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Texas A&M to Participate in 2011 2K Sports Classic in New York City

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PRINCETON, N.J.— Texas A&M will join St. John's, Arizona and Mississippi State to tip-off the 2011 college basketball season in the 2K Sports Classic, benefitting Coaches vs. Cancer, which culminates with the Championship Rounds at Madison Square Garden in New York City on Nov. 17 and 18.

The format for the 2011 2K Sports Classic, the nation's premier season-opening college basketball tournament, features 12 teams from across the nation competing in the 17th annual event. The Aggies, along with St. John's, Arizona and Mississippi State, will host regional-round games from Nov. 7-11. The four hosts will then advance to the Championship Rounds, Nov. 17 and 18, at New York's Madison Square Garden, while the remainder of the field will participate in sub-regionals held at campus sites.

"We are thrilled to be able to take part in the 2K Sports Classic this fall," A&M head coach Mark Turgeon said. "This is year in and year out one of the great preseason tournaments and we are really looking forward to competing against some of the nation's best programs. We're also very excited about the opportunity to take the team back to New York City and play in one of the world's greatest arenas, Madison Square Garden."

Matchups for the Championship Rounds, as well as the entire bracket for the 2011 2K Sports Classic, will be announced at a later date.

Tickets for Championship Round games at Madison Square Garden will be available tomorrow, Wednesday, March 9 beginning at 11 a.m. (CT). They may be purchased by calling Ticketmaster at 866-448-7849 or through Ticketmaster.com.

Four of the past eight National Champions have participated in the 2K Sports Classic, as well as four additional NCAA Final Four teams. Over the last eight years, 36 teams that participated in the event have gone on to compete in the NCAA Tournament.

The four schools playing in New York City, three of which are currently ranked in the national polls, have combined for 75 trips to the NCAA Tournament. Each of the four schools has been to the NCAA Tournament a minimum of 10 times.

Texas A&M: The Aggies are 23-7 and on their way to their sixth straight NCAA Tournament appearance...the No. 21 squad is the third seed in this week's Big 12 Tournament...the frontcourt tandem of sophomore Khris Middleton and junior David Loubeau combines for 26 points and over 10 rebounds a game for head coach Mark Turgeon's team...the Aggies, who are expected to return 12 players from this year's roster, have now won 20 games or more each of the last seven seasons.

St. John's: Quite possibly the surprise team in the nation in 2010-11...ranked 18th in the polls with a 20-10 record...has six Top 25 wins, including four Top 10 wins, under first-year head coach Steve Lavin...the 20 wins are the most since 2002-03...enters this week's Big East Tournament as the fifth seed...freshman forward Dwayne

Polee, the 2010 California state Player of the Year, returns next season, as does sophomore guard Malik Stith...the Red Storm should earn their 28th NCAA berth in 2011 and their first since 2002...St. John's welcomes the No. 2 ranked recruiting class in the country next year.

Arizona: The Wildcats, ranked 15th, won the Pac-10 regular season title this season...under second-year head coach Sean Miller, Arizona should earn an NCAA bid for the 26th time in the last 27 years...the 'Cats are 25-6 this season with only one senior on the roster...Arizona is paced by sophomore forward Derrick Williams and his 18.8 ppg scoring average and his 8.2 rebounding average...classmate Lamont Jones is second in scoring (9.6 ppg) and assists (77).

Mississippi State: At 17-13, the Bulldogs secured the West division's No. 2 seed for this week's Southeastern Conference Tournament...head coach Rick Stansbury has presided over a renaissance in Starkville, leading the Bulldogs to nine postseason berths and eight 20-win seasons over the last 10 years...junior guard Dee Bost is MSU's second leading scorer at 16.3 ppg while leading the team with 95 assists...sophomore big man Renardo Stanley is scoring 13.7 ppg with a team-best 7.6 rebound per game average...11 players are expected to return next season.

In the 2010 2K Sports Classic, Pittsburgh's Ashton Gibbs scored 24 points to lead the then No. 4 Panthers to a thrilling 68-66 win over then No. 22 Texas. Both teams used their 2K Sports Classic success to jump start tremendous seasons as Pitt is ranked No. 5 and Texas is No. 7 in the latest polls.

The Coaches vs. Cancer program, a nationwide collaboration between the American Cancer Society and National Association of Basketball Coaches (NABC), exists to leverage the strength and community leadership of the nation's basketball coaches to raise awareness and reduce the risk of cancer while raising funds for the American Cancer Society's fight to save lives from cancer. Since 1995, the event has raised nearly \$5 million for the benefit of Coaches vs. Cancer.

Beginning in 2012, Wounded Warrior Project will become the beneficiary of the event. The mission of Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) is to honor and empower wounded warriors. WWP's purpose is to raise awareness and to enlist the public's aid for the needs of injured service members, to help injured servicemen and women aid and assist each other, and to provide unique, direct programs and services to meet their needs. WWP is a national, nonpartisan organization headquartered in Jacksonville, Fla.

The 2K Sports Classic is produced by The Gazelle Group in Princeton, N.J. The Gazelle Group is a sports marketing firm, specializing in event production and management, client representation, and sponsorship consulting. Gazelle produces numerous nationally-recognized events, such as the CBE Classic, Legends Classic, the CBI presented by Zebra Pen, and the All-American Championship. The Gazelle Group is a member of USA Basketball. For more information on the Gazelle Group, please visit gazellegroup.com.

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