

ESPN Basketball Analyst Jay Bilas Calls AdvoCare Invitational Tournament Field at Disney One of College Hoop's Best Early Season Tune-Ups

Field includes three teams who played in 2018 NCAA men's basketball tournament including national champion Villanova Wildcats, winners of two of the past three titles

The college basketball season may have just ended, but ESPN basketball analyst Jay Bilas is already excited about the 2018 AdvoCare Invitational Tournament, which he says will be one of the best early-season tournaments next fall. Played at ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex at Walt Disney World Resort over Thanksgiving weekend, the AdvoCare Invitational Tournament field includes three teams who qualified for the 2018 NCAA Tournament, including men's national champion Villanova, which defeated Michigan 79-62 to claim its second national championship in the past three seasons. The Wildcats finished the season 36-4, the winningest campaign in the university's 98-year history.

The other two NCAA tournament qualifiers set to play in the AdvoCare Invitational are the Florida State Seminoles (23-12) and the College of Charleston Golden Eagles (26-8).

"The depth of the competition of the teams in the field makes this one of the best early season tournaments in the country," Bilas said. "You're not just looking at a good championship game, this tournament will be one of the best early season tournaments because it includes several tournament-quality teams that have either been in the tournament recently or were worthy of inclusion, but didn't make it. The field in this tournament is really impressive."

LSU, Memphis, Oklahoma State, the University of Alabama-Birmingham and Canisus College round out the teams in the 2018 field.

FSU head coach Leonard Hamilton took the Seminoles to the Elite Eight this year and his club has qualified for the tournament six times since 2002. College of Charleston head coach Earl Grant led the Golden Eagles to the 2018 Colonial Athletic Association conference championship and an automatic berth to the tournament in March.

Bilas said that in addition to three teams that qualified for the 2018 tournament, the 2018 AdvoCare Invitational has two up-and-coming teams that fans of college basketball should keep their eyes on all season.

"LSU is going to be a much improved team next season," Bilas said. "They are a really talented and have a great guard in Tremont Waters (16 points per game, 6.0 assists last season). He can score, he can pass and

he was as good as any freshman I saw in the SEC last season. LSU is getting better. They had a good season last year and they will be even better this upcoming season. Oklahoma State is a very athletic team. They have a lot of really talented players who logged a lot of minutes last season, and I thought they should have made the tournament.”

And while Bilas had flattering things to say about the AdvoCare Invitational tournament field, LSU and Oklahoma State, he reserved his highest praise for Villanova.

“Since the tournament went to 64 teams in 1985, only a handful of teams (North Carolina, Duke, Connecticut and Kentucky) have won three national championships and Villanova is one of them,” Bilas said. “And over the past four years, no program in college basketball has won more games (136 wins) than Villanova. They have had sustained excellence, and I believe they are one of college basketball’s elite programs led by Jay Wright, who will be a Hall of Fame coach.”

The 2018 season marks the 13th year of the AdvoCare Invitational Tournament at Disney. Previous winners include Arkansas (2006), North Carolina State (2007), Gonzaga (2008, 2012, 2016), Florida State (2009), Notre Dame (2010), Dayton (2011), Memphis (2013), Kansas (2014), Xavier (2015) and West Virginia (2017).