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HAWKEYES FAMILIAR WITH FINAL FOUR TEAMS

IOWA CITY, IA - - The Iowa men's basketball team knew it was playing a strong schedule in 2005. But even the Hawkeyes didn't imagine playing all the teams that will take part in the Final Four this weekend in St. Louis.

Iowa posted a 21-12 overall record, earning a bid to the NCAA Tournament after advancing to the semi-finals of the Big Ten Tournament. Iowa's fifth straight winning season under Coach Steve Alford ended with a loss to Cincinnati in the first round of the NCAA Tournament.

During the course of the season, Iowa played six games against the Final Four teams, posting a 2-4 record. Iowa is the only team in the nation to play all of the Final Four teams. Four schools (Oakland, Wisconsin, Indiana and Kentucky) played three of the teams. Wisconsin and Duke each played four games against members of the Final Four, with only Duke having two wins to match Iowa's total.

Iowa defeated Louisville (76-71) in the first round of the EA Sports Maui Invitational in November. After a semi-final win over Texas, the Hawkeyes lost to North Carolina (106-92) in the championship game of that event.

Along with those two games, Iowa split two games with Michigan State and lost twice to Illinois. Iowa lost to the Spartans (75-64) in Iowa City during the regular season before a 71-69 win in the quarter-finals of the Big Ten Tournament.

Iowa's two losses to Illinois both went down to the wire. Iowa's overtime loss at Illinois (73-68) in January marked the closest game of the season, at that point, for the Illini. Illinois later scored a 75-65 win in Iowa City, pulling away at the end after leading by just three points with 2:44 remaining.

This marks the first time ever that Iowa has faced all Final Four teams. Iowa played three Final Four teams in 1999, 1960 and 1956. Iowa advanced to the Final Four in 1956, defeating Temple in the semi-finals before falling to San Francisco in the title game. Iowa had scored a win over Southern Methodist early in the regular season.

In 1999, Iowa was 1-1 vs. Ohio State and 0-2 vs. Michigan State before losing to Connecticut in the Sweet 16. In 1960, Iowa defeated New York University and lost single games to Ohio State and Cincinnati.

NOTE: Iowa Coach Steve Alford will appear as a guest panelist on Fox Sports Network's "March Madness: Road to #1". The show will air on Fox Sports Network stations throughout the nation this week. The show will air Tuesday at 3 p.m. on Fox Sports Chicago.

The show is co-hosted by Tim Brando and Marques Johnson and also features Bob Huggins of Cincinnati and Ben Howland of UCLA.

