

**February 15, 2012**



An Interview With:

## **JEFF HATHAWAY**

DAVID WORLOCK: Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to this afternoon's teleconference with the chair of the Division I Men's Basketball Committee and a consultant to the BIG EAST conference, Mr. Jeff Hathaway.

We are taking a break from our selection orientation meeting which is taking place in Albany today and will finish at about noon tomorrow and that will lead into our mock selection exercise size we hold annually with select members of the media, and that will take place Thursday afternoon and Friday.

We are with Jeff here in Indianapolis and we are going to turn the call over to Jeff. We want to thank you for your time today and participating in today's call and also remind you that all media policies and the credential application link for all rounds of the Division I NCAA Men Championship can be found at [NCAA.com/media](http://NCAA.com/media). So please go there or drop me an e-mail if you have any questions about the process or credentialing policies. We will turn the call over to Jeff for his comments and then begin taking questions in a moment.

JEFF HATHAWAY: On behalf of the Men's Basketball Committee, let me say thank you for taking time out today to be with us today and to share your questions, and we look forward to sharing some information with each of you.

The first thing I would say to you is we are very excited about our three new members of the NCAA Basketball Committee: Joe Alleva, director of athletics at Louisiana State University; Joe Castiglione, director of athletics at University of Oklahoma; and Jamie Zaninovich, commissioner of the West Coast Conference. All three are tremendous additions to the committee and share the passion that the returning members have for college basketball and for this great event.

Let me also share with you that two weeks ago, I was in New Orleans for a press conference to talk about the upcoming Final Four. Very excited to report that all is well in New Orleans. Tulane University is doing a tremendous job with the preparations for this great event, and very much looking forward to the road to the Final Four ending there in the beginning of April.

We are in Indianapolis now, as you all know, and holding our mock selection for the committee. Very excited about the conference margin reports and to talk about all of the tremendous basketball action that has taken place thus far this year.

The committee will be ending their meetings tomorrow afternoon. The men's basketball staff and myself will be staying here in Indianapolis to then join the media mock selection process. We have about 25 media members that will be there. We are very excited about the turnout among the media. Some of you have been to this event in the past.

I think one of the things that really has excited us this year is to hear the number of members of the media to talk about their experience in going through the mock, and using that to further inform the fans about how the selection process works and what the committee looks for in teams as go through the selection process.

Part of that transparency with the media and giving them more information to share with the fans throughout the country; that dovetails into what we have tried to emphasize this year, and that's transparency in the process.

And as you all know, the average fan out there can now go to [NCAA.org](http://NCAA.org), go to the RPI section and see the RPI that the committee looks at every day. They can see the nitty-gritty sheets that the committee is looking at each and every day. They can see the team sheets that are available to the committee every day.

I think the bottom line here, as we talk about transparency, one of the exciting parts for

fans is after the selections are made, is to talk about who they wanted in, who got in that they didn't want in, who was on the bubble.

And one of the things we wanted to do this year was provide this information that's available to the committee to further enhance and inform those discussions that take place on Monday morning around the water cooler about who is in, who is not in, who I wanted to see in, what my bracket looked like. So we are very excited about the transparency efforts.

The last thing I would say to you is that as we have seen over the past couple of years in the committee room, and we are seeing it again this year, there are more better teams this year than ever before. That doesn't mean there's not as many great teams; that doesn't mean there's more parity. It means there are frankly just a lot of very good basketball teams out there that are playing very good basketball, and that adds to the challenge for the ten committee members here in the selection room.

So I thank you for being with us, and I'm here to answer any questions you might have.

**Q. Would you talk about -- being on the committee and what he has brought to and some of the ideas he's come up with, if you could?**

JEFF HATHAWAY: I'm sorry, I missed part of the question there.

**Q. Would you talk about Joe Alleva on the committee and how much he's brought to it, and maybe some of his ideas and his input.**

JEFF HATHAWAY: Oh, sure. Thank you very much.

I tell you what, first off, I've known Joe for many years and he's an extraordinarily well respected athletic director and athletic administrator. Very excited to have him on the committee. He brings a great deal of perspective from his past roles.

Obviously he's been around great athletic programs, both at Duke and at LSU. Obviously his basketball experiences at Duke and what he and Trent are working on at LSU to further enhance that basketball program, very engaged in our conversations, very engaged in our meetings and I just think his perspective is going to be a very strong addition to the team.

**Q. One of the big myths, coaches -- when they are in a power six conference, is that**



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**they get into double-digit wins, obviously ten or 11; and we could have a case this year where South Florida, they have eight, they play Villanova tonight and they have a good shot to get to that ten number. Yet when you look at the nitty-gritty sheet, when you look at the those eight wins, of the BIG EAST wins, only two of those are against teams in the Top-100. So just for educational purposes, how much do you strip that down and really look at where those wins are coming from, regardless of how many them in a conference like the BIG EAST?**

JEFF HATHAWAY: Well, the first thing I would say, Andy, and you've heard me say this many times, and that is to go to the basic premise of the selection committee and that is: Who did they play, where did they play them, and how did they do. There is no magic number on conference wins. There's 20-win seasons -- there's no magic number in any way, shape or form.

The committee sits down and they evaluate each individual team sheet. They look at the different indicators that are on that team sheet. Obviously the eyeball test comes into play --

**Q. What does that mean to you?**

JEFF HATHAWAY: Does what mean?

**Q. How do you define your version of the eyeball test?**

JEFF HATHAWAY: My version of the eyeball test is, you know, having seen teams, obviously you know we watch a lot of games. You know what is that team about, how good are they; when you compare a team to another team and you look at the statistical indicators, how well do they play, how well do they execute. You know, all of the quality teams, are they one of the 37 best teams in the country. There's no magic number, Andy.

**Q. I think people get carried away with the conference win total. So just to be clear, you do not look at those standings; you look at the team sheets?**

JEFF HATHAWAY: You and I have had this conversation before, and I know you're asking it just to get it back on the record. And the bottom line is, when we are reviewing an individual team sheet, they are an independent. They are not conference affiliated. We don't look at conference RPI. We are looking at a team, individually, at the

merits of their team sheet and their performance over the course of the year: Who did they play, where did they play, and how did they do.

Does that answer your question?

**Q. Yes, it did.**

**Q. I know you prefer hypotheticals but there's no point because you'll know who I'm talking about anyway. In a situation like UCONN where they have had a player suspended by the NCAA and they have had a coach suspended by the NCAA, and that has obviously changed the way the season has flowed. And by missing a player for nine games and losing a coach for a few games, and also with Coach Calhoun being out with his medical issue, I guess my basic question is: Do you view NCAA suspensions in the same way and is it discussed the same way as an injury, or how is that factored in?**

JEFF HATHAWAY: Let me say this, Kenny. One of the things I made very clear and up front to everybody on the committee, was that in no way, shape or form would I comment on the University of Connecticut. I've recused myself obviously from all of those conversations for obvious reasons.

So let me say this: In the past we have dealt with player suspensions and we have dealt with coaches' suspensions. We have dealt with a wide range of situations like this. The bottom line is the committee is aware of player and coach availability. Each of the ten members will factor that into their thinking. They will decide how to weigh that in their thought process.

But, quite frankly, at the end of the day, it's who did you play, where did you play them and how did you do.

**Q. Is it very similar to the way you would handle an injury though; correct?**

JEFF HATHAWAY: It is. It is. And again, we had a coach suspension last year. We had a coach suspensions last year; we had injury situations. We've had injury situations at the end of the regular season where we had to make determinations as we seeded for the tournament.

So the bottom line is that we view the availability to compete. We view how those teams have performed during the regular season. And, quite frankly, it's pretty cut and dry that we look at how they performed. Each committee member

evaluates in their own way, and has to vote as they see fit.

**Q. Following Andy's question earlier, will there ever be a situation where a team's placement within a conference is judged against another member of their conference if they both happen to be on the bubble, and, say, they are among the last few teams to be considered?**

JEFF HATHAWAY: I appreciate the question, but what I would say to you: Whether we judge two teams or evaluate two teams or discuss two teams that are in the same conference or in two different conferences, we would evaluate those team sheets the same way.

We would look to see, are there common opponents. We would look to see if there's head-to-head competition. We would look at the statistical indicators that are on the team sheet. We would look at player/coach availability, and quite frankly, there's no difference whether they are both in the same conference or two different conferences.

**Q. This is about your particular view. How much do you weigh or compare a big win in November, December versus February or March? Is it less significant if a big win came back in the early part of the season than if it comes in now or next month?**

JEFF HATHAWAY: You know, to me a big win is a big win. We look at the total body of work and quite frankly, we look at strength of schedule, we look at non-conference strength of schedule. But frankly in some cases, there is only an opportunity for certain games to take place in the early part of the season, particularly in some non-conference situations.

So the bottom line for me is a big win, any time, any place, and that's one of the great things about looking at the entire body of work. The season starts in November; it goes all the way through the conference tournaments. We look at every game, we evaluate every situation, and any win is a good win and any big win is a good big win.

**Q. Following up, a different way -- an injury is different than a suspension. So should a team -- Alabama; there's multiple teams that have dealt with this season. Should**

a team be rewarded for the suspensions that resulted in a loss? You're almost rewarding a team, if you are looking at them equally as an injury versus a suspension and maybe not treating that game the same way; or do you view it like, hey, look, these guys did something wrong, they were suspended, they lost the game, we shouldn't give them any kind of credit because these players weren't there.

JEFF HATHAWAY: You know, again, from our standpoint, we are looking at the competition, the competitive availability. It isn't a reward to discount the game. We are looking to understand the results, evaluate the teams.

We have seen many examples, many, many examples over the years of players not being available for whatever the situation might be. We have seen coaches not be available.

At the end of the day, each committee member has to evaluate the team sheet and make a determination, is this one of the 37 best teams in the country, and should they be placed into the field.

**Q. One last thing, this weekend, what will you be looking, as an individual committee member, to influence you, in how these teams and Brackets Busters handle these games; we have seen it before with George Mason; is it just a good home win against another good team? What are you looking to sort of gauge your interest in general at these games, Friday, Saturday, Sunday?**

JEFF HATHAWAY: Who did they play, where did they play them and who won.

So you know what, you're going to see a great game in Saint Mary's and Murray State. Saint Mary's had to go on the road. It's a big win for either one of them; who did you play, where do you play them and how did you do.

Every game is a chance for us to learn more about the teams involved, and whether it's a Bracket Buster, whether it's a regular-season game, whether it's in November, we are going to evaluate the team sheets and see who the 37 best teams are to be given at-large selections.

Did that answer it? Guess so.

**Q. In a way, yes.**

JEFF HATHAWAY: What does that mean, Andy? Tell me what you want to know. Ask it again. Let me see if I can do better the second time.

**Q. Well, obviously, you've got Wichita going to Davidson; Creighton has lost three in a row and playing a Long Beach State team, you can argue that's even more important than not to drop a home game. They have already lost one, so this could potentially be a second. So there's a lot of these home teams that are riding on some of these games.**

JEFF HATHAWAY: What I would say to you, that all of these games are of interest. And I think I said this early on, that the committee enjoys the Bracket Buster games. It's an exciting time to be playing a lot of very interesting, non-conference games late in the conference schedule.

But the bottom line is, when it's on the team sheet, it's another game for the committee members to evaluate. And there's really no other way to answer that, other than the challenge is, that every game is important, and every game can add to your resumé, and, you know, wins are certainly something that the committee is very interested in obviously.

**Q. You mentioned being a consultant to the BIG EAST, you mentioned you don't want to talk about UCONN, which is understandable; do you have to step out of the room for all BIG EAST teams now?**

JEFF HATHAWAY: Yes. Yes. We made it very clear that when I took the position at the BIG EAST, I'm treated no different than any other conference office member on the committee. I will be recused from all of those conversations.

**Q. For a couple of years, most analysts have been saying that they think either it will be a very soft bubble, the indication being it sounds like there's a lot of mediocrity at that spot. Do you see it that same way?**

JEFF HATHAWAY: I'm sorry, I apologize but I couldn't quite understand -- I couldn't hear you very well.

**Q. Most people who watch a lot of games, TV analysts, etc., most people are saying that they think it's a soft bubble this year from a year ago with the implied -- there's a lot of mediocrity there. Do you see it the same way and does that make the choices tougher?**

JEFF HATHAWAY: Well, I guess what I would say, a bubble team is a bubble team. At the

end of the day, a bubble team, a soft bubble -- I've always kind of been fascinated by that term; I'm not sure what a "soft bubble" is.

The bottom line in our minds as a committee is that there is more quality widespread throughout that basketball this year than we have seen in the past. And in the past couple of years, we have seen more than before that.

So the bottom line is that we look at all of the games across the board. And we don't sit here, I can honestly say to you that in our meetings in January and in our meetings thus far today, has anybody used the term soft bubble.

**Q. Notre Dame seems to be a pretty interesting situation where they actually struggled more for the first three weeks or a month, and developed quite a good rhythm since he's been out (Inaudible) -- to look at them, but how would you judge that situation?**

JEFF HATHAWAY: You know, that's a great example of looking at the entire body of work, and the bottom line is, it gets back to player availability. Quite frankly, if my memory serves me right, that player was only available for a couple games before he was injured. I assume you're talking about Tim Abromaitis?

**Q. Yes.**

JEFF HATHAWAY: He sat out the first four games and then he was back for a couple of games. As a matter of fact, I saw those games in person in Kansas City, and then he was injured.

So it goes back to player availability, and we'll study the games, and again, we see a lot of cases of injuries and we have to evaluate how the team has adjusted. But in this particular case, they played the bulk of their season without that individual.

**Q. Given the fact that that's been probably two thirds or three quarters, would the inclination be to -- (Inaudible) -- here and now and look at that large body of work?**

JEFF HATHAWAY: I'm going to ask you to repeat that question one more time for me.

**Q. They have played for an extended period of time with the current group and wondering whether the committee in trying to look at that long body of work after he's been out, etc., and look at that as the best information available.**

JEFF HATHAWAY: Again, I go back to the fact that I believe the individual was only available for a couple of games and then was injured, and we know he is not returning to play this year.

So quite frankly, we are going to look at that team and we are going to look at the team sheet and we are going to look at player availability, and we know he's not available. We'll evaluate it just like any other team.

**Q. You mentioned a couple of times that the committee is in agreement that there are more and more quality teams, and that's been a trend in recent years. My question is: Because of that, is there a certain criteria that's gone up or down in importance because you've seen more talented teams?**

JEFF HATHAWAY: Again, a couple of things. One, you know there's a number of criteria on the team sheet that we all look at. You have ten individuals who may weigh some of that criteria a little bit differently as you go around the table.

I think the bottom line is, we are going to look at what we have talked about already, who did you play them, where did you play them and how did you do. I think a lot of people look at strength of schedule, non-conference strength of schedule; does this team have the ability to win on the road.

So no prioritizing of the criteria. It's an evaluation of the team sheets, and I think what we would say is that we are seeing more and more quality in more team sheets, and that's great for the sport of college basketball. That's what we all want to see.

**Q. Just as a quick follow-up. What do you think remains the main misconception about what the committee does? Obviously last year, the fallout was greater and a lot of criticism; is there a certain misconception?**

JEFF HATHAWAY: Well, I think one of the greatest misconceptions that I've heard over the years is that there is conspiracy theories; that we match up certain teams; that we set the bracket a certain way. The examples I've heard in the past is UCLA playing Belmont because both of them have the Bruins for the mascots; or one team playing another team because the assistant of the second team used to work at the other school.

You know, that's the one thing; that is the one thing that I can unequivocally say there are no



conspiracy theories. As a matter of fact I did a question and answer article for the *NABC Magazine* and they asked me that question and that was my response: No conspiracy theories.

The second thing I would say to you is there is a wide range of checks and balances in place throughout the system, throughout the process, to where the process is monitored in a very strict way and to allow for no conspiracy theories.

**Q. How much does strength of schedule matter, and has that changed over the years? I recall a Georgia team that was seeded a little higher than people thought back when; how much weight is that given or is that still an individual committee member's decision?**

JEFF HATHAWAY: Well, I think your question quite frankly doesn't apply to any one team; so I don't know who you're talking about.

Certainly committee members look at strength of schedule, and they look at non-conference strength of schedule, because that reinforces to what we talk about all the time to everybody we talk about this process, and that is who do you play and where do you play them. So certainly those are factors as we look at selection.

**Q. There's a certain program that you used to be affiliated that has the No. 1 strength of schedule right now, and in some people's minds, a questionable resumé. So that was the point of the question.**

JEFF HATHAWAY: I appreciate that. Good schedulers back there.

**Q. One final shot, are margins of victory a consideration, a pattern of getting blown out or a pattern of playing close games?**

JEFF HATHAWAY: No. No. I don't think there's an awful lot of conversation about margin of victories. I think obviously common opponents, head-to-head competition, things of that nature. But do we sit there and say, you know, somebody won by nine or somebody else won by seven. No, we don't say that.

We also look at results against teams that are in the tournament or being considered for the tournament. But point totals, it's safe to say the scoreboard isn't the only factor.

**Q. And then the last question, I've always been kind of fascinated by the discussion over committee members needing**

**to look at a team and passing the eyeball test, just because we all know teams have really good nights and really off nights sometimes. Is that really that important, or how do you see it?**

JEFF HATHAWAY: Well, I think it's important to watch the teams. I think certainly you need to watch teams play. And I think the bulk of us, the majority of us, see teams play on multiple occasions, certainly on television, and that gives you some further insight.

And you know, how a team looks is crucial, and we get out, we see games, we watch games nonstop through the season, and we need to go beyond the numbers. We have got to go beyond the numbers, and each individual committee member has to assess what the eyeball test means to them.

**Q. You may have covered this before, we just got on recently, but with the upcoming bracket busters, do you put a lot of weight into some of those results for looking at mid-major teams, or is that only like one-third weight or what? How do you figure that?**

JEFF HATHAWAY: Quite frankly I think that game, if you're playing in the Bracket Busters, I think that game carries the same weight as every other game that you've played. It's another game on the schedule.

There are other schools that are playing non-conference games late in the year. Everybody plays games. We look at the entire body of work. Because it's a Bracket Buster game, I don't think any of the committee members weigh that any more than they would any other game on the team sheet.

I think a good example of that is, for example, if Murray State was to beat Saint Mary's, should that happen, that game is not weighed any more than them beating Memphis because it's in a Bracket Buster series or because it's played in February. It's the total body of work over the course of the full season.

**Q. So you wouldn't compare it to a December game, an early December game?**

JEFF HATHAWAY: Yes, full body of work, yes, sir.

**Q. Whenever we write about the BCS, we always write about how it's tweaked from year-to-year. In your tenure as a member of the**

**committee, has there been any changes that are different now than they were just a few years ago?**

JEFF HATHAWAY: In the selection process or in the tournament or in the Final Four? In what regard?

**Q. In regard to filling out a bracket itself, has the work of the committee changed how it judges certain criteria over the years?**

JEFF HATHAWAY: I think that at one point, criteria was the last ten games. My first year on the committee, that was changed to the last 12 games. My next year on the committee, that was eliminated all together, because I think frankly, looking at X number of games is not the point. I think the point is, maybe looking at trends and looking at each and every game, not just the last 12.

So those kind of things have taken place. Obviously we have expanded to 68 teams. Obviously we have had added the First Four. We learn each and every year, we review the process of selection each and every year; and certainly try to advance this each and every year.

**Q. What did you learn last year?**

JEFF HATHAWAY: What did we learn last year? One of the things we learned last year was we were very excited about the First Four last year and really felt that it was very good and it was a nice, addition, if you will, to the tournament.

I think we did learn a little bit about where those teams played in the First Four and when they played, when they moved on to the second round; you know, the example being Clemson. We evaluated that. We talked to the Clemson people and we are working to correct those situations.

**Q. You had a lot in and around Dayton, Columbus, Louisville, Pittsburgh; is there a good chance that a First Four team will be kept closer to home in that regard?**

JEFF HATHAWAY: Well, there's a couple of things. I think, one, you won't see them playing the first game of the afternoon session, okay, and that's what occurred last year in the Clemson situation.

I think the other thing that you will see is that there are some sites that are closer this year to Dayton; Columbus; Pitt. And it's an easier travel situation, also with Louisville and Nashville.

I think the point -- I think the real point to this is that we evaluated last year's First Four very

closely. We talked to the teams. We learned from it and we are going to try to make it an even more positive experience.

DAVID WORLOCK: Thank you, everyone, for your time today.

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