

There are 327 teams in Division I basketball of the National Collegiate Athletic Association. Each team begins the season with the dream of making it into the NCAA tournament in March and even of winning the national championship. However, only 65 teams are invited to the tournament. 31 teams get an automatic invite to the tournament for winning their respective conferences. The remaining teams are determined by the selection committee of the NCAA. The committee's decisions are final.

The NCAA tournament is played over a period of three weeks, usually beginning on the third Thursday in March. After the 64th and 65th teams of the men's tournament play in an opening round, the real tournament begins. Over the first two days of the tournament, the field of 64 is pared down to 32. In the next two days, the field is trimmed to 16 - the **Sweet Sixteen**. These 16 teams take a four day break before resuming play the next Thursday. During the second week of the tournament, the field is trimmed first to 8 - the **Elite Eight** - and then to 4. These last teams make up the tournament's **Final Four**.

The four teams that survived March Madness battle it out in April for the crown of college basketball. This year the Final Four games will be held in San Antonio, Texas, on April 3 and 5. Favored teams to win the tournament included Connecticut, Duke, Gonzaga, Stanford, and Kentucky, but Gonzaga, Stanford, and Kentucky did not make it to the **Sweet Sixteen!**

**Sweet Sixteen** teams for 2004 included Alabama, Connecticut, Duke, Georgia Tech, Illinois, Kansas, Nevada, Oklahoma State, Pittsburgh, St. Joseph, Syracuse, Texas, UAB, Vanderbilt, Xavier, and Wake Forest.