

PLAYER VS. PLAYER



Balling till he's falling

by **Riley Bauling**
Daily Lobo

Jamaal Williams, Mike Gansey and Ronald Ross sure would have been a nice addition.

Those three players are all living the high life that comes with a Sweet 16 appearance. And get this, they could have all been Lobos, well, except for Williams, who was a Lobo at one point in time.

What an impact those three players might have had on UNM's misfortune in the NCAA tournament. But to head coach Ritchie McKay's credit, hindsight truly is 20-20.

Williams, a product of the Fran Fraschilla era, transferred to Washington — that's right, the No. 1 seed in the Albuquerque bracket — when McKay took over the program. Talk about a good investment. The Huskies were 10-17 overall in Williams' first season there.

Ross was the New Mexico Gatorade Player of the Year his senior year at Hobbs High School and is a starting guard for Texas Tech.

The senior averaged 17.6 points per game for the Red Raiders, but you might remember him best for his 24-point performance and clutch three-pointer against Gonzaga to advance to the Sweet 16.

It seems that a potential All-American candidate — which Ross was in high school and is today at Texas Tech — shouldn't go unnoticed by his own state's best basketball program, especially if he's not recruited by anyone else. After all, Ross was a walk-on for the Red Raiders.

Then there's Gansey. He's the one I would most like to see in a Lobo uniform. The 6-foot-4 junior guard for No. 7-seeded West Virginia is the guy people make movies about. He's the guy wearing the XXL blue shirt under his jersey to

hide his skeleton-like frame from ridicule.

He's the dork who thanks reporters after interviews. He's the nerd on the team whose mom still probably cuts up orange slices for a halftime snack. He also happens to be the guy who has you out of your seat yelling, "See! I told you white men really can jump!"

Gansey went to the Mountaineers' program after leaving St. Bonaventure. The Bonnies got slapped on the wrist a couple of years ago for making phone calls with illegal phone cards.

Gansey narrowed his choices down to West Virginia and UNM. He even had a plane ticket to come visit Albuquerque. But Gansey committed to the Mountaineers before he even made the trip.

Now the high-flier is poised to take his team to the Elite Eight. He sure could fit them all in that undershirt of his.

So with all these Albuquerque connections floating around The Pit on Thursday, which team is going to stomp out of the Elite Eight into St. Louis and the Final Four?

Washington plays fair. Louisville cheats — come on, Rick Pitino is their coach. Washington's overrated. Louisville, well, got screwed.

Louisville is a No. 4 seed that should have been a No. 2, and Washington is a No. 1 that should have been a No. 3. If both teams were seeded correctly, and since there are no upsets in the NCAA tournament, Louisville has to win.

And then the flyweight battle of the year: Gansey versus Ross. It's the battle of what could have been at UNM.

I say Gansey traipses into the Elite Eight after politely thanking us at the Daily Lobo for interviewing him after a win.

VS.

Furious P



by **Phil Parker**
Daily Lobo

This is too juicy to be real. Bob Knight and Rick Pitino, right here in Albuquerque, might be set to go face to face in the Elite Eight.

Anyone who's followed these coaches is bound to have some memories of their ridiculous encounters with the media.

Remember the ESPN interview with Jeremy Schaap just after Knight got fired? He ducked every question and eventually cut off the interview with a rage-filled, black-eyed stare and the nasty retort "You've got a long way to go to be like your dad." He was talking about Schaap's late father Dick, who had a brilliant career in sports writing.

Just thinking about it sends chills to my fingertips.

Slightly less awkward — but more hilarious — was Pitino's press conference just as he was wrapping up his demolition of the Celtics.

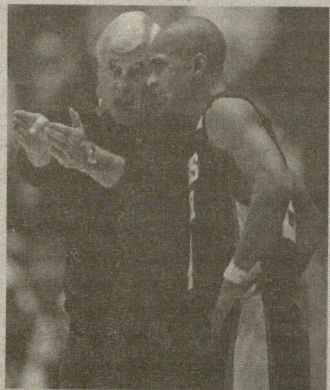
"Larry Bird's not coming through that door, people," he whined. "Robert Parrish isn't coming through that door."

The Steve Spurrier of basketball had just driven the most storied franchise in NBA history into a ditch, and he was crying like a spoiled brat.

So I'm really excited to see these guys, both of who have made mile-long strides back toward the promised land.

It's been crazy to watch Texas Tech make this run. I remember watching these guys not too long ago make it to the tournament with a bunch of walk-ons and hearing about Knight's crazy cutting of four scholarship players. And yet they continue to kick butt.

Phil and Riley are so pumped for the Sweet 16 at The Pit, they've been leaving puddles all over the newsroom. Check out Friday's sports section for a recap.



Charles Rex Arbogast / AP Photo

Texas Tech head coach Bob Knight gestures to Ronald Ross during the first half against Gonzaga in the second round of the NCAA tournament on Saturday in Tucson, Ariz.

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