

SPORTS

BASEBALL ▶ Shaker grad Tom Kahnle gets his first major league win as Rockies top D'backs, **B5**

GOLF ▶ Matt Kuchar uses three straight birdies to rally to four-shot lead after three rounds at Houston Open, **B7**

SECTION B

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SIENA 81, FRESNO STATE 68



Photos by Cindy Schultz / Times Union

Siena fans carry Saints senior Steven Cruz, center, as they celebrate an 81-68 win over Fresno State in Game 3 of the College Basketball Invitational championship series on Saturday at Alumni Recreation Center. Cruz, a fan favorite all season long, is the only senior on Siena's roster.

Finally, Saints celebrate

Longest basketball season in Siena history ends with a tournament championship

By Mark Singelais

Loudonville

The Siena men's basketball team was supposed to be going nowhere in September. Then the Saints figured they were done playing in March.

It wasn't until the first weekend in April that Siena's improbable year finally ended with hundreds of students storming the court and the players climbing an orange stepladder to cut down the net.

The Saints capped the longest season in program history on Saturday afternoon with an 81-68 victory over Fresno State in Game 3 of the best-of-3 College Basketball Invitational finals before 2,788 fans at Alumni Recreation Center.

Siena (20-18) captured its first Division I national postseason tournament title to conclude what figured to be a rebuilding year under Jimmy Patsos, the colorful, animated coach who was hired last April. "Winning this championship

just means a lot (after) all of the controversy we went through and all the hard work we put in all year," Siena junior guard Rob Poole said. "Practices weren't fun. Fights, black eyes, getting hurt all the time. But that's the hard work you need to do to win a championship. So we're really happy."

On the web View more photos from the game at <http://timesunion.com>, in program history as its season lasted into April for the first time.

Poole scored 23 points and sophomore forward Brett Bisping, named tournament MVP, added 20 points and nine rebounds in a game that Siena never trailed.

The Saints bounced back from a humbling loss to Fresno State, which led by as many as 26 in a Game 2 victory at the ARC on Wednesday night, to dominate the Bulldogs (21-18) Please see **SIENA B3** ▶



Siena's Rob Poole, left, and coach Jimmy Patsos hold the winner's trophy after the Saints routed Fresno State to win the final game of the College Basketball Invitational.

Odd finish lifts hopes

Loudonville

On the Saturday of Final Four weekend, the Siena men's basketball team played a championship game at Alumni Recreation Center, before which the school handed out free bacon and after which the team cut down the nets while "We Are The Champions" thumped through the loudspeakers.

Jimmy Patsos drove to campus in the morning listening to the Grateful Dead's "Truckin,'" and the metaphor was a slam dunk: If this season had a motto, it might as well have been "what a long, strange trip 't's been." The Saints may not be champions of the world, but their 81-68 pasting of Fresno State does make them champions of Please see **IRIZZIO B3** ▶



PETE DRIZZO

KENTUCKY 74, WISCONSIN 73

Late 3 sets up unlikely final

No. 8 Kentucky edgys Wisconsin; Wildcats face No. 7 UConn next

McClatchy

Arlington, Texas

The setting was wildly unusual, but the exciting finish is becoming almost customary.

With the largest crowd in the history of college basketball watching (79,444) in AT&T Stadium, Aaron Harrison once shocks No. 1 Kentucky to a victory in this

B3 ▶ UConn Harrison once more shot Kentucky to a victory in this NCAA Tournament.

His 3-pointer with 5.7 seconds left beat Wisconsin, 74-73. That marked the third straight game Harrison made a winning 3-pointer in the final seconds.

The third moved Kentucky (29-10) to the national championship game against Connecticut. The No. 7-seed Huskies upset the tournament's overall No. 1 seed, the Florida Gators, 63-63, in Saturday's opening game.

Harrison's shot was rich irony. Kentucky took a season-low five 3-point shots, but Harrison more than made up in quality what might have been wisely lacking in quantity.

No. 2-seeded Wisconsin shot Please see **KENTUCKY B3** ▶



—Jamie Squire / Getty Images
Aaron Harrison of Kentucky celebrates after hitting the game-winning shot Saturday night.

BOYS' BASKETBALL LARGE SCHOOL ALL-STARS

Scotia star led championship run

Behind Cremo, Tartans won Class A state titles, posted 27-0 record

By James Allen

Athlete of the Year: Joe Cremo, Scotia

Being driven to succeed never has been an issue for Joe Cremo. But a painful state regional loss in March of 2013 provided an added motivational boost to Cremo and his Scotia teammates

B8 ▶ More Times Union boys' and girls' basketball All-Stars.

for the 2013-14 boys' basketball season.

Cremo wanted the chance to avenge the regional defeat against Bishop Ludden. That meant the Tartans had to win another Section II Class A title. They did with a thrilling 77-75 double-overtime triumph over Troy.

Scotia knocked off Peru and proceeded to crush Bishop

Ludden 72-44 at Hudson Valley Community College. From that point on, it became abundantly clear Cremo would not allow the Tartans to be stopped.

Scotia, led by Most Valuable Player performances from Cremo, captured both the New York State Public High School Athletic Association and Federation Tournament of Champions Class A crowns to finish 27-0.

"In those bigger games, I thought I had to step up. I like Please see **LARGE B8** ▶



Cindy Schultz / Times Union

Scotia's Joe Cremo, the Times Union large school boys' basketball Athlete of the Year, averaged 24.9 points, 11.7 rebounds and 4.2 assists.

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Siena's Lavon Long, center, drives past Fresno State defenders during Saturday's game at Alumni Recreation Center.

SIENA

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of the Mountain West Conference. Siena led by 23 in the second half until Fresno State made a cosmetic run in the closing minutes.

"We had a tough Game 2," Siena sophomore guard Ryan Oliver said. "We thought we didn't give our best effort. They were coming back into our home. We had a chance to win at home, which is rare, so we just wanted to take advantage of the opportunity."

Siena did it with a team with no scholarship seniors that had finished 8-24 a year ago.

The Saints were picked to come in 10th in the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference preseason coaches' poll in September.

Even though they had a surprising regular season and finished fifth, the Saints appeared to be done when they lost to Canisius in the MAAC Tournament quarterfinals on March 8.

However, the CBI chose Siena for its 16-team tournament despite a losing record, partly based on its strong second-half performance and the school's passionate fan base.



Siena's Brett Bisping, left, gets one of his nine rebounds Saturday in Game 3 of the CBI championship series.

"It's very exciting," said Siena freshman point guard Marquis Wright, who added 12 points Saturday. "Not knowing we were even going to be in this tournament, and coming this far and winning it, is impressive."

The Saints became the first MAAC team to win a national postseason tournament and possibly laid the groundwork for a run at a conference title and an NCAA bid next season, with only beloved walk-on guard Steven Cruz graduating.

"Jimmy's done a great job with this group all year

long, and they're going to be a team that's reckoned with next year in their league," Fresno State coach Rodney Terry said. Bisping gave Siena the lead for good with a 3-pointer just 11 seconds into the game.

Then his tip-in started an 11-0 run that put the Saints ahead 24-11 at 8:23 before halftime. The Saints led by at least nine the rest of the way.

Siena unleashed a 9-2 zone defense that held Fresno State to just 20 percent shooting after the Bulldogs were a torrid 63 percent in Game 2.

It was an impressive win for a team from humble beginnings.

"We were picked low in the league to start, so I think we might have took that a little personally," Bisping said. "We wanted to respond and show people different."

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SIENA 81, FRESNO STATE 68

Table with columns: Player, Min, FG, FT, 3P, Rebs, Ast, Pts. Lists stats for Siena and Fresno State players.

SIENA (95-11)

Table with columns: Player, Min, FG, FT, 3P, Rebs, Ast, Pts. Lists stats for Siena players.

Statistical summary for Siena's performance, including shooting percentages and rebounding totals.

CONNECTICUT 63, FLORIDA 53

UConn upsets No. 1 Florida

Daniels, Boatright lead No. 7 Huskies into the title game

Associated Press

Arlington, Texas

Connecticut will not ride a one-man band into the national championship game this time.

Shabazz Napier is still the leader, but DeAndre Daniels and Ryan Boatright have taken their turns in charge.

Daniels carried UConn out of an early funk to finish with 20 points and 10 rebounds, and Boatright gave the Huskies a lift at both ends in a 63-53 victory over Florida in the Final Four on Saturday night.

"I just wanted to step up big time," Daniels said. "Though Napier was quiet early, he still finished with a steady game, finishing with 12 points and six assists."

But it was Daniels and Boatright who were difference-makers for the seventh-seeded Huskies (31-8), earning them a spot in Monday's national championship game.

Daniels helped UConn dig out of a big early hole by scringing inside and out, and he hit a couple of big shots down the stretch to prevent Florida (36-9) from rallying.

He made 9 of 14 shots



Tony Gutierrez / Associated Press

Connecticut forward DeAndre Daniels dunks during the second half of Saturday's win over Florida.

against the Gators, the top overall seed who had won 30 straight games until Saturday night.

"When he plays with energy like this, he's unstoppable," UConn coach Kevin Ollie said.

Boatright wasn't too shabby, either.

Comfortable in his role as Napier's sidekick, the junior guard was like a bulldog all night, consistently getting inside Florida's defense and combining with Napier to hold ailing Gators star Scottie Wilbekin (cramps) to just four points and only one assist.

"Daniels and Boatright really did a good job for them," Florida coach Billy Donovan said.

IORIZZO

CONTINUED FROM B1

the College Basketball Invitational, which was reason enough for 600 or so students to spill onto the court after the game and chant "M-V-F" as Junior Brett Bisping took his turn cutting down the nets.

"I'm speechless," Bisping said.

Yeah, it was all pretty surreal, right from the very idea of Siena playing meaningful games — on campus, no less — a week after the start of the major league baseball season.

Frankly, if some iguanas from the reptile expo that booked Times Union Center on Saturday had played pick-up at halftime, it wouldn't have been any odder than seeing Siena players carried off on the shoulders of fellow students five hours before the Final Four tipped off.

But even if Siena's improbable postseason run seems like some kind of weird postscript to a season that appeared over a month ago, it will be worth celebrating all over again next March if Siena is cutting down the nets at Times Union Center after winning a Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference championship.

Because the most obvious takeaway from the CBI is that a young Siena team with a first-year coach gained a lot of valuable experience by playing six bonus games in a tournament setting. Since March 1, Siena's learned what it's like to lose and figured out how to win.

It's no coincidence other mid-major schools have used the CBI as a springboard to better seasons. In

2010, Virginia Commonwealth won the CBI, then went to the Final Four. The following year, Creighton won the CBI runner-up, a prelude to making the NCAA Tournament's round of 32.

And Siena's winning this tournament was no fluke. For much of the game, Fresno State looked like it only showed up for the free

bacon, and that's mostly a credit to Siena's ferocious pressure defense and a game plan that featured a new wrinkle, a 3-2 zone for which the Bulldogs looked wholly unprepared.

Patios said after losing Game 2 on Wednesday that his team didn't give fans their \$36 worth, but Saturday, the Saints played like there was, in fact, a postseason championship on the line.

The CBI may be a consolation tournament, but the atmosphere at the ARC this past week made it feel like there was a lot more at stake than the right to be team No. 100th. That's a credit to the program's fanbase, which, like this team, has been re-energized.

"Next year's going to be fun," Junior Rob Poole said. "We're a resilient team, we play hard and we believe in our coach."

When this season

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started Nov. 8, with a 74-62 loss to the University at Albany, the idea that Siena could be cutting down nets on Final Four weekend seemed about as absurd as Victor E. Bulldog challenging Bernie the Saint Bernard to a game of H-O-S-E.

But a lot has changed during this long, strange

journey, and Saints now have every reason to believe they can aspire to an even grander celebration 11 months from now. And if Siena is cutting down the nets again, it won't seem weird at all.

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KENTUCKY

CONTINUED FROM B1

well from the perimeter (8 for 24 from 3-point range). But Trevon Jackson's desperation jumper at the buzzer missed badly, which enabled Kentucky to have 1 chance to duplicate Villanova in 1985 as No. 8-seeds to win the NCAA Tournament.

Al-α Poythress put Kentucky ahead 71-69 with 2:14 left.

But Wisconsin's leading scorer, Frank Kaminsky, who took only seven shots, tied 8 with a putback at the 1:16 mark.

Kentucky, which had

played true to its identity as a power team, wobbled. Andrew Harrison missed a 3, which was only UK's fourth attempt from beyond the arc.

With the shot clock inside five seconds, Jackson's shot fake lifted Andrew Harrison. Jackson made two of three free throws to put Wisconsin ahead 75-71 with 16.4 seconds left.

Aaron Harrison — who else? — delivered yet again. His moon shot from the left wing over Josh Gasser with 5.7 seconds left put Kentucky ahead 74-73 and one step from arguably the proud program's most unlikely national championship.

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