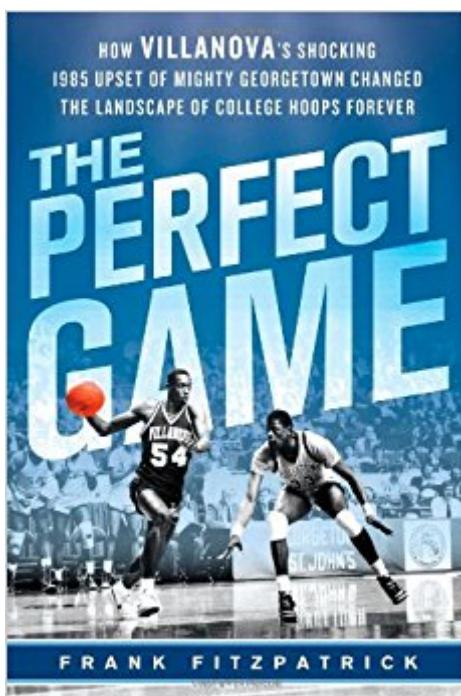


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# The Perfect Game: How Villanova's Shocking 1985 Upset Of Mighty Georgetown Changed The Landscape Of College Hoops Forever



## Synopsis

Critically acclaimed veteran sportswriter Frank Fitzpatrick takes readers courtside for one of the greatest upsets in college basketball history, the 1985 Villanova/Georgetown national championship showdown. A veteran Philadelphia Inquirer sportswriter and Pulitzer Prize finalist, Frank Fitzpatrick has long followed and covered Villanova basketball. In all that time, nothing compares with the Wildcats' legendary 1985 upset of Georgetown—a win so spectacular and unusually flawless that days after its conclusion, sports columnists were already calling it "The Perfect Game." The game, particularly its second half, was so different from what observers expected—so different, in fact, from what anyone had ever seen that a shroud of myth almost immediately began to envelop it. Over the years, the game took on mythological proportions with heroes and villains, but with a darker, more complex subtext. In the midst of the sunny Reagan Administration, the game had been played out amid darker themes—race, death, and, though no one knew it at the time, drugs. It was a night when the basketball world turned upside down. Villanova-Georgetown would be a perfect little microcosm of the 1980s. And it would be much more. Even now, a quarter-century later, the upset gives hope to sporting Davids everywhere. At the start of every NCAA Tournament, it is recalled as an exemplar of March's madness. Whenever sport's all-time upsets are ranked, it is high on those lists, along with hockey's Miracle on Ice. Now, through interviews with the players and coaches, through the work of sociologists and cultural critics, through the eyes of those who witnessed the game, Fitzpatrick brings to life the events of and surrounding that fateful night.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In the 1985 NCAA basketball championship game, the Georgetown Hoyas, pursuing their second title in a row, were heavily favored against Villanova. Fitzpatrick examines the game from the perspectives of the participants as well as its historical context. At the time, the operative phrase in college hoops was “Hoya Paranoia.” The shorthand, racist categorization of the all-black, aggressive Georgetown team was “thugs.” Fitzpatrick examines that perception and debunks it thoroughly. Villanova, on the other hand, was seen as the little-engine-that-could with its chubby, lovable Italian American coach, Rollie Massimino, and its racially mixed roster. (Ironically, it was later revealed that one of Villanova’s stars was a longtime drug abuser.) Fitzpatrick profiles all the key players as well as the coaches, tracks the schools’ journeys to the finals, and provides an appropriately breathless account of the game, which was one of the last to be played without the three-point shot or a shot clock. Ranked as one of the greatest upsets in college basketball, the 1985 title game continues to give hope to underdogs everywhere. A very intelligent bit of basketball history. --Wes Lukowsky

“A veteran Philadelphia sportswriter revisits the thrilling 1985 NCAA national championship basketball game [Fitzpatrick] insightfully deconstructs the racial framework surrounding the game, the appalling bigotry aroused by Thompson’s disciplined, unsmiling, walled-off Georgetown team, and he reminds us of the cultural impact of the Hoya-inspired boom in athletic merchandising and the merger of hip-hop and basketball. An unforgettable game recalled in all its glory, but with its warts remembered too.” Kirkus “Fitzpatrick profiles all the key players as well as the coaches, tracks the schools’ journeys to the finals, and provides an appropriately breathless account of the game, which was one of the last to be played without the three-point shot or a shot clock. Ranked as one of the greatest upsets in college basketball, the 1985 title game continues to give hope to underdogs everywhere. A very intelligent bit of basketball history.” Booklist “The Villanova Wildcats’ victory over the Georgetown Hoyas in the 1985 NCAA men’s basketball championship remains one of the greatest surprises in sports history.” Veteran sportswriter Fitzpatrick (*And the Walls Came Tumbling Down*) is at his best weaving the stories of the two schools and their basketball personnel. “[Fitzpatrick is] intent on demystifying the college football coach, moving beyond the spectacle of Saturday afternoon to reveal flesh and soul and humanity.” Buzz Bissinger on *The Lion in Autumn*, *New York Times* “Fascinating. . . . One of the best books ever written on the rise and fall of a great college football coach.” Allen Barra on

The Lion in Autumn, San Francisco Chronicle — “A rather startling success ... [Fitzpatrick] relies on his own tenacity and attention to detail with just the right amount of historical perspective.” Gene Collier on The Lion in Autumn, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette — “Brilliant.” ESPN.com on And the Walls Came Tumbling Down — “An admirably researched account of the barrier-shattering championship game that slam-dunked segregated college basketball. . . . Fair but devastating in its portrait of persistent prejudice, this is a landmark account of a landmark event.” Kirkus Reviews on And the Walls Came Tumbling Down — “A fascinating look inside team dynamics ... A fine baseball book, sure to be savored by fans for years to come.” Booklist on You Can’t Lose ’Em All

Too much emphasis on race instead of strategy of basketball by two of the games best masterminds. So what if one team was all black and other team "mixed". What counts as how the game was played and the reasons why one excellent team beat another equally as good team.

I thought this would spend more than a few pages about the actual game. Way too much commentary on racial issues over the years - no way near enough analysis of the actual game. The title is misleading

I know Frank's writing from the Philly Inquirer & he brings that quality to this book. I'm a 'Nova alum, watched the game with my neighbors (& of course thoroughly enjoyed it), and thought I knew just about everything that surrounded it, and the aftermath, but he brought out or clarified things I wasn't fully aware of and made my memories of the time brighten. I highly recommend it to even the casual fan or those interested in the history of the time.

I love college basketball. So I was excited to hear that this book was coming out. I consider the mid-80s as the heyday of college hoops, at least as far as my fandom is concerned. I got this book on my Kindle the day it came out and dove right into it. Unfortunately it was filled with factual errors. In the introduction alone: The author wrote that Ed Pinckney was a member of the 2004 Celtics when in fact he was an assistant coach with Villanova in 2004. Not sure how a writer who covers Villanova misses that. The author writes that Proposition 48 began in 1983. It began in 1986. The author makes mistakes about the status of both the Villanova and Georgetown football programs in 1985. The author also uses a quote from Wikipedia when writing about "Hoya

Paranoia." My middle school students know not to use Wikipedia as a source. Why doesn't a Pulitzer Prize finalist? Finally, another book on the exact same topic came out a year ago. The title of that book - The Perfect Game. Hmmmm. It seems to me that this project was a money grab from the start. The author got mine. Don't make the same mistake.

As Nova alumni and daughter of a LaSalle basketball player, I love both Villanova and Big5 basketball. This an amazing story of the special journey of the 85 Wildcats and Hoya team, staff and coaches and NCAA history. This book transported me to that amazing time and journey with such detail that I felt I was there. It is an excellent book and a must read for basketball fans and remind us to never give up and keep believing that anything is possible.

I found it boring. It is the authors rehashing of many already told stories. If you are interested in the 1985 Villanova Wildcats, I found Ed Pinckney's Tales from the Villanova Hardwood a far better read.

This book talks not only about the game and the season leading up to it, but also sheds light on the societal atmosphere surrounding it. A must read for anyone who is interested in sports history.

I brought this book for my son who is a Villanova graduate and big sports fan. He loved it. A must for any Villanova grad into sports.

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