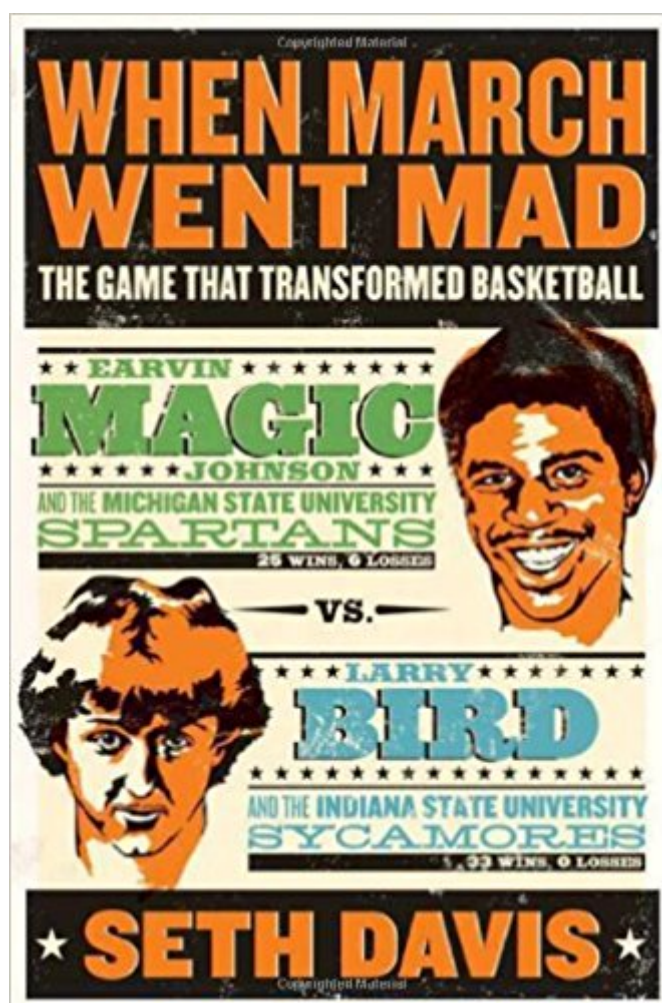


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# When March Went Mad: The Game That Transformed Basketball



## Synopsis

The dramatic story of how two legendary players burst on the scene in an NCAA championship that gave birth to modern basketball. Thirty years ago, college basketball was not the sport we know today. Few games were televised nationally and the NCAA tournament had just expanded from thirty-two to forty teams. Into this world came two exceptional players: Earvin "Magic" Johnson and Larry Bird. Though they played each other only once, in the 1979 NCAA finals, that meeting launched an epic rivalry, transformed the NCAA tournament into the multibillion-dollar event it is today, and laid the groundwork for the resurgence of the NBA. In *When March Went Mad*, Seth Davis recounts the dramatic story of the season leading up to that game, as Johnson's Michigan State Spartans and Bird's Indiana State Sycamores overcame long odds and great doubts that their unheralded teams could compete at the highest level. Davis also tells the stories of their remarkable coaches, Jud Heathcote and Bill Hodges—who were new to their schools but who set their own paths to build great teams—and he shows how tensions over race and class heightened the drama of the competition. When Magic and Bird squared off in Salt Lake City on March 26, 1979, the world took notice—to this day it remains the most watched basketball game in the history of television—and the sport we now know was born.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 336 pages

Publisher: Times Books; 1 edition (March 3, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0805088105

ISBN-13: 978-0805088106

Product Dimensions: 6.5 x 1.1 x 9.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.3 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 61 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,736,598 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #34 in Books > Sports &

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## Customer Reviews

"There are no secrets anymore in sport. Good grief, the best eighth-grade basketball players in the country are ranked. With his careful telling of the romantic saga of Magic and Bird, Seth Davis reminds us what fun it used to be when we could still be surprised, when a whole sport could be

turned upside down, right before our wondering eyes. It's a delight to relive all that with When March Went Mad." "Frank Deford can't remember a behind-the-scenes story I have enjoyed more. A transcendent moment in sports that is so fully captured by Seth Davis -- I feel as if I was right in the middle of it all! Thanks, Seth, for the insight as to how this magical game is still a standalone event even thirty years later." "Jim Nantz" There is a lot more to what is known as the Magic vs. Larry game than meets the eye. In When March Went Mad, Seth Davis does a superb job of shining a spotlight on many of those long-forgotten details." "John Feinstein "Seth Davis's When March Went Mad evokes more than a special season. Through deft reporting, he takes you behind the scenes from Terre Haute, Indiana, to East Lansing, Michigan, and on to the famous championship round in Salt Lake City. Best of all, though, Davis captures Larry Bird and Earvin "Magic" Johnson as the young basketball geniuses they were, basketball's yin and yang, equal but opposing forces who would transform the game. This is a fine piece of work." "Mark Kriegel" There are only a few perfect combinations in the world. Peanut butter on toast, scotch on ice, and Seth Davis on basketball." "Rick Reilly

Seth Davis is an on-air studio analyst for CBS Sports coverage of NCAA basketball and is an on-air host, reporter, and analyst for the College Sports Television cable network. He is also a staff writer at Sports Illustrated, where he has worked since 1995, primarily covering college basketball and golf. A graduate of Duke University, Davis lives with his family in Ridgefield, Connecticut.

In the Spring of 1979, there were two teams on an inevitable, collision course ~ perhaps more-so than any other two teams in the history of the NCAA tournament. The two teams were from the border states of Michigan & Indiana and both featured a superstar on their roster. For the Michigan State Spartans, it was Lansing's own Earvin "Magic" Johnson. For the Indiana State Sycamores, it was Larry Bird. The two players would have many things in common, as well as some notable differences. Larry was more of a pure scorer, while Magic was more of a "catalyst" for his team's offense. Both players would move on & have remarkable NBA careers where they would continue their rivalry from the national championship game. Both would even become NBA head coaches; Larry was highly successful with the Indiana Pacers, while Magic's short stint with the Lakers was disastrous. Personality wise, they could not be more different. Magic was gregarious and loved having a mic in front of his face. Larry, meanwhile, was diffident towards the media & preferred for the team as a whole to get the attention after victories rather than he personally. Magic always had a smile on his face, while Larry was known for his stoic expressions. Such is the backdrop of the

present book, which gives the reader a "behind the scenes" narrative of the 1979 college basketball season which culminated in perhaps the single most important basketball game ever played. It still holds the record for the highest ratings, and it elevated the game of college basketball to unseen heights. It also indirectly rejuvenated the NBA, which at this time was very unpopular. All of it happened due to a showdown in the national championship game between 2 of the best players who ever played the game. Seth Davis does an excellent job of giving us a historical background, not only of the players, but also both schools and everything that went on with both players being recruited to the respective schools. . Davis has no shortage of anecdotes and funny stories to share with basketball junkies, and even non-basketball junkies are bound to enjoy this book. If you are a fan of Michigan State or Indiana State, then this book is for you. If you're a fan of the Bird Man or the Magic Man (or both?) then this book is for you. If you have even a passing interest in the game of basketball & the historical context of the '79 championship game, then this book is for you. If you don't have a pulse, then this book is not for you!

Great back story in the year the NCAA Tournament to a huge step into becoming the impressive tournament we watch today. Hearing the stories of both athletes and their collision course with one another is both gripping and enlightening.

Magic Johnson and Larry Bird. Larry Bird and Magic Johnson. These two will go down in the annals of not just basketball history, but sports history, tied hand in hand. They revitalized the National Basketball Association with their fierce rivalry. But it started in an NCAA Division I college basketball championship game in 1979. In *When March Went Mad*, Seth Davis recounts how the irrepressible and talented Ervin Magic Johnson of the Michigan State Spartans squared off against the small school hero Larry Bird of the Indiana State University Sycamores in what will always be a storied NCAA Championship Game. In these pages Davis recounts the early lives of both of these young men, whose personalities and court styles were polar opposites. Bird, an introverted, hard working player who would have been just as happy cutting grass for the local Parks and Recreation Department as he was playing professional basketball, and the larger than life, happy go lucky, Ervin Johnson, with his huge smile and phenomenal basketball skills. Headed toward a collision course, these two would remake the NCAA and it's now wildly successful tournament. They were such great talents and good stories, they made the NCAA Championship Game must see TV before 24-hour news coverage and the over exposure of college basketball. In fact, outside die hard fans, few knew much of anything about Larry Bird, and not a great deal about Magic Johnson. Today of

course we'd know what they ate for breakfast (and maybe even something about their bowel movements) during the tournament. In 1979, they created hoopla with their talent, as newspaper and magazine articles touted their exploits during the regular season. Davis does an outstanding job of delving into the personality of both of these athletes and their route to that 1979 championship game where Earvin Johnson will forever have one up on Larry Bird. He provides stories behind each player's team and teammates, how they interacted with the press, their peers, and their coaches, and how each lead their team to the showdown that changed the face of college basketball. Beyond the obvious, detailing the first collision between two of the greatest basketball players of all time, this book has a theme. How this rivalry, which saved even the NBA from the doldrums, revitalized college basketball and made it relevant, and launched the careers of two superstars. Highly recommended.

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