

WISE AND OTHERWISE

By Kent A. Stock



The Bracketologist is in the house

March Madness is a disease that afflicts tens of millions of Americans each year even if they have had only casual or no exposure to basketball. Much like the World Series, the Super Bowl and this writer's birthday people are swept up in the fever. Symptoms include downloading phone apps to stay on top of that big game between underdog St. Whereareyouevenlocated and top seed University of Tall-FastPeople, random screaming and crying in the office when you are supposed to be working along with calling in sick to work (remember not to scream "that was clearly a foul" when talking to your boss). The only cure is filling out something called a bracket.

Any other time of the year you hear the word bracket you might think of the hardware store but not in March, baby. It is basketball season and it is finals time. It combines some of American's favorite things: downtime (wasting time), friendly competition (winning) and team building (gambling). I just want you to know I am here as a resource for your "brackets cure" as are around 300 million others.

First, many of you will spend countless hours (wasting time) analyzing your picks. Don't. Just go with your "gut" instinct. Because many times you will find out after the national championship game is played your pool was won by the girl in the office who picked the winners because the players were cute and/or their coach

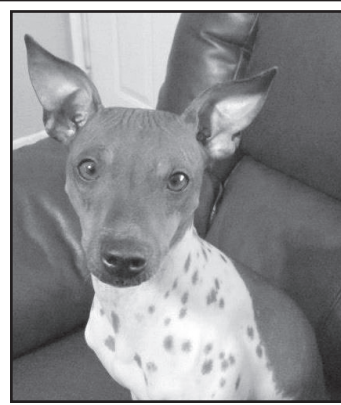
was "hot". OR, the guy who lives alone that let his cats Mr. Fluffy and Miss Snowball pick out the winning teams based on where the hairballs landed on the bracket. OR, the person who complained constantly about being forced to participate in this "mindless exercise" but then jumps on their desk with a big foam finger and face painted with the national champs school colors chanting "I'm number one" when the time comes to collect their prize money.

Second, don't listen to the experts (except me) because they have a record consistent with astrologists and folks on the weather channel...not so good. They will assure you that the Fighting Potatoes of West Whatchamacallit are going all the way only to be defeated in the first round by the Mighty Sea Shells of the Eastern Institute of Quantum Physics and Cosmetology. They will be the ones who deny, after the fact, they ever said that Whatsatextbook Tech was the clear choice to win it all and they never said (despite recorded evidence to the contrary) they would not pick South Welovethebeach University because they did not like their coach, assistant coach, trainer, water girl and/or ball boy.

Honestly, I always fill out several different brackets using wise and otherwise methods. Speaking of which, I need to go find the dog and cat to see how we are doing with their, er, my brackets. So, hope you filled out those brackets as a cure for the madness of March. Remember to be wise because we are all just doing this for fun. Unless I win then I have the face paint and foam finger ready! "I'm number ONE!"

Holding It All Together

by Amy McCollom



back massages. And I always share my blanket with her. We are best buds.

When someone in the house is sick, she never leaves their side. If we go anywhere, she is so happy to see us return that she literally does backflips when we get home. I would have to say that Paisley is more human than a lot of people I know.

The most amazing thing that I have discovered about Paisley, though, is that she can teleport. You know, like on Star Trek. Move from one spot to another instantly. Now before you call the men in the white suits with the net, let me explain a couple of things.

Here is what happens: Whenever I try to go into another room of our house without the dog, I try my best to sneak in, and shut the door quietly. I turn around, and THERE SHE IS! It blows my mind! How did she beat me into the room?! I just saw her on the couch!

The first time this happened, I quickly opened the door and looked on the couch to see if there were 2 dogs like her in the house. Nope. Wouldn't I have heard her toenails clicking on the hardwood floors? Wouldn't I have felt her brush past me? She's a 20lb. dog with a

whip-like tail. When she flops down on the couch next to me, you feel impact tremors. I didn't know whether I should scream, cry, pray, cheer, or call National Geographic, the National Guard, our pastor, or the local news station. I checked my sanity status; did I really just see that? Yes, yes I did. Go take a Tylenol. It's probably a one-time thing.

But then again and again I noticed Paisley popping up every time I closed a door, even tried the closet. Yep, she beat me in there. Even when I am looking right at her, and squeeze myself into the room, barely opening the door at all, poof! I turn around and there she is. I practically kept my eyes on her the entire time I was closing the door! I barely got my foot in the door without smashing it; how did she get her whole muscular 20 lb. self not only through the door without me seeing or feeling it, but onto my bed with her toy in her mouth?!!

I'm not seeing things, it's not a mirage, she doesn't have a stunt double, and as far as I can tell I am not being filmed for a stupid "reality-jokes on you- T.V. show." This incident has happened too many times to just be a coincidence. The only explanation that I can think of is that she is teleporting to whatever room that I am in.

It has taken me a little while to decide how I feel about having a teleporting dog; but I'm ok with it now. Paisley is a very good dog. She goes out to potty, lets us know when someone is at the door, and loves us unconditionally. And just maybe, she is downright amazing too. She teleports, I play the drums; we all have talents. I can live with that.

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