

4-3-1996

## College Basketball: The Coaches Game

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### Recommended Citation

Crepeau, Richard C., "College Basketball: The Coaches Game" (1996). *On Sport and Society*. 470.  
<https://stars.library.ucf.edu/onsportandsociety/470>

SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR ARETE  
April 3, 1996

As we approach the Final Four, the Big Dance, and the New Jersey swamps, I am reminded of Al McGuire's comment that professional basketball is a player's game, while college basketball is a coaches game. Nearly all the great programs are associated with great coaches: Wooden at UCLA, Smith at North Carolina, Rupp at Kentucky.

It also seems that there are different coaching types that have made their mark over the years, and observing them has been a study in human quirkiness. Some are amusing, some appalling, some evoke admiration, others disgust.

There can be little doubt that John Wooden was one of the best, and one of the most interesting to watch. Never losing his cool, the rolled up program in hand, he seemed always in control of himself and his team. But of course when you have the best team in the country, these things come with more ease. Another of the great quiet coaches was Ralph Miller of Oregon whose teams always controlled the tempo of a game, and always mastered the fundamentals.

Among those who taught great team defense was Hugh Durham at Florida State and then Georgia. His 1972 NCAA Final's team at FSU played as good a team defense as I have ever seen, and in fact only Al McGuire's Marquette teams matched that level defensively. Wooden's Bruins too were noted for their intimidating and destructive zone press. The coaches that are most interesting are those from the lunatic fringe. One of my all-time favorites in this category was Torchy Clark of UCF who looked absolutely psychotic when he had a twenty point lead, and was in total control when it was a two point game. He was a real treat to watch from behind the UCF bench, particularly when he spoke to the crowd seeking advice while feigning total exasperation with his players.

Also in this group is the king of sideline madmen, Bobby Knight of Indiana. Not only does Knight provide fireworks on the bench berating both players and referees, he can light up a press conference with his deranged behavior and total contempt for the press. His public behavior over the years has been marked by arrogance and the size of his ego seems infinite. Throwing tantrums and chairs, busting up telephones, pushing security guards, Knight has managed to be persona non grata in Puerto Rico and simultaneously the Crown Prince of Indiana. In short he

is one of the most unpleasant human beings ever to occupy the coaches position in NCAA history. While the enigma of Knight is that he is a person of high ethical and academic standards in a world where such a thing is less than commonplace.

Cincinnati's Bobby Huggins, whose need to berate and humiliate his players seems to be boundless, is the newest of the Knight clones. In interviews last week he talked about the need to teach his players to be men, to motivate them to extreme effort, and to do this by crushing them under a diatribe of verbal abuse. Those who use these methods like to talk about themselves as teachers and educators, and I wonder what the consequences would be if I tried these teaching methods in my classroom.

Another type is the slick fast talking used car salesman exemplified by Bobby Cremins, John Calipari and Rick Pitino. When you see them the instinctual reaction is to clutch your wallet. In a world without sport they would be selling bogus land deals, used cars without warranties, or patent medicine. Beneath the slick veneer one senses a commitment to nothing but winning pursued without scruple or restraint, and with no sense of human values.

Then there is the Father Flanigan of Long Beach, Las Vegas and now Fresno State. Jerry Tarkanian seems to specialize in troubled youth and marginal students. But he does win, and regardless of the tendency to look behind him for cash dripping out of his pockets, and despite the trail of tears of NCAA violations and prohibitions, he seems always to find a job at yet one more institution of higher learning willing to pay any price to reach the glories of the Big Dance.

My favorite coach remains Al McGuire who at Marquette seemed adept at conning everyone including himself. More importantly, for all the streetwise veneer, he knew the value of a college degree for his players, and he believed that an athlete was still a student. He knew that college sport, and especially college basketball, was more about fun than winning, although he was not adverse to the combination.

On Sunday when Syracuse beat Kansas there was Al in the middle of the floor doing a dance with the Syracuse players enjoying the moment as if he were eighteen again. Retired and in his early sixties, McGuire still understands that in its purest form the NCAA basketball tournament is about fun. It can be more, but should never be less.

On Sport and Society this is Dick Crepeau reminding you that you don't have to be a good sport to be a bad loser.

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