

INTERVIEWER: If you stayed up for the men's NCAA championship last night, chances are you're either celebrating or crumpling up your bracket and throw it in the trash. While March Madness has officially come to a close, here at home, the Twins are shaking off a strange home opener, and the Timberwolves are eyeing the playoffs. Here for all of our local sports news as always are our sports contributors Wally Langfellow and Eric Nelson. Hey, Wally and Eric.

WALLY How are you today?

LANGFELLOW:

ERIC NELSON: Happy Tuesday.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I'm good. Sun's shining. Wally, were you watching the men's basketball championship last night?

WALLY Yes, I was, and as far as crumpled up brackets go--

LANGFELLOW:

INTERVIEWER: Affects your bracket.

WALLY Well, mine went out the window a week ago when Duke lost on a half court shot. But my partner there, who

LANGFELLOW: you're going to hear from momentarily, he ended up winning our-- I'll call it our challenge. We had about 15 or 16 people, so I'm blowing his horn for him before he even gets to do it.

So he was the winner because he picked Michigan as did a number of people. But Michigan wins their first title since 1989. It was a 37-year drought for them. They had been to the finals four times in the championship game since then and lost them all including back in 2018 as recently as eight years ago.

So the Wolverines-- and they're also the first Big Ten team to win since 2000. They beat UConn last night by a score of 69-63. So congratulations to the Michigan Wolverines and congratulations to Eric Nelson for winning our bracket challenge, which he probably should mark this down because it-- him getting things right doesn't happen too often.

INTERVIEWER: Well, I want to know what you win, Eric. Do you just win bragging rights for a year, or did you actually have a pool?

ERIC NELSON: Yeah, it's a pool so--

INTERVIEWER: It's amazing.

ERIC NELSON: I'm waiting for the payday. It's--

WALLY Good luck.

LANGFELLOW:

ERIC NELSON: A good run for me. My LA Dodgers won the World Series in October, and now I win this March Madness pool.

INTERVIEWER: So how are you feeling about the Twins?

ERIC NELSON: Well, I'll tell you what. They looked good last night. They beat Detroit 7-3 and give the Tigers credit. They picked a good night to not look good because I think all of Michigan was tuned into the Wolverines basketball game. They probably didn't care about the Detroit Tigers.

But from the Minnesota perspective, all-star pitcher Joe Ryan gave up three runs in five innings. He got his first win of the season. The offensive heroes were Luke Keaschall. He hit a 2-run tater. And Victor Caratini, who had two hits and three RBIs.

Now tonight, quite a mound match-up. Tarik Skubal, two-time Cy Young winner for Detroit, Taj Bradley of Minnesota, young pitcher, the Twins are high on him. The Tigers and Twins will enter the game both with a record of 4 and 6.

Now here's the real sidebar early on, Kelly. Crowd counts have been sparse in three of the four Twins home games. Now weather certainly has been a factor. Saturday, Tampa Bay, they drew 15,256. Sunday Tampa Bay 13,659. Last night Detroit 12,569. That's tickets sold.

I was at two of those games. There might have been 5,000 people in the stadium on Saturday, maybe 7,000 to 8,000 on Sunday. Wally was there last night. There was a minuscule amount of fans for that game, too.

Minnesota, it's early, but already the Twins are 27th out of the 30 MLB teams in attendance, averaging just over 19,000 fans a game. So how desperate are the Twins to get fans into the ballpark? Well, tonight in celebration of National Beer Day, the cost of suds is just \$2. It's also dollar hot dog night, and the cheapest ticket on the secondary market is \$6. And if you're a student and you have ID to prove it, \$5. So if that can't bring them in, I don't what's going to bring them in.

INTERVIEWER: Wow. That is quite the selling point right there. So it sounds like they had more crowds on opening day even though, what, there was a power outage. It rained. It was barely above freezing. That was a weird home opener.

ERIC NELSON: It really was. That power failure in the North Loop threw everybody for a loop, delayed the game by an hour. But the Twins did get a win and--

INTERVIEWER: True.

ERIC NELSON: They had a power display by this kid Tristan Gray. He hit a grand slam to ice the game for Minnesota in the icy weather.

INTERVIEWER: In front of the biggest crowd so far. So that's-- that was a good thing for him. Wally, the NBA regular season I know also coming to a close this week. So the Timberwolves narrowing in on the playoffs?

WALLY LANGFELLOW: Well, they are. It's-- they're stumbling towards the playoffs to be quite honest. They have now lost four of their last five. They've lost three in a row. They do play tonight in Indiana.

Now Indiana was very good last year but not so good this year. So it's a winnable game for the Wolves, but they have the same problem that they've had the last several games. They're going to be without Anthony Edwards has already announced he will not play again tonight. He's missed 8 out of the last 10, still nursing basically a sore knee.

They say there's no structural damage, but I think they want to be careful with them because the Wolves will be in the playoffs and for all intents and purposes, they will be the six seed. They're three games out of fifth, which is held by Houston, and there's only four games left. So it's highly unlikely that they will move into that spot, and it's also highly unlikely that they would fall into seventh, which would be really bad because the seventh place team has to play in-- to get into the playoffs.

So they're pretty much locked into that six spot three games ahead of the Phoenix Suns. And as I said, there are sixth in the West. They wrap up the regular season at home on Sunday.

And here's a piece of good news. So if you're interested in watching the Wolves, you might be interested to know that Kevin Garnett makes his return to Minnesota as an ambassador. Of course, KG was the lifeblood of the Wolves from the mid 90s until about 2007 I want to say off the top of my head.

So they've invited him back into the fray so to speak as an ambassador of the game. I think he's going to help them recruit players. Just-- it's good to have KG back, and someday I believe they will have a statue out front of Kevin Garnett. Certainly the greatest player in team history. So that's the good news.

The bad news is like I said they've lost three in a row. Again, they have Indiana tonight. Then tomorrow they go to Orlando, and then Friday they are in Houston. So they have a three-game road trip here. But I think they're going to be more careful than anything here. Wrap up the sixth spot by winning either tonight or tomorrow night and then get ready for the playoffs and rest your guys. I think that they absolutely need to do that. They need to do load management as they call it for the rest of the regular season to get Anthony Edwards and Jaden McDaniels, who's been out and we don't when he's going to return. So two key players have been hobbling lately.

INTERVIEWER: So with the remaining minute here, Eric, let's talk about hockey teams because they're both doing great. The Wild and the Frost have clinched spots in the playoffs in the last week, yeah?

ERIC NELSON: Yes, indeed. Wild on the ice tonight against Seattle. Minnesota has 100 points, five games left in the regular season. It-- it's almost guaranteed Minnesota will play Dallas in round one of the NHL playoffs. The Stars are 2 points ahead of Minnesota with five left as well. They'll play Thursday night in Texas. Whoever finishes ahead of who will get home ice advantage in the playoffs.

Minnesota Frost are going to play home to New York on Saturday. Frost have 46 points. They've already clinched a playoff spot in the P NHL. And one quirky note on tonight's opponent for the Wild, the Seattle Kraken, that moniker comes from the presence of a giant Pacific octopus found in Puget Sound, close to Seattle. There's a legend that this thing is a 600-pound sea serpent near the Tacoma Narrows Bridge in Washington. So beware of the Kraken.

INTERVIEWER: OK. Well, we'll do that. Thank you. Sports contributors Wally Longfellow-- Longellow-- Langfellow! There we go-- and Eric Nelson. We appreciate your expertise.