

## **Friday, March 23 – SWEET 16**

### **3 Star Best Bet**

#### **\*\*\*Kansas (-8 ½) over NC State**

NC State has been on a nice run lately, covering in each of their last 6 games, but that streak actually sets up the Wolfpack in a negative 0-27-1 ATS subset of a 38-101-3 ATS NCAA tournament letdown situation. The only reason NC State beat Georgetown was randomly good 3-point shooting (7 of 15 from a team that shoots 35.8% for the season against a Georgetown defense that was 1st in the nation at 27.7% 3-pointers allowed). If NC State makes close to half of their 3-point shots again then they'll probably cover the spread in this game too, but that's not likely to happen. Kansas' relative weakness is defending the 3-point arc, as they are barely better than average in that category, but NC State ranks 307th in the nation in percentage of their points that come from 3-pointers, so they're not as likely to take advantage of the match-up like Purdue did. NC State likes to get the ball down low, but that strategy is not likely to work against a Kansas defense that ranks 2nd in the nation in 2-point percentage defense (39.8%). The Jayhawks' 16 ranked offense (in terms of compensated points per possession) should score pretty easily against an NC State defense that ranks only 71st in compensated defensive efficiency (and is actually slightly worse than the average defense that Kansas faced this season). My ratings favor Kansas by 10 ½ points in this game (with a total of 144 points) and the situation is strongly in favor of the Jayhawks.

**I'll take Kansas in a 3-Star Best Bet at -10 points or less and for 2-Stars up to -11.**

### **Opinion**

#### **Indiana (+9 ½) over Kentucky**

Kentucky is the best team in the nation at blocking shots and they rank #1 in 2-point percentage defense, allowing opponents to make just 39.3% of their 3-point shots. Indiana is good at scoring in the paint, but they are also the 2nd best 3-point shooting team in the nation at 43.7%, so they can simply take more 3-pointers to attack Kentucky's defense rather than going inside to battle Anthony Davis. That certainly worked the first time these two teams played, as Indiana only made 37.2% of their 2-point shots but converted on 9 of 15 3-point shots in their upset home win. I don't expect Indiana to make 60% of their 3-pointers again but the Hoosiers' ability to make a good percentage of their long range shots negates Kentucky's inside advantage and the Wildcats were just 3-8 ATS this season against teams that make 37% or more of their 3-pointers. Kentucky is a very good team, but they've been overrated all season long (just 14-20-1 ATS) and have covered just 2 of 10 games when favored by more than 6 points against teams that made the NCAA Tournament. Kentucky's revenge motive means nothing in this game, as revenging teams are just 24-28-1 ATS in the NCAA Tournament since 1991, including just 2-5 ATS for #1 seeds with revenge. My ratings only favor Kentucky by 5 ½ points in this game (with a total of 146 points) and I'll lean with Indiana plus the points despite a 5-16 ATS round 3 angle that applies to the Hoosiers.

### **Opinion**

#### **Xavier (+6) over Baylor**

I've won twice with Baylor as Best Bets in this tournament, but Xavier has also covered the spread in both of their games and the Musketeers appear to be playing up to their potential after playing below expectations most of the season. My ratings favor Baylor by just 4 points in this game (with a total of 141 points), so I'll lean with Xavier plus the points.

## **Opinion**

### **North Carolina (-10 ½) vs Ohio**

Ohio applies to a very negative 1-22 ATS round 3 situation but I think the value of North Carolina point guard Kendall Marshall is being underestimated. First off, Ohio is better than their average rating because the Bobcats, like most teams that force a lot of turnovers (they're 2nd in the nation behind VCU in turnovers forced per possession), are relatively better against better teams since good teams can't defend a break-away layup after a turnover much better than a bad team can. Losing an experienced point guard with the best career assist to turnover ratio in ACC history will likely lead to more turnovers and Marshall's absence will certainly affect the offense by more than people think it will. Remember how mediocre North Carolina was last season before Marshall took over as the starting point guard in mid-January? The Tarheels improved by 3.3 points per game after Marshall took over as the starter last season and his contributions are even more valuable now. My ratings favor the Tarheels by just 7 ½ points without Marshall. There is some speculation that Marshall will try to play with his broken wrist, but his ball handling and passing would be limited by the injury and could actually hurt the team more than it would help. The line value certainly favors Ohio in this game but the situation is strongly against the Bobcats so I'll pass on this game. My math projects 143 ½ total points, so there isn't any significant value on the total either.