

Raymond's highly scientific predictions for the 2008 NCAA men's basketball tournament

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It's that time again: Raymond comes up with an absurd, arbitrary criterion for filling out his NCAA bracket. This time, I studied all the games played in the NCAA men's basketball tournament since 1985 and computed how many of the games were won by the favorite and how many were upsets, broken down by the numerical difference between the seeding of the two teams.

Seed Difference	Winner		Upset Rate
	Favorite	Underdog	
1	121	105	46%
2	14	18	56%
3	110	76	41%
4	55	23	29%
5	113	45	28%
6	9	2	18%
7	100	42	30%
8	114	40	26%
9	81	19	19%
10	3	2	40%
11	86	15	15%
12	3	0	0%
13	84	4	5%

14	0	0	N/A
15	88	0	0%

I found it interesting that when the teams are seeded N and $N+2$, you get an upset more than half the time! If the probability of the favorite winning is p and I choose the favorite with probability q , then the prediction would be correct $pq + (1-p)(1-q) = (2p-1)q + (1-p)$ of the time. If you hold p constant, then this is maximized when $q = 0$ if $p < 1/2$, or when $q = 1$ if $p > 1/2$. (If $p = 1/2$, then it doesn't matter what you pick for q .) Therefore, to maximize the number of correct predictions, I should always choose the favorite, unless the two teams are seeded N and $N+2$, in which case I always choose the underdog. But that makes for a boring bracket. Consequently, I went for the suboptimal algorithm of choosing $q = p$. Here is the result:

Update:

- Correct predictions are in green.
- Incorrect predictions are in red.
- (!) marks upsets correctly predicted.
- (*) marks upsets predicted but did not take place.
- (x) marks actual upsets not predicted.

Opening Round Game

16	Mount St. Marys	Mount St. Marys
16	Coppin St.	

East bracket

1	North Carolina	North Carolina	North Carolina	North Carolina	Louisville
16	Mount St. Marys				
8	Indiana	Arkansas (!)			
9	Arkansas				
5	Notre Dame	Notre Dame	Washington St.		
12	George Mason				

4	Washington St.	Washington St.			
13	Winthrop				
6	Oklahoma	Oklahoma	Louisville	Louisville (!)	
11	St. Joes				
3	Louisville	Louisville			
14	Boise St.				
7	Butler	South Alabama (*)	Tennessee		
10	South Alabama				
2	Tennessee	Tennessee			
15	American				

Midwest bracket

1	Kansas	Kansas	Kansas	Kansas	Gonzaga
16	Portland St.				
8	UNLV	UNLV			
9	Kent St.				
5	Clemson	Villanova (!)	Villanova		
12	Villanova				
4	Vanderbilt	Siena (!)			
13	Siena				
6	USC	Kansas St. (!)	Wisconsin	Gonzaga	
11	Kansas St.				

3	Wisconsin	Wisconsin		
14	Cal St. Fullerton			
7	Gonzaga	Gonzaga (x)	Gonzaga	
10	Davidson			
2	Georgetown	UMBC (*)		
15	UMBC			

South bracket

1	Memphis	Memphis	Oregon	Michigan St.	Michigan St.
16	Texas Arlington				
8	Mississippi St.	Oregon (x)			
9	Oregon				
5	Michigan St.	Michigan St.	Michigan St. (!)		
12	Temple				
4	Pittsburgh	Pittsburgh			
13	Oral Roberts				
6	Marquette	Marquette	Stanford	Stanford (*)	
11	Kentucky				
3	Stanford	Stanford			
14	Cornel				
7	Miami Fla	Miami Fla	Texas		
10	St. Marys				

2	Texas	Texas	
15	Austin Peay		

West bracket

1	UCLA	UCLA	UCLA	UCLA	Xavier
16	Miss Valley St.				
8	BYU	Texas A&M (!)			
9	Texas A&M				
5	Drake	Drake (x)	Drake		
12	W. Kentucky				
4	Connecticut	San Diego (!)			
13	San Diego				
6	Purdue	Purdue	Xavier	Xavier	
11	Baylor				
3	Xavier	Xavier			
14	Georgia				
7	West Virginia	West Virginia	Duke		
10	Arizona				
2	Duke	Duke			
15	Belmont				

Finals

3	Louisville	Michigan St.	Michigan St.
5	Michigan St.		

7	Gonzaga	Xavier
3	Xavier	

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