



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**2026 NIT FIELD AND PAIRINGS ANNOUNCED**

INDIANAPOLIS---Auburn, New Mexico, Tulsa and Wake Forest highlight the 32 teams from 18 different Division I conferences that make up the National Invitation Tournament field released by the NIT committee today.

First round play is scheduled for Tuesday and Wednesday, March 17 and 18, with the second round playing March 21 and 22. Quarterfinals will be held March 24 and 25 with four teams advancing to historic Hinkle Fieldhouse in Indianapolis for the semifinals. The NIT semifinals will kick off the Final Four weekend on April 2 with tipoffs at 7 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. ET. The NIT championship will be played April 5 at 8 p.m. ET at Gainbridge Fieldhouse following the conclusion of the Division II and Division III Men's Basketball National Championships.

First round action on campus sites features number one seeds, Auburn, New Mexico, Tulsa, and Wake Forest facing South Alabama, Sam Houston, Stephen F. Austin and Navy, respectively.

Other first round games include Murray State at Nevada, University of Illinois Chicago at California, Davidson at Oklahoma State, Dayton at Bradley, Liberty at George Mason, Saint Joseph's at Colorado State, Wyoming at Wichita State, University of North Carolina Wilmington at Yale, St. Thomas (Minnesota) at Seattle University, George Washington at Utah Valley, UNLV at UC Irvine, and Kent State at Illinois State

For the fifth-straight season, the NIT seeded only the top half of the 32-team field. The bottom 16 unseeded teams were placed into the bracket by the NIT Committee as close to their area of natural interest as possible.

Dayton is making its 29<sup>th</sup> appearance in the NIT, the most of any team in the 2026 field and the second most all time. Bradley is making its 25<sup>th</sup> appearance and New Mexico is making its 21<sup>st</sup> appearance.

St. Thomas is making its first ever Division I men's basketball postseason appearance. Seattle U makes its first appearance in the NIT since 1957 and Navy enters the field for the first time since 1962.

"We're incredibly proud of the competitive field we've put together," said Jeff Jones, chair of the NIT Committee. "This year's bracket features 25 teams with 20 or more wins and representation from 18 conferences, underscoring the strength and balance of the tournament. These teams are hungry to keep competing and to earn their way to Indianapolis in April, when the NIT and NCAA Championships will be played side-by-side in a historic joint championship setting. It's going to be an exciting few weeks, and we can't wait to crown the NIT's 88th champion."

Chattanooga won the 2025 NIT Championship in an 85-84 overtime thriller over UC Irvine in Hinkle Fieldhouse in Indianapolis.

NIT games are being televised by ESPN, ESPN2, ESPNU and ESPN+. Additional NIT information including how to purchase tickets for the semifinals and championship can be found on [www.ncaa.com/championships/basketball-men/nit](http://www.ncaa.com/championships/basketball-men/nit).