

Perfect NCAA bracket? Near impossible, mathematician says

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The odds of picking a perfect bracket for the NCAA men's basketball March Madness championship tournament are a staggering less than one

in 9.2 quintillion (that's 9,223,372,036,854,775,808), according to Jeff Bergen, mathematics professor at DePaul University.

"It would be easier to win the Mega Millions lottery two times in a row buying one ticket both times than it would be to get a perfect bracket," Bergen determined. "Getting a perfect bracket is also the mathematical equivalent of picking the winning party of each [presidential election](#) through 2264."

College sports analysts and bracketology experts who study the teams, coaches and players have the challenging task each year of trying to determine the outcome of 63 games. Experts weigh in with insight into March Madness and analysis even before teams are chosen and ranked for the tournament, which happens March 15 on Selection Sunday.

"It would be more likely for the next 16 World Series to be won by the Chicago Cubs and Chicago White Sox than it would be to pick a perfect bracket by guessing," said Bergen.

"It's essentially impossible to guess a perfect bracket, but that's no reason not to have fun with it," he said. "People still play to beat their friends or win their office pool. Just remember to enjoy yourself."

If you had basketball knowledge, would that help your odds?

Bergen said "yes" but it is still a long shot. "Suppose you know that a one seed has never lost to a 16 seed in the men's tournament, that would help improve your odds. With additional knowledge of basketball and the history of the [tournament](#), the odds of picking a perfect bracket would be approximately one in 128 billion," he said.

"As a math professor, I do enjoy having fun with this. But it is important to remember that although the numbers are astounding and far bigger

than ones we come across in daily life, the math involved can be taught at the high school level," he said. "Anyone interested in math can understand where all these numbers come from."

Provided by DePaul University

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