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View from the lane: enduring the pre-race

BY SOMMER FANNEY
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"I wish I could enjoy running like you do."

As a member of Guilford's track team, I have caught this comment already three or four times just this semester from people on campus.

The consensus seems to be that people love the idea of running but cannot stand the thought of actually doing it.

I do not really understand where people get the idea that runners are magical creatures who cannot feel pain. Sometimes, I wish I could go out and enjoy running too, like that imaginary person we all apparently think is giddily bounding around mile after mile. Maybe this person exists but only if enjoying running does not mean to do so effortlessly, which is not likely.

To give a real perspective on what it is like to be a runner, and a Guilford College runner at that, I want to give you a glimpse into a typical track meet. This might seem the peak of glory and the aforementioned effortless.

You wake up at 4:45 a.m. on Saturday. This is normally when someone wakes up in mid-sleep to check their clock and then quickly get back into their slumber, but today is a special day. You grab your things and leave by 5:15 a.m. for a track meet. After a long car ride, you arrive at the track at 8:30 a.m., luckily in plenty of time for your race that is scheduled for 1:30 p.m.

After arriving, you jump off the bus wobbly with equipment and settle into a grassy patch of shade or sun. You pick a spot, set up a tent with your team and lay down to save energy. Your options for entertainment: trying to sleep or eating. But, be careful about eating. Take a brunch break too late and you will be paying for it two hours down the line when your sandwich punches the inside of your stomach with each one of your pitiful running steps.

After four hours have melted away while you have tried to sleep and not eat with the bags of tempting foods that surround you, you rise and warm up for your race. You slog around for five minutes, take the first of many restroom breaks, jog around for 10 more minutes, sit down, stretch, jump around and then head back to the restroom.

You have got 30 minutes before your race now, but you still need to check in, something that I occasionally forget. Checking in is like taking attendance for a race. If you do not do it by a certain time, you will be "scratched," or removed from your race.

After searching around for it for a few minutes, you make your way to the check-in table. The officials take your name and give you racing stickers. Put them on now and they'll fall off the minute you bend your knees to sit or stretch. Put them in your bag until right before the race and you might forget them and earn yourself a disqualification and some very dissatisfied coaches.

So what do we do with the stickers? Do we put them on



Sommer Fanney '18 describes the many stresses that a member of the track team has to think about as they get ready for a race.

anyway and hope for the best? Do we put them in a bag and risk forgetting them? Do we just run around with stickers in our hand and obsess over not dropping them? The sad truth is that no one understands the sticker predicament. If you have an answer to any of these questions, please let us know.

Stickers aside, you still have to fill your quota of bathroom visits, and you have only got 20 more minutes of pre-race freedom. You jog, use the restroom, shake out, check the time, use the restroom then sprint to the starting line because your race starts soon.

But oh no. Where are your stickers? With relief, you remember they are in your bag on the side of the infield – you were smart and brought your things with you to the line.

The other competitors crowd the starting line and get in some last-minute shakeouts. The whole lineup jiggles like jelly. Some girls make idle small talk to try and appear amiable, forget about their nerves and the fact that you're all about to be running kind of hard and that it is probably going to hurt a little.

If, under any circumstances, someone asks "What's your PR (best time for this race)?" either beat them with a spare baton or glare at them bitterly because this is not information that they have a right to know in such dire circumstances. A subtler, realistic approach is to laugh it off and say, "I don't know" or "who knows, I've never run this before."

Then you make sure that they do not beat you.

All of the Final Four have a shot in Indianapolis

UNPREDICTABILITY IN THE TOURNAMENT CONTINUES

BY REESE SETZER
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It is finally here.

After two weeks of March Madness, the shredding of countless brackets and the elimination of 64 teams, the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament Final Four is set.

This came on the heels of a handful of early upsets, buzzer-beaters and big games that the tournament brought, but now the grand stage is set. The teams who advanced to the Final Four are all from programs with tournament pedigrees and will not be hypnotized by the limelight.

Number-one seeds University of Kentucky, University of Wisconsin, and Duke University along with seven-seeded Michigan State University comprise the championship field.

All four schools have rich basketball history, current and future hall of fame coaches and star studded rosters that led them to Indianapolis. The consensus favorites are the undefeated Kentucky Wildcats.

The 38-0 Wildcats have the best start in NCAA history and could become the first team since the 1976 Indiana Hoosiers to finish a season undefeated. If Kentucky wins the tournament they would be the first to go 40-0.

This is coach John Calipari and Kentucky's fourth Final Four in five years.

Though the only players on this

Kentucky team that have any Final Four experience are sophomore twins Andrew and Aaron Harrison, it does not seem any of the others are shying away from the biggest stage.

Junior forward Willie Cauley-Stein, who was injured during last year's national championship game loss to the University of Connecticut, and possible top NBA draft pick freshman forward Karl-Anthony Towns have anchored the Wildcats through the Tournament.

After cruising through the first three rounds, which included a 39-point beat-down of West Virginia University in the Sweet 16, Kentucky faced the University of Notre Dame.

This Elite Eight matchup went back and forth all night, and with 6 seconds left Andrew Harrison knocked down two free throws to take a 68-66 lead. Notre Dame's star senior guard Jerian Grant had a shot at a buzzer-beater three. But the shot sailed long in the midst of three Kentucky defenders; punching the ticket for the Wildcats' berth in the Final Four as the Midwest Region Champion. They will be facing the West Region champs, the Wisconsin Badgers.

Wisconsin finds themselves in the exact same spot they were last year, a Final Four matchup with Kentucky. In that game, Aaron Harrison hit a three with five seconds left to give Kentucky the one-point lead and a 74-73 win.

The Badgers return to the game with the core players who suffered the heartbreaking loss last year.

Led by senior forwards Sam Dekker and potential player of the year Frank Kaminsky,

the Badgers match up well with Kentucky, and fans can expect another nail-biter.

After cruising in their first tournament game, Wisconsin was in close games on their path to the Final Four. Each of their last three games have been single digit wins.

At this point in the season all that matters is winning, and the Badgers are good at that.

They also have redemption on their mind from last year's loss; the Badgers may have the motivation and talent to take down the Wildcats.

As could either team on the other side of the bracket.

The East Region Champion Michigan State Spartans prevailed through a bracket that blew up in the first weekend of the NCAA Tournament.

One-seed Villanova University was upset by eight-seed North Carolina State University and the Spartans themselves upset the two seed University of Virginia Cavaliers, opening up the region for anyone to take. The Spartans took advantage of the opportunity.

Led by senior guard Travis Trice and junior guard Denzel Valentine, Sparty and Tom Izzo are once again in the Final Four.

All of Michigan State's Tournament games have been won by single digits and have been low scoring.

Although the Spartans are playing the "surprise" team in this year's tournament with 11 losses, there really should be no surprise in seeing them here.

A rule to remember for your bracket next year: do not pick against Spartan coach Tom Izzo in March. With this appearance,

coach Izzo has led the Spartans to seven Final Fours in 20 years.

However, the same could be said about coach Mike Krzyzewski.

Coach Krzyzewski's Duke Blue Devils find themselves back in the Final Four for the first time since their 2010 National Championship.

During their four-year absence from the Final Four, Duke has seen some early, and uncharacteristic, first-round upsets that bounced them from the tournament in 2012 (against Lehigh University) and 2014 (against Mercer University).

The difference this year is freshman center Jahlil Okafor, player of the year candidate and the consensus 2015 top overall NBA draft pick.

Okafor, along with senior guard Quinn Cook, freshman forward and probable NBA lottery pick Justise Winslow and freshman guard Tyus Jones have led the Blue Devils on a tear through the tournament.

Their closest game was a six-point win over the University of Utah in the Sweet 16. The Devils followed that with a 14-point win over Gonzaga University in the Elite Eight to become the South Region champs.

With the way the Devils are playing, their immensely talented rotation and coach K at the helm, the Blue Devils have as good as shot as anybody to take down Kentucky in Indianapolis.

So, while the Madness has just one weekend left in the 2015 season, fans can still anticipate the best matchups that a March Madness junkie could ask for.

Now all that is left is for these exemplary teams to fight it out and decide a champion.