



The Divine Nature of Basketball: My Season Inside the Ivy League

Ed Breslin

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The Divine Nature of Basketball: My Season Inside the Ivy League describes a season spent as a virtual coach in the Ivy League. Shadowing head coach of Yale men's basketball James Jones and bird-dogging his team from first practice to final game, Ed Breslin fulfills every college basketball fan's fantasy of being an NCAA Division I coach.

It's sports journalism in the tradition of George Plimpton. But above all, it's a celebration of basketball, of participation in life, of gifted mentors and coaches, and of the proper approach to collegiate athletics.

And all this in the throwback Ivy League. Where lofty academic requirements merge with high athletic standards. Where every game is an intense and ancient rivalry. Where no league tournament renders the regular season meaningless. Where nearly all league games are played two-a-weekend. Where back-to-back games and five-hour bus trips make for weary legs and heartbreaking upsets. Where coaches have to be teachers and mentors first and foremost.

Over the course of the season, Breslin comes to understand that it's coaches like James Jones, their priorities in order, who realize that lessons learned in sport are often enduringly important, and transferable to other areas of life. They know that the game of basketball, invented in a YMCA gym to vanquish winter blues and channel excess energy, is a divine template for teaching and mentoring. They know that mastery of a demanding skill in youth, and of one's self, often leads to mastery in adult life: in the arts, in the sciences, in the professions, and in business.

The author experienced all this, and more, firsthand. But the most important lesson he learned is that if you ever visit the Yale locker room, whatever else you do: "Don't step on the Y."

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