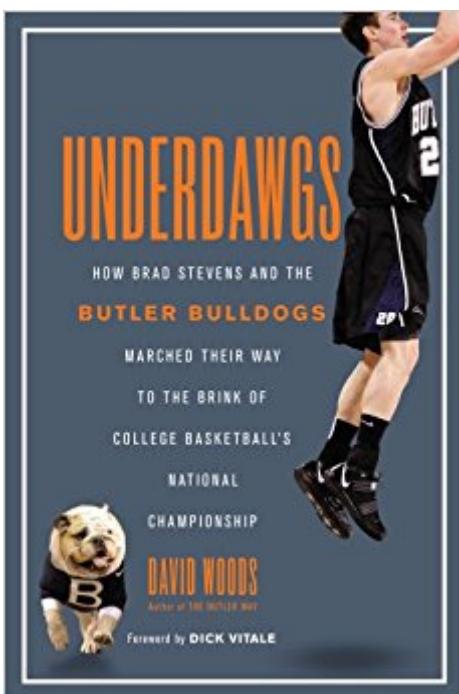


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Underdawgs: How Brad Stevens And The Butler Bulldogs Marched Their Way To The Brink Of College Basketball's National Championship



Synopsis

Butler University in Indianapolis became the smallest school in 40 years to reach the NCAA championship game. Prior to the tournament, a statistician calculated the Bulldogs as a 200-to-1 shot to win. But as fascinating as what Butler accomplished was how they did it. *Underdawgs* tells the incredible and uplifting story. Butler's coach, 33-year-old Brad Stevens, looked so young he was often mistaken for one of the players, but he had quickly become one of the best coaches in the nation by employing the "Butler Way." This philosophy of basketball and life, adopted by former coach Barry Collier, is based on five principles: humility, passion, unity, servanthood, and thankfulness. Even the most casual observer could see this in every player, on the court and off, from NBA first-round draft pick Gordon Hayward to the last guy on the bench. Butler was coming off a great 2009-10 regular season, but its longtime existence on the periphery of major college basketball fostered doubt as March Madness set in. But after two historic upsets, one of top-seeded Syracuse and another of second-seeded Kansas State, and making it to the Final Four, the Bulldogs came within the diameter of a shoelace of beating the perennial leaders of college basketball: the Duke Blue Devils. Much more than a sports story, *Underdawgs* is the consummate David versus Goliath tale. Despite Duke's winning the championship, the Bulldogs proved they belonged in the game and, in the process, won the respect of people who were not even sports fans.

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Customer Reviews

In the spring of 2010, Butler University came within a shot of winning the NCAA collegiate basketball championship against heavily favored Duke. Woods, the team's beat reporter for the

Indianapolis Star, presents a sunshine-and-balloons account of the magical season. For context, he provides a history of the basketball program, which not too many seasons ago was almost downgraded to Division III. Then came the gradual ascension of the Bulldogs over a period of years, culminating in that heartbreaking loss to Duke. He profiles head coach Brad Stevens, the players, the rest of the staff, and even—briefly—some of the fans. Also, in the best John Feinstein tradition, he gets inside the team dynamic. The culture Coach Stevens fosters is one of team over self, defense over all, and a commitment to the “Butler Way.” Well, readers might ask, doesn’t every coach promote essentially the same values? The answer is yes, of course, but the best coaches do the small things that convince the players to buy into the program. The 2009–10 Butler Bulldogs were a great, feel-good sports story, and Woods tells it well. --Wes Lukowsky

"If you want to learn how basketball is played in its purest form--the team game--learn all you can about Butler hoops. They represent what college basketball is all about!" —Dick Vitale

Great book in good condition.

The book is written for Butler fans as a keepsake. It's not earth-uncovering journalism, nor does it pretend to be. There's no deep, humankind-shattering revelation in this book. It's just a fun story of a great ride that this team took the country on for three weeks. It'll be fun to read 10 years from now. If you're not a fan of Butler, or of college basketball in general, it's not worth it. But don't expect to gain new life perspective from this book.

I really enjoy basketball especially Butler basketball. So naturally I enjoyed reading this book. With that said I would say the way this book is written is average. The author jumps around a lot with the things he talks about within each chapter. The information is good although nothing is earth shattering. I didn't come away learning much from reading the book but I did enjoy reading the book.

Great book - shows how a dedicated young basketball coach can bring a group of not well known college basketball players to play at a level of the highest recruits in the nation. My son graduated from the same HS as Brad Stevens and is now a student at Butler. He will always remember the 2010 Final Four season and really enjoyed getting this book.

Two things I learned immediately from reading this book. First - don't buy a book just because Dick Vitale (who I love btw) puts his endorsement on it. Second - don't buy a book about a sports program, event, or team unless it is autobiographical in nature - in other words unless it was written or heavily contributed to by someone directly involved with it. This just was not a fun book to read at all. I felt like it didn't go deep enough into what happened in their cinderella season from a philosophical, emotional, and experiential point of view. The book just seemed to be a rehash of that season with a little bit of these things thrown in here and there for good measure. I was more interested in reading about the heart of the coach and players rather than reading about the season, its stats, and its results. There was also very little discussion on coaching strategy in this book either. If you have no idea with what happened last season regarding Butler than this might be a good book for you - if you want to know how and why it happened then you might want to take a pass on this one...

This well written book by David Woods is a good example of what team work, integrity, dedication, understanding humanistic principles and compassion for people is all about. For me, being a Hoosier, the Bulldog drive to the Final Four was similar to the circumstances that the famous Milan, IN team created when it pulled off one of the biggest upsets in high school basketball history. That game inspired the movie Hoosiers and that film should be played for Congressmen before it opens for business every day. It would teach them what teamwork is about. UNDERDAWGS is a story about players and coaches and a small school banding together to accomplish an almost impossible goal and nearly doing so. If readers/leaders want to learn about what people can accomplish by working together without being selfish then they should read this book. The basketball story, the shots, the strategy, the exciting plays, etc. are secondary in understanding the true meaning of the story within this book. Norman Jones, Ed.D. author of Growing Up in Indiana: The Culture & Hoosier Hysteria Revisited

David Woods does a thorough job relaying the experiences and accomplishments of this group of true "student-athletes," especially considering it was his second book on Butler University (and basketball) in the past year. Though I'm a fan who attends several games at Hinkle Fieldhouse per year -- including last year's National Finals -- the story certainly has a broad appeal. Absolutely no "homeritis" here as one reviewer indicated; just a wonderful tale worth reading for any fan of life or sports. Truly enjoyable and uplifting.

The Butler Bulldogs of 2010 came within a few inches of a national championship, in a game that

may very well have saved college basketball from the doldrums. A little-known program even within its home state of Indiana, Butler had zero commentators and stat experts predicting its amazing run, even when they got to the Final Four. Their season deserves documentation and celebration. So why is "Underdawgs" such a boring read? It suffers from homer-itis, that peculiar trait in sportswriting where a beat reporter who is assigned to cover the team never gets beyond the surface pronouncements of the players and coaches nor criticizes the decisions and mistakes made by the program because then all his sources would wither away and his ability to cover the team would suffer. A lot of beat reporters do hold their program's feet to the fire (having worked in the newspaper industry briefly, I can attest to some beat writers being much more objective), but David Woods does not. Someone like David Halberstam would cover the season from a less partisan point of view, engaging the reader not just in the play-by-play but also the personalities on each team, and how the season affected. Pity that David Woods is no David Halberstam; his book reads like a rushed attempt to rewrite game coverage with just enough "human interest" to keep the reader's eyes from glazing over. His focus on players and the coach feels like nothing more than sports-writing cliches from a previous era, when sports stars were gods and infallible. His job is to cover the Butler program, of course, and he has access to the team that a national reporter would kill for, especially in light of Butler's historic run. But he's not able to do anything more than offer platitudes about "the Butler way" and how super-duper-awesome each and every player is. Maybe in the cynical, jaded sportswriting world we live in, his efforts to accentuate the positive could be refreshing. I just feel like he overdid it. The book about the Butler Bulldogs (and the eventual champions, the Duke Blue Devils) has yet to be written, perhaps dependent on the passage of time to help quiet down the hype and see where the players in this historic contest end up (I'm thinking of the book last year about the Magic-Bird NCAA finals of 1979). For now, books rushed out to capitalize on the event before it fades from memory are what we have to settle for, and "Underdawgs" achieves that much at least. That it doesn't do much more than that shouldn't be a surprise.

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