

## 5 Tips to Overcome March Madness Bias

Because it's easier, we're inclined to use our recent experience and biases as the baseline for what will happen in the future. In many situations, this works just fine, but when it comes to March Madness, it can cause people to look at their brackets based on the most recent sample of results for a particular team or familiarity of a brand because they hear a team mentioned frequently on ESPN.

This can be problematic because previous performance can indicate future results and chatter about a particular team can lead you to believe they are better than the competition. In fact, these biases cloud our rational decision-making and can leave you frustrated with your selections heading into April and the Final Four.

March Madness always has an element of chaos, so below we outlined five common types of bias for you to consider and give you the advantage in picking your bracket:

1. **Familiarity Bias:** Avoid sending a team in your bracket all the way to the championship simply because you often hear them discussed on ESPN or they have a star player. Taking the time to delve into some research will really pay off in the end and help you stand out in your bracket because the majority of people will inherently favor the #1 seed or the most discussed or recognizable team.
2. **Comfort Bias:** Half the excitement of March Madness comes with the unexpected. Even if a team played exceptionally well in a game you watched earlier in the season, that doesn't mean they are guaranteed to beat a lower rated seed as the tournament progresses. When selecting your top 16 teams, branch out of your comfort zone (a particular team you've watched) and ensure you have at least a few reasons why you are selecting them – not solely because you have seen them play well in the past.
3. **Recency Bias:** Avoid recency bias by focusing on regular season records, in addition to the most recent conference tournaments and pre-season ranking. This will also help you stand out against your bracket competitors.
4. **Confirmation Bias:** Eradicate confirmation bias by finding and comparing a team's negatives and positives. As with anything else, when you are faced with all the facts, both good and bad, you will be more informed to make the better selection.
5. **Data Bias:** Think beyond the data. With March Madness comes a ton of statistics to help people with their picks. However, last year, the team with the top statistics did not end up winning the tournament. To really increase your chances of winning your bracket, think about the combination of elements beyond what the numbers suggest because that is the foundation on which most people will build their brackets.

Much like March Madness, financial markets can be unpredictable and planning can be unintentionally biased. Like selecting your brackets with the biases listed above, investors too often rely on their intuition to make investment decisions. However, those who adhere to a more disciplined approach achieve better long-term investment performance. We emphasize rational, data-driven decision-making wherever possible, whether it's your March Madness bracket or your financial investments. This ensures that decisions are based on measurable facts rather than the latest news story, moods, bias or other typical fleeting influence.

Learn more about [our firm philosophy](#).