

The beauty of the Madness

It's what we've all been waiting for. The tradition. The excitement. The upsets. People call in "sick"

to work, jump up and down and rave about schools they definitely couldn't find on a map. Why are these people spending so much time watching basketball? Welcome to the three best weekends in sports.

March Madness (aka "The Big Dance") refers to the annual single-elimination NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Tournament. Sixty-four teams compete for three weekends, culminating in the Final Four and the crowning of a new champion in college hoops. Something special happens during March Madness. People who have no interest in college basketball—or basketball of any kind, really—are suddenly glued to the television anxiously watching every game. There is a pool in every place of employment across the country. You hear about brackets on the radio every time you turn on your car, and college players formally known as nobody become overnight celebrities for making the right play. In short, March goes mad and we eat it up.

Here are some of the reasons anyone can find enjoyment out of that time of the year that is truly...madness.

Single-elimination means the stakes are high in every game, which makes each one incredibly exciting to watch. The way we love that Game 7, go big or go home mentality—that is what we love about March Madness. Every game is win or go home. Every game is Game 7. Every March Madness game has the potential to sucker punch anyone who thinks they know what is going to happen. This often translates into those infamous upsets that bracket participants dread, and sports fans and college enthusiasts alike will discuss for years to follow.

March Madness is all about the upsets. Prior to the start of the tournament, the 64 teams are ranked based on their regular season records, strength of schedule, conference, and general perceptions of their overall ability. You'd think the higher seeds would always beat the lower seeds. However, this is not the case. Teams ranked much lower can often pull off an upset by beating a favorite. Take the 2010 tournament for example. Who would have thought that a smaller school such as Butler would compete in the finals with Duke and only lose by one shot? Brilliant.

Of course, with any good sporting event, there's also gambling. All classic March Madness wagers are done by a bracket/pool of some sort. Whether it's picking winners with a tiered scoring system, against the point spread, snake drafts, it doesn't matter—you still get the chance to win bank. There are also many ways to make your picks. Some people do a lot of research, while others choose based on region or mascot.

Once you choose your bracket style and clock in your picks, it begins. March Madness embraces the competitive and financially motivated spirits in all of us. We like getting money, and winning money is the most rewarding way there is to get money. For most, having the potential to win loads of cash just by scribbling down a few names on a sheet of paper is too tempting to resist.

Finally, we love the drama. There are the previously mentioned upsets, along with star performances, last-second shots, and nail-biting finishes. Not everyone is into sports, but for those who enjoy a little hoop action, nothing beats the intrigue and utter thrill of March Madness.