Heading into this weekend's final two conference games, the **Cleveland State Vikings** control their own destiny for the regular season championship and the top seed in the Horizon League Tournament.

If you're reading this, you're probably familiar with the unique format of the Horizon League Tournament. If you're new here, the top two seeds in the regular season are rewarded with a double-bye into the semi-finals.

The rest of the teams begin the tournament on Tuesday March 1st, with seeds 3-6 hosting 7-10 at the campus home of the higher seed.

The quarter-finals and semi-finals are held at the home of the No.1 seed on Friday March 4th and Saturday March 5th.

This means, by the time the top two seeds play their first game of the tournament, their opponent will be playing on back-to-back nights and its third game in five days.

The championship is then played three days later, on March 8th, at the home of the highest remaining seed. This is done to ensure a home crowd for the championship game. The Horizon League doesn't want a scenario that amounts to a neutral site game, say **Loyola** and **UIC** playing the championship in Cleveland in front of an empty Wolstein Center, which is exactly what happened in 2002 in the last year of the old format.

This format also protects the top teams and helps them get into the NCAA Tournament. That 2002 scenario also left 25-5 **Butler** out of the NCAA,

Since the switch to the new format in 2003, the top seed has played in every championship game, and one of the top two seeds has won the tournament in every year except 2008, when No.3 seed Cleveland State
upset Butler at Hinkle Field House.

In fact, only two teams not seeded in the top two have even advanced to the championship game, the aforementioned CSU team and **Detroit** in 2005.

The format change has also helped the Horizon League have unprecedented success in the NCAA Tournament. The HL is one of seven conferences, along with the other six "power conferences", to win at least one game in the NCAA Tournament for six straight years. The League has also advanced a team to the Sweet 16 four out of the eight years since the switch.

Horizon League Standings:

The standings are as close as they've ever been this late in the season, with only one game separating first and fourth place.

1 **Cleveland State** 12-4, 23-6

2 **Butler** 12-5, 20-9

3 **Valparaiso** 11-5, 20-9

4 **Milwaukee** 11-5, 16-12

5 **Wright State** 10-7 18-12

6 **Detroit** 9-8, 15-15

7 **Green Bay** 7-9, 13-16

8 **Loyola** 6-10, 15-13

9 **Youngstown State** 2-14, 9-18

10 **UIC** 2-15, 7-22

It's pretty simple for Cleveland State, if the Vikings win their two remaining games, they will win the first regular season Horizon League championship in school history and host the tournament.

If CSU loses a game, things will get hectic at the top. The Vikings could drop as far as fourth with a single loss in the final weekend because of tiebreakers.

Tiebreakers: (skip ahead to the next section if you don't want a tiebreaker-induced migraine)

The first tiebreaker in the Horizon League is head-to-head. CSU is currently 1-0 vs. Milwaukee, and if the Vikings take care of the Panthers on Thursday, it will knock Milwaukee out of the discussion for the top seed.

On the other hand, CSU is 1-1 vs. Valparaiso and 0-2 against Butler and both teams have a chance to catch the Vikings if CSU loses either game.

If two teams are tied in the standings and split the season series, the record against the next team in the standings is used as a tiebreaker.

So, if CSU ties Butler, they lose the 1st tiebreaker because of head-to-head, and if CSU ties Valpo, they lose 2nd tiebreaker because Valpo split with Butler while CSU was swept.

Stay with me.

If more than one team is tied at the top, the cumulative head-to-head record is the tiebreaker. For example, if CSU tied both Butler and Valpo for the top spot, Butler would win the No.1 seed because they are 3-1 vs. CSU/Valpo, while Valpo is 2-2 against the others and CSU is 1-3.

Make sense?

Now, this can go in a million different directions this weekend, but the main point is this, CSU controls its own destiny, but doesn't control any of the tiebreakers if they lose.

All of this does leave Milwaukee in a good spot for the tiebreaker, so they too control their own destiny for the top seed thanks to their remaining game with CSU and their sweep of Butler.

Likely Scenarios:

If CSU wins out, they're the champs.

If the Vikings lose to Milwaukee, CSU is probably the fourth seed with Milwaukee grabbing the No.1 seed.

If CSU beats Milwaukee and drops the finale to Green Bay, the Vikings are probably the third seed with Butler taking the No.1 seed thanks to its sweep of the Vikings.

Valpo can still claim the top spot if they win out, but they would need CSU to beat Milwaukee and then lose to Green Bay, as well as have Butler lose its last game at home to Loyola.