Abstract

Every March, millions of people fill out NCAA Tournament brackets with the hope of predicting which small school will be the next impossible underdog to upset its opponents from much larger schools and live out its own Cinderella story in the Final Four, the sport's grandest stage. But what if we've been analyzing these teams incorrectly all along? Instead of using fairytales and sentimental reasoning to explain these occurrences, I have compared mid-major basketball teams that have made it to the Final Four in the modern era to the encounter between David and Goliath, the most famous underdog story in history, to uncover the idea of "desirable disadvantages." Each of the teams share a few common disadvantages that are the very reason for their success: A coach who's an outsider, players who are catalysts, an administration that has no choice but to put its support behind the men's basketball program, and a fearless attitude. Then I investigated the effects that these Final Four runs have on their respective universities as a whole, and use the given criteria to attempt to predict who the next mid-major to make the Final Four will be.

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