


No. 1 (12-2 ACC, 25-3)

BLUE NO LONGER

Duke's vulnerability to athletic teams was somewhat exposed in back-to-back losses to Wake Forest and Miami in February. And when the Blue Devils aren't hitting their 3s, they can look very ordinary. That said, they still have a good shot at a No. 1 seed with a 25-3 (12-2 ACC) record. But Duke will need a big push if it wants to go through Charlotte.




Duke

No. 2 (12-2, 27-2)

HEELS HEATING UP

The Tar Heels have rebounded strongly from losses to Maryland and Duke but probably will need to win the ACC Tournament to gain a No. 1 seed in the Big Dance for the second consecutive season. Tyler Hansbrough is making his case for POY consideration every night, and UNC hasn't lost much with Quentin Thomas at the point in place of the hobbled sophomore Ty Lawson.



North Carolina

No. 3 (9-5, 21-7)

LOCKED IN

The Tigers definitely look like an NCAA team right now. With two big-time guards in K.C. Rivers and Cliff Hammonds, Oliver Purnell's squad definitely has improved from last year. Most importantly, the Tigers bounced back from a devastating choke job against UNC to win four of five. But free-throw troubles cause Clemson some trouble.




Clemson

No. 4 (8-6, 17-11)

IN THE THICK OF IT

The Hokies are scarily inconsistent. They got blown out by 39 against UNC on Feb. 16 before proceeding to score victories on the road against Maryland and at home against Georgia Tech. The problem for this club is that its record sits at 17-11, thanks to losses in almost every big non-conference game. As is the case with most ACC teams, Va. Tech needs a couple more wins.




Virginia Tech

No. 5 (8-7, 18-12)

CASE MADE?

Your classic bubble team, the Terps have their defining win at North Carolina, and they're sitting at better than .500 in the conference. But blown 17-point lead on senior-day loss to Clemson has raised doubts. They still can make a good showing in the ACC Tournament, and Greivis Vasquez's play at point, combined with James Gist and Bambale Osby down low, definitely could get them there.




Maryland

No. 6 (10-5, 23-12)

WORK LEFT TO DO

The 'Canes are becoming a nice story this season thanks to the program's defining win at home against Duke. That will get them noticed, and they also have nice nonconference victories against VCU and Mississippi State. But in general, Miami's nonconference schedule was weak, and it needs a deep run in the ACC Tournament to prove its worth to the NCAA Tournament committee.




Miami

No. 7 (6-8, 15-11)

FEEL-GOOD STORY

By far the best story of the season to this point, the Deacons have really grown with first-year coach Dino Gaudio. Blessed with two flashes for guards in Jeff Teague and Ishmael Smith and a powerful force in James Johnson, WFU sits at 6-8 in the ACC and boasts a big-time win against then-No. 2 Duke. But three straight ACC losses have made an NCAA appearance unlikely.



Wake Forest

No. 8 (6-8, 17-12)

TOO LITTLE TOO LATE

The Seminoles got a big-time win against Clemson and are pulling themselves back into the picture — but just the very edge of it. At 6-8 in conference play and 17-12 overall, they need to finish strong and have a solid ACC Tournament. Nonconference wins against UAB, Florida and Minnesota definitely help, but a loss against Cleveland State raises questions. Hello, NIT.




Florida State

No. 9 (5-9, 12-16)

INCONSISTENT KIDS

Just when you thought Paul Hewitt's club had turned the corner, they dive-bomb again and lose five straight games — four in the ACC. After an 0-3 start to the conference season, the Yellow Jackets reeled off four of their next five to get right back in it. But you have to win games at home vs. Miami or on the road against a young Virginia Tech team to really have a shot at the NCAA's.




Georgia Tech

No. 10 (4-10, 14-13)

HE DESERVES BETTER

Rather than talk about the Cavaliers' 4-10 conference record, let's just lament about what Sean Singletary has to go through every game. He could be the most exciting player to watch in the conference with his assortment of jukes and leaping ability. But the poor man has to go through a horrible senior season on an inexperienced UVa. squad.



Virginia

No. 11 (4-10, 15-14)

NOT SO GOLDEN

Sitting at 4-10 in conference and 13-14 overall, BC's season is looking like it's just about finished — barring a miraculous run to end the season or in the ACC Tournament. Tyrese Rice has been the man all year for BC, and he continues to grow into an all-around scorer rather than just a spot-up threat. Watch out next year if Rice and talented freshman Rakim Sanders get some help.

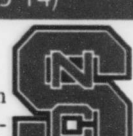


North Carolina State

No. 12 (4-11, 15-14)


A STEP BACK

Gavin Grant's ill-fated prediction to start this season will be remembered for a while, mostly because of how inconsistent the Wolfpack has been ever since. Sidney Lowe must be having lots of sleepless nights, such as those after losses to New Orleans and East Carolina. And the 'Pack's 4-11 mark in the ACC is not going to draw consideration from either the NCAA or the NIT.



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