

Other March madnenses

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

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[It's the most wonderful time of the year](#) for fans of collegiate (men's) sports. I'm not one, but I can appreciate the thrill of a single-elimination tournament. I also enjoy the creative ways people use March Madness to bring attention to other subjects.

Tim Schenck, an Episcopal priest and blogger in Massachusetts, is hosting the second annual [Lent Madness](#), in which saints from the Episcopal Church Calendar compete for "the coveted 'Golden Halo'" by way of blog posts comparing their legacies--and inviting readers to vote on a winner. Here's Schenck:

Last year George Herbert pulled off an upset in the finals against Julian of Norwich to claim the illustrious title - [click](#) here to view last year's final bracket.

To win in 2011 will take grit, determination, holiness, and perhaps some good old-fashioned ballot stuffing (this is discouraged, of course) to claim the hallowed crown. Lent Madness 2011 features an entirely new slate of saints ancient and modern, Biblical and ecclesiastical. So if your favorite saint didn't make it into the tournament last year you might just be in luck. And if not? Your favorite saint may be pretty lame. Better luck next year.

Silly-sounding stuff, but the individual posts are pretty informative. It's a fun way to get us Protestants to consider some of the great women and men of the faith. "Why should college basketball fans have all the fun," [asks Schenck](#), "while we're sitting around giving up chocolate?"

The NCAA tournament is a fraught subject for those in the higher-education field, but two leading trade publications are having fun with it. The *Chronicle of Higher Education* [invites](#) readers to fill out a "Tweed Madness" bracket, "select[ing] winners based not on such practical considerations as shooting percentage, ease of region, or senior leadership" but instead on "the geekiest, most-obscure factoids you can muster."

The *Chronicle* offers this helpful example: you might pick North Carolina to go far on account of its general toughness, as evidenced by the fact that the team's (ovine) mascot [committed fratricide](#) to get where he is today.

Inside Higher Ed takes a more barbed angle, presenting its sixth annual [Academic Performance Tournament](#). The publication takes the NCAA's initial match-ups and completes the bracket according to who would win "if teams advanced based on their outcomes in the classroom."

The point is to highlight [controversies](#) over academic standards for student athletes. But interestingly, the academic bracket's past winners have ranged from long shots to heavyweights in the tournament itself. This year's winner? Butler University-- which, *Inside Higher Ed* points out, is taken [a bit more seriously](#) on the court than they were a couple years ago.