



Ramblers: Loyola Chicago 1963 — The Team that Changed the Color of College Basketball

Michael Lenehan

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Today basketball is played “above the rim” by athletes of all backgrounds and colors. But 50 years ago it was a floor-bound game, and the opportunities it offered for African-Americans were severely limited.

A key turning point was 1963, when the Loyola Ramblers of Chicago took the NCAA men’s basketball title from Cincinnati, the two-time defending champions. It was one of Chicago’s most memorable sports victories, but *Ramblers* reveals it was also a game for the history books because of the transgressive lineups fielded by both teams.

Ramblers is an entertaining, detail-rich look back at the unlikely circumstances that led to Loyola’s historic championship and the stories of two Loyola opponents: Cincinnati and Mississippi State. Michael Lenehan’s narrative masterfully intertwines these stories in dramatic fashion, culminating with the tournament’s final game, a come-from-behind overtime upset that featured two buzzer-beating shots.

While on the surface this is a book about basketball, it goes deeper to illuminate how sport in America both typifies and drives change in the broader culture. The stark social realities of the times are brought vividly to life in Lenehan’s telling, illustrating the challenges faced in teams’ efforts simply to play their game against the worthiest opponents.

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