



## **Players Need to Put Aside Egos for Good of Team**

By Bill Gosse

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As the NCAA men's basketball tournament draws to a close, much discussion has taken place regarding who has the best team. Many people filled out their tournament sheets and immediately became bracketologists.

What information did everyone pore over to arrive at their picks? Were teams with exceptional guard play favored over teams with length? Were certain schools with one or two dominant players given more of a chance? What about teams with great role players?

Everyone used a different set of criteria to pick their eventual champion.

When reviewing past title teams, great teams had significant role players – those willing to sacrifice their personal statistics for the good of the team.

The last team to go unbeaten was the 1975-76 Indiana Hoosiers. They had Scott May, Kent Benson and Quinn Buckner as their star players. Does anyone remember 6-7 senior starter Tom Abernethy, whose strengths included defense, rebounding and passing? Doesn't sound like much of a glamour position, does it?

The Marquette Warriors' 1977 NCAA championship team featured Bo Ellis and Butch Lee, but had two key role players: starting forward Bill Neary, defensive stopper, and backup guard Gary Rosenberger, zone buster. Both players didn't get nearly as much publicity as the big names, but they were invaluable in helping Marquette win the championship in Al McGuire's last game as a coach.

Here's your last test: Name one starter on the Wisconsin Badgers' 2000 Final Four team.

Can you say Duany Duany?

That team had only one player average more than 10 points per game (Mark Vershaw), yet regularly went 10 deep off the bench.

Wisconsin's meteoric rise in this decade can be tied to teamwork and defense. Many pundits call this brand of basketball boring.

Bo Ryan eventually took over what Dick Bennett started, and unselfish play is what makes the Badgers successful.

When players don't make the proper adjustments, they either transfer, fall by the wayside or both. Players able to submit their egos and play for the good of the whole will flourish. This applies to all team sports.

That same unselfish philosophy should be taught to our young student-athletes, and they should learn it at home at a young age. Thousands of dollars spent on lessons and physical development don't guarantee nor entitle stardom. Being on an AAU team as a young player should promise nothing on the varsity.

Those who work at their games the most, perhaps in their driveways like everyone used to, more than likely will be the best players. Coaches appreciate a family willing to spend money to improve their child's game, but they don't appreciate the ensuing pressure from parents who make it known their money is wasted because a kid sits on the bench.

Coaches love players who are unselfish and who are flexible enough to play different positions when needed. They love players who play with passion, have a positive attitude, and are teachable.

As a coach, I get a thrill each season seeing who will be the one, or two players who unexpectedly step out of the shadows to play a crucial role as the season unfolds.

These are the players who produce great stories. These are the stories that are told about great teams. These are the teams that accomplish great things.