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Thoughts on Last Night's Coaches vs. Cancer Semi-Final Games

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Last night's semi-final action in the 2K Sports Coaches vs. Cancer Classic at Madison Square Garden featured four teams that figure to be in the mix for an NCAA Tournament bid come early March.

Mississippi State and Texas A&M played an uneven game that lacked significant intensity and also lacked any doubt as to what the outcome would be after the Bulldogs jumped out to an early 22-point lead.

Conversely, the nightcap between St. John's and Arizona was full of intensity (thanks largely to the respective fan bases) and went back and forth until late in the second half when the Red Storm's point guard and leader, Nurideen Lindsey, fouled out of the game.

Yes, I know It is dangerous to draw too many conclusions from an early season tournament game, but after witnessing the action first-hand last night, I am going to go ahead and list a couple...

- **Nurideen Lindsey is really good**

The 6'3 sophomore, playing his first season of Division I basketball, is the unquestioned leader and best player on a young and talented St. John's squad. He weaved in and out of the tough Arizona defense for and-ones and jumpers and nearly carried the Red Storm to a victory, before picking up his

5th foul with nearly four minutes remaining in the game. With Lindsey's exit went the Johnnies' chances at a big-time win.

- **St. John's will be a good team by the end of the year**

They actually may be good right now. For a team full of freshman and "upper classmen" to look this solid as a unit, so soon, is very impressive. Of course John Calipari might ask "what's the big deal?" But, the job that coach Steve Lavin and his staff – particularly Mike Dunlap – have done has already been impressive. The undersized youngsters have been playing tough team defense, gang rebounding and moving the ball on offense. If the Red Storm can keep this up and continue to get better, they will be players come March.

- **Arizona is a top 15 team**

It's early and Arizona is not nearly the team they will be towards the end of the year, but they are already a tough, defensive-minded team that seems to have a knack for winning. You can thank coach Sean Miller for those attributes. Freshmen, Josiah Turner and Nick Johnson are barely scratching the surface of their likely midseason output. When they start to get comfortable, the rest of the Pac-12 is in trouble.

- **Texas A&M is indeed overrated**

I semi-waffled on this yesterday and I may waffle again. But today, they are overrated. They are not the 18th or 19th or 20th (or whatever) team in the country. They have a new coach, no guard scoring to count on, and really no go-to scorer at all. The Big 12 may be down this year, and that includes the Aggies, in my opinion.

Nobody knows, or should know, what to expect from Mississippi State.

Mississippi State looked good last night. That was not the case last week in a 10-point loss to Akron. Or maybe Akron was just a tougher match-up than Texas A&M.

- **The Bulldogs have a couple things in their favor....**

They have a very good college point guard in Dee Bost; and they have a very large frontline. The biggest of that big frontline is, of course, Renardo Sidney. The heralded, yet troubled junior seemed to lack intensity and stamina last night, in a 0-8, 5-rebound performance. Even without Sidney's production, MSU had plenty down low to dispatch of Texas A&M.

We will find out more about MSU tonight versus Arizona, but the Bulldogs look to have the talent, size and coaching to be competitive with the SEC's upper echelon this season.

However, Sidney and chemistry questions could drag the Bulldogs down. We shall see.

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