

2017 NCAA Tournament Player Pool

AKA

Player Pool XI

In many ways the night of April 4, 2016 epitomizes the Player Pool experience. Magic for one man, heartbreak for another and for the rest of us a sense of relief as another year of early losses, bad shooting, and too much passing comes mercifully to an end. By the time Kris Jenkins's buzzer beater three-pointer sailed through the Houston night and ended up in the history books, our own James Malatack had long since popped his champagne and lit his victory cigar. That Villanova would end its thirty-one year old title drought in such dramatic fashion on the same night that James took home his first Player Pool championship is not only fitting but also the stuff of legends. I hope we have not done him the same disservice the media has done to Villanova this season. (Has there ever been a defending champion talked about less than Nova this year?) After such forgettable years as 2007, 2011 and 2013 (the all-time low score), James deserves every bit of attention and praise we can give him.

In North Carolina, however, the experience for Rob Kinner was much different. With three players in the title game and with his own alma mater vying for their third national title of the millennium, Rob had his own shot for glory. But it wasn't meant to be. And in a bit of irony that only the player pool gods could have cooked up, Kris Jenkins was actually on Rob's team and scored a team high 93 points for his third place finish.

Much has happened in the year that's followed. In writing this preview I looked back at the Player Pool X Preview, cried a little, and then decided I'm not going to try to replicate that highly emotional, Pulitzer Prize-worthy piece of writing. Maybe I'll get back on the horse for Player Pool XV or XX. For this year I'll just say that *whatever* we do, it's clearly a disappointment because when Player Pool X ended there was a clear consensus that we should be doing the draft and early round viewing together in...



Doing this...



So as I sit writing this while on call in the middle of nowhere North Carolina (Rob, please get me a job at your hospital), I can't help but be a little upset. As the group's #1 Vegas advocate I'm both blaming Alex for not making it happen while simultaneously putting him in charge of making it happen in the future.

As always, before we get to team previews, I would like to formally thank and recognize our statistician and advanced stats guru, record book keeper, three point specialist and excellent ping-pong player Dr. Adam Zahm for his tireless efforts to keep The Player Pool on the absolute cutting edge of technology and sophistication. Will this be the year he finally gets the monkey off his back? Like the NCAA selection committee and their Power 5 bias, the email chain offered a harsh critique of Adam's interest and knowledge of mid-major stars. Will the 6th round selection of Aussie Jock Landale come back to bite him? Or will it light a fire under his team to get them to their reach potential?

Here are the teams in order of picks for this year:

ALEX
(2007 Champion)



Frank Mason III is a Sweepers-type player: unheralded recruit turned Naismith Player of the Year favorite. Does he see Alex's first title since Player Pool I on the horizon?



"Look, I promise that your 'indefinite suspension' will only be for one game."



If FSU leading scorer Dwayne Bacon can get past Arizona in the West that could bode well for Alex (one of only 2 managers to choose an FSU player)



Undersized Notre Dame forward Bonzie Colson flashes the kind of swag we all want to see out of our players come tourney time.



Oregon guard Tyler Dorsey was all smiles when asked how it felt to be drafted by one of the premier genetics physicians in the country.



Creighton and guard Marcus Foster could face Oregon in the second round, likely ensuring Alex a player in the Sweet 16. But is it worth to know you'll lose someone so early?



UCLA guard Aaron Holiday (brother of Jrue) plays on a team that scores a ton of points but with only one ball to go around, who will take all the shots? James is hoping it's not this guy



Nate Mason's lawyer told him from the start: The best way to put a sex tape behind you is to go out there and win yourself a Player Pool title.

**ROB
(2011 Champion)**



If you're going to have bias for your alma mater it helps when your school churns out All-ACC, future NBA players like Justin Jackson. But with UNC players spread out to four different managers, Rob's title hopes hinge elsewhere.



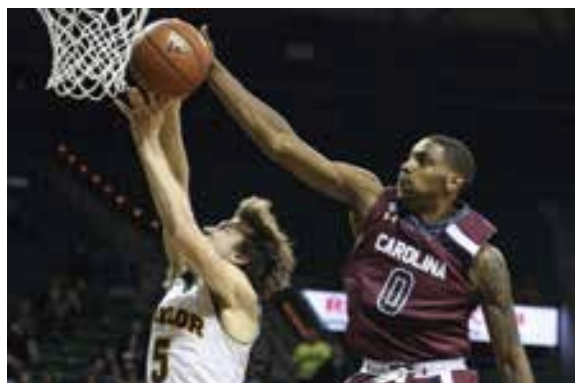
Donovan Mitchell of Louisville with the type of high-percentage shot every manager wants to see his players taking.



Arizona freshman Lauri Markannen is a Finnish big man with a predictably good shot and “creative” footwork. But is he tough enough? As a tough, blonde, inside man himself, Rob knows one when he sees one.



A burst appendix put him in the ICU for eighteen days when he was a teenager. Now Rob is hoping Baylor big man Johnathon Motley has plans to cap his improbable recovery with selfish play leading to tons of points.



Syndarius Thornwell of South Carolina. If they can upset Duke in the second round, Rob will be happy on several accounts.



A 4 seed with only one player taken from it? Butler's Kelon Martin is on Adam's side in being out to prove the might of the mid-majors. Actually, who even knows what conference Butler is in anymore. Impossible to keep track.



Maryland guard Melo Trimble was giddy as can be to be picked in the seventh round.



Manu Lecomte, one of many key figures in a potential pool changing Baylor-Duke battle.

ADAM
(will this be the year?)



By drafting Josh Hart and Kris Jenkins one-two, Adam made clear his strategy of adding a veteran, winning presence to his champion-less locker room.
He will go as far as Nova takes him.



Edrice Adebayo of Kentucky (or Dwight Howard?)



UCLA guard Isaac Hamilton – this guy is young enough to be in college?



Duke transfer Semi Ojeleye has found a home at SMU where Adam hopes he calls for the ball like this all tournament long. A Texas showdown vs. Baylor could await in the second round.



The controversial Aussie Jock Landale. Playing in small stadiums on the west coast, does he really understand the type of pressure that comes with us emailing about him?



Iowa State guard Nazareth Mitrou-Long, one of many players in this tournament with a great name.



Mormon Frank Jackson says he wants to change how you think about the Mormon faith. Just shut up and shoot the ball.

**FARACH
(2008 Champion)**



Because he has yet to record the lowest score in any given year, Farach has flown under the radar as a disappointment since his early title in Philadelphia. Is Ohio native Luke Kennard the answer? One thing I know is that he plays with his hair a lot. See above. But maybe we should give Kennard credit for being an excellent, white player at Duke and yet somehow not hated across the country. I guess Grayson Allen is that bad so in comparison...



This team first gesture by De'Aaron Fox is not valued in the Player Pool.



Kansas guard Devonte' Graham tells Farach's critics to hush up.



Josh wanted him. Farach got him. The tale of Caleb Swanigan will go a long way in helping to answer an age old Player Pool question: Do you draft excellent big men on teams with poor guard play?



I don't know what they teach in the Sudan, Deng Adel, but in the Player Pool we don't think about doing anything but putting this back up on the rim.



Farach drafted Arizona's Kadeem Allen though two teammates averaged more per game. What does Farach know that we don't? Or will this be a classic example of overmanaging?



Notre Dame guard Matt Farrell asks Coach Brey why the hell he would tell the media he's as good as Bobby Hurley on the eve of the tournament?



Iowa State's Deonte Burton. I guess he's a lefty.

LLOYD
(2014, 2015 Champion)



When Malik Monk's hot he's one of the best in the country. When he's not... Lloyd isn't going to take home a championship.



Hopefully Karnowski finds himself into better offensive rebounding position than this. Would you believe me if I told you this seven foot, three hundred pound giant has the hands of a model-ship builder and the feet of a ballerina? I know Adam would because he's probably seen it more than me.



Coach's son Bryce Alford was drafted because he takes threes all game long whether he makes them or misses them. That's all you can ask of the players on your roster.



This confident, devil-may-care smile on Kennedy Meeks's face is just what I'm looking for in a ballplayer.



I hope Arizona's Rawle Alkins does more than sit on the bench because I really couldn't find any good pictures of him. Hmm....



And one, says VJ Beachem, Notre Dame's second leading scorer.



Purdue's Vince Edwards was drafted with a logic that's lost many a player pool: I saw him play well against my team once a few months ago.

JAMES (Reigning Champion)



Arizona sophomore Allonzo Trier missed the first part of the season because of a stupid NCAA banned substances rule (not sarcasm, you can look up what happened). But anyone who's seen this guy play knows how hot he can get and how he can take over a game.



Kansas star freshman Josh Jackson was also recently suspended for his role in vandalizing a fellow student's car. Now the victim claims Jackson's lawyer tried to pay her off to make the problem "go away". What will really make those problems go away is a huge NCAA tournament and a place in the NBA lottery.



UCLA freshman Lonzo Ball and his (in)famous Dad, LaVar. Lonzo looks like the real deal but as a pass first guard, you have to wonder if he'll take enough shots for James's needs.



James's well known strategy of loading up on one or two teams comes to fruition with UCLA freshman TJ Leaf. I told you this guy doesn't look tough (he doesn't really wear the glasses now I don't think). But despite his appearances he somehow does.



Mikal Bridges of Nova – because James couldn't help himself.



Like James, Amile Jefferson is a long-armed, versatile big man from Philadelphia whose career has been plagued by injuries. Now that he's healthy as a senior, will he go out in the same style James did as Jefferson IM Champs in 2010?



Kentucky's Isaiah Briscoe. Players with mouth guards in college don't tend to score much unlike in the NBA.



Nova's Dante DiVincenzo, another all-name team candidate. And apparently he has some serious hops.

JOSH
(2010, 2013 Champion)



Jayson Tatum. NBA lottery pick of tomorrow. But will his white teammates Kennard and Grayson Allen steal all the shots?



Joel Berry II looks the part of a Josh player here. Tough. Focused. Gritty. Let's hope a mid-game broken nose isn't in his future.



Oregon's Dillon Brooks signaling he's just hit a three but it looks to me like he's inside the three-point line.



Josh hopes Cal transfer Jordan Mathews will be looking for his shot and his shot alone in the tourney. But will it even matter unless Gonzaga can make their first ever Final Four?



If I knew how I would have photoshopped Josh's head onto the Florida coach's body and said: "KeVaughn Allen, you better shoot the fucking ball when you get it."



Iowa State's Monte Morris isn't too pleased when a reporter suggests Josh only selected him because he couldn't find any former NBA player's children playing in the tournament.



A classic Josh pick (not even on the list), playing for an 11 seed: Trevon Bluiett.

**BRYAN
(2009, 2012 Champion)**



Nigel Williams-Goss, another of Gonzaga's roster built on the power of transfers from Power 5 schools (Washington).



Jalen Brunson won one kind of ring last year. Now Bryan's hoping he's just as hungry for a better kind of ring.



Quentin Snider makes a revolting play: passing the ball to a teammate. And wait, he's playing his own team.



Looking like Big Phil Krapchev rolling up the court on the fastbreak, Isaiah Hicks knows if he gives up the ball he's not likely to get it back.



Jevon Carter was the first to respond to Coach Bob Huggins's defibrillator incident this month. Will he show that kind of foresight and anticipation when it comes to getting into the lane and scoring buckets?



UVA's London Perrantes sniffs his fingers in celebration of a three. On a team that relies on defense, he might not get to do this much in March.



SMU's Sterling Brown, the only guy on here with a headband.



Big Ten Tournament MVP Derrick Walton Jr. has been playing out of his mind for the last two months. Will it carry over into March?