

Cam's bracket challenge: Sportswriter vs Cocker spaniel vs ballerina and others

By Cam Ellis

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Do you like the NCAA Tournament?

I like the NCAA Tournament. It allows me to stop pretending I care about Spring Training.

Do you like bracket challenges?

I like bracket challenges. I'm a twin and the youngest of three kids, so I consider myself fairly competitive. And by fairly I mean that I am grossly competitive in the most unattractive and off-putting way. I have spent multiple dinners seeing who could eat their meals the fastest.

Also, no one else knew that we were racing.

So when my editor came to me a couple weeks ago explaining that I'd be taking part in a bracket contest against various people from Goldsboro, it goes without saying I was excited.

What's the only thing better than getting to put my sports knowledge to the test against a bunch of people I don't know who probably see this as just a fun way to interact with the community and not a justification for graduating with the dream of getting into print journalism?

The short answer: nothing.

The long answer: still nothing.

Over the next three weeks or so, you're all invited to read along as I take part in a bracket challenge against some of Goldsboro's finest. The winner will have \$100 dollars donated to the charity of their choice, and might I suggest that the entry-level salary of a sports writer as an excellent option.

Taking part in the challenge with me are some Wayne County celebrities, a legendary coach, and ballerina and a cocker spaniel.

If you're wondering how a cocker spaniel is going to pick the outcome of a basketball game - not to mention 67 of them - please let me know what ideas you might have because I don't have the slightest clue. You can all be certain that I won't take it easy on him though. Just because he "doesn't know what basketball is" or "have the ability to speak" or "is a dog" doesn't make him any less susceptible to my personal brand of competition and passion for being right that other people have referred to as "really annoying" and "a total deal-breaker."

Joe Gurley, George Whitfield, Fane Greenfield, Bill Clingan, Terry Jordan, Freddie Pierce (and his friend Deacon Earl -- more on that later) are just some of the kind souls who agreed to take part in the challenge and allow me to teepee their yards when they beat me.

(I'm not actually sure they've heard about that last part yet, so be cool.)

Every week, we'll publish updated brackets with the most recent round's picks from all competitors, along with some biting commentary from yours truly that will no doubt transition from confidence towards complaining as the tournament goes on.

At the end of the tournament, we'll announce the winner. It most likely won't be Fred the cocker spaniel. I told you there would be no mercy, Fred.

The official bracket is announced tonight and the opening rounds begin on Tuesday, so you can go ahead and reschedule any important work obligations you had penciled in for this week. Fred probably doesn't have to do that though, because he is a dog.

Good luck to all my competitors, and I look forward to handling defeat in a classy and professional way.*

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*Throwing a "I-didn't-get-the-toy-I-wanted-for-Christmas" level temper-tantrum, most likely.

Cam Ellis is a News-Argus sportswriter, proud UNC-W alumnus and budding Skittle connoisseur

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