

The Madness of March

- Dan Rosenberg

There's really no competition for the best playoffs in America. Sure, the NFL and NHL playoffs are fun to watch, and the World Series is always intense, but the NCAA Basketball tournament, commonly known as March Madness, takes the cake. Over a span of two weeks, 64 teams compete on an even playing field to win the championship. The reason March Madness is so great is because of the infinite possibilities. Once the tournament starts, past successes and wins are left behind. The best team on any given day wins the game. This gives teams that would have no shot at a title in sports like football, a real chance at a championship.

March Madness is as American as apple pie. We're an underdog nation; even our beginnings, fighting against the British, make a great underdog story. That's why across America men and women and children fill out brackets, hoping a sixteen seed would finally upset a one seed. Our culture is geared to root for teams like Florida Gulf Coast University, a fifteenth seeded team that upset the storied program from Georgetown and that of San Diego State. It's why we rejoice, as a nation, to see a small school like La Salle take down the goliath team of Kansas State.

It's actually an incredible unifying factor as well. While few people watch the regular season of college basketball, millions of viewers every year tune in to the Final Four. Millions fill out brackets as well, trying to predict the outcome of every game in the tournament. When one thinks about the core fans of other sports, it's often a fairly uniform demographic. But when March rolls around, men, women, and children, of all shapes and sizes fill out their brackets. It's another amazing idea, that a sports tournament can bring so many different people together. On a worldwide scale, the only competition that's comparable is the World Cup. But here in the United States we all don colors and cheer for the underdog, temporarily united in front of the television.

What amazes me most about the tournament, though, is the raw emotion displayed on and off the court. This is a college sport; there's no payment, no endorsement deals, not even a guarantee of playing in the NBA. What the student-athletes demonstrate on the court is a drive to compete, and more heart than any professional athlete I've seen. The tears of joy and of sadness are present after every game, the ecstasy of victory and the agony of defeat. March Madness is the truest form of the sport of basketball; no money, just young men playing for themselves, their families, and most of all their teammates.

Just like every year, I'll be watching on the edge of my seat like everyone else. The tournament is full of surprises, of upsets, of unexpected stars. So let's all have some hope for the little guy; because anything is possible when we get to March.