

## What's next for Gophers women's basketball as they eye stronger future season

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Megan Davis and Matthew Zeichert dive into the Gophers' WBIT championship win, redshirting in track and field and the latest in NBA playoff drama.

**MATTHEW ZEICHERT:** And I'm Matthew Zeichert.

**DAVIS:** With the Minnesota Daily, and you're listening to The Gold Standard, a podcast dedicated to the University of Minnesota sports.

I am a sports reporting intern who covers women's basketball. My upcoming story is gonna be about the WBIT final or the Women's Basketball Invitational final, which the Gophers won.

Which was great news and they were very dominant. They played Belmont. And I'll kind of be recapping the season for them, where it started and how it finished. It ended on a very high note, but in the beginning they were going really strong and then they started playing these Big10 teams and things kind of fell apart. But, super excited for that to come out.

**ZEICHERT:** Yeah. And for me, I'm working on a story for both men's and women's cross country slash track and field where I kind of talk about athletes that have redshirted. And something that's interesting about that sport compared to other sports is they can compete in a certain amount of meets and such. The regulations are different than other sports.

And so I'm trying to kind of get to the bottom of what is behind decisions to redshirt because that's a very difficult decision to sit out a season or not compete as a Gopher for a season. So it interested me and I hope it interests our readers.

**DAVIS:** The men's track and field aren't they like number two right now?

**ZEICHERT:** They're doing very well. Ranked number three for the first time since the 1940s and the big news just came out that they are now number two in the nation. So, very big news for Gophers men's track and field.

**DAVIS:** For the indoor women's track and field. I know Anthonett Nabwe and Hadley Streit, they both did really good in the weight throw and indoor season. But at the NCAA championship, they kind of fell short, and I know Nabwe talked to me about it, like really wanting to get better for the outdoor season. So I'm kind of excited to see what happens with that.

**ZEICHERT:** Yeah. Last week I wrote an article on the [Greek faction of our men's throwing team](#). Coach Miller affectionately calls them the team's "Greek God," and they're doing quite well, breaking NCAA records, and it was great to interview them. They have a lot of personality.

For example, Kostas was talking about how he's a huge Giannis fan. Loves watching Giannis play basketball. Angelos, who I also interviewed butted in and went, "I'm a big Giannis hater," so there's some infighting in the group and it's lovely to see because they really want what's best for each other and they have a great sense of humor on the track team.

**DAVIS:** Kind of back to basketball. I forgot to mention that I'm very excited for the next season for women's basketball, just because we have Sophie Hart coming back for her fifth year. And you got Mara Braun who previously was injured all year and she'll be coming back.

And Tori McKinney ended her last game as a freshman in the WBIT final with 26 points. And I think there's just such a high ceiling there, especially as a freshman to be playing at that level.

I'm excited to see where they can go because I know they had kind of March Madness expectations in the beginning of the year. And when those fell away, it was like really disappointing for a lot of them, but March Madness was still fun nonetheless.

**ZEICHERT:** Yeah, most definitely. And that brings us to our next topic, Paige Bueckers, Minnesota's own, and a lot has been made of both the men's and women's teams kind of having some trouble in terms of recruiting in state. Paige Bueckers being a prime example,

**DAVIS:** Hopkins alum.

**ZEICHERT:** Yep. Ends up going to UConn and had great success this year.

**DAVIS:** Oh yeah. What a fantastic way to end her college career. I mean, I think everyone knows now, like she'll be the number one pick regardless, most likely going to the Dallas Wings. And UConn has such a history with women's basketball. Just always success.

Great way to end it. Like there's kind of no better way to get there and to defeat University of South Carolina you know, a team that also has such high expectations for women's basketball.

**ZEICHERT:** Yeah, and I heard today that although viewership was down this year, compared to last year because of the dominance of Caitlin Clark, it was double the last time both those teams faced off. The sport is definitely growing.

**DAVIS:** Also I mean, women's basketball is always great, but I know it was really disappointing to see JuJu Watkins tear her ACL early into March Madness, but she'll be back next year. Hopefully USC will make another run. UCLA's Lauren Betts will be back. And those matchups were just kind of incredible every single year within the Big Ten.

I mean, I also think that's the reason, like why the Gophers women's basketball team didn't perform as they expected to just because the Big10 in basketball, and all sports, got so much more competitive this year with the addition of USC and UCLA and Oregon and Washington. It was just like crazy competition all around.

**ZEICHERT:** That's funny you say that because I just got done with my first interview for the redshirt article and something that came up was the addition of the four formerly Pac-12 schools.

**DAVIS:** Yeah.

**ZEICHERT:** Has made conversations about redshirting very important. And right now a lot of the redshirt freshman of last season are now, you know, redshirt sophomores, and so they have a little bit more experience under their belt. Although not fully experienced because of the redshirting. But it is a very difficult process.

But a difficult game to watch for Houston fans yesterday in the March Madness finale.

**DAVIS:** Oh my gosh. I just caught the end of that. I mean like you could see the anguish in the players' faces, but what a disappointing way to end. Final game can't even get a shot up.

I mean, there was really nothing you could do and Florida had to come back from I think a 12 point deficit. It might have been 16, but they had that game. They could have won it and it just fell out of their hands.

**ZEICHERT:** Well, your experience watching was the inverse of mine. I watched the first half and then fell asleep, and then I'm like, "What happened?"

Yeah, and I figured out that second half, a lot of the internet is a blaze because they think that maybe there should have been less foul calls in the second half. The first half they kind of let them play, but that's always going to happen on the internet.

Unfortunately for me, I thought I was gonna have a really successful bracket this year. My go-with-your-gut bracket had Duke and Auburn in the final with Duke winning.

**DAVIS:** Oh, I had Duke as well.

**ZEICHERT:** And of course Houston pulls off that comeback only to lose with a comeback in the final.

**DAVIS:** I know, like how you said, "Oh, I fell asleep after the first half." I was out and I saw the Duke in Houston game. And Duke was, I think I had by a good margin in the first half and I was like, "Oh, Duke's gonna take this." I'll see them in the final. Like, there's no way that Houston's really gonna recover from this.

And then I checked my phone later and Houston won. And I was like, “What happened?.” Duke was, so, Houston obviously a great team, but Duke was the favorite for all of this.

**ZEICHERT:** My roommate was really dogging me about my, I was like, “Duke is really good. Cooper Flagg is the real deal.” Houston was the weakest one seed going into this tournament because of injuries and such, and lo and behold, they end up losing to Houston in a heartbreaker.

**DAVIS:** Do you have any aspirations on where you want Cooper Flagg to go with the draft?

**ZEICHERT:** Well, I don’t think he’d fit my favorite NBA team, the Milwaukee Bucks, but I’ve heard murmurs that he doesn’t want to go to Charlotte.

**DAVIS:** I don’t think any player wants to go to Charlotte.

**ZEICHERT:** I can neither confirm nor deny that’s true. But for me, I don’t think it’s impossible that he comes back for another season. But I also think the smart decision would be, what if next season he’s not in the same form?

**DAVIS:** Yeah.

**ZEICHERT:** You fall a couple picks in the draft, maybe you have a better location, maybe a location that you prefer, but at the same time, you know.

**DAVIS:** That’s true. I hope that Philadelphia gets it because I think that would be hilarious.

**ZEICHERT:** You’ll have to trust the process yet again.

**DAVIS:** But I know obviously Charlotte has the most probability. But, I’ve heard a lot of people being like, they don’t wanna see him with LaMelo. They just don’t think it would be a good fit overall. I mean, he’ll be a star nonetheless. Online people are like, rig the draft.

We don’t wanna see him go to the Hornets, send him to the Spurs, him and Wemby will be fantastic. And I mean, De’Aaron Fox. I mean I’m from Sacramento, so a Kings fan. Seeing De’Aaron Fox go was not ideal for my hope for that franchise, but I mean him and Wemby next year will be fun.

**ZEICHERT:** Some breaking news today in the NBA realm you wanna divulge?

**DAVIS:** The Nuggets have fired Head Coach Michael Malone and General Manager Calvin Booth, literally the Play-In Tournament starts next Tuesday. And to fire the coach who brought you a championship this close to playoffs. It’s been a crazy season for NBA drama. I am just really curious to see where they’re gonna go with this. I mean, they have to have another coach in mind like you would have to.

**ZEICHERT:** You would think. But sometimes these decisions are very rash.

**DAVIS:** I have a hard time believing that Jokić kind of wanted Malone out. But, I mean he did put up a 41 point triple-double yesterday against the Pacers and they still lost. So obviously they're having some problems.

Huge complaint with Russell Westbrook recently, after that messy end to one of their recent games. I really wanna know what they have in mind because you can't go into the playoffs without a coach.

**ZEICHERT:** Yeah, and I think it's an important point you brought up about Jokić because Jokić, especially in the media, they like to cover the fact that he doesn't really like to play basketball.

**DAVIS:** Yeah. They do that a lot. I feel like, gotta be a little exaggerated. They cover it so much that he doesn't like to play basketball, but I don't know. I'm just like, can we, we gotta pick a new plot point for Jokić.

**ZEICHERT:** Most definitely.

**ZEICHERT:** and Matthew Zeichert.

**DAVIS:** And produced by Kaylie Sirovy and Ceci Heinen.

As always, we appreciate you listening in and feel free to send a message to our email inbox at [podcasting@mndaily.com](mailto:podcasting@mndaily.com)

**ZEICHERT:** I'm Matthew Zeichert.

**DAVIS:** And this has been The Gold Standard.