

# Special Report

*Every five years since 1997, Basketball Times has evaluated the best of the best NCAA programs – those that have won two-thirds of their games over 10 seasons. And every year, the winner has been the one located in Durham, N.C.*

## Still a Devil of a program

*By Jack Styczynski*

The envelope please... Duke. Again.

*Great to be back...Thanks to Battier and Boozier and Brand...Couldn't have done it without Deng and Duhon and Dunleavy...Can't forget Redick and Williams and Williams...*

Duplicating a distinction it first achieved five years ago, Duke tops the third semi-decennial analytical ranking of Division I college basketball programs that have won two-thirds of their games over the past 10 seasons. After 28 schools made the cut in 2002, the field returns to 29 in 2007, as was the case in 1997.

Once again, the "two-thirds" criterion has eliminated none of the national champions from the previous decade, although that perfect record came closer to falling than ever before during the past two seasons. Had any Final Four team other than Florida lifted the trophy in 2006 or 2007, a champ would not have qualified.

That brings us to the project's glaring omissions. In the 2002 top programs ranking, Florida itself fit that description.

This year's most glaring has to be UCLA, an elite program if there ever was one. Despite reaching the Final Four the past two seasons, terrible records in 2003 and 2004 were too much for the Bruins to overcome.

Wisconsin, a participant in the last nine NCAA Tournaments, was actually the nearest miss. Had the Badgers won just one measly regular-season game that they lost over the last decade, or had they not been the lone one or

two seed not to advance to a regional final in 2007, they would have made it. Ohio State and Winthrop were also "close but no cigar."

In fact, Wisconsin, Ohio State and Winthrop would probably all slide in if the project were done a year from now. Each is burdened with a lousy season to begin the

ti, Connecticut, Duke, Kansas, Kentucky, Murray State, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Syracuse, Utah and Xavier.

It will be particularly interesting to see if Cincinnati and Utah can hang on in 2012 now that those programs appear to be nose-diving without Bob Huggins and Rick Majerus at the helm. Oklahoma without Kelvin Sampson

Overall ranking (From lowest to highest average rank)		
1.	Duke	3.7
2.	North Carolina	7.5
3.	Florida	8.0
4.	Stanford	8.8
5.	Gonzaga	10.0
	Michigan State	10.0
7.	Creighton	10.2
8.	Kansas	10.8
9.	Xavier	11.5
10.	Illinois	12.0
11.	Arizona	13.5
12.	Connecticut	13.7
13.	Syracuse	14.5
14.	Butler	14.8
15.	College of Charleston	15.2
	Southern Illinois	15.2
	Texas	15.2
18.	Kentucky	16.0
	Pennsylvania	16.0
20.	Maryland	17.3
21.	Pittsburgh	17.5
22.	Utah State	18.3
23.	Kent State	18.8
24.	Utah	20.2
25.	Cincinnati	20.5
26.	Murray State	20.7
	Oklahoma	20.7
28.	Oklahoma State	21.0
29.	Memphis	23.0



Head coach ranking (First place votes in parentheses)		
1.	Mike Krzyzewski, Duke (left)	267 (4)
2.	Roy Williams, North Carolina	260 (2)
3.	Billy Donovan, Florida	252 (1)
4.	Tom Izzo, Michigan State	244 (1)
5.	Mark Few, Gonzaga	214 (1)
6.	Chris Lowery, Southern Illinois	205
7.	Bill Self, Kansas	197 (1)
	Jim Calhoun, Connecticut	197
9.	Rick Barnes, Texas	179
	Jim Boeheim, Syracuse	179
11.	Dana Altman, Creighton	177
12.	Billy Gillispie, Kentucky	170
	Lute Olson, Arizona	170
14.	Jamie Dixon, Pittsburgh	167
15.	Bruce Weber, Illinois	153
16.	Gary Williams, Maryland	148
17.	Sean Miller, Xavier	132
18.	John Calipari, Memphis	122
19.	Stew Morrill, Utah State	117
20.	Jim Christian, Kent State	104
21.	Jeff Capel, Oklahoma	103
22.	Glen Miller, Pennsylvania	97
23.	Bobby Cremins, Charleston	87
24.	Trent Johnson, Stanford	83
25.	Jim Boylen, Utah	74
26.	Brad Stevens, Butler	70
27.	Sean Sutton, Oklahoma State	66
28.	Mick Cronin, Cincinnati	61
29.	Billy Kennedy, Murray State	55

last decade, and replacing it with even a mediocre campaign in 2007-08 would do the trick.

But that's not how it goes. Another ranking isn't scheduled until 2012.

With Arkansas, Indiana, New Mexico, Princeton, Purdue and UCLA dropping out of this year's ranking, there are now 12 schools that have qualified every time this project was undertaken. They are Arizona, Cincinnati,

might be shaky as well. Assuming he's not done in by his phone, Sampson has a chance to bring Indiana back, however.

Murray State is also extremely intriguing. No one touts the Racers as king of the mid-majors, but their sustained success over the past 20 years is undeniable. Truth be told, mid-major programs are faring better and better in general. Butler, Creighton, Kent State, Southern Il-

Illinois and Utah State all join the “two-thirds club” for the first time in 2007. Gonzaga, College of Charleston and Pennsylvania return for a second spin. Although big name and BCS conference schools remain more likely to maintain high winning percentages, “little guys” are doing it with increasing frequency.

While the “two-thirds rule” might seem especially unforgiving to some schools that play in the toughest leagues, the fact that teams from a smaller pool of major programs still survive it more often than those from a larger pool of mid-majors gives credence to the idea that it’s fair. With that established, it’s time to rank 2007’s top programs using six equally weighted criteria.

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The first ranking criterion is the ten-year winning percentage used to determine the project qualifiers. The big news here is Duke winning better than 85 percent of its games over the past decade, blowing away every other program in the history of these compilations. The Blue Devils averaged 30.2 wins per season during the time frame, and prior to their 11-loss campaign in 2006-07, hadn’t dropped more than seven games in a single season.

The second ranking criterion is the number of former players in the NBA, as listed on team rosters as of Oct. 15. North Carolina leads the way with 14, as it did in 1997 and 2002. Though Oklahoma didn’t fare too well this year, this is the one category where it’s understood that major programs will normally have a decided advantage over mid-majors, and it’s accepted – even valued – since players often choose a school based on its ability to produce professionals.

For this and the succeeding categories, all schools involved in ties are awarded the preferable ranking.

The third ranking criterion is the four-class team graduation rate for incoming freshmen, as listed in the 2007 NCAA Graduation-Rates Report. Data are only for the four classes of freshmen on athletic scholarship who entered between 1997 and 2000 and indicate the percentage graduating within six years. Incoming transfers are not included. Note that Penn is not ranked in this category since none of its players receive athletic scholarships.

Also note that no real consideration was given to using the NCAA’s complex new graduation-success rate (GSR). The primary reason is to keep consistency with the projects of 1997 and 2002, when no such calculation existed. Secondly, there is no desire to give possible extra benefit to programs whose players leave early to turn professional, when theoretically those schools should already be rewarded with better positions in the category ranking the number of former players in the NBA.

Duke and Kansas fell precipitously in the 2007 grad-rate ranking from their second- and third-place perches in 2002. Gonzaga and Connecticut also took tumbles. But perhaps most newsworthy in this year’s ranking is Cincinnati’s climb to 50 percent after years of being criticized for abysmal graduation rates. The new bottom feeder in this category is Maryland, checking in at 0 percent.

The fourth ranking criterion is the academic peer assessment score, as listed in the *U.S. News & World Report* 2008 edition of America’s Best Colleges. This criterion complements a school’s graduation rate with the (perceived) value of its diploma. A peer assessment score of 5.0 is the highest possible.

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Aside from determining which schools have the ten-year winning percentage necessary to qualify, the final two ranking criteria always comprise the most anticipated part of the project. A panel of 10 writers from *Basketball Times* and the USBWA ranks the head coaches and perceived “cleanliness” of the programs. Coaches are ranked both on their ability to win and their suitability to guide young men. “Cleanliness” is defined as a program’s ability to avoid run-ins with the NCAA (or practices considered risky in that regard) and produce upstanding citizens amongst its players. The criteria are subjective, but dis-

Izzo. Meanwhile, the biggest surprise had to be the level of agreement on Chris Lowery, who finished sixth. This came as Lute Olson dropped to 12th from fourth in 2002 and Gary Williams fell to 16th from sixth five years ago.

The most disagreement was over Bruce Weber, who ultimately finished dead center at No. 15. On the way there, he received a second-place vote, a 29th place vote and nearly everything in between. The panel didn’t seem to know what to do with Weber.

Not surprisingly, the cleanliness votes for Illinois were almost equally disparate. Another second-place vote, a 28th-place vote and just about everything in between added up to a 14th-place finish. More of a shock was the disagreement over Michigan State’s cleanliness. Two first-place votes and a third place were offset by two 19th-place votes and a 22nd.

There was plenty of agreement on the cleanliness of Memphis and Oklahoma State ... at the bottom. Memphis

Winning percentage (First-time qualifiers in bold)	NBA players (As of Oct. 15)	Freshman graduation rate (Pennsylvania not reported in this category)	USNWR academic peer assessment (On a 5.0 scale)	Program cleanliness (First place votes in parentheses)
1. Duke .851	1. North Carolina 14	1. Butler 82%	1. Stanford 4.9	1. Pennsylvania 251 (3)
2. Kansas .793	2. Connecticut 13	2. College of Charleston 77%	2. Pennsylvania 4.5	2. Duke 236 (2)
3. Gonzaga .792	Duke 13	3. Southern Illinois 73%	3. Duke 4.4	3. Creighton 230 (1)
4. Connecticut .772	4. Arizona 12	4. Creighton 67%	4. North Carolina 4.2	4. Butler 224
5. Kentucky .760	Florida 12	Florida 67%	5. Creighton 4.1	5. Stanford 220 (2)
6. Arizona .752	6. Kentucky 11	Stanford 67%	Texas 4.1	6. Xavier 217
7. Stanford .750	7. Kansas 10	Xavier 67%	7. Illinois 4.0	7. Southern Illinois 213
8. Florida .743	8. Michigan State 9	8. Kent State 63%	8. Xavier 3.8	8. Gonzaga 211
9. Utah State .741	9. Texas 8	9. Michigan State 60%	9. Butler 3.7	9. North Carolina 207
10. Illinois .735	10. Maryland 7	11. Illinois 58%	College of Charleston 3.7	10. Michigan State 195 (2)
11. College of Charleston .734	Syracuse 7	12. Utah State 57%	Gonzaga 3.7	11. Kent State 185
12. Syracuse .732	12. Memphis 6	13. Duke 54%	12. Arizona 3.6	12. Pittsburgh 170
13. Cincinnati .728	Oklahoma State 6	14. Cincinnati 50%	Florida 3.6	13. Murray State 163
14. Michigan State .725	Stanford 6	Murray State 50%	Maryland 3.6	14. Illinois 161
15. Oklahoma .722	15. Gonzaga 4	16. Syracuse 46%	15. Michigan State 3.5	15. Kansas 145
16. Oklahoma State .713	Illinois 4	17. Pittsburgh 44%	16. Kansas 3.4	16. Utah 144
17. Xavier .710	17. Cincinnati 3	18. Kansas 40%	Pittsburgh 3.4	17. Florida 134
18. Creighton .709	Utah 3	19. Oklahoma State 38%	Syracuse 3.4	18. Utah State 126
19. Maryland .704	Xavier 3	20. Gonzaga 33%	19. Connecticut 3.2	19. Maryland 123
20. North Carolina .703	20. Creighton 2	21. Utah 31%	20. Murray State 3.1	20. Texas 117
21. Utah .700	Pittsburgh 2	22. Memphis 30%	21. Kentucky 3.0	21. Arizona 109
22. Murray State .698	Southern Illinois 2	23. Oklahoma 29%	Oklahoma 3.0	Oklahoma 109
23. Butler .694	23. College of Charleston 1	24. Texas 23%	Utah 3.0	23. College of Charleston 90
24. Texas .691	Kent State 1	25. Connecticut 20%	24. Cincinnati 2.7	24. Syracuse 80
25. Kent State .689	Oklahoma 1	26. Arizona 18%	Oklahoma State 2.7	25. Connecticut 77
26. Pittsburgh .682	26. Butler 0	27. Kentucky 18%	26. Kent State 2.6	26. Kentucky 75
27. Southern Illinois .6811	Murray State 0	28. Maryland 0%	Utah State 2.6	27. Cincinnati 59
28. Memphis .6807	Pennsylvania 0		28. Southern Illinois 2.5	28. Oklahoma State 47
29. Pennsylvania .679	Utah State 0		29. Memphis 2.3	29. Memphis 32

cret polls are designed to reduce individual bias. Points are awarded on a sliding scale, from 29 points for a first place vote to one point for a last place vote, with 290 being the highest possible cumulative score.

Special thanks to John Akers, Dave Birkett, Dave Curtis, Ken Davis, Vahe Gregorian, Blair Kerkhoff, Kevin McNamara, Dana O’Neil, George Rodecker and Kyle Whelliston for serving on the 2007 panel. Seven of them were first time participants. Kerkhoff and McNamara were on the 2002 panel. Rodecker participated in 1997.

Some of the 10 expressed how difficult these rankings can be. One even commented, “Detecting who is clean is becoming harder and harder to tell and the best programs don’t have to cheat that much in order to get the best players. That is a change in the last 10 years or so. Also, it’s awfully difficult to make an educated guess on coaches at (lower profile schools). Who really knows how those guys operate?” Nonetheless, it’s compelling to see which coaches and programs generate the highest levels of agreement and disagreement in the polls.

Obviously, there was a great deal of agreement on Mike Krzyzewski, Roy Williams, Billy Donovan and Tom Izzo as top coaches. In fact, the standings among this foursome might have differed if not for a stray 15th-place vote given to Donovan and a 20th-place tally assigned to

tallied seven 29th-place votes and Oklahoma State scored no better than 20th with any panelist.

With the six ranking criteria compiled, the overall rankings can be determined. Each school’s average rank is computed by adding together its rankings in the various categories and dividing by six. Since Penn has no graduation-rate ranking, its total is divided by five. Finally, the 29 programs are ranked in order of lowest to highest average rank, and the dynasty from Durham rolls on.

...Ewing and Langdon and Maggette...

So as Duke wraps up its 2007 acceptance speech and we look forward to 2012, many questions come to mind.

Can UCLA win enough to overcome those poor seasons and return to its accustomed place among the top programs? How about Indiana?

Along with Cincinnati, Utah and Oklahoma, can Stanford get back to the level of excellence established by a previous coach and remain among the elite?

Will Georgetown and Louisville continue their recent success and rejoin the club?

What new entries should be expected? Wisconsin? Ohio State? Winthrop? Nevada? VCU? Vermont?

And last but not least, can Duke three-peat?

Stay tuned.

To view the 1997 and 2002 “Top Programs” projects, go to <http://hotsheet.50webs.com/sports.htm>