
NCAA CHAMPIONSHIP GAME: GONZAGA vs. NORTH CAROLINA

FOR ALL THE MARBLES

StatFox staffers look to end a profitable college season on a high note

STATFOX DAVE SAYS:

I'm going to fade the market here and back the Tar Heels to win the big game. I like the fact that North Carolina has played a much tougher schedule all season, which is backed by the fact that the average power rating of North Carolina's opponents played is 81.8 while the average power rating of Gonzaga's opponents is 75.5. UNC is also backed by a StatFox Super Situation™ stating that teams from a major Division I conference are 23-6 straight-up and 23-5-1 against the spread since the start of the 2012-13 season when a) coming off a no-cover where the team won straight up as a favorite and b) facing an opponent from a second-tier conference.

NORTH CAROLINA 80, GONZAGA 73

STATFOX GARY SAYS:

Gonzaga simply hasn't seen a team in this tournament with the size and athleticism that North Carolina brings to the table. While UNC's bigs can have trouble with "stretch" big men who force heavy-footed players like Kennedy Meeks and Isaiah Hicks out to the perimeter, the Zags' preference to dump the ball low seems to be an approach that UNC can handle. I think both teams are good enough defensively to keep this relatively low scoring, but Carolina's superior athletes and the ability of Justin Jackson to create offense better than anyone else on the floor will give the Heels the edge.

NORTH CAROLINA 76, GONZAGA 70

STATFOX SCOTT SAYS:

Dave and I both had North Carolina beating Gonzaga in the title game in the brackets that were part of the annual March Madness Guide we released three weeks ago, and I'm going to stick with that pick despite the fact that Gonzaga looked like the best team inside University of Phoenix Stadium on Saturday. The Zags have yet to face an opponent in this year's tournament nearly as talented as the Tar Heels, who have the size up front to neutralize the Bulldogs' big men. I expect a lot of scoring from both teams and for the final outcome to be close, but in the end it will be Carolina's experience that will ultimately prevail.

NORTH CAROLINA 84, GONZAGA 81



Gonzaga's Nigel Williams-Goss racked up 23 points, five rebounds and six assists in Saturday's 77-73 victory over South Carolina.

STATFOX BRIAN SAYS:

Gonzaga is the better all-around team, having held NCAA Tournament opponents to 61.8 PPG on 35% FG, while UNC has surrendered 71.6 PPG on 41% FG. And while the pundits laud the Heels potent offense, they have been erratic for the past month, shooting 38% or worse four times in the past 11 games, including 37% against Oregon on Saturday. If Zach Collins plays as well as he did vs. South Carolina (13 boards, 6 blocks), and both he and Przemek Karnowski limit UNC's second chances, Gonzaga will prevail. Carolina has nobody that can check Nigel Williams-Goss, who will score 20+ points and lead the Bulldogs to their first NCAA title.

GONZAGA 74, NORTH CAROLINA 71

STATFOX ZACH SAYS:

There's no doubt Gonzaga is a great basketball team, but North Carolina should be able to get it done here. Playing with last year's loss on their minds, the Tar Heels are going to be the hungrier group on Monday. The difference in this one will be the play of both Justin Jackson and Kennedy Meeks. Jackson will be the best player on the floor in this game, and Meeks is simply a monster on the glass. He'll present some problems inside for both Przemek Karnowski and Zach Collins, and the second-chance opportunities he provides will be too much for the Bulldogs to overcome.

NORTH CAROLINA 78, GONZAGA 73
