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Steeped in Tradition– A History of the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament

By F.R. Penn

A comprehensive and in-depth history of the NCAA men's basketball Tournament offers a genuine look at individual and collective adversities and strengths. It is a looking glass for human hope, excellence and positive social change. It is, in short, a microcosm of the human existence, with all of its exuberance, tragedy and triumph.

The excitement and tradition of "March Madness" as we know it today has been shaped by many significant events in NCAA tournament history: The first NCAA men's basketball tournament was held in 1939 with the first championship game held at Northwestern on March 27, 1939. Only eight teams competed in two regions. Oregon defeated Ohio State in the championship, and the West region held a third-place game.

Although the NCAA tournament now determines the national champion, that was not always the case. Until the 1950's, the NIT was considered a more prestigious tournament than the NCAA, and teams often chose to enter the NIT and bypass the NCAA tourney. Because of this dichotomy, two of the best centers of the 1940's never met in an NCAA tourney. George Mikan's DePaul team traditionally entered the NIT, while Bob Kurland's Oklahoma A&M (now Oklahoma State) won two NCAA titles. Several schools entered both tournaments. One such team, City College of New York (CCNY) led by Irwin Dambrot, won both in 1950. Ironically, CCNY defeated Bradley University in the finals of both tournaments. Another school, Utah in 1944, entered the NIT, lost in the first round, and then went on to win the NCAA title. Kentucky pulled off a similar accomplishment in 1949, losing in the second round of the NIT and then going on to win the NCAA Tournament.

In 1941, the East region added a third-place game into the schedule, and in 1946, a national third-place game was held for the first time; the game would be a fixture until 1980. In 1951, the tournament expanded to 16 teams, and in 1952, Seattle was the site of the first true "Final Four," with both semifinal games and the championship game in one city. It was 1956 when the tournament was divided into four regions. Some of the most astounding and telling events in college basketball were to follow: North Carolina defeated Wilt Chamberlain and Kansas 54-53 in three overtimes to win the title in 1957. The legend of dominance emerged in 1962 when John Wooden's UCLA team makes the first of 13 Final Four appearances over the next 15 seasons.

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Reflecting the race and civil rights issues of the time, Loyola (Illinois) was matched up with Mississippi State in a 1963 men's basketball tournament regional semifinal. Mississippi State, an all-white team, fled the town in the middle of the night despite protests from the governor and state police of Mississippi to play a Loyola team that features four black starters. Mississippi State overcame an unwritten Mississippi rule against playing integrated teams with a cloak-and-dagger flight to the North just one step ahead of a court injunction. Triumphantly, Loyola beat Mississippi State and went on to win the title. In 1966, Texas Western (now UTEP), with an all-black starting five, defeats an all-white Kentucky team to win the national title.

In 1973, with the championship game held on Monday night for the first time, UCLA behind Bill Walton's 44 points on 21 of 22 shooting, won its seventh straight championship, defeating Memphis State. NC State, led by David Thompson, ends UCLA's title run in 1974, defeating the Bruins in the national semifinals in double overtime.

The following year, the NCAA tournament expanded to 32 teams, and then allowed more than one school from each conference to participate. Prior to this ruling, the restriction prevented several great teams from competing in the tournament, including the 1974 Maryland team. They finished the season nationally ranked #4, yet lost the ACC Conference final game to top-ranked NC State prior to the start of the tournament. After that, the NCAA began to allow more than one team per conference to participate. In 1976, Bobby Knight's Indiana Hoosier squad completed an undefeated season with a victory over Michigan in the championship game. The Hoosiers are the last team to go undefeated and win the title.

The tournament expanded to 40 teams in 1979, and teams were seeded for the first time. "Magic" Earvin Johnson leads Michigan State over Larry Bird and Indiana State to win the national championship. The game drew the attention of millions throughout the country; its 24.1 TV rating remains the highest ever for a college basketball game and is still considered one of the greatest match-ups in NCAA Tournament history.

Expansion followed in 1980 to 48 teams, and then in 1983, to 53 teams. In what many believe is the greatest Cinderella story in college basketball, North Carolina State's Lorenzo Charles dunks the ball as time expires in the 1983 championship game to lead the Wolfpack to a 54–52 win over heavily favored Akeem Olajuwon and Houston. Perhaps no one figure in college basketball history more personified the spirit of March Madness than Coach Jim Valvano. His underdog North Carolina State Wolfpack did what many consider a miracle by making an incredible run through the 1983 Tournament. Culminating in the defeat of the highly touted "Phi Slamma Jamma" squad from the University of Houston, Valvano was rocketed into the media limelight and quickly became the symbol of exuberance and enthusiasm. He discovered soon afterward that he had bone cancer, and for a short time became a commentator for college basketball. Before his death at age 47, he was named the recipient of the Arthur Ashe award for courage at the first ESPN ESPY awards. It was at this time he announced the formation of the V Foundation for cancer research.

In 1985 the tournament expanded to 64 teams. A Villanova Wildcat team shot a 22 for 28 field goal

percentage to defeat Patrick Ewing and defending champion Georgetown in the championship game. Villanova remains the lowest seed (#8) to win the championship. In 1991, Duke upset undefeated UNLV in the semifinals and went on to win the national championship. In 1997, Arizona, led by Mike Bibby, Jason Terry and Miles Simon, becomes the first school to defeat three #1 seeds en route to the national championship, winning against Kansas, North Carolina and Kentucky.

The NCAA Tournament's popularity has grown to rival that of the World Series, the Olympics and the Super Bowl. CBS Sports in 1999 negotiated an 11-year, \$6 billion agreement for television, radio, Internet, corporate marketing, licensing, publishing, home video and Hoop City rights for the Division I men's basketball championship.

In 2002, the NCAA tournament committee developed a "pod" system for the first and second rounds. The system allows the top four seeds to play at a site as close to home as possible, without regard to the school's tournament region. In that year's tournament, Maryland became the first school to defeat five former national champions on their way to win their first title. In 2004, the regions became known by the regional final's host city instead of by their geographic names. The Final Four match-ups were set by committee prior to the tournament instead of on a rotating basis. Connecticut, behind center Emeka Okafor, won its second title in six seasons. Last year, 2005, Roy Williams' North Carolina Tar Heels led by Sean May, held off the Fighting Illini to win the title game

by a final score of 75–70.

Adversity, tragedy, and ultimate triumph; the downtrodden and beleaguered emerge through the journey as champions. The drama of hope intensified to euphoria, only to be dashed on the rocks of defeat in the ultimate test of poise and determination. The human experience in all its excellence and all its failures. Yes, this Tournament has it all.

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Why is Bobby Knight Explosive?

By John Boe

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Bobby Knight is presently the head basketball coach at Texas Tech. Prior to being hired by them

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Bobby Knight spent twenty–nine years coaching basketball at Indiana University. In those twenty–nine years he coached many successful basketball teams and in fact, brought three NCAA basketball championships back to Indiana. He was recognized as a strict disciplinarian and used a "hands on" coaching style. Coach Knight was feared and respected not only by the opposing team, but by his own players as well. His winning tradition at Indiana University made him an icon for college basketball. Here is a man who was at the top of his game and appeared to have it all. So what happened? Why did Indiana fire him as their head basketball coach? Essentially Bobby Knight lost his job when he lost his temper. It has been said that people are a lot like steel, once they lose their temper they are rendered useless. Unfortunately when most people think of Bobby Knight, they picture an irate coach throwing a chair across the basketball court dramatically underscoring his disagreement with an official's call. His explosive and volatile temper ultimately caused him to be placed on probation at Indiana University after he chucked one of his players during practice.

Why are some people more aggressive and volatile than others? Twenty–four hundred years ago, Hippocrates, the father of medicine, theorized that we are born into one of four primary temperament styles and that each style has its own unique physiology, character traits and outlook on life; Choleric (aggressive), Sanguine (emotional), Phlegmatic (passive) and Melancholy (analytical). Of these four styles, the Choleric or Worker style is the most impatient, ill natured and short tempered. The Worker temperament style is the D in the D.I.S.C. profiling system. Bobby Knight has the Worker as his primary temperament style and therefore like most Workers, has a challenge with anger management. This style is often referred to as a "Workaholic or Type A" personality. When they get angry their tendency is to explode like a volcano and then get over it quickly and go about their business as if nothing had happened. Workers are aggressive, no–nonsense people who seek power and control. They are goal–oriented individuals with a practical, bottom line approach to life. The Worker is extroverted by nature. People who have the Worker as their primary temperament style are physically large, powerful people with broad shoulders. Other well–known Workers are; Mike Tyson, John Wayne, Vince Lombardi, George C. Scott, Bea Arthur, Pete Rose, Janet Reno, O.J. Simpson, Joseph Stalin, George S. Patton and Jim Brown.

Bobby Knight developed a winning tradition while at Indiana University by demanding that his players learn how to play under pressure and adversity. Ironically, self–control was the one thing coach Knight was unable to give back to them! Bobby Knight is a good example of a bad example. He reminds us all that the strength of our temperament style taken to the extreme becomes our greatest personal weakness. He has been given a second chance to coach at Texas Tech. Let's hope that he learned his lesson and will control his legendary, explosive temper!

John Boe, based in Monterey, CA, helps companies recruit, train and motivate top–quality people. To view his online Video Demo or to have John Boe speak at your next event, visit www.johnboe.com or

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