
Coaches to urge NCAA to expand tourney

Posted by Aaron - 2006/06/25 19:57

By MICHAEL MAROT, AP Sports Writer
June 25, 2006

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) -- In a perfect world, college basketball coaches would nearly double the size of the 65-team NCAA men's tournament field. Realistically, they'd accept a smaller victory.

Motivated in part by George Mason's remarkable Final Four run last season, coaches will urge the NCAA to expand its most lucrative championship event during the men's and women's basketball committee meetings in Orlando, Fla., this week.

"They'd love to see the tournament double to 128," said Jim Haney, executive director of the National Association of Basketball Coaches. "It's based on several things. First, there are a lot of good teams worthy of making the NCAA field, and second, the size of 64 or 65 has been in place for a number of years."

Potential models range from minor adjustments to major changes.

When Haney met with NCAA officials last month, he proposed the 128-team field in part because postseason bids may help coaches keep their jobs.

At this year's Final Four, though, Syracuse coach Jim Boeheim said he supported expansion on a smaller scale. Boeheim and others suggested adding three to seven teams, a move they claimed would allow as many as four opening-round games to be played in Dayton, Ohio, instead of the one now played between the two lowest-seeded teams in the field.

Some believe such a schedule would create a more realistic tournament environment since first-round sites also play four games on the first day.

But changes don't appear imminent.

In March, NCAA president Myles Brand said he didn't see much support to expand the field and vice president for men's basketball Greg Shaheen reiterated that point Friday.

"Many, many people believe the size of the championship is just right," Shaheen said. "A lot of people think there's enough recognition of teams that did well and there's a logical and timely conclusion to the season."

Shaheen said this week's discussions, which end Thursday, will mark the first time expansion has been on the agenda in several years. The reason?

After a four-year legal battle with the National Invitation Tournament, the NCAA agreed to buy the tournament for \$56.5 million last August.

Expansion also faces additional hurdles.

If the NCAA opted for a 128-team field, the number of first-round sites would double and an extra week of play would likely be added. Plus, Shaheen said the NCAA would have to debate how best to provide maximum television coverage.

Shaheen said changes would also have to be made in conjunction with the women's tournament.

"There is no one model that is obvious here, and that's something we need to contemplate," he said. "The other issue is how the women's tournament would be similarly impacted here and they need to coincide."

The coaches, however, contend there are many reasons to expand. Among their arguments:

-- The number of Division I teams has increased significantly since the last major expansion more than two decades ago. The field went from 48 to 64 teams in 1985, then added a 65th team to the field in 2001 when the number of automatic bids went from 30 to 31.

-- George Mason, which was one of the last at-large teams to make the field this year, proved parity in college basketball is real. The combination of prominent programs losing underclassmen at faster rates and scholarship reductions have helped mid-major schools become more competitive. The coaches believe they deserved to be rewarded accordingly.

-- Now that the NCAA controls both postseason tournaments, coaches think it's time to include some of the bubble teams that annually complain when they are left out.

Could it happen?

"I don't think the idea of doubling the field is going to happen right now because there are too many complications to do that," Haney said. "But I think the committee will seriously consider what the number will be. ... I think if it happens, it will have to happen soon because of the logistical issues."

<http://sports.yahoo.com/ncaab/news?slug=ap-ncaatournament&prov=ap&type=lgns>

Re: Coaches to urge NCAA to expand tourney

Posted by Zeke - 2006/06/25 20:25

While I want to see North Texas get in the tourney, I do want there to be a level of reward for a good regular season.

128 team model is insane. 64(65) teams are all that there needs to be there. Would the final four have been any different last year with more teams? Any year?

Re: Coaches to urge NCAA to expand tourney

Posted by Aaron - 2006/06/25 20:53

If it goes to 128, then the "129th" team will be upset just like the "66th" team is now. I don't think the final four or even eight would have changed. You could make the case that some talented teams that won the NIT would have made the sweet 16. After that round, the teams really start to sort themselves out.

Plus, the NCAA tourney is wildy popular because of how conducive it is to gambling. Everyone and their grandma fills out a bracket in some sort of pool. Can you imagine anyone but the most hardcore hoops fans attempting to fill out a 128 team bracket?

Re: Coaches to urge NCAA to expand tourney

Posted by scrappy - 2006/06/25 21:30

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This is about the best point of all of this. Joe Blow sports fan really isn't much of a sports fan accept when it is cool to do so. (See Dallas Stars fans a few years ago). The current bracket is a lot to tackle.....128 teams would be a nightmare to fill out.