Jack McFarlane 0:00

Hi everyone and welcome to the HR Happy Hour network. This is the Play by Play podcast hosted by myself, Jack McFarlane and Nick Schlemmer.

Nick Schlemmer 0:17

Hey guys. How's it going?

Jack McFarlane 0:19

Well, it is officially one of the greatest times of the year, especially if you're a big sports fan, it is March Madness. We all know what that means. It means faking like you're doing homework, faking like you're doing work, having the basketball games pulled up on your phone, hidden out of sight from your boss, teacher, parent, whatever it may be. It is arguably the best time to be a sports fan. You get 32 basketball games in two days, and then another 16 the next two days, plus double that for women's. I mean, it's just an incredible time to be alive. So we wanted to come at you with our annual March Madness episode, but a little bit of a disclaimer: we recorded this two days ago, and the you know, we had technical issues. So round one, also known as the round of 64 is currently ongoing, so we have some results, and some are still pending. We'll compare that to our brackets and our predictions, and we can, It'll kind of be fun, because we can say, well, this is what we've got right so far, and this is what we missed on completely. So just hang in with us there, and let's just jump right into it.

Nick Schlemmer 1:29

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Nick Schlemmer 2:26

All right, guys, we are back. And like Jack said, it is March March Madness time. And you know, with all the brackets and all the teams that make it, 64 teams, there's always those teams that you don't see too often, maybe some first timers, second timers. Jack, what are some of those teams where it's their first time in the tournament? What do you what do you think about those guys?

Jack McFarlane 2:47

So there are two that jump out to me right away. One, being from Illinois, we have a lot of friends, family members, teachers, people in our community go to the Southern Illinois University of Edwardsville, also known as SIUE, and this was their first ever time making it in the tournament. In the school's history. They've never made the March Madness, never made the bracket. They actually have a crazy story. Five years ago in 2019 at the end of 2019 I should say so technically, six calendar years, their coach was hired, and he got a big pair of those, like carnival looking scissors, like, you know that like a mayor would use.

Nick Schlemmer 3:23

 Were they ribbon cutting scissors?

Jack McFarlane 3:24

Yeah, ribbon cutting scissors and hung them up in the team's locker room. And he said, these are the scissors we're going to use to cut our name out and put it on the bracket when we make the tournament. Sure enough, they finally got to use those scissors. I was really looking forward to who they're going to get to play. Maybe they could pull a 16 over one upset. It's only been done twice before. Sadly, their game has been played. They did not come close to beating Houston, but it was still a great story, right? First time in the tournament, could potentially be the biggest sporting event in that school's history. It definitely is up to this point, but it might be for the rest of history. It's hard to tell if a small school like that ever makes it back. The other school that jumps out to me is Alabama State. So they were one of the first four, which is, you know, you play to get in. It's the first two games to get into the tournament. 16 seed. They had never won a tournament game before. Sure enough, they go out, they win their first four game. They sadly got the honor, the privilege of playing Auburn, the number one ranked team in the country. They also did not win, but they did put up a good fight. We can get into that a little bit later. Auburn did not look great. Those were the two that stood out to me. Were there any teams that stood out to you, Nick?

Nick Schlemmer 4:38

Yeah, and then I just want to swing back over to Alabama State. Did you see the ending to their first game?

Jack McFarlane 4:44

Well, that is a great point!

Nick Schlemmer 4:46

It was a buzzer-beater tip...

Jack McFarlane 4:49

 So for those who didn't see it, the best way to describe it, okay, so full court pass inbound to baseline like a quarterback just chucking the ball. It is basically everyone jumps for the ball at once, it gets tipped around. An Alabama State player somehow gets the ball and gets the layup with no time left.

Nick Schlemmer 5:06

They win by two points.

Jack McFarlane 5:07

Win by two points. It was incredible. That probably so far has been the best moment of March Madness. I would I would argue, I can't think of a better play. That has been the best play so far, that is a great point to bring up. But yeah, who jumps out to you?

Nick Schlemmer 5:21

So I've got two teams as well. First time entry High Point University in North Carolina. Now, like you said, they got to play a one seed, and they didn't make it.

Jack McFarlane 5:36

It's good to be there, right? It's good to be in the tournament at that point.

Nick Schlemmer 5:40

It was good to be there. And then another one was Omaha. That was their first time entry into the tournament as well. And sadly, they got knocked off.Jack, remind me who they played?

Jack McFarlane 5:52

Yeah, St John's.

Nick Schlemmer 5:54

St John's. St John shot the lights out that game.

Jack McFarlane 5:57

St John's, I'm telling you like we'll get into our predictions., they are a very good team, and they are the best coach team in college of basketball. I don't think there's much arguing there. Omaha just got unlucky. They played pretty solid. But eventually, I actually think they went up seven-nothing, if I believe it was seven-nothing, nine-nothing. And they were looking really good. And St John's decided, Oh, wait, yeah, we're not gonna miss a single shot the rest of the game, and we're gonna make it everything. So it kind of went how you'd expect it. But yeah, Omaha, it was a great, great story. I actually thought it was funny. Omaha is a small city, for those who don't know, they had two schools make the tournament. I'm like, Yeah, I don't think anywhere else in the country has that small of a city sending two teams in. So I thought that was another with Creighton being the other one.

Nick Schlemmer 6:40

The state of Nebraska almost sent all the men's and women's teams. Sadly, the University of Nebraska men's team did not make it. The women's team is still playing. But Nebraska almost sent everybody. We were one short.

Jack McFarlane 6:53

One day you guys will get that win. I saw that Nebraska is the only Power Five school to never win a tournament game. So it's coming, though it's coming, though.

Nick Schlemmer 7:04

It's on the way.

Jack McFarlane 7:05

Which, I'm shocked that you guys didn't make it. Honestly, you had a pretty good beginning of the season if I remember.

Nick Schlemmer 7:10

The begginning of the season was great, and then towards the end, close games just couldn't pull through. Yeah, couple blowout losses that we had.

Jack McFarlane 7:20

You just wanted to pave the way for Omaha. You just wanted Omaha to participate. That's very kind. That's very kind. But, um, let's jump into our prediction. So I'm curious. Can you give me a rundown? Who do you have in the Final Four, and are they still playing like or have they lost?

Nick Schlemmer 7:36

Yeah, no. So my Final Four from what we had the other day, was Michigan State, Florida, Duke and Tennessee. So far, all of my teams are still in the tournament.

Jack McFarlane 7:48

Yeah, that that's great. That's always a good sign after the first round, if you're if your Final Four team is gone, your bracket is busted.

Nick Schlemmer 7:56

Yeah, the percentage just keeps going down.

Jack McFarlane 8:00

So that's a good sign. I'm in the same boat. All four of my Final Four teams are still alive for now. I've got Houston, Florida, Auburn and Alabama. I'm feeling a little less confident about that now. I was really feeling good about Alabama, and then Duke just played five hours ago. Oh my gosh. Whoever didn't see that first round game, Duke looked incredible. They looked like the best team I've seen all year. Forget just the tournament. They put up 93 points, which is the most so far this tournament. Now, they weren't playing that great of competition. Uh, Mount St Mary's, a 16 seed, but man, Duke looked so good. So I'm a little nervous, because my bracket so far has done really good. I'm at 99.5% correct, and I'll get into what I've missed. I'll get into what I missed. But that one could really hurt me if I'm like, in a close race for winning some prizes. So yeah, yeah. Dukes looked really, really good. Well, who do you have winning it all out of your out of your bracket?

Nick Schlemmer 9:06

Yeah, so winning it all, I'm keeping it in the Big 10; So, I'm going with Michigan State. I just like their style of basketball, very old school, very defensively sided. Always been a great program. Tom Izzo definitely left his, he left the mark and left an impression, and it'll forever be a, you know, a Power Five, high quality program. But yeah, I have Michigan State. I just, I would love to see a big 10 team make a run.

Jack McFarlane 9:33

Yeah, that's great, and it's a really good pick. Michigan State reminds me a lot of classic NBA basketball, right? They're big, they're defensive, they live around the rim, right? They've got the best dunker in the country, there's no doubt about it, and they're just a really well run team. There's not one standout player, right? You know, Duke is a great team, but Duke is a is run by stars. They're kind of like an NBA team, like Cooper Flagg is the main person on Duke. Michigan State is very team oriented. I'd say the opposite of Michigan State would be Alabama. They are new style NBA. They shoot as many threes as they can and hope they go in. The might have to to beat Duke, honestly, and even then, I don't know if Alabama can beat Duke. I'm telling you guys, Duke looked incredible.

Nick Schlemmer 10:17

I am sad that I did not watch that game today.

Jack McFarlane 10:22

I'll talk about some of the players later in just a bit here when we talk about standout players. But Duke looked so good.

Nick Schlemmer 10:32

Jack, who do you have winning at all?

Jack McFarlane 10:34

So I have Florida winning it all. They've been the hottest team in college basketball all year. Basically, they've had a lot of quality wins. Some of them, they beat Tennessee twice. Both times Tennessee was ranked. One as number one. One as number eight. They've beat Alabama twice. That's why I have them beating Alabama a third time, actually. And then they beat Auburn when Auburn was a one seed. They beat Texas A&M and Mizzou both when they were ranked. So Florida, they've just proven, they've done more than enough to prove themselves into against the big teams. They are 30 and four. They're a one seed. Right now, they are whooping up on the 16 seed that they're playing. The game is going on right now. So I don't have a Live Score update, but last I checked, it was like 27-9.

Nick Schlemmer 11:21

I can give it to you. So they're playing Norfolk State University, right? Yeah, North Fork, 47 to 19.

Jack McFarlane 11:28

Okay, looking good so far for my pick to win it all. That's a good sign for me.

Nick Schlemmer 11:33

Jack, you know, just looking at the bracket, Florida, I kind of like their run they've had towards the Sweet 16. They're probably going to play UConn over Oklahoma, yeah, I would imagine. And probably, I don't know, Colorado State and Maryland, that's a pretty good matchup.

Jack McFarlane 11:50

We'll get into Colorado State and in just a second here. But Florida, they've got a, I think, the easiest path, as a number one seed, to the Final Four, and then they would have to play in my bracket, Auburn, which I think Auburn, you know, they've been so good, but their momentum is down. They really didn't look great yesterday when they played. And, yeah, I just, I think Florida's just been better. And I mean, Florida's beaten Auburn once already, so I think they could definitely do it again. So I think Florida's got not only the best team, but the easiest path as a one seed. Let's get into what people really love about March, and that is Cinderella stories. Every year there's at least one. It's usually multiple. This year's honestly been odd. There was only, I think, three official upsets, but two of them, or at least one of them, was a nine seat over an eight seed. Not much of an upset there. So tell me, going into this, who were you looking out for, for a Cinderella run, and are they still in it?

Nick Schlemmer 12:50

Yeah, so my Cinderella prediction was High Point, and like I said, they played Purdue, and they lost 75 or 75 to 63 to Purdue, so they're not in it anymore. I wanted to see them make a run, because it was their first time in it. I wanted to see them get that win first round, you know. But Purdue is just a solid, Big 10 , Power Five conference team. Who did you have? Who was your Cinderella story?

Jack McFarlane 13:16

Yeah, so my Cinderella story, we just mentioned them, Colorado State. It was good pick. They they did win their matchup. They were a 12 seed, going against five seed Memphis. They won. The reasons I was looking for Colorado State, there's a couple. One is since January 1, they've been the second hottest team in college basketball, right behind Florida. Florida has not lost since November. Colorado State was 17 and three since January 1, so still really good. They ended up winning the Mountain West. So they were coming in with a ton of momentum. And that really plays a huge part in a win or go home game, is momentum. And people don't realize that. The other thing was looking at that side of the bracket. I mean, Memphis is a five seed. I think they were seated way too high. I think Colorado State was seated way too low. I think that would have been a good eight, nine game, and then they get to play Maryland now, and that's a very winnable game. Maryland looked okay against GCU. They definitely were the better team. They definitely put up a lot of points. They left no doubt on the court. But I still think, you know, they did not shoot the ball well from three. They didn't actually shoot many threes to begin with. So Colorado State, I think they could take advantage of that. All it takes one game, right? It's March Madness. If they all have one good game, they'll move on. So I have them actually making the Sweet 16 and then losing, but I picked them to beat Maryland, so I think that's a good Cinderella story. And the third reason that I'm picking Colorado State is for Nique Clifford. This guy has been electric to watch. Honestly, he had a good game against Memphis, not a great game, but on the season, he was averaging 18 points, almost 10 rebounds, four assists, and was Mountain West first-team at shooting guard. Go look up some of his highlights. It's just a fun watch. It's like when you would look up Tavon Austin highlights when he was at West Virginia. It's just like, you cannot take your eyes away from the screen. It's so much fun. That's someone that I would like to look out for during the tournament, not just for my Cinderella run. Do you have anyone that you want to look out for during March Madness?

Nick Schlemmer 15:31

Yeah. So I definitely do have a player. Before I get into that, I wanted to flip over to the other side of the bracket and talk about one of the upsets: the seed, 12 seed, McNeese over the five seed Clemson. I don't know if you've been on social media or our listeners, have you guys been on social media? Their, I'm blanking on the name of the team manager, but their team manager has a lot of attention on him right now. He's the only manager that has an NIL deal, as a team manager.

Jack McFarlane 16:01

I saw that.

Nick Schlemmer 16:02

He comes out with the speakers playing, and the players are getting behind him, but they upset Clemson. They upset them by a crazy two points, 69 to 67.

Jack McFarlane 16:13

And what's crazy about that score line is that, you know, that sounds like, wow, that's a really close game. In reality, that game was not close at all. McNeese started out on fire. I forget the exact amount of points they were winning by, but it was over 20 points going into the half, they were destroying Clemson. Then the opposite happened in the second, and Clemson clawed all the way back, and they came up just short, which is sucky because I picked Clemson, but also great to see. You love to see the upsets. You love to root for the small schools like McNeese beating Clemson. That's not going to happen in any sport, you know, other than a one and done, like it's just not. Clemson's just a bigger, better school. So I'm so happy for them. I'm fine that it took that part of my bracket out just a bit. It was a great, that's a great one, one thing I did miss on, you know, because I'm sitting here, oh, I picked this and this and this, right? Blah, blah, blah. One thing I missed on, and I'm being forced to talk about, was I had picked VCU to beat BYU, and that was for two reasons. One, VCU coach was the coach of UMBC when they were 16 seed and upset number one, Virginia. Two, BYU is my rival. I did the same thing last year, picked them to lose to 10 seeded Dayton, and that worked. So I thought, sure enough, it's going to work this year as a 11 seated VCU, six seated BYU. It was close. It was a close game, but BYU won, so I didn't get that one. I'm not saying, I'm not sitting here saying, Oh, my bracket is perfect. I picked everything, right! No, I missed, and I will continue to to miss, for sure.

Nick Schlemmer 17:52

Hopfully this Wisconsin team can knock them out for you.

Nick Schlemmer 17:56

Right? Like, as long as, as long as you miss small right? That's, that's fine. You can miss a game or two as long as your big teams make it.

Jack McFarlane 18:04

But yeah, let's jump into those players.

Jack McFarlane 18:07

Exactly. Do you have one that you're looking out for, that you really want to see?

Nick Schlemmer 18:11

I do and he's from the University of Illinois: Will Riley. He was the 2024, 2025, Six Man of the Year in the Big 10. He's 19 years old. He played in all 33 games, started seven of them, and he shoots the ball a lot. On average, he is shooting the ball 16.2 times per game. And to kind of put that into perspective, when compared to the entirety of the roster of Illinois, he shoots more than everybody, more than the starters, and more than everybody else, in only 40 minutes of play. So every 40 minutes, he's getting the ball up over 16 times. That's the most on the whole roster and he's coming off the bench.

Jack McFarlane 18:56

That's right, he's not a starter. He's coming in the game, and he has one goal, and that is: get the ball and shoot the ball. Get ball, shoot ball. But you know, in March, that is so valuable to have a really good bench player, because oftentimes, when it comes down to the last shot, someone might be injured, someone might be tired, you need at least one bench guy in the game, and he'll probably find himself not as guarded as, like a superstar, like, if Cooper Flagg is in a one-possession game, he's getting double teamed. That's when your bench player can be opened up and hit the shot, so that that's a really, any like he's ever he's averaging just over 12 points a game, yeah, and out of the last so before the tournament started, the last 12 of the 13 games, he was actually averaging 16.3 so, I mean, as a true freshman, 19 years old, off the bench, that's pretty good. For those that don't watch much college basketball, that's really good. That's above average. Players are averaging 18, maybe 19 points a game. I forget what the guy from Auburn's averaging, but I have Cooper Flagg right here, and I'll just jump into him while I'm on his name. He's averaging 18.5 a game, and he's considered the best player in the country. He will be the number one overall draft pick. Yes, obviously someone to look out for. Six foot nine, he is basically a point guard. He's dropping seven boards a game, five assists a game, two steals a game. Probably gonna win National Player of the Year. If I was voting on it, he might get second, but he'll either get first or second. And I said earlier in the episode, Duke looked incredible. Yeah, a lot of it was thanks to Cooper Flagg. He played great. If he's around the rim, the ball is just going in right hand, left hand. He was getting hard fouled, double covered. He's making everything, dunking and everything. He's so tall, so athletic. He is someone not only to look out for it, to make an impact, but to look out for it if you just want to have a good time, if you just want to sit down. You know what it reminded me of? And I haven't felt this feeling in a long time, but when it was Steph Curry, KD, Clay Tohmpson and Draymond Green, prime, like 2016 Golden State where it was just fun to watch, like it was just that there's no other way to describe it, it was just fun to watch any day against any team. And that's what I felt like today watching this Duke team, and I hadn't, I had watched him a couple times, but today was different. A lot of that was thanks to Tyrese Proctor, who I actually, we didn't talk about when we recorded this the first time; I have to talk about him now. Today was spectacular, best player on the floor, honestly, better than Cooper Flagg. Finished with 19 points. Six for nine from the field, one, one for two from the line, but six for nine from the field, six for eight from three. He shot the lights out.

Nick Schlemmer 21:51

That's an amazing percentage.

Jack McFarlane 21:52

Yeah, grab three boards, had another five assists, and, you know, obviously he didn't play the whole game either, because they pulled their starters out. He looked incredible. I'm going to be specifically watching out for him when, when I see Duke play again, he was he was great. And then I've got one more guy here. Had to include someone from Florida. I've got them as my championship. Their star player, Walter Clayton Jr, one of the best guards in the country, averaging 17 a game, four, assist, one steal, runs the offense better than I think anyone could, you know, Florida's got a pretty dynamic offense when you have that many stars. So you need someone that's really good, but also not selfish and is not afraid to, you know, run the play. And I think anyone else in that situation would not be as good as Walters has been this year. He's been incredible. So that's another player to look out for.

Nick Schlemmer 22:47

100% agree and Jack, I just wanted to swing back around to Cooper Flagg. It'll be, it can be the last thing we talk about. Cooper Flagg. Yeah, he mentioned his points per game, his rebounds, assist, steals. He is the leader in all of those stats on the Duke roster, and he's the only player to ever do that.

Jack McFarlane 23:06

As a true freshman and everything. Yeah, no Duke player has ever led this, the the team in all those stats in a single year. And Duke, I mean, Duke's produced some of the best NBA players you can think, yes, tons of superstars have gone to Duke. I mean, even past recently, Jason Tatum Duke, he just won the Finals, right? He's the favorite for MVP, although I think SJ will win it, but Jason Tatum's in the voting. Great player. He went to Duke. No one's ever done that, except Cooper Flagg. Um, incredible. Zion went to Duke. He was really good, like so many superstars have been there, and yet this 18 year old kid is not even a man. He's a kid. It's just the best player. It's incredible. It's I'm telling you how if listen, if you're listening and you have not seen Duke play, you need to watch them. There's a chance that they play in every game the rest of the year. They could really win it all. It does make me a little nervous. They look that good. So, yeah, Duke is a is a must watch. Cooper Flagg is a must watch.

Nick Schlemmer 24:17

100% agree. Alrighty guys, for wrapping up the show, as we always do with the quote of the show. And I figured, you know what, we have to keep the whole theme of basketball going, talking about March Madness. I figured, why not get a quote from the Michael Jordan? Jack, I think you're gonna like this one. I think it ties really in with the theme of this month. Okay, so here we go. Michael Jordan said, and I quote, "some people want it to happen. Some wish it would happen. Others make it happen." In that last sentence, others make it happen, we're talking about those 12 seeds upsetting the five seeds. They make it happen. It's win or go home. So they made it happen.

Jack McFarlane 24:59

Fantastic, yeah. What if there's no better quote from March Madness, that's for sure. I mean, any team can win any day. If you're a smaller school, just go make it happen. Like, forget the seeding, forget the universities, forget everything. Just go do it. That's perfect. Yeah. And from Michael Jordan, one of the best, one of the best? THE best to ever do it. He won a national championship himself, has that famous buzzer beater when he was at North Carolina in March Madness. So yeah, that's fantastic.

Nick Schlemmer 25:30

Yep. And guys, everybody tuning in today, thank you for all the support and all the listens.

Jack McFarlane 25:36

Thank you guys. Just like Nick said, we really appreciate it. We have so much fun making these shows. Hopefully you can tell that we're truly enjoying it, and you know, we hope that you're enjoying it right back. So feel free to reach out on any social media or shoot us emails if there's anything we can improve on, or if there's anything you want to see, I'd say stay tuned for next episode. We're gonna have a really good guest on, and that's about all I can say about that for now. But yeah, we're looking forward to it, and thank you guys for listening,

Nick Schlemmer 26:05

Bye for now.

Transcribed by https://otter.ai