

IT'S MADNESS

There's something magical about March. Perhaps it's the advent of spring, church and fire department fish fries, or the first buds that start to break through that give me hope that there's better things on the horizon.

I'm a little discouraged this week with the latest scandal – college admissions – or the ability of a few to find the crack in otherwise exceptional organizations. Sad that there will always be those who don't live up to the values of the organization. At least those will be weeded out now. Unfortunately the next scandal will overshadow this one, but I hope that the pain caused by this one will result in a new set of standards and audits that bring some level of integrity back to an otherwise deliberate standard. I have to say though I'd love to see the punishment to fit the crime – and the requirement that the teams and coaches that accepted a non-athlete onto a great team – that individual should have to workout at the same level and demands as the other athletes for a minimum of four years. You're on the team right ??? Wouldn't that be a fitting solution to the dishonesty of the action by the coach or institution.

That being said, somewhere in the next few weeks we're also going to witness a real live Cinderella. It might be a female or it might be a male – but there's one honestly laboring in the shadows right now as we go about our daily lives. You see, it's time for the big dance – it's MARCH MADNESS!!!

In 2008 a small undersized kid from a small North Carolina team – no not DUKE nor those titans from Chapel Hill – one of the smallest Division I teams in the country made a wild run until they lost to the eventual national champions. Davidson, led by Steph Curry, shocked their way into the Elite Eight. This kid scored 40, 30 and 33 points in his team's first three wins. He's now one of the most prominent players in the NBA – and he still doesn't match up anywhere near the physical dominance of LeBron not that Jordan character from a few years ago. He's just perfected his skill to be the best in the sport today!

But he's not the only one to wear a slipper. Last year a short point guard, she's 5 feet 8 inches, from Notre Dame did something that's historic. She won the semi-final game with a last second shot -IN OVERTIME - to get the Irish into the National Championship over the most dominant women's program in women's basketball history – U Conn. WAIT – that's not the end of the story. 48 hours later playing in the National Championship game she did it again with a three pointer with 0.1 seconds left on the clock to win the title. Arike Ogunbowale became famous throughout all of college basketball history.

It's why I love this tournament. Hard work will be rewarded. Years and years of workouts, hours and hours working on their fitness and their skills, encouraging their teammates and developing and being a part of team chemistry that will inspire some other kids who watch for the purity of the love of competition. Amateur athletes without multi-million dollar egos who don't play and won't live up to their commitments play for the love of the game and sport. They're the honest competitors. Some won't get past the first game – but forever they'll tell their kids, friends, and grandkids that they made it to the dance. Hard work paid off. Almost every player from every team will learn one thing that will carry them throughout the rest of their lives – that the discipline and hard work that got them here will take them to even greater heights in their next endeavors. That's the power of people – realized!

-DAVE BAKER