

The Washington Post

[Back to previous page](#)



For Oregon's Altman, hardest part of CBI finals is facing his old friends from Creighton

By Associated Press, Sunday, March 27, 12:29 PM

OMAHA, Neb. — College Basketball Invitational organizers did Oregon coach Dana Altman no favors when they placed the Ducks and Creighton on opposite sides of the bracket.

The result is one compelling story line for the best-of-three championship series that starts Monday night at the Qwest Center.

Altman, who had 11 straight 20-win seasons and seven NCAA tournament appearances in 16 years at Creighton, is back to face the school he left last April to take the Oregon job.

Altman said Creighton wouldn't have been his first choice of a finals opponent.

"It was an opportunity for us to play and an opportunity for them to play," he said. "I wasn't going to not let our team play because I didn't want to go back to Omaha."

The series moves to Eugene, Ore., on Wednesday. If a third game is necessary, it will be in Eugene on Friday.

The ties between Altman and Creighton remain strong.

Junior Antoine Young, the Bluejays' starting point guard, made his verbal commitment to Altman when

he was a freshman in high school. Altman was at sophomore Josh Jones' bedside in 2007 when, as a verbally committed high school junior, he was recovering from open-heart surgery. Fifth-year seniors Kenny Lawson and Casey Harriman spent four years with Altman. The coach has known senior Kaleb Korver, brother of former Creighton star and current NBA player Kyle Korver, since Kaleb was 10.

Darian DeVries, an assistant retained by new Creighton coach Greg McDermott, was hired by Altman as a full-time aide 11 years ago.

"A lot of history with those guys," Altman said, "and it's just uncomfortable trying to compete against them. I'll feel terrible if we lose. I might feel just as bad if we win."

Young said it will be weird to go against his old coach.

"He took me in when I was really young, and I never thought I'd see myself on the opposite side of him," Young said.

Creighton (22-14) has played some of its best basketball of the season in the CBI, posting double-digit wins over San Jose State, Davidson and Central Florida.

"We wanted to go to the (NCAA) tournament. We fought hard and it didn't happen for us," Creighton's Gregory Echenique said. "Now we have another chance to prove ourselves. We're taking it seriously, and we're definitely going to go get the championship."

McDermott said the CBI experience can motivate his players to work hard through the offseason and get better. Rather than going into the summer with the memory of a loss in the Missouri Valley Conference tournament semifinals, he said, they have an opportunity to end the season on a high note.

Altman doesn't put quite as much stock in the CBI.

"It's not the NCAA tournament. It's not the NIT," he said. "I told our team to keep it in perspective. It's a 16-team tournament that gives us a chance to play a little bit. We have a lot of work to do in the offseason. If they use it as a springboard, that's good. If they think this is where we want to be, it's probably not going to do us any good."

Copyright 2011 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Sponsored Links

US Oil Patch's Best Kept Secret?

Not for long. Similar stocks trade at \$30-\$60. Underpriced UTOG exploding now!
www.AmericanEnergyReport.com

Marriage + RA = Less Pain

High quality marriages are associated with better health outcomes
<http://conditions.aolhealth.com/rhe>

Hot Precious Metal Stock

Rare Earths are Plentiful in Mongolia. Profit From New Exporter!
www.RareEarthExporters.com

[Buy a link here](#)

© 2011 The Washington Post Company