



Monday, March 11, 2002

OU to face Vanderbilt in NCAA Tournament

Oakland University's **women's basketball team** will face one of the top teams in the country during its first-ever appearance in the **NCAA Tournament**.

OU, the only team from Michigan in the women's NCAA Basketball Tournament, will play Vanderbilt Saturday, March 16, at 9:30 p.m. EST (8:30 p.m. CST) in Nashville, Tenn., at Memorial Gymnasium, Vanderbilt's home court.

Golden Grizzlies players and coaches were joined by about 300 fans during an **NCAA Selection Show celebration** in the OU Athletics Center "O'Rena" as tournament seedings and first round match-ups were announced on ESPN Sunday, March 10. Check out the **photos** from the celebration.

OU received the number 16 seed in the Midwest Region and will play Vanderbilt, the top seed in the region, in the second game at Memorial Gymnasium on March 16.

The first game between Arizona State, the number eight seed in the Midwest Region, and Wisconsin, the number nine seed, is at 7 p.m. EST (6 p.m. CST). The winner of that game will go on to play the winner of the OU/Vanderbilt game on Monday, March 18, at 8:30 p.m. EST (7:30 p.m. CST) at Memorial Gymnasium. The second-round game will be televised on ESPN2.

Oakland enters the NCAA Tournament with a 17-13 record. The **Golden Grizzlies** earned a trip to the national tournament by winning their first-ever Mid-Continent Conference Tournament title.

After finishing in a tie for second place in the Mid-Con regular-season standings, OU, the second-seeded team in the Mid-Con Tournament, defeated No. 7 **IUPUI** (63-53), No. 6 **Oral Roberts** (74-71) and top seed **Valparaiso** (52-40) to capture the Mid-Con Tournament championship. See the **photos** from the championship game.

"The fact that we won the tournament and made the big dance and had the selection party here – that's the excitement of the whole thing," OU coach Beckie Francis told the Detroit Free Press. "We've let the team celebrate, now we'll get back to practice and elevate our focus."

Senior forward Sarah Judd leads the **Golden Grizzlies** with 20.3 points and 8.2 rebounds per game. Judd was named the Mid-Con Tournament MVP after putting forth a dominant performance, averaging 29.3 points, 8.3 rebounds, 3.3 assists and 3.3 blocks per game. She scored a Mid-Con Tournament record 38 points along with 12 rebounds in the championship game against Valparaiso. She also was voted Mid-Con Player of the Year by the league's media.

Vanderbilt won its first Southeastern Conference championship since 1995 and is led by Chantelle Wilson, a 6-foot-5 junior center and All-American. The Commodores, which have an overall record of 27-6, were ranked fifth in the nation in the latest Associated Press and ESPN coaches poll. OU has played Vanderbilt only once before in December 1981 and lost 78-72.

"I know Vanderbilt is a very good team," Francis told the Detroit News. "I've watched them on TV. [Anderson] is very good. We've played SEC teams, so we won't be intimidated. I love being the underdog. This is our third year in Division I. We have absolutely nothing to lose. The pressure is on them."

This season, Oakland lost to two SEC opponents – Florida (84-65) and Georgia (72-51). Of its other top non-conference opponents, OU lost to Boston College (74-53) of the Big East and Michigan (71-42) of the Big Ten. However, OU defeated Colorado State 77-71, which was then ranked No. 15.

"The win over Colorado State should give us confidence," Francis told the Detroit News. "It should be a big motivator."

During OU's Selection Sunday celebration, players, coaches and fans were treated to food, drink, music from the Sun Messengers jazz band and a video replay of OU's Mid-Con Tournament win over Valparaiso prior to the live broadcast of the selection program.

The **women's basketball team** is only the second team in OU history since moving to Division I athletics three years ago to qualify for an NCAA post-season tournament. Last November, the women's soccer team became the first OU team to achieve

this milestone.

For information on travel to the women's NCAA Basketball Tournament, contact Jamie Ruark in Alumni Relations at ruark@oakland.edu or (877) 445-ALUM. Game ticket packages are \$15 for adults and \$10 for students and may be obtained by contacting Simon Dover in the Athletics Department at dover@oakland.edu or (248) 370-4000.

Fans unable to attend the game can listen to a live audio webcast by visiting the **OU Athletics** Web site. The site also contains archived webcasts of previous games, a team roster, statistics and profiles of the players and coaches.

You also can follow the Golden Grizzlies on their "**Road to the NCAA Tournament**" by visiting the Web page on The News @ OU that is dedicated to offering up-to-date stories and photos as well as related links concerning the team's historical first trip to the national tournament.

For the complete NCAA Women's Basketball Tournament bracket, visit the **NCAA** Web site.

SUMMARY

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