team in Michigan.

Michigan has the team to do something good. Last year, they made to the finals and can easily make it to the Sweet 16 or higher.

Michigan State is doing quite fine, if they could really pull some levers and press some buttons, they have a good chance to get into the Final Four. However, based on the competition, Michigan State will probably end up in the Sweet 16 at best.

The biggest story so far for NCAA basketball this season was the ACC.

Every team has been very competitive and over half the teams have at least been ranked. Virginia Tech has never been as dominant in past seasons, but they definitely have had the spotlight on them a few times.

For most teams in the ACC, they would be ranked really high at points of the season but were knocked around by Duke, Virginia, etc.

Based on where these teams are placed they could control their region but they will have trouble with the bigger teams. Along with the Hokies; Syracuse, Louisville, and Florida State have all been strong forces inside the ACC.

The ACC has really been dominant, the former great Pac-12

(Pacific 12 Conference) only has one hope for a successful March Madness team: Wisconsin. Wisconsin had an okay season so far, but they have to work a little harder if they want to compete with the better teams in the tournament.

The Pac-12 used to be a huge force within the tournament, with teams like Oregon, Washington, and UCLA, they were the conference to beat. However, it is very quiet now and is not very competitive.

Unfortunately, Oregon's star center, Bol Bol, was injured early on and Oregon has not been able to recover since.

This has built most of the intense competitive energy within the first few months of the season.

One of the many great things about doing the March Madness bracket is competing with friends, coworkers, and family. English teacher Bill Maglisceau puts together a bracket pool with other staff members every year.

Last year in 2018, there were up to 89 teacher participants in the pool. He started in 1998.

"The old athletic director, Olan Faulk, had asked me to do it," Maglisceau said.

Some teachers have had some outstanding brackets.

"One year, Mr. [Joseph] Valentino had a near perfect bracket and another year Dr. [Michael] Mazzeralla came from behind and won. Those two are almost always in the mix" Maglisceau said.

Like most, Maglisceau plans on having Duke win it all.

In this tournament there are bound to be some fireworks, upsets, blow outs, nail biters and crazy finishes. In a tournament with 67 games every basketball play in the book will be implemented.

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# The Lady Atoms win their senior night game

The Lady Atoms win their senior night basketball game against the West Potomac Wolverines. It was a close game- coming down to the last few seconds, ending with a score of 53-50.

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## Cracking down on Concussions

When people think of concussions in high school sports, football is the first sport that comes to mind. Although most concussions do take place in football, winter sports such as basketball and wrestling, also have very high concussion rates.

A concussion is described as a brain injury that is typically caused by a blow to the head or a violent shaking of the head and body. Higher contact sports have a greater risk of concussions.

Aproximately all sports-related concussions account for 3.8 million concussions per year and of that 2.4 million are from high school and teen sports. 63% of all concussions in the U.S. come from sport-related injuries. Of that 63%, 47% account for high school sports.

“I got my concussion in a basketball game last year,” junior Annika Yungner, a power forward on the girls varsity basketball team. “There was a cross-court pass and an elbow from an opponent that both hit my head at the same time.”

Girls basketball sees the third most concussions in all high school sports after football and girls soccer. According to the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, girls are at a significantly higher rate of getting concussions than boys.

“At first I didn’t know I had a concussion,” Yungner said. “It was ten minutes later when I felt very dizzy and had blurry vision.”

Concussions can put athletes out of sports for weeks. Recovery from a minor concussion can take up to 24 hours and as long as three weeks. Symptoms like dizziness and nausea can last multiple weeks after the injury. A major concussion, however, is very different. An athlete can be out for more than a month and is significantly more likely to get another one down the road.

“We have a pretty comprehensive program that we have at AHS,” athletic trainer Ryan Hughes said. “Every student that plays a sport has a baseline computer test. This tells us how their brain is working before a concussion. If a student does get a concussion we notify the parents and the student checks in with us every day until the symptoms go away completely.”

Once the symptoms have gone away, a rigorous five step return to play protocol. It starts with light conditioning then moves to longer conditioning. This leads to agility exercises, conditioning with the team, and finally contact practice.

Cumulative sports concussions are shown to increase the likelihood of catastrophic head injury leading to permanent neurologic disability by 39%.

Many think that new safety measures should be taken in sports to prevent injuries.

Wrestling has banned some high-risk moves in past years for fear of concussions and other injuries. Although wrestling has lower rates of concussions since the safety measures were implemented wrestling has had a slight drop off in concussion

rates.

“You can’t entirely prevent concussions if you play a contact sport,” Yungner said. “All you can do is be prepared for it if it ever happens.”

Concussions and injuries, in general, are hard to prevent, but there are a couple things you can do on and off the court to be prepared. Wearing the proper equipment and talking to your coach or trainer after a knock to the head are good ways to ensure that you don’t have a concussion. Knowing the symptoms and taking the proper concussion education courses are ways off the court or field to help.

In no way should this discourage students from playing a sport. Concussions and other sports injuries are always a possibility in any sport you play, but playing a sport has so many other benefits for high school students.

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## **March Madness craze begins**

With the official bracket being released on March 11, the first round of the NCAA basketball tournament is set to kick off on March 15.

Many students are racing to begin creating brackets which predict winners and losers of each round of the tournament.

“I like creating brackets because it almost feels like I am writing a script,” junior Muaz Nasher said.

The intense and crucial moments of many tournament games are highly anticipated as dynamic high-scoring teams such as Kentucky and Kansas get set to take the court.

“My favorite part about March Madness has to be the buzzer beaters and exciting plays,” junior Alex Bellem said.

A number of students around school join leagues with friends and classmates in which all members create brackets and attempt to have the highest number of correct picks.

“It is always fun to compete against my friends,” Nasher said. “When it comes to March Madness, there is always an exciting feeling of getting correct picks.”

In the championship game last year, North Carolina came out victorious against Gonzaga.

This year, the favorites to win the tournament this year include Villanova, Duke and Virginia.

There are also a number of underdogs that have an opportunity to come out victorious such as Oklahoma and Missouri.

“I really think that Ohio State can win the championship this year,” Bellem said. “They are really severely underrated and nobody is giving them a legitimate shot to win.”

In addition, both Michigan and Michigan State are viewed as highly improved teams from last year with an opportunity to make the final four.

Those competing and creating brackets mainly do so in apps. In past years the most popular have been the ESPN Tournament Challenge and the NCAA March Madness app.

These apps provide notifications and updates on the status of brackets and breakdowns of individual games.

“I enjoy using the ESPN app because of the updates it gives me on my picks,” Bellem said.

Make sure to create and finalize brackets by March 15, as they will lock and be submitted automatically on that day.

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# Atoms Special Olympics

As the screeching whistle sounded and freshman Tate Conroy's shot went up into the air and through the basket, the audience roared at the close of the second quarter.

As the game went on, and the teams exchanged baskets, the Lee Lancers began to pull away with a lead.

For the first time on Jan. 14, AHS participated in the Special Olympics.

The Atoms Special Olympics basketball team competed in the Area 26 Basketball Invitational Tournament which was held on Jan. 14 at Holmes Middle School.

"This is the first year that Annandale has participated in the special olympics," Principal Tim Thomas said.

The team played in two games that consisted of four quarters each and lasted about approximately an hour each as well.

In the first match-up, the Atoms played against the Robert E. Lee Lancers Special Olympics team and against the Lake Braddock Bruins Special Olympics team in the second half of the tournament.

The Atoms were defeated narrowly in both match-ups, losing 38-24 to the Lancers and losing by only two to the Bruins

The AHS special education department was responsible for organizing the Atoms' participation in the event.

"I think it is tremendous that we participated this year," Thomas said. "It is a great opportunity not only for the kids participating in the special olympics, but it also shows how we value inclusion at Annandale High School."

In the weeks leading up to the special olympics basketball tournament, Leadership students attended team practices to help those participating in their preparation.

“I think the Special Olympics is a really great and positive for the school to participate in,” junior Leadership student Devin Gill said.

Not only did leadership students attend practices, but many also attended the tournament and helped out on the court.

“We had one to two practices with everyone playing in the tournament during W4 every week,” Gill said. “We also were able to play in the tournament games with the students.”

Players frequently rotated in and out of the games throughout all four quarters of each game.

The audience at the tournaments consisted of parents, students, as well as many AHS staff members including administration.

Also at the tournament were other school special olympics teams that rotated onto the court once the preceding games were completed.

“It makes me happy to see all types of kids out their on the court participating together,” Thomas said.

With this being the Atoms’ first year participating in a special olympics event, it will be determined if AHS will continue participation in these events in coming years.

“I think that it went really well this year and that Annandale should definitely participate in this event every year,” Gill said.

It is anticipated that because of the successful participation in the basketball tournament this year, the school will continue to join special olympics tournaments in future school

years.

“I appreciate the efforts of the special education staff for this event and all they do for our kids,” Thomas said. “I absolutely anticipate this event being a part of the future.”

The Atoms’ participation in the special olympics this year was successful overall and the efforts of the special education department are greatly appreciated.

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## **Player Profile: Junior Lotongo**

Junior Lotongo is a junior in his second year playing varsity basketball for the Atoms. He is looking to be a leader on this year’s squad. So far this season he is averaging 14 points per game.

How long have you been playing basketball?

I have been playing basketball since the fourth grade.

How did you discover your interest in basketball?

My sister got me into basketball. She let me watch it with her all the time and I eventually fell in love with it.

Who is your favorite basketball player and why?

My favorite player is Kevin Durant, because of how versatile he is.

What inspires you to play basketball?

What inspires me to play basketball is my mom, my family, and my friends. I want to bring my family and close friends to the top with me.

How have your friends and family supported you?

They come to games with me, give me rides to the gym, and they give me the best advice.

What's the best advice you've received?

The best advice I've ever gotten is "shooters shoot."

What's your daily training routine?

My daily training routine is: First, when I get to the gym, I stretch. Then, I lift and work on ball handling. After that, I shoot around 100 free throws and like 250 jump shots. Then, I run 5 on 5. I usually do all this with [junior] Amir [Aburish].

What is your favorite move to do in game?

My favorite move is the AI crossover.

What do you like to do in your free time?

In my free time I like to eat Chick-Fil-A.

What's your favorite song to listen to before a game to get pumped up?

My favorite song to listen to before a game is "We Don't Luv Em" by Hoodrich Pablo Juan.

What other sports do you play?

I play a little bit of football.

What's your favorite part about playing basketball?

My favorite part about playing basketball is when the game gets close at the end of the game. Both teams start fighting really hard to win.

What advice would you give to basketball beginners?

Some advice I would give is the advice my coaches give me now: "If you want to get somewhere you've never been, you have to do stuff you've never done."

What are your goals/expectations for the season?

My goal for the season is for our team to win the district.

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# Girls basketball seek a successful season

December has rolled around and so has the winter sports season.

Girls Varsity Basketball looks to improve on an unsuccessful 2017/2018 season. Senior Grace Hatch sees the problems the team had and knows how to fix it.

“Last year’s season had good moments to it but this year we are working on improving our shooting consistency, our communication, and our endurance,” Hatch said.

“My personal goal this season is to have a winning season,”

The girls played their first game on November 28th against Fairfax High School. The Rebels beat the Atoms 70-27.

Grace isn’t fazed by this loss though.

“Yesterday’s game was a learning experience because we didn’t have the whole team, we had girls hurt and sick. We did the best we could with what we had and we can only improve from there,” Hatch said.

The girls have taken into experience that basketball is a team game.

“I am looking forward to seeing us as a team comes together on and off the court,” Hatch said. With a very important schedule coming up, girls look to make a strong push for the season.

The girls are preparing for an upcoming tournament at Potomac High School on December 1st and 2nd.

The girls play their next game on December 5th at Falls Church High School.

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## **Boys basketball in depth**

After a disappointing season last year for the Atoms boys varsity basketball team, the team works hard and makes every practice worth it as they prepare for their upcoming season.

The boy's varsity team last year went for a disappointing record of 8 wins and 15 losses. But changes have been. Annandale is now in a new conference with easier opponents. Also, Annandale has acquired a new head coach from Wakefield High School.

On November 14th, the boys had a scrimmage against McLean High School. The game took place at Annandale High School. The boys won by 23 points in a blowout victory. Senior Mathew Mckiver had things to say about the game. "We really worked well as a team, and everyone individually did their part," said Mckiver.

The boys then took on South County High School on November 22. The boys fell short in a tough and a hard-fought game. The game took place at South County High School. Junior Dazon Harrison felt like he could have played better. "We could have played way better as a team and I could have played better individually," said Harrison.

The boys so far have played two scrimmages and have won one and lost the other, a record of 1-1. They will be taking on Fairfax Rebels on November 29th. The game will take place at Fairfax High School and it will be their first regular season game.

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# Students gear up for the start of the Fantasy Basketball Season

As a new NBA basketball season rolls around, so does a new season for Fantasy Basketball.

Throughout the years of the start of Fantasy Basketball, it has garnered more and more attention and participation from many, including a large amount of AHS students.

Many students have created leagues on ESPN Fantasy where they have fellow friends and classmates join and create teams via a draft, where each member of the league selects NBA players that they want to be part of their fantasy team.

Each week, one league member's team is pinned against another team in the league and the winner is determined by which team accumulates the most fantasy points, which is dependent on the stats of the NBA players.

For some students, competition is the key factor in their participation.

"My favorite part of fantasy basketball is beating the person that I am matched up against," junior Javonte Durr-Cannon said. "I always try to start players that I think would get me the most points and give me the best chance to win."

Fantasy Basketball teams will typically have one or two stand out performers that consistently accumulate the highest amount of fantasy points.

"My most valuable player is most likely LeBron James," sophomore Syed Ali said. "He's probably my best player because he gets all sorts of stats which add up to a lot of fantasy

points.”

With the increasing popularity of Fantasy Basketball among students, some have even come to prefer the basketball version of fantasy over football and other sports.

“I am starting to like and prefer fantasy basketball over other types of fantasy sports leagues like football,” Durr-Cannon said. “Fantasy basketball give you more positions to fill with more options for players.”

The popularity of Fantasy Basketball amongst students may continue to increase as it steadily begins to gain preference over fantasy leagues for different sports.

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## **NBA 2K18: Innovation comes at a price**

NBA2K serves as basketball fan’s way to escape reality from not only reality, but from their respective NBA team. One of the ways you can escape is by playing “MyCareer.” The game mode allows you to immerse yourself into the harsh journey of becoming an NBA player and working hard to become the league’s top player and create a legend of an NBA career.

“ProAm,” an eSports competitive game mode, where you can make a team of up to 10 with you and your friends and take on some of the best in the world. “MyPark” is more casual, where you can team up with some friends on the fly and take people head on in 2v2, 3v3, or 5v5. Or even go 1v1 with a friend to see who the better 2K player is.

Though, In 2K18, “MyCareer,” “ProAm,” and “MyPark” where combined to make “The Neighborhood,” a social-like hub, comparable to Activision’s Destiny. It allows you to build

your player your way, and grow him in more entertaining way. There's also some mini-games if you go down to the "2K Zone" in "The Neighborhood" like trivia and an arcade hoops game. You can really personalize your player. It all sounds great and ingenious until you see the price: 1,500 VC for a basic pair of Nike shoes? In other words, \$1.16 for virtual shoes?

2K has decided to implement micro transactions into about everything in the game: clothes, tattoos, shoes, haircuts, and the development of your player. You can play to earn VC, but it's not enough. 2K practically puts sanctions on you to go into your pockets, and give them \$3.49 for 5,000 VC, and even that won't give you a nice outfit for a virtual player. A virtual. Player.

The graphics are polished from 2K17, though they did implement new AI, making the computer more difficult on defense, forcing you to make a more educated play. The gameplay is somewhat improved, once again polished, to add a little more realism into 2K. There's been some bugs with 2K, the main ones are the inability to save your MyPlayer, and one where it wipes your MyPlayer's saved data, bought VC, and in-game items. As expected, a large amount of 2K players have complained heavily to 2K. 2K has already released a patch to battle this bug. Then you have the online servers... Never change, 2K. Never change. All in all, 2K took a few steps forward with the introduction of "The Neighborhood", creating this new, awesome, more social environment for its players though also took a couple steps back with the force feeding of micro transactions into the game, the awful data-wiping bugs, and unimproved online serves.

Rating 7.6/10

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# Boys Basketball robbed at Senior Night

As a bottle dropped onto the court from the bleachers for the second time, the Atoms' bench erupted with anger as the team would be charged with a technical foul and the Majors would be awarded four free throw attempts which they converted into points.

Unfortunately for the Atoms, with the team clinging to a one point lead late in the fourth quarter, the actions of a spectator from the bleachers robbed them of a senior night victory.

"I was shocked that someone would do that to their own team," senior Robert Figley said.

The game started out as any traditional senior night game would with Atoms hosting the Mount Vernon Majors.

The Atoms' seniors Youni Eskinder, Jordan Adams, Chase Murphy, Edris Raid, Dontae Johnson, Robert Figley, Junior Ebirim and Andrew Ours were honored before the game tipped off.

"Being called out for senior night was probably the best feeling in the whole world," senior Edris Raid said

The final game of the regular season started strong for the Atoms as the team took the lead and remained in front for the remainder of the first quarter with the score at 12-9.

The Majors tied the game at 15 midway through the second quarter. Eventually, the Majors extended their lead late in the second quarter. However, the Atoms fought back and regained the lead going into the half up 23-18.

The Atoms maintained their lead up until the beginning of the fourth quarter. The Atoms and the Majors would trade the lead

for multiple possessions, until Mount. Vernon built up a six point lead 43-37.

With time winding down in the game, senior Dontae Johnson scored on a driving lay up, a clutch basket to give the lead back Atoms 48-47 with only two minutes remaining.

With the Atoms holding onto a 56-55 lead with less than a minute remaining, a spectator in the bleachers on the Annandale side threw a bottle that landed onto the court.

The referees stopped play and removed the bottle from the playing surface and warned the crowd that if another bottle is thrown, the Atoms would be charged with a technical foul.

Despite the warning, the unidentified spectator at the time persisted and another bottle would fall from the bleachers onto the court again.

"I was angry because I felt like we were being robbed of a win," Raid said.

The officials followed through on their warning and charged the Atoms with a technical foul, granting the Majors four free throw attempts.

The Majors capitalized on the opportunity and drained all four free throw attempts giving Mount Vernon a 59-56 lead. The crowd looked on as each free throw made brought the possibility of a blown game closer and closer.

With many looking to find who the culprit that launched the bottle onto the court twice was, the Atoms looked to the scoreboard to find that with 8.7 seconds remaining in the game, sending the game into overtime was still in the realm of possibility, but only with a three point shot.

The Atoms would move down the court with speed in an attempt to get a final shot off. Sophomore Junior Lotongo would take the final shot from beyond the arch in hopes to tie the game

only to have his shot bounce off the rim and out.

The Majors held off the Atoms' final attack to the basket to win the game 59-56.

"It hurt to lose that way, but we're moving on from that game as team and preparing for the conference tournament," Figley said.

The Atoms will go on to face the top-ranked West Potomac Wolverines on the road in the conference tournament on Feb. 14.

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## **Fast-paced offense keeps Atoms undefeated**

As the Spartan offense cut into the Atoms' lead late in the fourth quarter, the teams defense made a stand and denied Broad Run any more points to claim victory 98-86.

The victory put the boys at a record of 4-0 as the team has yet to lose this season.

Prior to the match-up the team had won by blowout margins in two of their three victories, defeating the Jeb Stuart Raiders by a score of 76-37 and cruising to victory against against the Falls Church Jaguars 90-55. The Atoms also slid by the Fairfax Rebels in their season opener, 47-44 in a nail-biter.

The boys came out of the starting gates strong once again against the Spartans, taking a 25-17 lead by the end of the first quarter with sophomore Junior Lotongo having 11 first quarter points. The team would continue an offensive assault during the second quarter, expanding their lead to a

commanding 57-39.

With just a minute remaining in the half, McKiver delivered what was the most memorable play of the night with an ankle-breaking crossover move on Anthony Cooper of Broad Run followed by a three point shot.

The Atoms refused to let up in the the second half and maintained a 78-60 lead going into the final quarter. In the fourth quarter, the Spartans made an effort to cut into the Atoms' lead but their efforts would stall with the Atoms' defense stepping up to lock up the victory.

The Atoms defeated the Spartans with a final score of 98-86 and picked up the fourth consecutive win of the year.

"The season is going exactly how we want it to so far," McKiver said. The team's 4-0 start this season is one of the best starts to a season there has been under the current coaching.

"As a team we are feeling great about the season, we are off to a 4-0 start which ties the best start under Coach Behne," senior Jordan Adams said.

The team looks to keep the win streak alive in coming games and avoid losing.

"We want to keep our loss total at zero for as long as possible and to do that we need to be working as hard as we can in practice," Adams said.

Despite the undefeated start, the team recognizes areas for improvement for upcoming games.

"To keep winning, we need to have fewer turnovers and focus on finishing our shots and making our layups," McKiver said.

"As a team we need to improve our defense, letting a team score 80 plus is not good enough," Adams said.

The Atoms are set to go on the road and take on the Marshall Statesmen next on Dec. 15.