



The Baron and the Bear: Rupp's Runts, Haskins's Miners, and the Season That Changed Basketball Forever

David Kingsley Snell

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In the 1966 NCAA basketball championship game, an all-white University of Kentucky team was beaten by a team from Texas Western College (now UTEP) that fielded only black players. The game, played in the middle of the racially turbulent 1960s—part David and Goliath in short pants, part emancipation proclamation of college basketball—helped destroy stereotypes about black athletes.

Filled with revealing anecdotes, *The Baron and the Bear* is the story of two intensely passionate coaches and the teams they led through the ups and downs of a college basketball season. In the twilight of his legendary career, Kentucky's Adolph Rupp ("The Baron of the Bluegrass") was seeking his fifth NCAA championship. Texas Western's Don Haskins ("The Bear" to his players) had been coaching at a small West Texas high school just five years before the championship.

After this history-making game, conventional wisdom that black players lacked the discipline to win without a white player to lead began to dissolve. Northern schools began to abandon unwritten quotas limiting the number of blacks on the court at one time. Southern schools, where athletics had always been a whites-only activity, began a gradual move toward integration.

David Kingsley Snell brings the season to life, offering fresh insights on the teams, the coaches, and the impact of the game on race relations in America.

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