

March Madness 2017 – NetScout’s Role in Preventing the Games from Impacting Your Network

With the March Madness games consuming much of your employee’s productivity Thursday and Friday this week, now is the time to start planning for how your company will handle the increased traffic on your network. CBS, TNT & the NCAA are streaming all the 2017 NCAA Tournament games live, in Hi-Definition, and there will certainly be a lot of employees wanting to watch their favorite team while at work.

With NetScout’s performance management solution, it is easy not only to detect how many people are accessing the live video and how much bandwidth is being consumed, but also to alert administrators when this unnecessary traffic starts to impact business critical applications. In 2017 the default video stream from NCAA’s website was measured sending 3.3Mbps of traffic just to a single user! Once you add multiple users accessing the content at the same time, it is easy to see how this could present a significant problem for network administrators.

With nGenius ONE, all the most popular and common websites are tracked by default without doing anything. Your nGenius ONE solution will already be tracking the March Madness traffic and putting it into a special category called Sports without needing to do anything at all.

If you want more information, you can classify all the HTTP access by URL to the popular streaming video feeds. By classifying and grouping the URLs together as an application group or service, you have the power to understand what resources are being consumed by all March Madness streaming content and be able to take preemptive measures to prevent that traffic from having an adverse impact on your business critical applications. Below is a list of popular URLs that should be defined as individual HTTP applications:

<http://mml01-i.akamaihd.net>

<http://cbssports.com>

<http://cbssportsnetwork.com>

<http://ncaa.com>

<http://comcast.net>

<http://timewarnercable.com>

<http://directv.com>

The primary URL that I found being used for the First Four for 2017 was mml01-i.akamaihd.net.

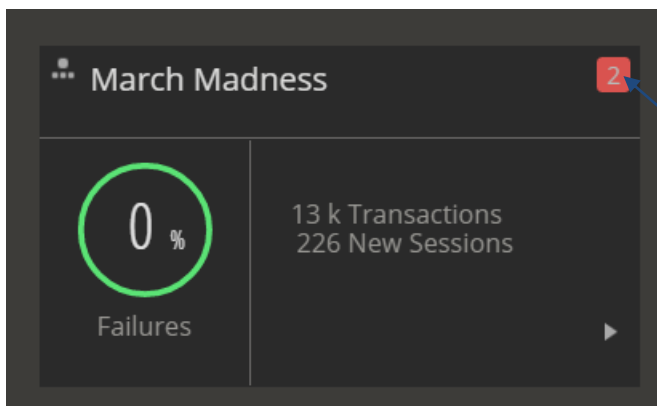
UPDATE 3/16:

NCAA is using incremental URL’s following the mml01-i.akamaihd.net naming convention. I have seen mml02-i.akamaihd.net and mml04-i.akamaihd.net. To be thorough you should add a couple dozen URL’s following this same naming convention. It is unknown if they will use a unique URL for each game, or if they will re-use URL’s. NetScout will still work by default without creating all the URL’s – without any special configuration at all, the traffic will still be in the Sports

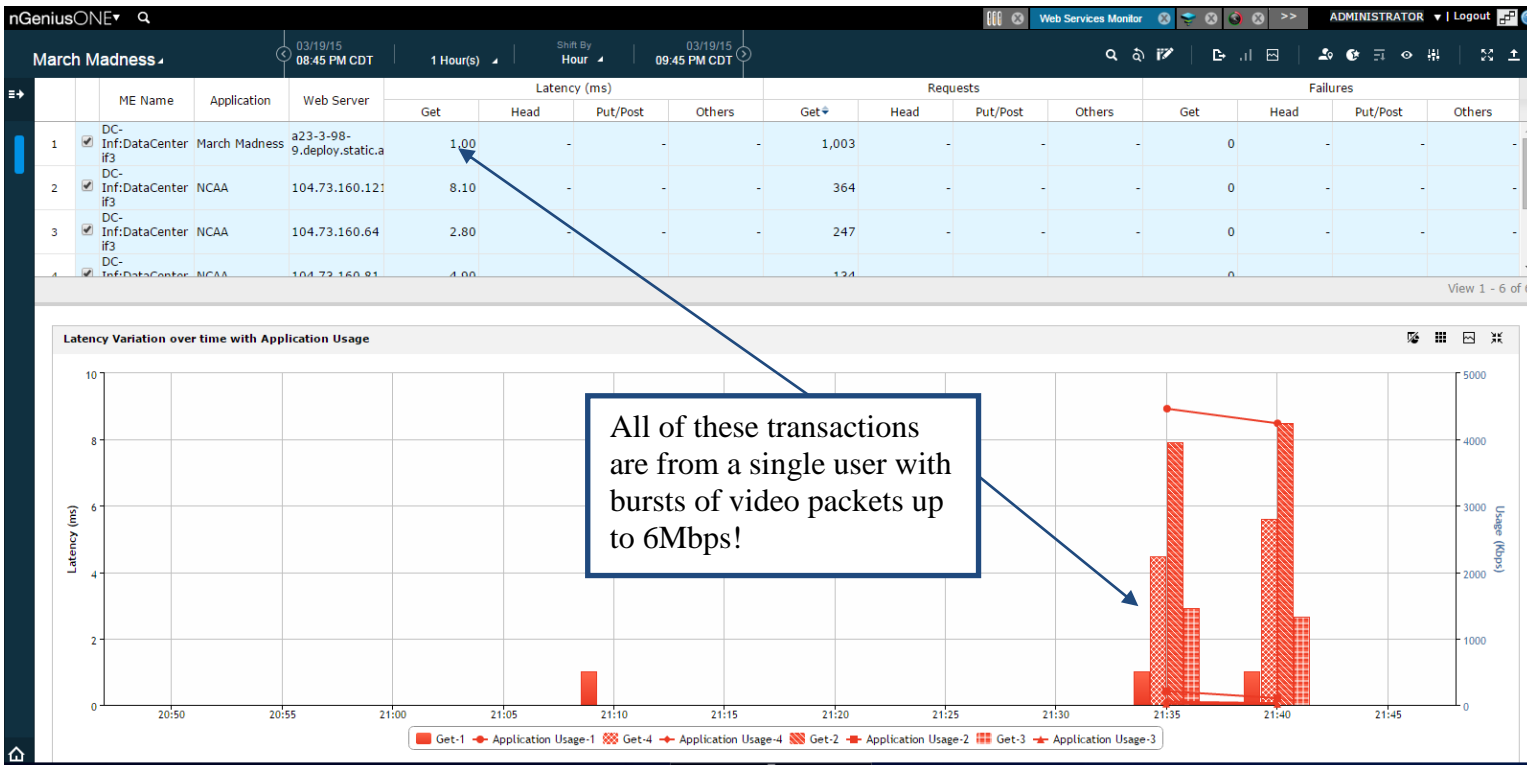
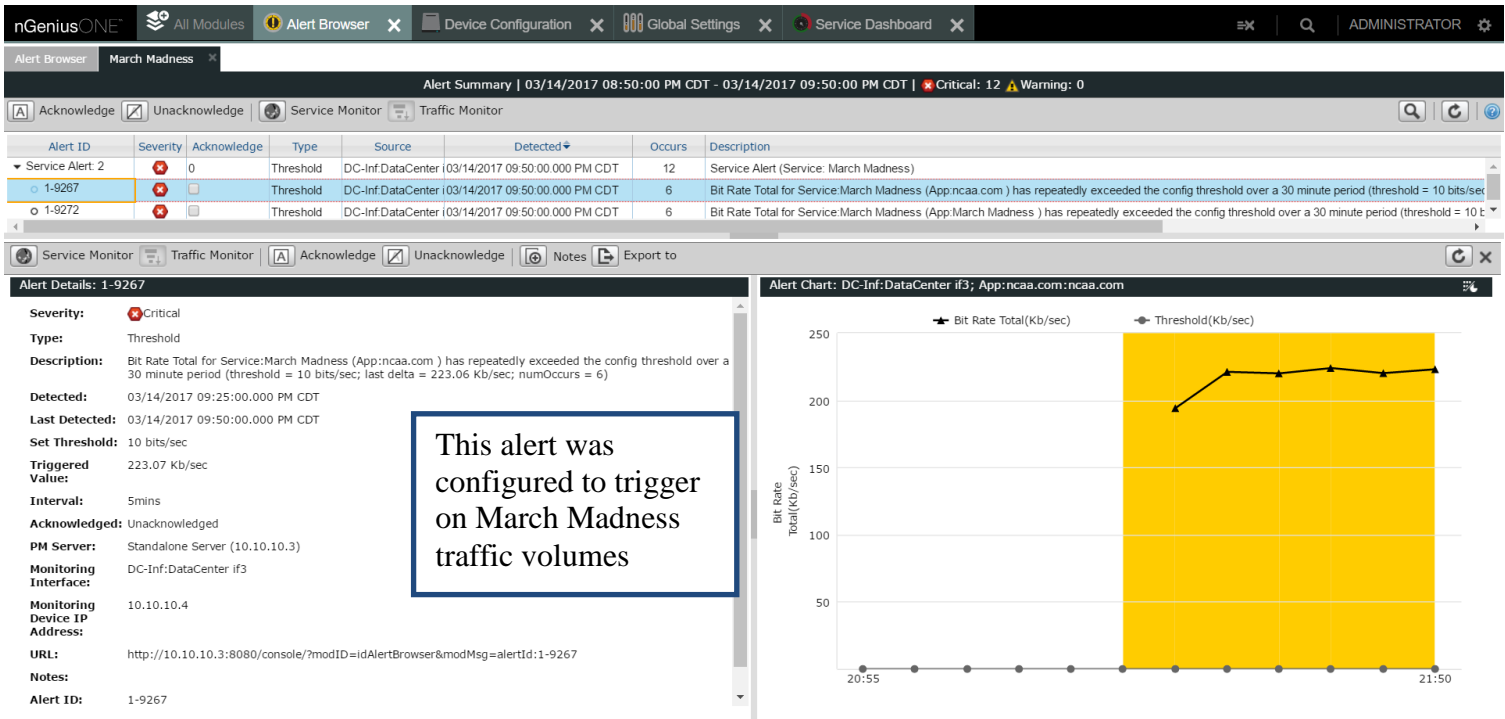
category and you will be able to track the utilization (see the fourth screenshot below of the Application Monitor for details).

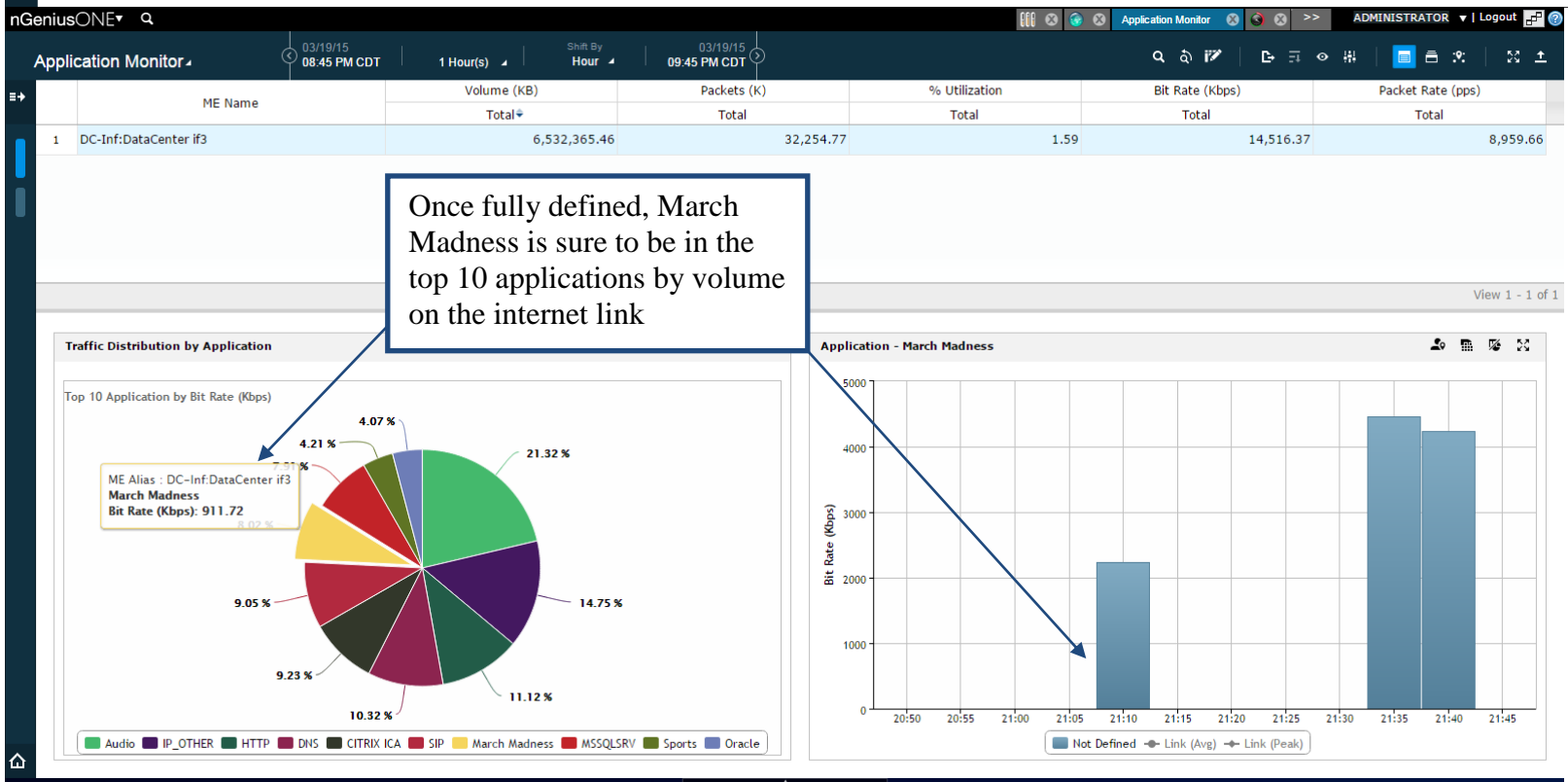
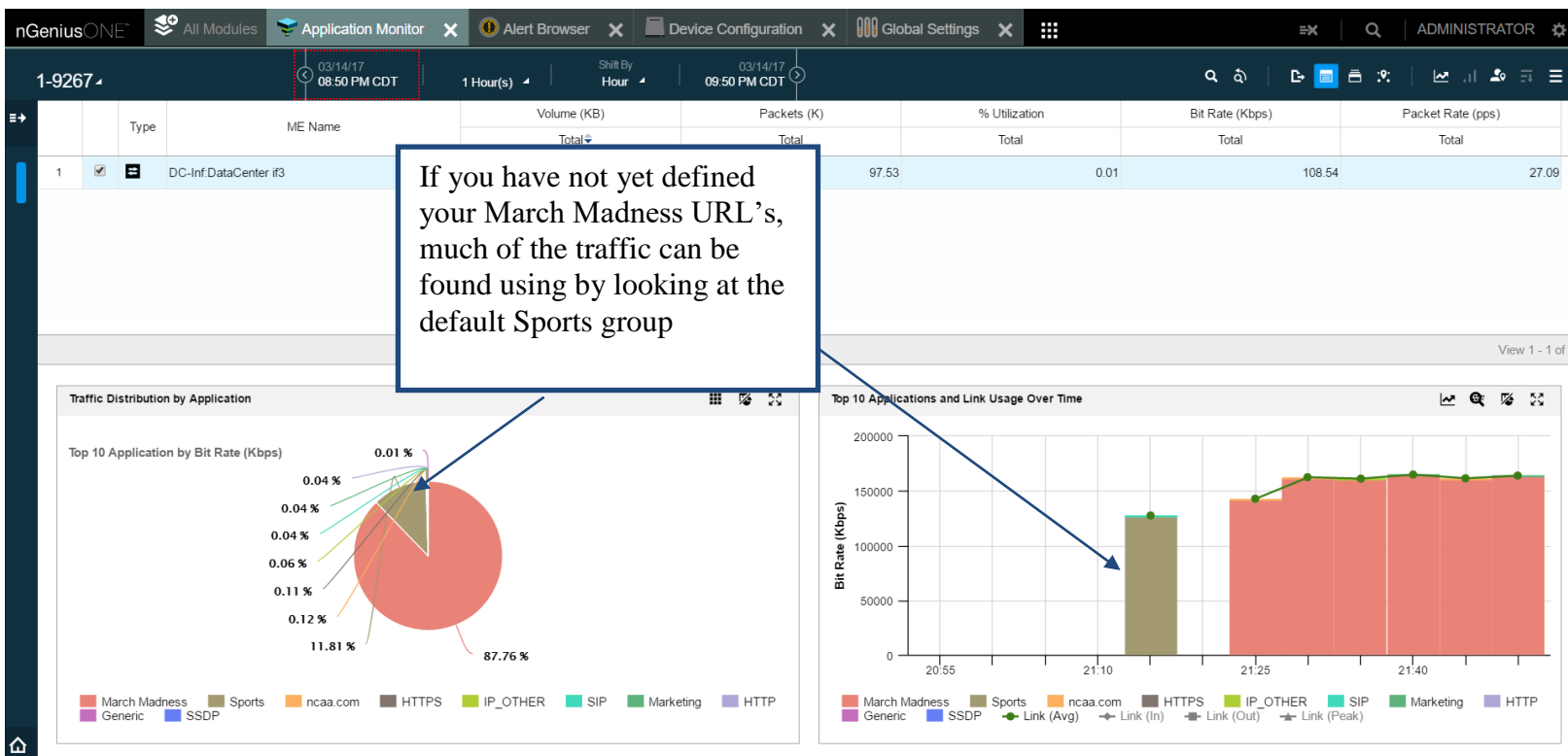
If you want to be thorough, you can also add <http://cdn.turner.com> – there are multiple hosts used from this domain for different types of media that are interspersed in the webpages, but there are almost certainly other uses for this domain in addition to March Madness. It would not be correct to call it March Madness, but it is video streaming.

Application utilization alarms can then be enabled to send an alert when these applications begin consuming a high percentage of an Internet link. This allows network administrators to quickly detect when the streaming video becomes a problem and take immediate action to ensure that the impact is minimal. Here are a few sample reports of the potential impact of March Madness 2017 as well as how easy it is to isolate the conversation which caused the spike.



Alerts for March Madness traffic can be generated automatically





The following are additional screenshots describing exactly how to configure your NetScout solution to monitor the March Madness traffic:

Add Application

Fields marked with * are required.

Address Parameters

Parent: HTTP

Short name: * March Madness

Address:http:// mml01-i.akamaihd.net

Parameter:

Additional Port:

Application Tag:

Group: March Madness ▼

☐ Exact Match

Application Type

- ☒ URL Application
- ☐ Server Application

Server Parameters

Server Address

Import...

Add

OK

Cancel

nGeniusONE							
All Modules Global Settings							
Enterprise Applications Traffic Discovery Locations Groups Decryption Keys Business Types Voice/Video							
Name	Port(s)	Group	Logged	Response Time	Session	Recording	
O365Mobile		Web Applications	None	✓	✓	Full Optimized	
O365Online		Web Applications	None	✓	✓	Full Optimized	
O365PortalAndIdentity		Web Applications	None	✓	✓	Full Optimized	
O365ProPlus		Web Applications	None	✓	✓	Full Optimized	
O365RemoteAnalyzer		Web Applications	None	✓	✓	Full Optimized	
O365SharePointOnline		Web Applications	None	✓	✓	Full Optimized	
O365SkypeForBusiness		Web Applications	None	✓	✓	Full Optimized	
O365Yammer		Web Applications	None	✓	✓	Full Optimized	
ncaa.com		March Madness	Client-Server	✓	✓	Full Optimized	
March Madness		March Madness	Client-Server	✓	✓	Full Optimized	

Once you have defined at least the ncaa.com and the special march madness akamaihd.net URL underneath HTTP in Global Settings, ensure that you have the Response Time and Session checkmarks selected so that nGenius ONE will monitor the session records, and Client/Server enabled if you want to see the Client IP addresses.

Service Hierarchy

- Enterprise
 - Data Center
 - Enterprise Applications
 - Enterprise Geographically
 - Enterprise Community View
 - Unified Communications
 - Cisco UC Jabber
 - SIP Trunking
 - Networks
 - Non Business

Application Services and Network Domains

Showing all Service types

- Mail Services (Seattle)
- Mailbox
- Manuf - Database
- Manuf - REST
- Manuf - Web
- Manuf Application
- Manuf MySQL All
- March Madness**
- MDF
- Microsoft Exchange All

Application Service: March Madness

Service Name: March Madness Monitor: Web Services

Orientation preference for Location Keys: ☒ Server ☐ Client

☒ Alerts
 Profile: March Madness Action: Default

Configure services by adding or deleting service members. At least one service member is required.

Service Members

Application	Monitored Element
March Madness	DC-Inf:DataCenter if3
NCAA	DC-Inf:DataCenter if3

Next, create a service for March Madness in the Service Configuration section. You need to select the service members March Madness and NCAA (or the names you picked when you configured the applications in Global Settings, or just the March Madness Application Group if you created one). You'll notice that I have selected the Web Services monitor as well. As an option, you can also create alerts for March Madness triggers, such as high utilization.

Alert Profile: March Madness

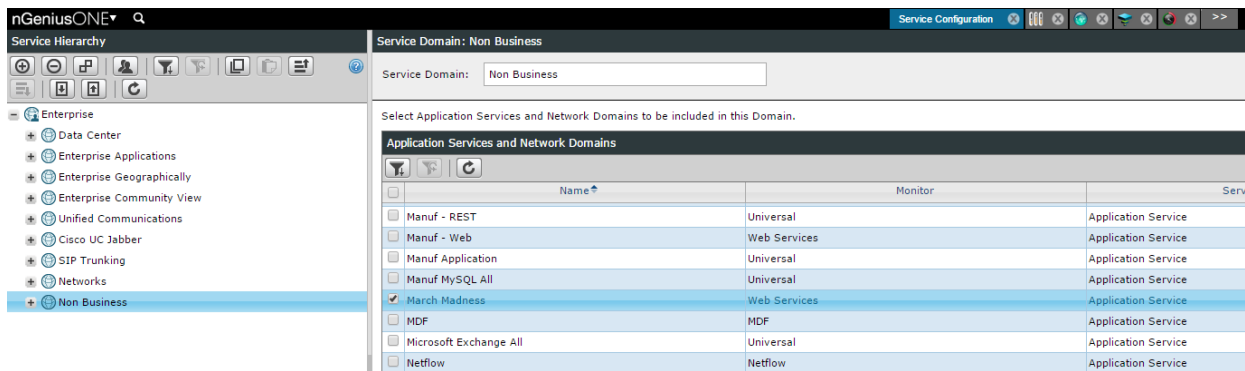
Configure a new alert profile or modify the selected alert profile.

Name: March Madness ☐ Enable Real-Time alerts

Triggers

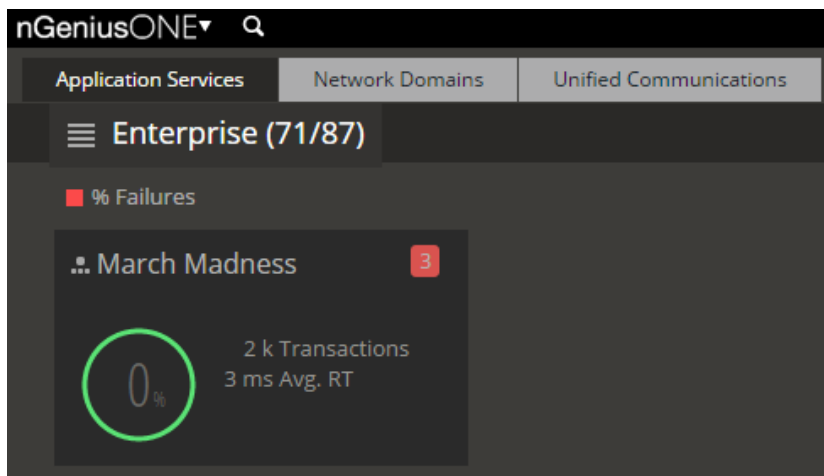
Metric	Type	Attributes
Bit Rate	Threshold	Increasing, Warning: 1000000, Critical: 1500000

Be sure to click on the human head icon in the bottom left pane where you created the application service and select the users or groups that you want to have access to this service.



Finally, select a service hierarchy to place the new March Madness service from the top left, and click the checkbox to enable March Madness to display.

Wait 15 minutes for the first data to populate in the Service Dashboard, and you are finished!



If you want an overtime graph of the connections going to servers that host March Madness videos, you can also create an overtime view from within the Service Dashboard, or you can use our new Grid functionality to show the number of sessions over time, utilization, number of transactions or many other metrics.

