



Thursday, March 7, 2024

Arizona Wildcats at UCLA Bruins

Game Time: 9:30pm ET

TV: ESPN

Selection: Arizona Wildcats -9

UCLA coach Mick Cronin lost his top five scorers from last season's Pac-12 regular-season champions, and as a result it has been a tough year for the Bruins. Cronin starts two freshmen and two sophomores while they rank 318th in Kenpom's "Division I experience" metric, a measure of the average number of seasons played by a team's roster, weighted by minutes played. Cronin has been playing only seven players regularly in Pac-12 games, relying heavily on sophomore point guard Dylan Andrews (36.0 minutes a game) and junior wing Lazar Stefanovic (34.9), while also playing freshman guard Sebastian Mack an average of 24.3 minutes. Cronin, who is an outstanding coach, is looking at his first losing season since the 2008 Cincinnati Bearcats.

Back on January 20th the Bruins went into Arizona and got off to a hot start. They outscored the Wildcats 22-13 in the first 10 minutes of play and at one point led by 13. However, the Wildcats stormed back and in the final quarter of that game, Arizona blitzed the young Bruins 35-18 to pull away for the six-point victory. This was an outlier game for Arizona as they shot only 23% from three-point range, going 6 for 26. Arizona is the 16th best 3-point shooting team in the nation at nearly 38% and that type of poor performance is highly unlikely again.

When Arizona wins games, they tend to win by big margins. This year their wins have been by 47, 19, 15, 6, 9, 26, 11, 6, 20, 45, 16, 18, and 20. Ten of their 13 victories in 2024 have been by double digits. When they start to lay it on teams, the games often get out of control. Teams have a tough time coming back against their stifling defense. UCLA will do their best to stay in this game, but this young team, which is ranked 172th on adjusted offensive efficiency, will have trouble doing that for 40 minutes. Lay the points with Arizona.

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Any questions or comments can be sent to: wiz@wizardraceandsports.com

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