

By Mike Douchant

It's debatable whether there is any substitute for consistent season-long excellence, but a key criteria employed in evaluating coaches is how their teams perform in postseason competition. Nolan Richardson is no longer on the list after his contract buyout at Arkansas, but following are the career NCAA playoff records of the 39 active coaches with at least 10 games in the Division I Tournament through 2001 and their highlights or lowlights (FF denotes Final Four appearances):

Rank	Coach, Current School	Yrs.	W-L	Pct.	FF.
1.	Tom Izzo, Michigan State	4	16-3	.842	3

Comment: Fourth-best winning percentage in NCAA playoff history (minimum of 10 decisions) behind Cincinnati's Ed Jucker (11-1, .917), La Salle's Ken Loeffler (9-1, .900) and San Francisco's Phil Woolpert (13-2, .867). First two defeats were against ACC Final Four teams (North Carolina in 1998 and Duke in 1999).

2.	Mike Krzyzewski, Duke	17	56-14	.800	9
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Comment: Won all 11 NCAA playoff games against Big East and Big Ten teams from 1990 through 1994. He was the only coach to appear in as many as seven regional finals without a defeat until bowing to Kentucky in 1998. Coach K assembled an incredible streak of playoff victories over storied programs in a three-year span from 1990 through 1992 (St. John's, UCLA, Kansas, Kentucky, Indiana and Michigan). He won his first 26 East Regional games until bowing to Florida in 2000. Reached a regional final 10 times in the last 15 seasons he coached the Blue Devils. He won nine of the 10 finals. Prevailed in his last six national semifinal contests.

3.	Rick Pitino, Louisville	8	26-7	.788	4
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Comment: Three of his victories came against former Final Four coaches-- UAB's Gene Bartow (with Memphis State and UCLA), Georgetown's John Thompson and Johnny Orr (with Michigan). He has a chance to become the first coach to guide three different schools to the Final Four after directing Providence and Kentucky to the Promised Land.

4.	Steve Fisher, San Diego State	7	20-6	.769	3
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Comment: Reached championship game three times in first five years with Michigan. Won his first 12 NCAA playoff contests decided by fewer than six points or in overtime. Hasn't won since 1994 after briefly moving ahead of former Cincinnati coach Ed Jucker for all-time best record (minimum of 10 decisions) with Michigan. Jucker was 11-1 (.917).

5.	Billy Donovan, Florida	4	8-3	.727	1
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Comment: The leading scorer (20.6 points per game) for Providence's 1987 Final Four team is among only six men to both play and coach in the Final Four.

6.	Tubby Smith, Kentucky	8	18-7	.720	1
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Comment: Only coach to take three consecutive teams to the Sweet 16 although they were each seeded sixth or worse (Tulsa in 1994 and 1995 before Georgia in 1996). In 1998, he became the only coach to win an NCAA title only two years after his predecessor (Rick Pitino) achieved the feat.

7.	John Calipari, Memphis	5	11-5	.688	1
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Comment: Eliminated the first four times with Massachusetts by an average of 11.8 points although the Minutemen were close to home in the East Regional in three of those tourneys.

8. Jerry Tarkanian, Fresno State 18 38-18 .679 4  
Comment: Eliminated by UCLA in his first three appearances with Long Beach State from 1970 through 1972. He has had a total of 11 twenty-win seasons where he didn't participate in the NCAA playoffs. Tark the Shark hadn't been in the NCAA playoffs for nine years until appearing with Fresno State in 2000.

9. Roy Williams, Kansas 12 25-12 .676 2  
Comment: His first four defeats were against schools that won a national title at some point in their histories--UCLA, Duke, Texas-El Paso and North Carolina. The Jayhawks failed to reach the regional final as a No. 1 seed four times since 1992; that's as many as all the other top seeds combined. Williams has never lost a first-round game, but didn't reach a regional semifinal for three consecutive years from 1998 through 2000.

T10. Jim Calhoun, Connecticut 14 26-13 .667 1  
Comment: Winningest Big East coach in playoff competition in the 1990s with 1999 title climaxing eight Sweet 16 appearances in the decade, including six in a row. He won first-round games in back-to-back tourneys with Northeastern (1981 and 1982).

T10. Bob Knight, Texas Tech 24 42-21 .667 5  
Comment: Compiled a sterling 7-2 Final Four career mark, including three victories in as many championship games with Indiana. He absorbed six first-round defeats since 1986, including three in a row from 1995 through 1997. Big East Conference opponents handed him three of his last five playoff setbacks, which were by an average of 16.2 points.

12. Rick Majerus, Utah 9 17-9 .654 1  
Comment: Never lost a first-round game with the Utes, but his first four playoff defeats with them were by an average of 21 points. Eliminated by championship game-bound Kentucky three consecutive years from 1996 through 1998. His second-round defeat against #10 Miami (Ohio) in 1999 was his first setback against a worse-seeded opponent.

13. Steve Lavin, UCLA 5 9-5 .643 0  
Comment: Three consecutive victories over Iowa State, Miami (Fla.) and Michigan were by a total of seven points. The Bruins were either a #5 or #6 seed three straight years from 1998 through 2000.

14. Lute Olson, Arizona 22 37-22 .627 5  
Comment: Only coach to go winless at the Final Four among the first 25 to reach the national semifinals at least three times until winning the 1997 championship. Won five consecutive contests against #1 seeds until bowing to Duke in 2001 final. Despite playing in natural region (West) most of the time, the Wildcats incurred five first-round defeats before reaching the 1994 Final Four. Eleven of his setbacks were to teams seeded fifth or worse.

15. Jim O'Brien, Ohio State 6 10-6 .625 1  
Comment: Three of his first four playoff victories with Boston College were as #9 and #11 seeds against legends Dean Smith (North Carolina) and future Big Ten rival Bob Knight (Indiana/twice). O'Brien is the only active coach to win at least two-thirds of his NCAA playoff games (more than 10 decisions) despite having a losing career record in conference competition.

T16. Bob Huggins, Cincinnati 11 17-11 .607 1  
Comment: First two defeats were against Michigan (70-64 with Akron in 1986 and 76-72 with the Bearcats in 1992) before overtime loss against North Carolina in

1993. Failed to reach regional semifinals four straight years from 1997 through 2000. Sustained seven defeats against worst-seeded opponents.

T16. Gary Williams, Maryland 11 17-11 .607 1  
Comment: He is the only individual to win games while coaching schools from the three conferences with the best winning percentages in NCAA Tournament competition reflecting actual membership--ACC, Big East and Big Ten. He is the only coach to win games with as many as three different schools even when they were seeded ninth or worse. Incurred Maryland's first opening-round defeat in history in 1996. Williams lost his first six regional semifinal contests until defeating crosstown rival Georgetown in the 2001 West Regional.

18. Jim Boeheim, Syracuse 21 32-21 .604 2  
Comment: No more than one playoff victory any year in his first eight appearances although those teams all finished the season with more than 20 triumphs. His six defeats from 1987 through 1992 were by an average of just four points before bowing in overtime in 1994. Three consecutive setbacks were in overtime (1993 through 1995). He won 10 of his first 13 contests as a #4 seed until bowing to 2000 champion-to-be Michigan State.

19. Billy Tubbs, Texas Christian 12 18-12 .600 1  
Comment: Last eight NCAA playoff defeats with Oklahoma through 1992 were by six points or less, including three losses by two points. Hasn't won an NCAA tourney contest since 1990.

20. Eddie Sutton, Oklahoma State 22 32-22 .593 2  
Comment: The only coach in the 20th Century to guide four different colleges to the playoffs has a winning tourney record with each school (Creighton, Arkansas, Kentucky and Oklahoma State) and directed all of them to a regional semifinal. His first four defeats from 1974-79 were by an average of only 3.5 points in games his teams outshot their opponents from the floor but lost despite hitting 57.4 percent of their field-goal attempts overall. He won his first eight first-round games with the Cowboys until bowing to Southern California in 2001. Sutton has the most NCAA playoff victories of any coach who has never reached the championship game.

21. Mike Montgomery, Stanford 9 13-9 .591 1  
Comment: In 1989, he guided the Cardinal to its first NCAA Tournament appearance in 47 years. He didn't earn an NCAA playoff victory in his first 16 years as a head coach. Won opening-round game each of the last seven seasons.

22. John Chaney, Temple 17 23-17 .575 0  
Comment: First 10 defeats were against teams combining to average almost 29 victories in those seasons. Eliminated in the opening round four times in the previous decade--St. John's (1990), Michigan (1992), Cincinnati (1995) and West Virginia (1998). The only year in the previous 18 seasons that he didn't direct the Owls to the NCAA playoffs was 1989. Participating in more tournament games than any coach without reaching the Final Four, he is 5-0 regional semifinal outings and 0-5 in regional finals.

23. Dave Odom, South Carolina 8 10-8 .556 0  
Comment: Eliminated in the opening round just once with Wake Forest (1992) until the Demon Deacons were embarrassed by Butler in 2001. His first four defeats were by an average of 19 points. Settled for participation in the NIT three consecutive years from 1998 through 2000.

24. Jim Harrick, Georgia 15 17-14 .548 1

Comment: Five NCAA Tournament defeats from 1983 through 1990 were against ACC schools (three while coaching Pepperdine). First-round setbacks in 1991 (Penn State) and 1994 (Tulsa) while coaching UCLA were against schools that had gone winless in the NCAA playoffs since 1955. Including Rhode Island, he is one of three coaches in NCAA history to direct four different universities to the NCAA playoffs.

25. Jeff Jones, American University 5 6-5 .545 0

Comment: An NIT title in 1992, the only year in his first five at Virginia's helm that he didn't participate in the NCAA playoffs, enabled him to become the only person to win NIT crowns as a player (Cavaliers' 80) and a coach. His first four NCAA Tournament defeats were by an average of 12.5 points.

26. Lefty Driesell, Georgia State 13 16-14 .533 0

Comment: Split his last six NCAA playoff games while coaching Maryland, with all of the contests decided by six points or less, before bowing by two with JMU against Final Four-bound Florida in the opening round in 1994. On of three coaches in history to take four different schools to the NCAA Tournament (also Davidson).

27. Gene Keady, Purdue 17 18-17 .514 0

Comment: Two tourney opening-round road games in a three-year span--at Memphis State in 1984 and LSU in 1986--didn't help his playoff record. None of his victories were against a team with a better seed until 1999.

T28. Ben Braun, California 5 5-5 .500 0

Comment: Reached regional semifinals with Eastern Michigan (1991) and Cal (1997). Defeated Duke's Mike Krzyzewski in first round with Eastern Michigan in 1996.

T28. Hugh Durham, Jacksonville 8 8-8 .500 2

Comment: Hasn't won an NCAA playoff game since 1985. Lost last four NCAA tourney contests with Georgia through 1991 although two of them were in overtime.

30. Lou Henson, New Mexico State 19 19-20 .487 2

Comment: Nine NCAA playoff defeats with Illinois from 1981 through 1990 were by an average of 3.2 points. He has only one playoff victory (1993) since guiding the Illini to the 1989 Final Four. Henson was eliminated three consecutive years by champion-to-be UCLA from 1968 through 1970 in his first stint with the Aggies.

31. Pete Gillen, Virginia 9 8-9 .471 0

Comment: Incurred first-round defeats with Xavier against eventual national champions in back-to-back years (Kansas '88 and Michigan '89). Lost in overtime with Providence to eventual champion Arizona in 1997 Southeast Regional final.

32. Mike Jarvis, St. John's 8 7-8 .467 0

Comment: First four playoff defeats with Boston University and George Washington were against #1 and #2 seeds, including future Big East Conference foe Connecticut twice. He never had a team seeded better than #9 with BU and GWU before earning a #2 seed in his first appearance with the Red Storm in 1999.

33. Cliff Ellis, Auburn 7 6-7 .462 0

Comment: Eliminated with Clemson in back-to-back years by #1 seeds Arizona (1989) and Connecticut (1990). He has never reached a regional final.

34. Pat Kennedy, DePaul 8 6-8 .429 0

Comment: Lost his first two NCAA playoff games while coaching Iona by one point each (1984 against Virginia and 1985 against Loyola of Chicago) before moving to Florida State. He reached the regional semifinals in back-to-back years with the Seminoles (1992 and 1993) before failing to appear in the tourney his last four seasons with them.

35. Dave Bliss, Baylor 11 8-11 .421 0

Comment: Lost by one point while coaching SMU against eventual champion Georgetown (39-38 in 1984), but most of his other defeats with the Mustangs and New Mexico were by double-digit margins. He has never reached a regional semifinal.

36. Don DeVoe, Navy 10 5-10 .333 0

Comment: Setback in 1994 with Navy against top seed Missouri was nothing new. He bowed to a No. 1 seed three consecutive years from 1981 through 1983 while coaching Tennessee, with two of the defeats coming against Virginia. Compiled a 1-1 playoff record five straight years from 1979 through 1983.

T37. Kelvin Sampson, Oklahoma 8 3-8 .273 0

Comment: Lost only playoff game with Washington State and first four with the Sooners. First three defeats with OU were by an average of almost 14 points. Eliminated three consecutive years by Big Ten Conference opponents from 1998 through 2000 before getting upset by #13 seed Indiana State in 2001 South Regional.

T37. Charlie Spoonhour, UNLV 8 3-8 .273 0

Comment: He never reached a regional semifinal with Southwest Missouri State and Saint Louis.

39. Rick Barnes, Texas 9 3-9 .250 0

Comment: Joined Tom Penders as the only two coaches to take three different schools to the NCAA playoffs by their second season with each of the institutions. Barnes, who previously took Providence and Clemson to the tourney, is the only coach other than George Raveling to register losing playoff records with three schools. He lost all three playoff contests with PC before dropping his first outing with Clemson.