

Free Picks – February 17th Weekend

It's here, folks – GoSportsBet expert columnist Hansel Wei's NBA All-Star preview! We also bring you a couple NCAA picks that will fatten your wallet.

Hey folks, Hansel here. I'm going with the Beasts of the East this year, and selecting the Eastern All-Stars to take home this year's All-Star title. Here's why:

- More pure scorers. A team with Allen Iverson, LeBron James, Dwyane Wade, Gil Arenas, Vince Carter, Paul Pierce, and Rip Hamilton will have no problem putting the ball in the basket.
- Better defensive frontline. Everyone's talked about how great the West's front court is, but defensively? These guys couldn't stop my neighbor's kid's middle school team. Dirk Nowitzki is a great scorer, but he defends about as well as the French in World War II – that is to say, not at all. The same goes for Pau Gasol and Yao Ming. Against a front court of Chris Bosh, Shaquille O'Neal, Jermaine O'Neal, and Ben and Rasheed Wallace? We're not liking the West's chances.
- Better teamwork. There will be times during the game when four Detroit Pistons are on the floor for the East. This can only help the team run actual plays and work off a chemistry that they've built while running up the NBA's best record this season.
- Emotional edge – Do you think Shaq enjoyed losing his starting spot to Yao Ming's legions of Asian fans for the last three All-Star Games? He didn't, and went on the record publicly to discuss it. They're each starting now, and Shaq will be ready to flatten Yao every time he catches the ball in the paint. Look for the Big Diesel to show everyone he means business.

Finally, I'm going to go with the “under” on this one. The West's most dangerous scorer, Kobe Bryant, should have his minutes held in check by Coach Avery Johnson. I wouldn't be surprised if he gets 15 or 20 points, but I don't see him playing more than 25 or 30 minutes. Another Western scoring threat, Tracy McGrady, has struggled with injury, and will not look to force the issue. The total right now is 258.5 points – will the teams average 130? I doubt it. I don't see this one going into OT, and for these teams to get that high, there will either have to be extra time, or ABSOLUTELY no defense. As last year's game showed, these guys are competitive, and will buckle down in the second half and try to win the game. **Play the Eastern All-Stars and Play the Under.**

Enjoy the game guys – should be a fun one to watch.

In NCAA action, we like Akron against Nevada. These guys are number one in the MAC in scoring (just over 74 per game) and lead the conference in threes made per game as well (just over 8). Having suffered some big losses earlier this season, the Zips

are playing to prove to people that they can win games and that those earlier defeats weren't a true indicator of their strength as a team.

We like the 10-man rotation used by Zips coach Keith Dambrot. Nevada isn't anywhere near there in terms of personnel, and we're predicting this is the difference as Akron takes control of the game early and hangs on to win.

Also, we're going to advise a play on the Over in this one as well. The over has cashed in 4 of the Zips' last 6 games, and in five of those, they've put up 75+ points. We expect a score in the 60s from Akron against Nevada, and we're thinking they'll look to push the tempo early, coming into the game brimming with confidence and shooting nearly 50% over their last three. Last game against Louisiana Tech, Nevada scored just 50, but let's remember this is the team that scored over 80 in the two games before that. Both offenses have the edge as this is an unfamiliar out-of-conference game. **Play Akron, Plus the Points, and Play the Over.**

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