

# Down Home: Will ‘Marvo the Fly’ soar again this year?

March 21, 2014

This year, I broke out in a sweat just thinking about filling out my NCAA college basketball tournament bracket. “March Madness” just about drove me crazy.

And for the record, it’s not because Warren Buffet [is offering](#) a \$1 billion prize to anyone who completes a perfect bracket.

Yes, I know the tithe on \$1 billion is \$100 million. No, I wouldn’t give all of it—but a nice chunk of it—to my church. Yes, the [Baptist Standard](#) and [FaithVillage.com](#) would be well-endowed. No, I wouldn’t quit my job. If I didn’t have to worry about making a budget, working here actually would be fun.

## **The perfect bracket**

Since I’ve read a bunch of websites getting ready for the NCAA tournament, I know the odds against filling out a perfect bracket. According to *USA Today*, they range from 1 in 9 quintillion (a “9” followed by 18 zeroes) to 1 in 128 billion. Here’s how they described it: “If everyone on earth filled out 100 brackets, it would theoretically take 13 million years to get a perfect bracket. If all the world’s population filled out just one bracket, it could take 1.3 billion years. That means dinosaurs that lived 65 million years ago could have been filling out brackets and we’d still just be 5 percent of the way to perfection.”

So, I’m not sweating whether or not I’ll be a billionaire in a couple of weeks.

But I am concerned about how I'll stack up against my friends.

This is probably the sixth year or so that several of my buddies and some of our wives filled out brackets on the [ESPN website](#). Man, I want to beat those guys. Gals, too.

That wasn't always the case. The first time, I was as calm as a pair of last-year's sweatsocks. Because I didn't really care.

My friends know tons more about basketball than I. Where I come from, basketball is what football players play to keep in shape for the next football season. My friends keep up with college basketball players and understand the plays. Me? It's 10 tall guys in long shorts, running around like crazy, putting up baskets when the shot clock winds down.

### **I would've picked a Baptist team...**

That first year, I picked teams from places where I lived (like Vanderbilt, Louisville and Kentucky), schools from my home state (Texas and, I think, Texas Tech), teams colors I like (North Carolina and Syracuse) and a school whose football team I like (Michigan). I would've picked a Baptist team, but alas and alack. ... Well, you know. Then, I randomly guessed about everybody else. It was all highly unsophisticated.

And the worst thing happened.

I won. "Marvo the Fly" ruled.

No, I didn't win the national bracket. But I filled out the best bracket in our little group. Nobody saw that coming. My friends know me well enough to realize I don't know slam-dunk about basketball. I couldn't tell a pick-and-roll from a Naismith.

Since then, I've been pretty much a bracket bawler. Read it and weep. All three weekends.

My second-best year, I just chose the highest seed in every game. No way the tournament turned out that neatly, but it was good enough to get me to the middle of our little pack.

Most of the time, I pick who I actually want to win. Problem is, by the Sweet Sixteen, I got nothin'.

### **Doing research**

So, this year, I decided to really try. Since late fall, when I've thought about it, I've paid attention to college basketball. When I work out on the elliptical at the gym, I watch "SportsCenter." And, being me, I even read blogs about the tournament.

I picked a mix of high seeds, long-shots and even a semi-Cinderella. By the time you read this, of course, my heart will have been broken at least a few times. But the games will be more fun now that bragging rights on the line.

And if Mr. Buffet has to pay up, Baptist Standard Publishing will hold its happiest board of directors' meeting in 125 years.