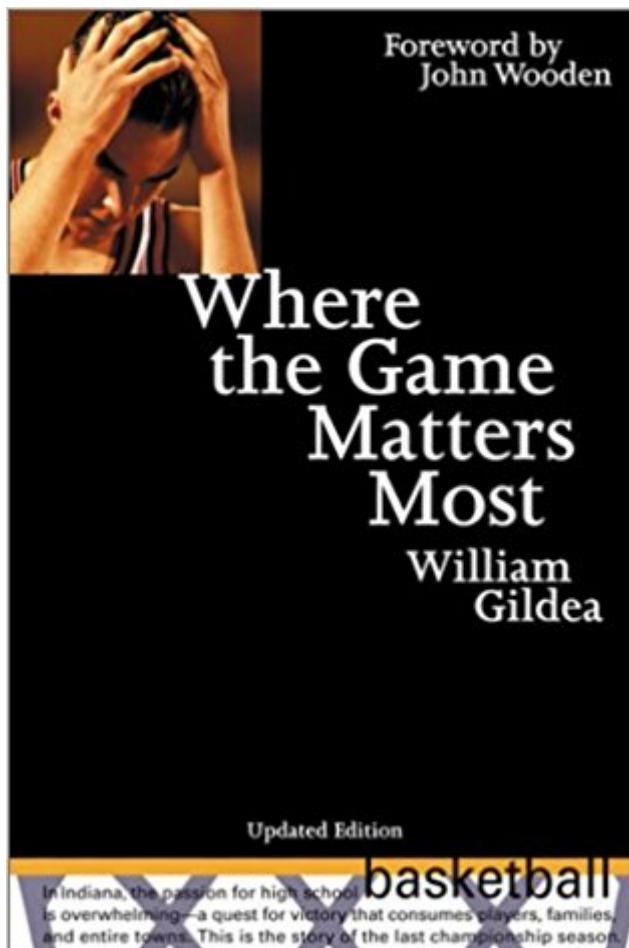


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# Where The Game Matters Most



## **Synopsis**

No state loves basketball -- especially high school basketball -- more than Indiana does. Each winter high school basketball fever grips the state, with games broadcast every night -- and a climactic championship tournament in March. Last season, however, Indiana crowned its last all-state champion, marking the end of an eighty-five-year-old Hoosier tradition. Next year, small-school teams -- like the one in the movie *Hoosiers* -- will no longer have a chance to upset the big-school Goliaths and go all the way. In *Where the Game Matters Most*, William Gildea captures all the drama, tension, and excitement of this final all-state championship season. Following the fortunes of four very different teams, he brings to life the traditions, the rivalries, the mounting pressures, and the desperate dreams as the season moves toward a dramatic final showdown in Indianapolis. Here is a brilliant evocation of a place where basketball is not only a game but a way of life. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Whenever David beats Goliath it's news; everything is suddenly possible. In Indiana, where basketball is an obsession, and high school basketball a religious pilgrimage to the state championship, the potential for Davids--remember *Hoosiers*?--is both magnificent and ever possible. But in 1996, Indiana changed that. Despite outrage and protest, the state opted to revamp the format that allowed all its high schools to compete against one another for the state title, and instead to institute a divisional system that would segregate schools by size, allowing for four champion teams. As unpopular as the decision was, it made the 1996-97 season--the last to be

played under the old rules--emotionally charged and sociologically above the rim in richness. William Gildea's examination of that final season is ripe with the voices of coaches and players, and vivid in its replay of big games. But the book's real strength is off the court in Gildea's observations and reportage on the ethos of small towns, small-town virtues, and the place of sports in the community. *Where the Game Matters Most* is a championship volume in any league. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Gildea's work in the Washington Post is always quick, intelligent, and entertaining. Like all sporting events, there is much more to Indiana high school basketball than the final score and a few quotations. With this work, Gildea has the luxury of telling the full story of Indiana's recent change from an open to a four-class tournament system and of the last true state champions. As Indiana University Coach Bob Knight (who is from Ohio) explains, "Basketball was invented in Massachusetts and developed in Indiana." Gildea takes us all around the Hoosier state, where it seems that every house has a hoop in the driveway, on the barn, or both. He introduces us to the coaches, who see no need to change a system that is not broken, and we meet the gutsy young players. At the end, we may not entirely understand the unique Hoosier love for basketball, but we certainly want to practice our free-throws. For all public libraries. ?Andrew Riccobono, Marymount Univ., Arlington, Va. Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Gildea bounces between four different schools to try to capture the final single-class basketball tournament in Indiana. For people who are still bitter about Indiana's switch to multi-class basketball, this story will be music to your ears. For everyone else, you may or may not be interested. It is an interesting look at Indiana basketball during the final days of single-class basketball and a bygone era, but it also illuminates how much things had changed in the single-class tournament's 87 year history.

After watching *Hoosiers*, and reading *A Season on the Brink*, I'd be hard-pressed to call this a page-turner. The vast majority of the book is dedicated to describing the personalities and culture surrounding Hoosier Hysteria, and it's fairly engaging. The unlucky part is that the majority of the players/teams Gildea chose to follow did not make it as far in the tournament as anticipated. I'd wished that more time were spent on the actual games....describing the heroics of sports and teamwork which make the game literature-worthy. However, this book does say a lot for "classless"

basketball, and is eloquent in the defense of the old tournament structure.

As a young boy growing up in the heartland of Indiana the homage for Milan High School and the infamous jumpshop by Bobby Plump over Muncie Central in 1954 created a mystique that may never be duplicated in the annals of Hoosier high school basketball. Mr. Gildea portrays the inner sanctum of what "The Game" truly represents with complete respect and esteem. Every youngster who learned the game of basketball in the state of Indiana continually remembers the never-ending and repetitive drills of lay-ups and dribbling with either hand plus the proper procedure of the "give and go" with the eventual expectations of playing in Hinkle Fieldhouse for the state championship. Mr. Gildea examines the heart and soul of Hoosier Hysteria and the demise of the single-champion tournament as if he lived in Indiana his entire life and not as an outsider from the Washington Post. He captures the spirit of Hoosier basketball through a spectrum of nostalgia and emotion and gives life and meaning to what is moral, virtuous and innocent. Coach Witty of Ben Davis High School in Indianapolis states that "life is not a level playing field." Basketball is a means to teach the game of life and to exceed your expectations because everyone will not be a champion on the hardwood. As a native now of Ohio where they crown multi-state champions in basketball, it is absolutely impossible to support and develop any folklore, legends or myths concerning your favorite team within the state. The game is meaningless, and the spirit and essence is forever shortchanged. The spirit of Indiana basketball will continue, and Mr. Gildea's conclusion that more and bigger is progress articulates the thesis of his excellent book. I recommend Mr. Gildea's book to anyone who believes that motivation, effort and the opportunity to beat anyone no matter the odds in the pursuit of your personal dreams. If you live in Batesville, DeKalb, Merriville or Anderson, this is the mystique of Hoosier Hysteria. Hopefully, the two year trial of multi-class champions will be the ultimate "Gone with the Wind."

While I agree with the earlier review, that the teams profiled, didn't advance as far as you may have originally expected; I also feel that is part of the beauty of the book (and Hoosier basketball itself). Anything can happen on a given night and the giants can fall to the Davids. This is the exact purpose of the book and why so many Hoosier basketball fans are unhappy with the delineation of their sacred tournament. I found myself seated in many of the gyms depicted in the book, as the games were described. I was on the edge of my seat, surrounded by the atmosphere of the noisy arenas, the smell of hotdogs and popcorn. I don't think anyone could ask for more from any written work. While this will be a great read for most Indiana basketball fans, it should also be a delight for

anyone who enjoys sports at its purist form; one where the athletes play simply for pride and enjoyment, rather than a larger chunk of the corporate puzzle. I've read it twice now, and when it returns from the autograph circuit I've sent it on, courtesy of the post office, I'm sure I'll read it again.

Having watched Mr Gildea's interview on Booknotes with Brian Lamb (CSPAN), I was immediately interested in the subject matter. Being a hoosier heightened my interest. Mr Gildea takes the reader on a magical journey through what was Hoosier Hysteria at tournament time. He captured the true spirit of Indiana High School basketball with his vivid descriptions of the gymnasiums and people, past and present, that are Indiana legend. A thoroughly delightful read. My only disappointment, and it is minor at best, is that he didn't focus on any of my town's schools and their brushes with the coveted championship. I say this tongue in cheek of course. I wouldn't be a true hoosier otherwise. Thank you Mr Gildea!!!

As a follower of one of the schools featured in the book, I feel the author captures and describes the essence of Hoosier Hysteria. He vividly describes the emotions felt by devoted fans of high school basketball. He also describes very well the high esteem for the game felt by players, coaches, and fans. High school basketball is Indiana's game and it holds a very special place in the lives of Hoosiers. The author chronicles a season of basketball with all the feeling and emotion of those involved. His depictions of scenes make it easy to place one's self in the middle of the action. It is very enjoyable reading for the fan and a must read book for any fan of Hoosier Hysteria.

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