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CATS TO MEET MAC WINNER

Villanova in NCAA; Penn Paired With Duquesne

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Villanova got a break in the draw. Fordham couldn't have come any closer to home. Duquesne got its choice for a playing site and Penn — well, Penn, with the top record on the Eastern wheel, may have gotten the shaft in the NCAA Tournament draw on Tuesday.

Jack Kraft's Wildcats, who accepted a bid to the Eastern regional Tuesday morning along with co-independent Fordham and Duquesne, drew the winner of the Middle Atlantic Conference as their first-round foe, March 13, in a Palestra matchup.

On the same night Fordham will play Southern Conference champion Davidson at St. John's while the Quakers (24-9) will travel to Morgantown, W. Va., to meet Duquesne (20-3).

The winner of the Villanova-MAC game will play the Fordham-Davidson survivor in the first game of a doubleheader March 18 at Raleigh, N.C. Meanwhile, if it survives the test against the rugged Duke, Penn will have the pleasure of meeting the Atlantic Coast Conference champion on a floor where it has just clinched the ACC title.

"I think we got almost the perfect draw," a jubilant Jack Kraft said from Boston where his team meets Boston College in its season finale Wednesday night. "The only better draw we could have received was to play Davidson at the Palestra."

Kraft must have been dreaming. He had voiced dismay at the possibility of having to play Penn at the Palestra prior to the draw.

"We don't want to play a team on its home court," Kraft said. "We'd rather play another team at the Palestra than out of town. Anybody that thinks the Palestra is our home court is erroneous. A home court is where you practice all the time. Where you know the baskets and the floor. And, also, Penn would have been handling the tickets."

Villanova Athletic Director Art Mahan supported Kraft's view, although not so vehemently. "We felt that Penn would have had an edge at the Palestra since they practiced there since Oct. 15," Mahan said. "But we were willing to take anything that came down the pike just to get in the NCAA."

Kraft was pacified by the draw. He says his team is "mentally tired" from a 28-game schedule, a three-week road trip to Kansas, California, North Dakota and Hawaii and the effects of the Howard Porter dishester, didn't-be-sign-an-ABA-contract affair.

"We have gotten over it but we haven't been able to recover from everything," Kraft said in his best Stengelese. "After Wednesday night, I want our kids to not even talk about basketball until Monday. Then we'll sit down and talk about our tournament opponent."

Kraft said he would rather pass on playing St. Joseph's if it emerges as the MAC winner.

"I don't like to play anybody three times," the Wildcat coach says. "The law of averages is against you." The Wildcats beat the Hawks, 60-55, in a City Series game at the Palestra and by 85-75 in a Jayhawk Tourney consolation game in Kansas.

Villanova, Fordham and Duquesne were three of 10 independents accepting bids to the NCAA Tournament. They join winners of eight collegiate conferences in the 18-team field for the opening round competition at sites across the nation.

Second-ranked Marquette (24-0), winner of 36 straight games, will face Miami of Ohio, Mid-America Conference champion, and Jacksonville (23-3) will meet seventh-rated Western Kentucky, Ohio Valley

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MARCH 13 START

1st-Round Draw

First-round pairings March 13:
East—Duquesne vs. Penn at West Virginia, MAC champion vs. Villanova at Palestra and Davidson vs. Fordham at St. John's.
Midwest—Southwest Conference champion vs. Notre Dame and Houston vs. New Mexico State at Houston.
West—Western Athletic champion vs. Utah State and Weber State vs. Long Beach State at Utah State.
Midwest—Marquette vs. Miami of Ohio and Jacksonville vs. Western Kentucky at Notre Dame.