



I Remember Jim Valvano: Personal Memories of and Anecdotes to Basketball's Most Exuberant Final Four Coach, as Told by the People and Players Who Knew Him

Mike Towle

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College basketball and its annual March Madness extravaganza have emerged over the last three decades as one of the most popular sporting phenomena in America. Perhaps no one personifies the excitement of this tournament better than Jim Valvano, whose heavily underdog North Carolina State Wolfpack achieved the pinnacle of success in college basketball in 1983 with an unlikely run through the NCAA Tournament, culminating in an incredible one-point victory over Houston's heavily favored Phi Slamma Jamma squad in the championship game.

While that Cinderella story was Valvano's only national championship, he quickly came to symbolize the exuberance and excellence of the exciting world of college basketball. Valvano transcended his sport, touching millions as he emerged as one of the most charismatic and, ultimately, courageous figures in American life who touched millions.

Diagnosed with bone cancer, he joined ESPN to comment on college basketball games. Later he received the Arthur Ashe Award for Courage at ESPN's first ESPY Awards, where he announced that he was starting the V Foundation for Cancer Research. Shortly after receiving the award, he died at the age of forty-seven. In *I Remember Jim Valvano*, he is remembered by former players, fellow coaches, a variety of other basketball experts, close associates, and many others as one of college basketball's great movers and shakers, a man with a heart as big as his popularity. Valvano's life is the classic story of courage and determination as borne out in his memorable line: "Don't give up. Don't ever give up".

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