



NCAA Division II Elite Eight Capsule

National Championship Game

Sat., March 27, 2021 • Ford Center • Evansville, Ind. • 11 a.m.
Telecast on CBS-TV • National radio broadcast on Westwood One

West Texas A&M (#1 seed)



Head Coach: Tom Brown (7th year)
Overall Record: 19-2 (ranked 5th in final NABC poll, 6th in D2SIDA media poll)
Conference Record: 10-2 (2nd in Lone Star Conference West Division; won LSC tournament)
vs. Top 25 Teams: 6-2
vs. 2020-21 NCAA Field: 8-2
All-Time NCAA Tournament Record: 18-18
NCAA Appearance: 18th (4th Elite Eight, first appearance since 2019)
Longest Winning Streak: 9 (Jan. 14-Feb. 25)

Probable Starters:

No.	Name	Ht.	Year	PPG	RPG	AST	STL	Hometown
2	Qua Grant	6-1	Jr.	22.5	8.0	68	42	Waxahachie, Texas
4	Jon'il Fugett	6-0	Jr.	13.2	4.0	50	27	Denver, Colo.
11	Kavon Booker	6-6	So.	4.9	4.2	5	5	Schertz, Texas
13	Joel Murray	6-0	Jr.	23.9	6.4	90	39	Rowlett, Texas
14	Zach Toussaint	5-10	So.	10.3	1.3	13	12	Johnsburg, Ill.

Notes:

West Texas A&M, the top seed in the Elite Eight, is in its first NCAA Division II national title game after beating Lincoln Memorial in the semifinals on Zach Toussaint's buzzer-beating three-point shot. ... Qua Grant had 25 points and Joel Murray scored 24 in the game; both have scored 20 or more points in all four of the Buffaloes' NCAA Tournament games. ... The Buffaloes rank third in NCAA Division II in turnover margin, forcing seven more per game than their foes and have had a plus 21 in the two Elite Eight games. ... West Texas A&M is also sixth in scoring at 91.7 points per game and has had a 30-point scorer in four of the last nine games, led by Qua Grant's 40 in the regional championship game win over Lubbock Christian. ... West Texas A&M is the first Lone Star Conference team to reach the championship game since Northeastern State won the 2003 title.

2021 NCAA Tournament Results (South Central Regional)

Semifinals:
def. DBU 82-65
Championship Game:
def. Lubbock Christian 101-92
Elite Eight Quarterfinals:
def. Daemen 97-83
Elite Eight Semifinals:
def. Lincoln Memorial 87-86

Northwest Missouri State (#2 seed)



Head Coach: Ben McCollum (12th year)
Overall Record: 27-2 (ranked 4th in final NABC poll, 3rd in D2SIDA media poll)
Conference Record: 21-1 (won Mid-America Intercollegiate Ath. Assoc. regular season, 2nd in tournament)
vs. Top 25 Teams: 5-1
vs. 2020-21 NCAA Field: 7-2
All-Time NCAA Tournament Record: 33-20
NCAA Appearance: 21st (6th Elite Eight, first appearance since 2019)
Longest Winning Streak: 18 (Jan. 9-March 5)

Probable Starters:

No.	Name	Ht.	Year	PPG	RPG	AST	STL	Hometown
1	Diego Bernard	6-0	Jr.	11.9	6.2	104	42	St. Joseph, Mo.
10	Wes Dreamer	6-7	So.	8.0	4.4	31	23	Alvo, Neb.
12	Trevor Hudgins	6-0	Jr.	20.0	2.4	134	37	Manhattan, Kan.
33	Ryan Hawkins	6-7	Sr.	22.3	8.5	70	53	Atlantic, Iowa
42	Luke Waters	6-6	So.	9.7	2.4	21	13	Olathe, Kan.

Notes:

Northwest Missouri State is seeking its third NCAA Division II title since 2017 and enters the championship game with a record eight straight wins in Elite Eight contests. ... The Bearcats posted the widest margin of victory in a national semifinal game with its 31-point win over Flagler and has won its two games in Evansville by a combined 52 points, the most by a team in the first two rounds since 1971. ... The Bearcats, who have a record of 155-8 since that first national title season, has the top field goal percentage in Division II at 53.5 percent while also ranking third in three-point shooting (42.5 percent) and seventh at the free throw line (80.2 percent). ... Ryan Hawkins has had 32 and 20 points in the two Elite Eight games to lead Northwest. ... Trevor Hudgins, the MOP at the 2019 Elite Eight, has averaged 19 points in five career Elite Eight games and 19.4 points in 10 career NCAA games.

2021 NCAA Tournament Results (Central Regional)

Semifinals:
def. Washburn 85-44
Championship Game:
def. Northern State 91-86 (OT)
Elite Eight Quarterfinals:
def. West Liberty 98-77
Elite Eight Semifinals:
def. Flagler 77-46

Additional Notes:

Northwest Missouri State and West Texas A&M were the two highest-ranked teams in the final NABC/Division II national poll of the year, with Northwest at No. 4 and West Texas A&M at No. 5. Four of the last five national champions were the highest-ranked team entering the Elite Eight (Florida Southern in 2015, Northwest in 2017 and 2019 -- all as No. 1-ranked teams -- and Ferris State in 2018 at No. 2). In 2016, No. 2 Augustana defeated No. 1 Lincoln Memorial in the championship game.

Saturday's championship game will mark the first time since 2014 that the game will not include a team ranked among the top two in the final poll. That game featured No. 3 West Liberty and No. 15 Central Missouri. This is also the first championship game since 2012 that will not have a top-three team playing in it (No. 12 Western Washington vs. No. 22 Montevallo; No. 2 Alabama Huntsville and No. 3 West Liberty were eliminated in the quarterfinals that season).

The 2021 championship game will also be the first in which each team has two players who are averaging at least 20 points per game. Joel Murray is averaging 23.9 points per game and Qua Grant is at 22.5 for the Buffaloes, while Ryan Hawkins is scoring 22.3 for Northwest and teammate Trevor Hudgins is right at 20 per contest.

West Texas A&M is the first team from the Lone Star Conference to reach the NCAA Division II championship game since 2003, when Northeastern State defeated Kentucky Wesleyan for the title. It also marks the first title game appearance ever for a Texas-based school.

Northwest, playing in its third championship game since 2017, is one of five current or former member of the MIAA to represent that conference in the title game, following Central Missouri (1984 and 2014), Missouri State (then known as Southwest Missouri State, with appearances in 1959, 1967, 1969 and 1974), Southeast Missouri State (1961, 1986 and 1989) and Washburn (2001).

During the 2020-21 season, West Texas A&M was one of five Lone Star Conference schools that was ranked among the top 25 in the NABC/Division II poll. The Buffaloes attained their highest ranking of second -- behind Northwest Missouri State -- in the Feb. 23 poll.

Northwest Missouri State was ranked first in six of the 13 polls of the season -- the first four and two late-season polls prior to a loss in the Mid-America Intercollegiate Athletics Association championship game to Washburn -- and its lowest ranking of the season was fourth following that second setback to Washburn.

Since 2006, six of the 14 national champions have come from the Central Region (Winona State in 2006 and 2008, Central Missouri in 2014, Augustana in 2016 and Northwest in 2017 and 2019). Northeastern State, the last national finalist and champion from the LSC, was also the last national finalist to represent the South Central Region.

The COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on schedules throughout college basketball this season means this year's national champion will be the first with fewer than 30 wins in nearly two decades. MSU Denver in 2002 was the last national champion to finish with less than 30 victories (the Roadrunners went 29-6 that season). A win by Northwest would give the Bearcats 28 victories; the last national champion with that few was Cal State Bakersfield when it repeated as national champion in 1994 with 27 wins.

West Texas A&M, meanwhile, would top out at 20 wins with a championship game victory; the 1959 Evansville national championship team has the fewest wins ever of a titleist with 21.

With a victory, Northwest would win back-to-back Elite Eight titles and its third national title in the last four Elite Eights. The other back-to-back title winners: Evansville (1959-60 and 1964-65), Kentucky Wesleyan (1968-69) and Cal State Bakersfield (1993-94). Kentucky Wesleyan is the only team to win three titles in a span of four national tournaments, winning in 1966, 1968 and 1969. A total of 21 different schools have won national titles since Bakersfield's 1994 championship, including Northwest.