

## 3Qs: An inside look at the 'Madness'

March 26 2012, By Greg St. Martin

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Alan Zaremba, associate professor of communication studies, captured the experience of watching the March Madness men's college basketball tournament in Sin City in his book, "The Madness of March: Bonding and Betting with the Boys in Las Vegas." Credit: Lauren McFalls.

March Madness is in full swing, offering college basketball fans an onslaught of games that feature epic matchups and dramatic finishes. Alan Zaremba — associate professor of communication studies and associate dean for undergraduate curriculum and research in the College of Arts, Media and Design — captured the experience of watching the tournament in Sin City in his book, "The Madness of March: Bonding and Betting with the Boys in Las Vegas." Northeastern University news office asked him why sports fans make the annual voyage to enjoy the tournament in the so-called entertainment capital of the world.

**You have visited Las Vegas for the opening rounds of**

## **March Madness on several occasions. Describe what makes the tournament such a thrilling experience for fans and bettors.**

Most of the people I meet are fans, and betting is peripheral to their enthusiasm for college basketball and sports events in general. The event is thrilling because multiple games are played concurrently, each of which is essentially a tossup because of the point spreads. Hundreds of like-minded individuals are congregated in the sports books cheering for their teams and bets, which makes for a heavenly atmosphere for sports fans.

A few memories stand out from this year. One fellow in the Venetian casino intermittently was slamming his hands on the countertop, standing up and rolling his head in exasperation when Syracuse failed to pull away from UNC Asheville. A young man seated behind me in one casino was wailing about how he was losing every [game](#), but then he got right up in line to place more wagers.

## **What have you discovered about sports fandom in general from these experiences?**

The people who attend have been going for years. The allure of betting doesn't draw them to Vegas, because they lose more often than they win, and certainly lose more often if you factor in plane and hotel costs. What draws them to Vegas is being with like-minded zealots feasting on 48 basketball games in four days.

## **Have these experiences made you curious about exploring other subcultures in a similar way?**

Yes. I am interested in looking at other types of sports fan subcultures. I write in my book about hockey season-ticket holders in New York. I have also been curious about what kinds of people attend Olympic events, or sports that do not get as much television exposure, like women's softball, lacrosse and swimming. One colleague is urging me to spend time in Saratoga, N.Y., this summer to capture the horse racing [sports](#) subculture.

Provided by Northeastern University

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