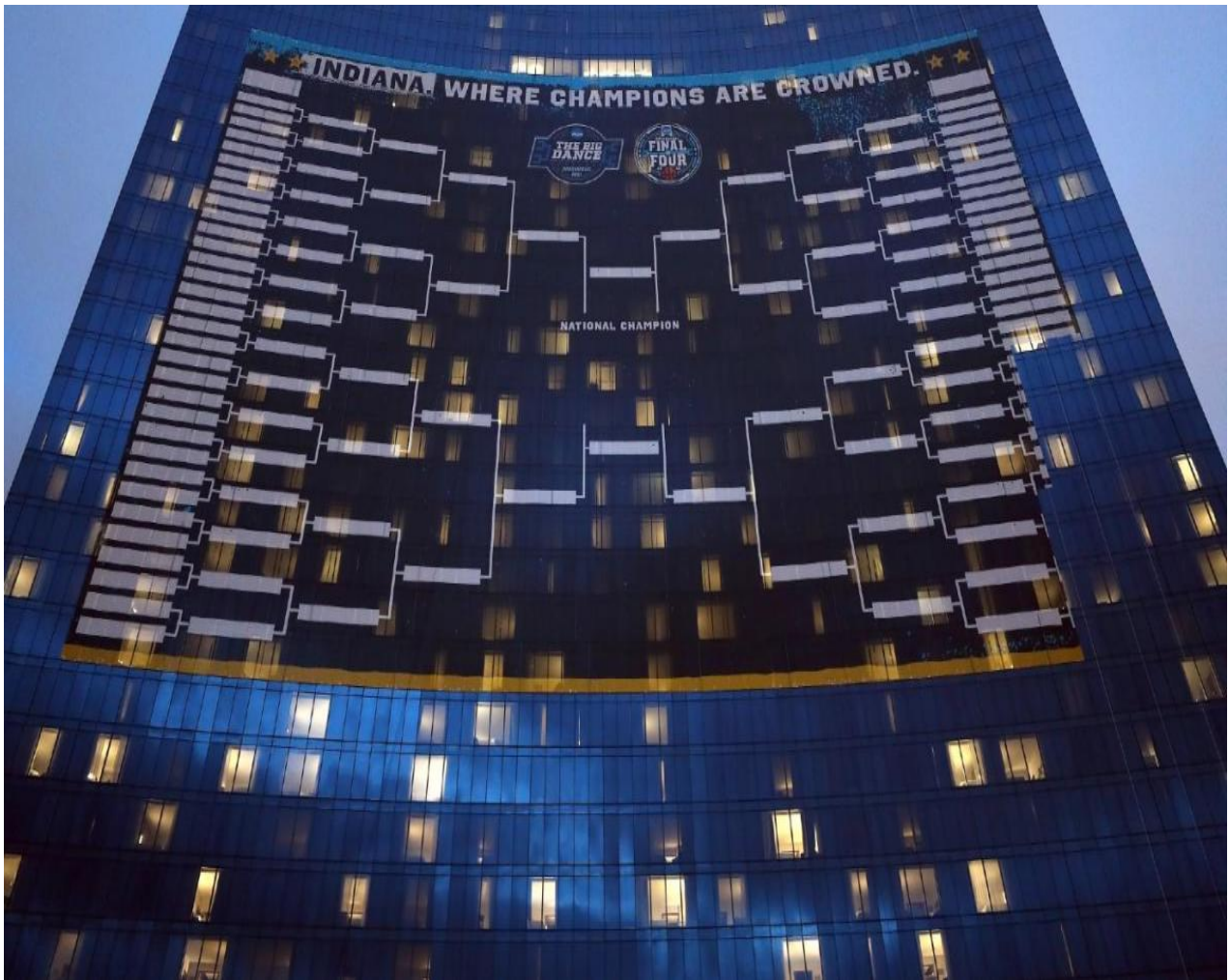


The Virgin Islands Consortium

Teams With Virgin Islands Connections Learn First Round Opponents During NCAA Men's Selection on Sunday

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There are five teams that made this year's Men's NCAA Tournament field with local connections to the Virgin Islands (U.S. and British), which should result in more Virgin Islanders keeping an eye out for March Madness.

The teams are Baylor, Houston, Winthrop, North Texas and Cleveland State, and on Sunday evening they all learned who their initial opponent will be in the Big Dance.

The games will be televised on either CBS, truTV , TBS and TNT and will also be streamed [here](#).

Tip off times for Friday's games:

- Baylor 3:30 truTV
- Cleveland State/Houston 7:15/truTV
- Winthrop 9:57/TNT
- North Texas 7:25/TNT

While first round match-ups are going to be played on Friday and Saturday, all teams with Virgin Islands connections are slated for the opening day of the tournament. This means that if any of these teams advance, their second round game will be on Sunday.

All games in the NCAA tournament will be played in Indiana across six different venues. Four venues are in Indianapolis while the other two are in Bloomington and West Lafayette. The NCAA is allowing a limited amount of fans — 25 percent capacity of the arena — at these venues.

Sixty-eight teams were selected and seeded by a ten-member selection committee. The tournament is split into four regions, each region is seeded 1-16. There are two regions that have two 11 seeds and two 16 seeds. Teams with the same seeds will play in the “First Four” on Thursday to trim the tournament field at 64.

Thirty-one teams earned an automatic bid by winning their conference and 37 teams earned at-large bids.

The regional champions will meet on April 3 for the Final Four before the Championship is decided on April 5.

If a team has to withdraw from the tournament due to Covid-19, the NCAA has designated replacement teams to fill in. This is only for 48 hours and if a team withdraws from the tournament due to Covid-19 after Tuesday at 6 p.m., their opponent automatically advances to the next round.

Baylor

Baylor is the highest ranked team in the field with a connection to the Virgin Islands, as former national and youth team coach, Jermone Tang, is the associate head coach for the Bears. The Bears went 22-2 this season but lost to Oklahoma State 83-74 on Friday in the Big 12 Tournament. They are the number one seed in their region and will play Hartford on Friday.

Mr. Tang was born in Trinidad but moved to Frederiksted at a very young age. He has been part of the Baylor staff for 18 seasons and earned his promotion to Associate Head Coach in 2017.

During his time coaching USVI junior teams, he led them to two Centrobasket bronze medals and one silver medal, in 2015, the Virgin Islands highest finish in that

competition.

Houston And Cleveland State

Houston is the next highest seed with Virgin Islander J'wan Roberts, a St. Thomas native, on the roster. The team earned a number two seed with a 24-3 record this year. They will play Cleveland State on Friday, who have two players from the British Virgin Islands on their roster.

Going into the conference tournament, Mr. Roberts, a redshirt freshman, played in 23 games this season averaging just over 11 minutes while scoring 2.1 points and securing 4.1 rebounds a game this season. His career highs are 10 points, 14 rebounds, 3 blocks and 2 steals. He recorded his first career double-double against Our Lady of the Lake on February 6th when he had 11 rebounds and 10 points.

In the American Athletic Conference championship game, Houston defeated Cincinnati 91-54 on Sunday afternoon.

Mr. Roberts picked up a thumb injury last week and did not play in the conference tournament. It is unclear if he will be back in time for the NCAA Tournament.

Cleveland State clinched the Horizon league title on Tuesday night by defeating Oakland 80-69. D'moi Hodge and Franklyn Penn Jr. are the players on their roster from the B.V.I.

Mr. Hodge, a junior, has started in all 25 games he played in this season and has averaged 10.5 points, 3.8 rebounds and 1.6 assists this season. Hodge's season high for points this season was 46 points against Purdue Fort-Wayne when he shot 15-23 from the field and made 10 three-pointers.

Mr. Penn Jr., a senior, had a slower year than his junior season and only appeared in two games scoring 4 points against Youngstown State in a 81-74 victory in December. In his junior season he saw action in 23 games and averaged 5.5 points, 4.1 rebounds, 1 assist and 1 steal per game. He scored his career high of 15 points against Detroit Mercy.

Winthrop

Winthrop won the Big South Tournament to earn an automatic bid to the NCAA tournament by defeating Campbell 80-53 last Sunday and went 23-1 this season. Chase Claxton, a prospect for the Virgin Islands national team, plays for the Eagles.

Mr. Claxton is a sophomore at Winthrop and has played in 22 games this season and averaged 4.2 points and 3.6 rebounds in about 20 minutes of action per game this season. His career high for points is 14 which came against Campbell on 12/31/20. His career high in other categories are 9 rebounds, 3 blocks and 3 steals.

Chase comes from a basketball family as his father, Charles Claxton, born in St. Thomas, played at the University of Georgia and was drafted by the Utah Jazz. His brother Nicolas Claxton has played for the Virgin Islands National Team, the University of Georgia and is now a member of the Brooklyn Nets.

They earned a 12 seed position and will play Villanova on Friday.

North Texas

North Texas clinched their bid to the NCAA tournament late on Saturday night as they defeated Western Kentucky 61-57 in overtime of the Conference USA Championship game. Jarrem Dowling is an Assistant Coach for the Mean Green. The team earned a 13 seed and will play Purdue on Friday.

Mr. Dowling is from St. Croix. In his bio on the North Texas website, he is credited with being a crucial recruiter for North Texas. The same bio states that he led Virgin Islands national teams to two silver medals and a pair of bronze medals during his time with the Virgin Islands Basketball Federation.

It went on to say that Mr. Dowling was part of the North Texas coaching staff in 2017-18. The year before the team had just eight wins. Last year, the team was No. 1 seed in their conference tournament before the season was canceled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Now, North Texas is the conference champion and earned its first trip to the NCAA Tournament since 2010.

North Texas has Jahmiah Simmons on their roster from St. Thomas but unfortunately he suffered an achilles injury in a practice in October and missed this season.

If North Texas and Winthrop both win on Friday, they will meet in the second round on Sunday.