



— THE HEARTBEAT —



INSIDE THE MOMENTS THAT REVEAL THE HEARTBEAT OF A CHAMPION

I W U M E N ' S B A S K E T B A L L



— THE HEARTBEAT —

# THE LINEUP



FIRST QUARTER  
*BIG DREAMS*

06.....Jonny Marlin  
07.....Greg Tonagel  
08.....Nate Bubash  
09.....Josh Mawhorr  
10.....DJ Bettinger  
11.....Aaron Murray  
12.....Kylan Dubbels



SECOND QUARTER  
*SMALL STEPS*

14.....Jonny Marlin  
15.....Micah Davis  
16.....Jordan Delks  
17.....Jackson Murphy  
18.....Jacob Johnson  
19.....Jay Mercer  
20.....Jeff Clark



THIRD QUARTER  
*FEARLESS PRAYERS*

22.....Jonny Marlin  
23.....Mark DeMichael  
24.....Grant Evans  
25.....Tony Marlin  
26.....Lane Mahurin  
27.....Ben Carlson  
28.....Trevor Waite



FOURTH QUARTER  
*DIGGING DITCHES*

30.....Bob Peters  
31.....Ethan Whaley  
32.....Kar Reng  
33.....David Dimmich  
34.....Josh Mawhorr  
35.....Grant Zawadzki  
36.....Greg Tonagel



It is an exciting time to be associated with IWUHoops! In the past three years, the program has won more games than any four year college in the nation and cut down the nets after two NAIA DII National Championships. On top of this success, all of our home games are now being shown on ESPN3! It's safe to say the profile of the program has risen across the country.

Amidst the hoopla and excitement that surrounds all of this success, it can be easy to miss 'The Heartbeat' of the program. This book is our attempt to change that, as we take you inside the moments that reveal the heartbeat of a champion.

This book will take you inside the minds of the players and coaches of IWUHoops as you hear stories from their perspective. The 28 stories combine to tell the bigger story of our national championship run. The national championship run points toward the bigger mission of IWUHoops, to train men to live IAm3rd lives with a fearless mentality.

We hope you will take the next 28 days to journey with us toward our national championship. We have been praying that these stories and the Scripture included will be used by God in the following ways;

- We pray that you will be inspired to dream fearless dreams about what God can do in your life.
- We pray that you will be challenged to take small steps to see these dreams come to reality.
- We pray that you will grow in fearlessness, because greatness favors the fearless.
- We pray that you will learn more what it means to be 3rd because if you want to be 1st, you first have to find a way to be 3rd.

You will be hearing a lot about what our team learned about 'digging ditches,' so grab a shovel and read on!



1<sup>ST</sup> Q U A R T E R



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# BIG

D R E A M S

— THE HEARTBEAT —

# DIGGING DITCHES

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## JONNY MARLIN | #10



### DIG DEEPER

#### *Read 2 Kings 3*

Spend 10 minutes in silence before the Lord. Ask Him what area of your life you need to start praying in expectation and journal your thoughts.

Will you commit to daily 'digging ditches' in this area over the next 28 days?

#### *I'll always remember the Father/Son Retreat.*

There are a few games you circle on the schedule because they just tend to mean a little more. In the same way, you circle special events in life and look forward to them as soon as you put them on the calendar. One of those special events is our Father/Son Retreat, which happened in September, a full six months before our trip to Branson.

The Father/Son Retreat is a time that is different from anything else you experience throughout the year. I mean seriously, how many times do you get to spend a weekend with your father alongside some of your closest friends and their dads?! Sometimes the anticipation of an event is greater than the excitement the event produces, but that is not true of the Father/Son. It has delivered every time.

This year we were fortunate to travel to West Virginia and experience the thrill of whitewater rafting down some of the most extreme rapids in North America. While I will never forget the thrills and laughs that my dad and I shared in the raft with the Johnson's, Murphy's and Peters, they do not compare to the experiences that were created away from the river.

Our time away from the river was spent enjoying some manly food, sitting around campfires and exploring God's word. There is something unique that happens when people gather in Jesus' name. Although you can't predict how God is going to move, you know He will in some capacity.

Leading in to the retreat, I was challenged by Steven Furtick's book 'Greater' to have a greater expectation of what God is going to do in our lives. In 2 Kings 3, Elisha not only prayed for rain when it was needed in the land, but commanded the king to get his men shovels and have them start 'digging ditches' in anticipation of the Lord answering the prayer. When the coaches asked me to share with the players and their dads on Sunday morning, I knew immediately that I had to challenge all of the men to take on the same mentality. Of course we would say that we wanted to do something for God, but 'digging ditches' seemed like a much more tangible challenge that we could all resonate with and hold on to.

We all left the retreat inspired and ready to get our shovels and start 'digging ditches' in expectation of what God was going to do. We anticipated Him to work in big ways through our team! I personally was convicted to spend more time in the Word, in prayer and in worship, and I know many of the players and their dads joined me in grabbing a shovel!

# BUILDING A WALL

## COACH GREG TONAGEL



### DIG DEEPER

*Read Nehemiah 5:15-6:19*

As Nehemiah was building the wall, what challenges, disappointments or threats did he face? How did he respond?

Think of a disappointment or challenge you are facing. How is God calling you to respond?

*I'll always remember walking off the court in the league tournament championship game.*

I'll never forget the feeling of disappointment that came from losing to a team for the third consecutive time. Bigger than that disappointment was the frustration that was vent up inside of me. If frustration is best defined as 'unmet expectation,' I wasn't about to accept a close loss to the #1 team simply because I had high expectations for my team. As I walked into that locker room I knew that if we could change our defensive mindset, this team had a chance to make a run in the National Tournament.

I remember telling each guy in that locker room that we were so close but I also told them that we were running out of time. From here on out, a loss would mean our season was over, so we had to find a way to come together and be a tough team on the defensive end. We had to be able to count on each other in big moments. We had to start making tough plays like taking charges and coming up with loose balls. I told them to take two days off to rest physically and prepare for the three most important practices of the year.

It wasn't just the players that needed to change. The way we practiced had to change also. We decided as a staff to simplify things. After all, in order to play fearless, a player's mind must be free of thought. We dumbed down our terminology and even the finer teaching points. We had one concept for our guys to focus on defensively--to "build a wall." This served as a picture for the heart and a point for their minds. Every time we transitioned to defense, we wanted them thinking about one thing and one thing only. We wanted unity in thought, motive and purpose.

Regardless of time or score, we would be a unified group "building a wall". I remember after our first 6 AM practice telling our guys that I really liked our bracket. The truth was, I had no clue what the bracket looked like. I just knew that our defense was getting better. After the second practice of much improved defensive mindset, I told them that our bracket looked even better! Those practices were so much fun as we watched our guys take charges and fight for loose balls all over the place! The third practice ended the same way. We could feel the change in our mindset as we watched the team gel together on the defensive end.

They were building a wall. And as they were building this wall, the bracket was turning in our favor!

# DIVING ON TO THE FLOOR AND INTO THE WORD

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## NATE BUBASH | #30



*I'll always remember how much we grew the week leading in to our national tournament run.*

I couldn't believe how committed everyone on the team was on and off the floor. We had some of the toughest practices I can ever remember, but also some of the most meaningful prayer times.

The coaches really pushed us that week, and the practices were competitive. Guys were diving on the floor and taking charges left and right. But there was something even bigger going on off the floor. The leaders on our team thought we should dedicate time every day to pray with a different teammate. Each morning, they would send us a worship song and bible verse that they believed would have an impact on us and on our mindset as we got ready for the tournament. We would then get with a teammate and worship to this song and pray through these Scriptures together.

Sitting down with a different teammate praying about various things helped us build unity and grow closer with that teammate on a different level. Prayer became such a strong way to grow closer with our teammates and also with the Lord. Having a team that wants to dive into the word, pray, and glorify God is something that I will never forget.

## DIG DEEPER

### *Read Nehemiah 1*

Before starting on a great work with a huge vision, Nehemiah fasted and prayed. What was the focus of his prayer and who did he pray for?

Set your alarm for 30 minutes earlier than normal tomorrow. Re-read Nehemiah's prayer and then spend some time 'digging ditches' in the area of your biggest dream.



# BUILDING A WALL

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## JOSH MAWHORR | #33



### DIG DEEPER

#### *Read Philippians 4:4-9*

Sometimes, the best antidote to worry and anxiety is remembering what God has done in the past. Recall a 'Red Sea' moment in your life when He did something or worked out a situation you could not have on your own.

How can this memory encourage you as you dream big and dig ditches?

*I'll always remember watching the 2014 national championship game while we were on the bus to Branson.*

The national tournament is a culmination of a lot of hard work and energy over the course of a season. As a reflective person, I spent the bus ride to Branson thinking about all of the memories that were created during the season. From a basketball perspective I thought of every preseason workout, every practice, every conference game, every suicide, every film session, every loss, and every win. Spiritually, I remembered the moments spent in prayer, the moments searching God's Word, the tears shed and the moments of joy that we shared as teammates. I wondered how all of this preparation would reveal itself.

While we were on the bus, the coaching staff decided to play the 2014 Championship game vs. Midland. As a senior, I felt our team's belief in each other being ignited while we watched that team come together. We had heard stories about what happened in the 2014 season but we got to see first hand the passion and unity that the team showed while winning the championship. The members of our team who had been a part of that run got to re-live the moments they were a part of that will go down in IWUHoop's history books.

It was empowering to see guys like Jordan Weidner, RJ Mahurin, and Garvin Haughey lead the team to a ring. The fearless mentality and IAm3rd attitude that those guys played with was a great reminder of what our program was all about. It built our faith in each other to see former Wildcats play for each other and leave it all on the court.

Watching the 2014 championship game was what I like to call a "Red Sea moment". Our team saw what it took to win a championship and everything that was in our way parted to the side as we walked step by step with the Lord. Seeing the guys who were before us come together empowered us to have that same belief and faith in each other.

I'm looking forward to a day when a future Wildcat team will be riding the bus around Branson watching a group of IAm3 and fearless players win a championship, but this time with a new set of actors—the 2016 Wildcats.

# STORY TIME

## COACH DJ BETTINGER



*I'll always remember being on the other side of 'story time'--as a coach.*

Being just a year removed from playing at IWU, I was invariably asked throughout the year what it was like to now be a part of the coaching staff. I could discuss at length how impressed I was by everyone's work ethic and basketball IQ, but what stands out the most to me was their diligence in prayer. It was humbling to be surrounded by men who consistently set aside time to meet with the Father.

For four years, I showed up for film sessions, meetings, practices and games, with a limited knowledge as to just how much preparation and prayer went into everything. Needless to say, I was surprised the first time we prayed over the day's practice plan and what exactly our guys needed to work on! It amazed me to see them pause before the Lord as they offered up even the smaller things like a practice plan. I'll never forget Coach Tonagel saying, "We never want to get ahead of God".

Every year, when we first get to College of the Ozarks, the coaches go around and share memorable stories made over the years at the National Tournament. As a player, I always looked forward to this time to hear about the legacies that had been left in our program, but this season I heard the stories differently after realizing how much the coaches had prayed for these legacies over the course of the season.

As Coach Clark got up to tell a story about our national championship from two years before, the memories flooded back, and the story took on new meaning. I often found it difficult to "be still" before God in the midst of something like the National Tournament. I think a former teammate of mine, Jordan Weidner, would echo the same sentiment. J-Weid, who is probably the most competitive person I know, carried a massive burden to lead IWU to its first ever Final Four appearance his

senior year. It was visible in the way he played early on and in the way he carried himself. However, the night before the Elite Eight game, which had to that point been an insurmountable barrier, God called him to "be still".

Jordan woke up in the middle of the night and was lead to read Psalm 18. Amidst the pressures Jordan was facing and the burdens he was carrying, God called him to be still, and sit in awe of God's power and love. As his focus turned off his own pressure to lead the team and on to God first and his teammates second, J-Weid went on to have his best three games in the tournament and helped to lead IWU to a National Championship.

Not only did I enjoy re-living that experience, I also saw how that story impacted our current team. This is a program where the legacy of past players is passed down to the current players, but none of us could have known how that story would play a role on the story that was about to be written, when Josh Mawhorr would turn to that same passage at halftime of the National Championship game. The rest of the story is history, and I am sure it will be told by the coaches at 'story time' in the years ahead.

## DIG DEEPER

### Read Psalm 18

What was David's focus on when he went to battle?

Re-read this passage and pattern your ditch digging time after David by 'praying your way' through this Psalm

# THE PRAYER WALK

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**AARON MURRAY | #24**



## DIG DEEPER

*Read Philippians 2:12-18*

Think about the challenging situation you are facing. What are you complaining and grumbling about that is keeping you from being ready for all the big dreams that God has placed on your heart?

Before you dig ditches today, confess to God these areas, and then 'dig ditches' with a boldness that can only come from clean hands and a pure heart.

*I'll always remember the prayer walk that Josh Mawhorr and I took before the night before our first national tournament game.*

It had been a frustrating season for me as I had high hopes of playing a big role on the team after putting in hundreds of hours of work in the off-season. I knew it was going to be a breakout season for me, and I played well to start the year. However, in the ten games leading in to the tourney I had not played more than 3 minutes in a game. I had many sleepless nights wondering if my hard work off the floor was ever going to pay off on it. Still, as much as I wanted to complain, I had a lot of faith in my coaches, and I knew God was asking me to trust what He was doing.

I had decided to pour all my energy into practice. Coach Clark showed me on film how I could work on my perimeter defense, and I spent a lot of time working on it before and after practice. If other guys were going to play more minutes than I was, I knew I had to do everything in my power to get them ready.

The night before we opened the tourney against Bellevue, Josh Mawhorr grabbed me and we walked around our hotel and prayed for each other and our teammates. He prayed that I would be able to pour my energy into the game without worrying about playing time. He prayed that whether or not I played, I would glorify God in all I did. It was a meaningful time of battling in prayer with a teammate that I battled against on the floor every day in practice.

Coach called my name midway through the first half against Bellevue, and I remember Josh's prayer going through my head as I was waiting to enter the game, 'God, help me not worry about myself but to play to glorify you.' On my first possession, I snagged the offensive rebound and put it in the basket. I remember the great feeling that came knowing I was helping the team and my hard work was paying off. By the time the game ended, I had filled up the stat sheet with 20 points on 8-11 shooting to go along with three offensive rebounds and a block. The best part was, I was not concerned about myself but had been playing with a focus on our team and for God. This allowed me to play with a great sense of freedom.

As I led our squad in the Lord's prayer in the locker room after the game, I couldn't help but hear the words of Josh's prayer in my head again, and I was grateful to be a part of a team that sought to give glory to God in everything.

# BIG SHOT JONNNY

KYLAN DUBBELS | #11



## DIG DEEPER

*Read Exodus 33:7-11*

How was Kylan's attitude toward Jonny similar to Joshua's attitude toward Moses when he was young and in a role that went unnoticed? What would have been different if these 'followers' had focused on jealousy or comparison?

What small step can you take today to take an 'IAm3rd' attitude to help someone else succeed or celebrate someone else's success?

*I'll always remember feeling sorry for the guy who was guarding Jonny.*

It was a one point game, with just under a minute left and I was sitting on the edge of my seat watching Jonny dribble the ball at half court. I was not wondering IF he was going to make a winning play—I was wondering what winning play he was going to make.

Having guarded him every day in practice, I knew first hand that there's really not much a defender can do when Jonny decides he is going to score. I remember backing off Jonny at times in practice, but he has one of the most deadly pull up games I have ever seen. I never had much success when I would get up in to him and crowd him, because he is so quick that he can drive right past about any defender. Trying to be physical is also fruitless, as he is creative enough to draw a foul and make the free throws. Our 'white squad' would even try to run two guys at him in practice, but he led the country in assists for a reason, and his vision always allowed him to find the open man. I could resonate with what a tough spot the defender was in.

On the first possession, Jonny decided to pull up from several feet behind the 3-point line and nailed it. It was one of the biggest shots I have ever seen! Then he came down on the next possession and hit a fade away from the baseline that was equally as tough, if not tougher, than the deep three.

The fans in the crowd may have been surprised by those shots, but the guys on the bench were not. We've seen Jonny make those shot so many times when he is the first one in the gym before practice. We've seen him make them when he comes back to the gym late in the evening. And we have seen him make them all season long when our team needed it late in close games. It's all that practice that allows him to make it look so easy!

It was such a thrill to watch from the bench and see Jonny's hard work pay off in those big moments. And it was an even bigger thrill that this time I wasn't the guy on defense trying to figure out a way to stop it!



2<sup>ND</sup> Q U A R T E R



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# SMALL STEPS

# BACKYARD DREAMS

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**JONNY MARLIN | #10**



## DIG DEEPER

*Read Joshua 11:15*

What habit was Joshua creating before he was in charge and led the Israelites into the Promised Land with miraculous victories like the Battle of Jericho?

Are the habits you have today on par with the dreams you have for tomorrow? Take a small step to build these habits.

*I'll always remember my mind flashing back to playing alone in the driveway, my mom calling me inside for dinner way too early.*

I'd yell back 'Not until I win this game!'

As a kid, I always dreamed about hitting the "big shot." Night after night, I would hit one game winner after another until mom's voice got a little more serious. And so when the stage was actually set for my chance to hit a "big shot" in a meaningful game, I had already been there. I had already thought about that moment and what move I might make and the feeling I was going to have after the shot went down.

Before every game in the last half of this season, I would pray that I could play as if I was outside on my court. It's a place where I played because I loved the game and had no worries or fear (except the neighbors telling me to go inside because they wanted to go to sleep). With just over a minute left on the clock in our game against Northwest Christian, I found myself praying that same prayer. I wanted to forget the pressure, the reality that this could be my last game, and simply go out there and act as if nobody was watching.

The time difference between the game clock and shot clock on our last offensive play of the game was 7 seconds. With a 2 point lead, I knew that if we scored, the game would be sealed. As I dribbled the ball at halfcourt, my mind drifted back to all the times I hit that shot in my backyard. There was no fear, no worry--nothing--just me and a ball, playing the game I love.

I made one of my favorite moves going to my right and shot a semi-fade away, a shot I had practiced again and again. I wish I could tell you exactly what I was thinking as I made the move, but I don't believe I was thinking anything. I was simply re-living what had already happened so many times before...only this time the feeling of moving on to the Elite Eight was a little sweeter than walking inside to a home-cooked meal.

# THE HUDDLE

## MICAH DAVIS | #11



*I'll always remember the timeout huddle that shook me to the core.*

I had a unique opportunity as a redshirt to observe our leaders carefully and I watched no one harder than Jonny Marlin.

Everyone knows Jonny for the fearlessness and freedom he plays with on the court; he is intense, and ultra-competitive, yet remains extremely humble in his approach to games. The daily approach that he took meant that everyone on the team listened in when he spoke up.

I was fortunate enough to make 2 state title runs in high school and have learned that every championship team faces some adversity they have to overcome in their journey to the title.

Our team at IWU had come out firing on all cylinders in the Elite 8 against York. Up 25 at halftime, we came out sluggish in the second half and York began to slowly cut in to the lead. I became nervous on the bench so I thought back to the pattern we had shown throughout the year of giving teams confidence by letting teams hang around for too long.

As the team gathered during a timeout, I was expecting Coach Tonagel to come into the huddle yelling at our poor effort. Instead it was Jonny Marlin who came sprinting into the huddle and sat down on Coach T's stool. With tears welling up in his eyes he emotionally proclaimed, "Guys, I've never been to a final four. And I want to, really, really bad!"

It was that sentence that rocked me. This was a guy who had given his all for his team over the course of his career. He was the type of guy who would sit and cheer for 40 minutes if it meant the team would win the game. He is that selfless of a teammate. He really did have an IAm3rd mentality.

In that moment, Jonny put into perspective how much this meant to him, and therefore how much it should mean to all of us. Jonny, along with many other people, had sacrificed a lot to get us to this point, and the opportunity was not to be squandered. I believe it set the tone for the toughness we would play with the rest of the week, and I don't remember our team taking another play off or myself having another moment of worry or fear the rest of the week!

## DIG DEEPER

*Read 2 Timothy 2:22-26*

What small steps had Jonny taken throughout the year to earn credibility with his teammates?

How did this credibility impact the way Jonny's words were received?

# CHURCH

COACH JORDAN DELKS

*I'll always remember how we spent our off day in Branson. We went to church!*

I came to IWU last year anxious to learn about what made the program so successful. I will never forget the first piece of advice I got from Coach Tonagel. I was expecting him to tell me what players to recruit or what film to watch, but instead he said, "If you are ever wondering how you can help further our program, pursue Christ."

On our day off between the Elite 8 and the Final 4, rather than sleeping in or watching film, that's what each man in our program did.

Chills ran through my body as I turned and saw men of God on each side of me raising their hands in reverence to the Lord in worship. Coach Dimmich was clapping his hands and 'Big Daddy' Josh Mawhorr was about to jump onto the front stage he was so excited to worship!

The sermon that morning was about commitment. I was reminded of my commitment to my Savior and the identity that I have in Christ alone. This tournament was not about our pursuit of winning a national championship – it was about pursuing Christ through basketball.

As I looked around and saw players, parents and boosters all worshipping together, I was overwhelmed with gratitude. Just as Coach T had told me on my first day on the job, there was one primary thing that every person in our program would do—Pursue Christ!

## DIG DEEPER

*Read Matthew 6:25-34*

What stress and worry are you facing that is getting in the way of your big dream?


In the midst of this stress, take a small step toward 'seeking Him first' by waking up 20 minutes early tomorrow. Pick out your favorite two or three worship songs and focus all of your attention on Him as you listen.



# TRUE GROWTH

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## JACKSON MURPHY | #20



*I'll always remember how I grew more off the court than on it during the National Championship run.*

Cutting down the nets with my teammates was a memory I'll never forget, but the growth I experienced in prayer is what I will take away from Branson. I learned that there is something special that happens when you pray in unity with a group of men who are all passionate about seeking the Lord.

When Josh Mawhorr got up and shared with the team and led us in prayer time the morning before we took on Davenport, something clicked inside of me. Rather than talk about our basketball experiences and successes, Josh shared about all of the ways that God has moved through prayer this season, including a story about a particularly hard time that I had been through.

Praying in front of others isn't necessarily something I felt uncomfortable doing, but it didn't ever feel very natural. Throughout our trip in Branson there were many opportunities that were given to me to pray with a teammate and I felt my courage and confidence in the Lord grow each time.

Seeing a teammate I respected as much as Josh who was so passionate about the Lord was very meaningful, and I remember the prayer time that followed. I felt my prayers shift away from struggling for words and trying to 'speak on my own' and toward being fully surrendered to God and just seeking Him. By the end of the week I was able to look back and see how much I had grown in prayer in a short time.

Having this experience was extremely helpful. Not only did I experience a connection with God on a deeper level in the midst of prayer, but I already feel better suited to continuing my Christian ministries path at IWU. Winning a National Championship will always be special for me, but not as meaningful as the way I grew in prayer.

### DIG DEEPER

*Read John 17:20-23*

As Jesus prays for us as future believers, what does he indicate will lead others to believe in Him?

Take a small step of pursuing an 'IAm3rd' type of unity with a friend by 'digging ditches' in prayer together.

# THE ASSIGNMENT

## JACOB JOHNSON | #44

*I'll always remember when my teammates had my back after I was given the biggest defensive assignment of my life.*

After I saw that we were going to play Davenport in the Final Four, I instantly felt a tinge of anxiousness. I knew how good Davenport was, and I remembered specifically one player from when they knocked us out in the Elite 8 last season. Dominez Burnett. This dude was good, I mean really good. He won NAIA National Player of the Year two years in a row and was the all time leading collegiate scorer in the state of Michigan, scoring over 2800 points.

I had a feeling that I was going to be given the responsibility to guard him, and thinking about doing this on my own created some nervousness. But as my teammates started talking to me and encouraging me about building a wall and guarding him as a team, a sense of confidence began to grow inside of me. By the time the ball tipped, I do not think I had ever been more energized to play in a game.

It was obvious from the tip that it was going to be a fast paced and physical game. These guys were aggressive and athletic, an extremely well-coached team. Each possession, I focused on Burnett's tendencies and stuck to the game plan given by our coaches. I tried to make it hard for him to catch the ball, and every time he did I thought 'shade him to his left hand, be physical, and beat him to the spot.'

Against a great individual player, even a perfect game plan may not be enough. It would take a team effort to limit a player of this caliber, and I remember every time he caught the ball hearing teammates on both sides of me yelling that they were in my gap or they had my help.

We walked off the court with a tough win, and Coach Tonagel said in the locker room it might have been the best defensive performance by an IWU team in 11 years. He mentioned that Burnett finished the game with 7 points! When he gave me a big shoutout in front of the team, I knew that the credit went to the way we had played defense as a team. The coaches had been talking constantly about 'building a wall' and I remembered during the game that every time Burnett caught the ball that my teammates had executed this to perfection. I couldn't have done this on my own, and I knew I needed teammates to make plays to help me, like when Lane took a charge to give Burnett his fifth foul.

Having a great individual game is fun, but nowhere near as satisfying as accomplishing something as a unified group. I'll never forget the energy my teammates gave me as they encouraged me and had my back and as we together 'built a wall' to stop one of the best players the NAIA has ever seen.

### DIG DEEPER

*Read Joshua 5:13-6:27*

Name all of the people that Joshua relied upon to complete the big assignment that God had laid out in front of him.

Who are the key people on your team as you face your biggest challenges? How can you rely on them and pray for them today?

# LATE NIGHT FILM SESSIONS

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## COACH JAY MERCER

*I'll always remember the late night runs to Krispy Kreme with DJ.*

When our coaching staff prepares for a regular season game, we will spend dozens of hours watching film of our opponent to put our guys in the best position to succeed. That becomes a lot more challenging when you are getting ready for your fourth game in five days, like we were when we were getting ready to take on Davenport in the Final Four. With such a jam-packed schedule, the coaches cram as much film as possible into the time available, and my roommate DJ Bettinger and I often watched film late into the night.

After the coaching staff finished our pregame prayer with just under 20 minutes showing until the game started, I sat alone in the locker room and opened my Bible. I had been praying the words of Romans 5 and James 1 over our team, especially Lane. I knew we would face adversity as a team, and I knew that how Lane responded to this adversity would go a long way in determining how far we could advance. I wasn't praying for his success but rather that his character would be evident as he persevered through whatever challenges he would face during the game.

We held a 62-60 lead with just under two minutes left on the clock, but Davenport was surging and had the ball. Lane had not played up to his standards to this point (3-13 FG and 5 TO's), and as we took the floor after a timeout, I wondered how he was going to respond.

On the first possession, a ball screen was set for Dominez Burnett, the 2-time national player of the year. Lane stepped over and took a charge, giving Burnett his fifth foul. On the very next possession the ball was rolling off the front of the rim after a missed shot, and Lane came lunging in and somehow tipped the ball in to give us a 4-point lead. Even watching the replay I am not sure how it went in.

Those plays put us in a great position, and we were up by 2 with 20 seconds left. As Davenport brought the ball up the floor, DJ and I noticed they were lining up to run a specific play before they called time out that we had seen several times while watching film. We both looked at each other and alerted Coach T to what was coming.

As Coach T diagrammed the play that they would run out of a timeout, I knew the late night film sessions were all worthwhile. And as Lane made a great defensive stand and gathered the rebound off of a broken play to seal the win, I knew that all of the time spent building a relationship with him and praying for him was worth it as well. This game wasn't as pretty as some of Lane's 30-point performances, but without the perseverance he showed all the way to the end, we probably wouldn't be playing for the national championship the next night.



## DIG DEEPER

*Read James 1:2-8*

Who do you know that is going through a trial or tough situation?

What specific small steps can you take to develop trust with them and 'dig ditches' for them?

# WAKE UP CALL

## COACH JEFF CLARK

*I'll always remember when God woke me up early on a Saturday morning in Branson.*

It wasn't unusual for the coaches to wake up after three or four hours of sleep in Branson to watch game film, but on this morning it was a passage of Scripture that was laid on my heart that got me out of bed. I'll never forget how clearly I felt compelled to type out some specific thoughts as I read through Acts 4 that morning. As we walked in to the locker room after beating Davenport a few days later, it was those thoughts from the Lord that I couldn't get out of my head.

I began with excuses. Surely that wasn't from God, I reasoned. How can you really be sure it's God speaking to you through the Word and not just your own imagination? This was a hard argument to win, as the document entitled 'Monday Night Prayer Time' had sat unopened on my computer for three days. Right in the middle of the document was a command for our team to 'Pray for USF.' Obviously, it would have been impossible for me to know before the Elite 8 games that we would be playing USF for the title three days later. In retrospect, maybe I should have anticipated this moment coming, but somehow it had all but left my mind as we went about preparing for the next two games.

I remember my desire to re-open that document to make some adjustments. Pray to beat USF? Sign me up! Pray about USF? I could have done that too. But pray for USF? Nothing against the people in their program--I have great respect and relationships with their coaches and players--but that went against all of my human instincts. They were our opponent and rival, in our world it was as close to an 'enemy' as you could get.

My mind drifted to a bigger question—Does God care about a game like basketball? I never understood the argument that He didn't. You're telling me that He knows the number of hairs on Jonny Marlin's head, but he doesn't care about the thing that Jonny uses as a tool to spread the gospel? He cares about the birds of the air, but the thing that Josh Mawhorr has spent hours and hours practicing over the course of his life doesn't matter to Him?

Maybe his concern isn't who wins the game as much as what growth it inspires. He may not use the game to make me happy or successful but why couldn't He use it to advance His purposes? Too often, we (trust me, I am at the top of the list) treat basketball like a golden calf, when really it should be viewed more as a tool for sanctification.

Over the course of a decade, our staff had spent hours in prayer and the Word seeking God's direction for our program. We ask God what He has for us, we listen to His voice, and then we respond in obedience. This pattern has always led to more fruit than we could ask or imagine, but the fruit we see is not measured in the win column.

As we finished the celebration in the locker room and got on the bus to the hotel to prep for the national title game, I knew that no matter how much my human instinct was to focus on game film or strategy, obedience was the only response to God's Word on Saturday morning calling us to pray for USF--even if I didn't like it.

### DIG DEEPER

*Read John 15:1-17*

In verse 5, what does God promise will happen if we remain in the vine and stay obedient to what God is calling us to?

We define spiritual toughness as 'the ability to do the next thing you know God is asking you to do.' Is there a step of obedience that you can sense God has been asking you to take?



3<sup>RD</sup> QUARTER



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# FEARLESS

## PRAYERS

# WHY I CAME HERE

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## JONNY MARLIN | #10



*I'll always remember when the national title game lost its importance.*

It was the night before the biggest game of the year, and we had not gone over the game plan yet. I walked in to the meeting room anxious to know what we were going to do differently after going 0-3 against our opponent during the season.

The coaches got in front of the room and didn't talk basketball. They started sharing from Acts 4. As the coaches laid out this passage, the team would pause and pray in groups. This was not out of the ordinary, as our team had prayed the words of Scripture with each other often over the course of the season. But this time, something happened that I will never forget.

Coach Clark explained something that I've heard a hundred times--how we are supposed to pray for our enemies. But seriously, how many times have I actually done that? How many times have I even considered praying for an opponent, especially before a game as big as the national title?

The prayer for our opponent was powerful. Trust me, we weren't praying that our opponents would be free from injury, or that they would play a great game but lose by a point. It was 25 men passionately praying that our opponents would receive favor, insight and knowledge from the Lord. We prayed that they would grow in faith and spread the word of God through basketball. I prayed these prayers with tears because there was a depth and authenticity to them that was much more important than the outcome of a game.

I clearly remember my thoughts as we prayed. 'Who even cares about the game tomorrow? This is why I left IU to join this program, and regardless of the outcome this has been the greatest ride of my life.'

It's a night I will never forget because it is rare to be surrounded by guys passionately praying with each other, let alone going to battle FOR their enemy and not against them. It was a night that reminded me why I came here.

## DIG DEEPER

*Reads Act 4:23-31*

How did the apostles show both humility and fearlessness in their prayers?

Take 30 minutes to pray for a humble but fearless spirit about the big dreams you are 'digging ditches' for.

# TRUE INNER WORKINGS

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## ATHLETIC DIRECTOR MARK DEMICHAEL



*I'll always remember praying with the Men's Basketball team before their national championship.*

As Athletic Director at IWU, one of my favorite parts of the job is the opportunity I have to watch all of our teams compete. At the national tournament, this goes to another level as the coaches are gracious enough to invite me in to some team meetings that consisted of game video analysis, strategy talks, devotional thoughts and prayer time. When I sit in these meetings, I feel like I am observing the "inner workings" of Wildcat Basketball... the non-glamorous component necessary for any team to be successful but a part that many non-team members never have the opportunity to see or understand.

Monday night after the semi-final win against Davenport I was sitting in just such a meeting. The meeting started off with a short talk about Saint Francis, our opponent in the next day's national championship game, and then the coaches moved into a devotional time using Acts 4 as the scripture reference. It was powerful, as the words that were clearly inspired by the Holy Spirit. But what I will remember most is the prayer time that followed the devotion.

There were three specific prayers the team prayed night, one of which was for our upcoming opponent. To be in a room full of young men lifting their hearts and voices up to the Lord in prayer brought chills to my spine and tears to my eyes. But to experience college student athletes sincerely and passionately praying for their next day's national championship opponent is something that I will never forget!

In today's world of athletics, coaches love to use war analogies to communicate performance expectations to their teams and they commonly refer to their opponents as the enemy. IWU athletics strives to be counter-cultural to the world of athletics and the prayer time that night was a perfect example.

When the meeting ended that Monday night, I did not know if we would win the national championship the next day, but there were a couple of things that I did know;

1. I knew that our guys would play with a FEARLESSNESS and FREEDOM that can only come when you are truly playing for God's glory.
2. I knew that no matter the outcome of the game, our guys had already won the victory that matters most. They understood that the score was less important than their relationship with Christ AND their witness to all those who had their eyes on the next night's game.

I knew these things because we are blessed with coaches that are committed to the TRUE "inner-workings" of building a successful team. Getting the opportunity to lead a group of coaches like this across all sports is what makes us truly '16 Teams, 1 Program.'

# POWERFUL PRAYERS

## GRANT EVANS | #12



### DIG DEEPER

#### *Read James 5:13-18*

Who has invested a significant amount of time and energy into your growth?

Take some time to 'dig ditches' for them. First, give thanks to God for their influence and then pray in expectation that God will do something to show them favor.

*I'll always remember praying with my dad the morning of the national championship game.*

Our team was focused all week in prayer. Leading up to the trip and while we were in Branson, we would break up into small groups every night and pray. Sometimes these prayer times were led by coaches but usually they were led by players. We prayed words straight from Bible verses, we prayed for our teammates, we prayed for our coaches, we prayed God would move in powerful ways and we prayed we would have courage to share what He was doing. All of these times were very powerful and the Spirit was present at each one, but the prayer session that meant the most to me was the one I was able to share with my dad.

The morning of the National Championship game our dads were invited to our morning devo led by Jonny Marlin. Jonny shared the Word and then had the players and their fathers break into groups and pray.

I remember the Lord tugging at my heart to give thanks for the impact my dad has had on my life, and as I prayed I took a trip down memory lane. I thought about all the great times I have had with my dad, but also about the times that were not so great. I thought about the times he was hard on me and expected so much from me. In that moment of prayer, it was those times that I was most thankful for. I am so thankful that God has given me a dad that pushes me to my limits every single day. I am also very thankful that my dad has stuck by my side and always had my back no matter what—even those times when I am sure I was a handful for my parents!

This past year I have seen the Lord work in my dad in many different ways. He has always been a great leader in my family and always made sure my mom, sister and I have had the necessities for a great life, but as he took his turn to pray, I was moved as I heard him give thanks for how the Lord has been working in his life. It was a special and powerful moment that I will never forget.

Cutting down the nets was awesome and getting that ring will be great, but one thing that I have really taken away during my first year at IWU--Prayer is powerful and God hears powerful prayers!



# MARCH 15, 2016

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## TONY MARLIN



### *I'll always remember March 15, 2016.*

The day had been circled on my calendar for a year. I had in my head that March 15 would be the day that IWU would be playing for the NAIA National Championship. March 15 would provide the fitting ending to the countless hours of hard work in the weight room and the early morning wake up calls for the 'junkyard workouts.' Yes, March 15th would be a special day, best remembered for watching the team, and in particular my son Jonny, cutting down the nets at approximately 8 PM.

Well...isn't it just like our great and awesome God to give us the desires of our heart but in the process provide us with something even more rewarding? You see, March 15th became a day I will always remember not because of cutting down the nets at 8 PM, but what happened hours before the tip of the championship game. Let me explain.

The coaches invited all the dads, brothers, uncles, grandfathers and every other man associated with the team to sit in on the team's devotion and game plan discussion. On the most important day of the season. On a day when most coaching staff would be focused only on last minute adjustments to their game plan.

The meeting began with a time of sharing why 'we got it good' and we heard stories of how 'digging ditches' had played out throughout the year and about Josh Mawhorr singing a worship song at the top of his lungs on the bench in the middle of a tight game the night before. Who does that?

My son Jonny then took the floor and shared openly and authentically about his prayers for the year and the things he was currently asking his teammates to pray with him about. I was overwhelmed with pride in the young man my son has become, and yet humbled at seeing things in him that I want more of in my own life.

## DIG DEEPER

### *Read John 3:30*

What is the biggest day on your work or personal calendar? On that day, what small step can you take to make sure God increases?

What small step can you take to make sure you decrease?

Jonny then asked us to split into small groups to pray together and a room full of 50 men huddled together and gave thanks to our Heavenly Father for the 'overabundance of blessings' he has rained down upon these young men. I write these words with tears in my eyes as I think back on this moment. What an awesome time!

March 15 will go down in the record books as the day that Indiana Wesleyan Men's Basketball team won the NAIA National Championship. The dreams that I had of the team cutting down the nets became reality. The celebration and ceremony of 15 awesome young men and their godly coaching staff ending the season on top exceeded even my vision of what it would be like.

But what I will remember most about March 15 is the opportunity to listen to my son that morning talk without concern about the biggest game of the year, but being totally focused on his Heavenly Father. I will remember hearing Jonny giving praise and thanksgiving for everything He provides, asking for guidance to live a pure life, and praying for a humble spirit in everything he does.

I'll always remember March 15, the day I got to pray with my son on the morning of the national championship game.

# PLAYING IN FREEDOM

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LANE MAHURIN | # 23

*I'll always remember the sense of peace and freedom I had before the tip off of the national championship game.*

As I sat in the locker room, I reflected on what had happened over the past 24 hours.

When we were called in to a meeting after beating Davenport, I expected to be rallied by our coaches through revenge stories, having lost to Saint Francis three times during the year. Rather than talk about basketball, we spent the entire time in worship and prayer. Specifically, we read about how the apostles prayed in Acts 4 and tried to copy their pattern. We gave praise to God and all that he had done. We prayed for our opponents and that, through any means, His will be done. We prayed that the room would be shaken, because we knew that when God enters a room, He moves and things change. In Acts 4, the apostles prayed and spoke God's word with such boldness that the room was shaken, and all who heard were filled with the Holy Spirit. We wanted to have this type of courage to share what God had done in the hearts of the men on our team.

To add to this spiritual experience, we invited our fathers to join us for breakfast and a pregame scout on the morning of the championship. This was the first time that I got to pray with my father and father-in-law. It was amazing to come together in prayer with these role-models of mine.

These acts gave me a sense of calmness that I hadn't felt for weeks. I felt confident as the game became secondary in my mind. I knew that God was alive and working in our team, and this made the game seem of small importance. These experiences gave me a peace I hadn't felt during the tournament. They gave me a sense of freedom. I knew that I had everything I needed, and that God was with me.

I wasn't sure if we would win or lose, but I was sure it didn't really matter.



## DIG DEEPER

### *Re-read Acts 4*


What happens to the apostles as they shift their focus off of their circumstances and onto the One who is greater than their circumstance?

Is there a circumstance in the way of your big dreams that you need to lift your eyes off of because you are spending too much time worrying about it?

# THE HOUSEKEEPER

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**BEN CARLSON | #42**



*I'll always remember when I saw Sonia walk in to watch the National Championship game.*

We were blessed during the week to have our hotel rooms cleaned by Sonia, a sweet, elderly Latino. She was the housekeeper on our floor in charge of taking care of our players, coaches and media crew.

You can imagine the mess 15 basketball players left throughout the week, but from the first day we noticed the joyful attitude that Sonia worked with. Pleasant hellos at the beginning of the week turned in to short exchanges and then in-depth conversations as the week went along. We loved learning about the life and family of the newest Wildcat fan!

One of my favorite moments of the tournament came when we saw Sonia's smiling face walk into the gym on championship day. Our fans had paid for her to attend the game, and she cheerly loudly right behind our bench the entire game!

It's an honor to be a part of this team for reasons that stretch far beyond basketball. I'll always remember this team's ability to extend God's love and joy to everyone they came in contact with. The IAm3rd attitude I see in my teammates doesn't only shine in the way they play, but also in the way they treat others.

## DIG DEEPER

*Luke 10:25-37*

As you have been taking small steps and praying about big dreams, who has God placed in your path?

What 'IAm3rd' step can you take today to extend Christ's love to this person?

# HALFTIME

## TREVOR WAITE | #13



### DIG DEEPER

#### *Read Psalm 27:1-8*

When David is in the midst of a challenging moment, what is the one thing he asks God for in prayer?

Where do your thoughts go to in your biggest moment?

*I'll always remember where Josh Mawhorr's mind was during halftime of the national championship game.*

If someone asked me if the week in Branson was about something more than basketball, the answer would be a resounding "YES!" Our mission was obvious. Every scout, walkthrough, pregame, practice, and game was focused on Christ in one way or another. Our coaches and player leaders were constantly pushing us spiritually. They are some of the most faithful men I have encountered, and they made basketball more than just a game.

Basketball was a form of worship. Literally, we were worshipping the Lord during games. The Davenport game had been back and forth the whole game but essentially it came down to one possession: if we got a defensive stop then we would walk out of the gym with a W, but if we let them score then we were heading back to Indiana. Naturally, everyone on the bench was on their feet screaming, the coaches were yelling out orders and the fans were cheering loudly.

However, in the moment, in the midst of all the chaos, I could hear someone singing. I was standing between possibly the two loudest people on our team, Ben Carlson and Grant Zawadzki, and I heard someone belting out the lyrics of the song "Unstoppable God." It was then that I looked down the bench and saw Josh Mawhorr, our senior captain, in full praise mode. 'Wait a second,' I thought. 'We need one stop to win the game, and our senior leader was singing a worship song at the top of his lungs?' Yeah, you read that right.

Well, we got the stop and edged Davenport by one point to move on to the Championship, which leads us to one moment I will never forget. We had a lead at halftime, and as the team was sitting in the locker room, most of the players were discussing the first half of the game. Josh had something else on his mind. While everyone else was talking, Big Daddy pulled out his Bible and started reading from the Word. This was during halftime of the National Championship game: the biggest game of his life! I do not know which book of the Bible he was reading from or what exactly he got out of his meeting with the Lord, but I do know that he has set an example for me that I will never forget. For Josh, in the biggest moment, his focus was on the Lord and not himself or his circumstances. Then he came out like a man possessed in the second half, scoring all 10 of his points and getting some of the biggest rebounds of his career.

Winning the championship was special, but winning is not what I'll remember most about the week. Instead, the moments that I'll remember most are the spiritual ones, especially seeing what our seniors were focused on the whole week. I won't forget seeing them on their knees praying before games. I won't forget seeing Josh reading his bible during halftime of the Championship game and I'll never forget the sound of "Unstoppable God."



## 4<sup>TH</sup> QUARTER



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# DIGGING DITCHES

# WE AREN'T GOING TO LOSE THIS GAME

## BOB PETERS | #34



### DIG DEEPER

#### Read Hebrews 12:7-13

Refer back to Coach T's frustration in day 2 of this book. How did the small steps of growth in big moments over the course of the season pay off in the tournament?

Dig some ditches for the people who are helping you pursue your big dream. Find a way to encourage one of them for the ways you have seen them grow through challenging circumstances.

become a championship team, and that was to become tougher. We had to make tough plays. I knew we needed someone to make a tough play in the final moments if we were going to cut down the nets, and Josh Mawhorr gave it to us when he ripped down a huge rebound to seal the deal for the championship game after we had regained the lead.

As Josh ripped down the rebound, I knew that "we weren't going to lose this game." I had never for a moment doubted these guys. The whole tournament was full of so many emotions I shared with my teammates, too many to even describe. We were a group of tight-knit brothers who were fighting for a common cause. We had shared memories of early morning practices and junkyard workouts. The one constant emotion was the confidence I had in this team. I will never forget it!

*I'll always remember how confident I felt because of the way our team had grown in toughness.*

What had once been an 11-point lead had turned in to a 1-point deficit with under four minutes to play. This was a moment where our team may have folded a month before, but I knew there was no way we were going to lose this one.

The night before my roommate Jacob Johnson and I had been reminiscing about some of the toughest plays we had seen from our teammates on the tournament run. We talked about Jonny's two tough shots against NWC. I shared with him how during warmups before the Davenport game, Coach Clark approached me and asked my opinion on who should guard Dominez Burnett, the best player in the country. I had been guarding the best player during the season, but just know Jacob would lock him down. It was almost too good to be true, as he played the defensive game of his life, and it was capped off by Lane making one of the toughest plays of the year when he took a charge late in the game for Burnett's fifth foul.

These were momentst I will never forget because I knew they showed we were winning not just because of having the most skill but because of having the most toughness.

Most people dream about winning one national championship, and here I was with an opportunity for my second ring. We had lost in the conference title game largely because our opponent came up with more tough plays than we did, but as we talked about those plays we looked at each other and said 'we aren't going to lose this game.'

The whole experience felt similar to my freshman year. It didn't matter who we were playing, I felt with all my heart that there was no way we could lose. In talks the next day with parents, coaches, or teammates, I felt like all I was saying was "we aren't going to lose this game." Looking back, I honestly was probably getting annoying to whoever I came in contact when my response to any questions was, "we aren't going to lose this game." All I can remember the whole day was thinking (you guessed it) "we aren't going to lose this game."

When Saint Francis took the lead, my mind flashed back to the memories of those tough plays. The whole season, the coaches had been telling us what we needed to do to

# THE REBOUND

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## COACH ETHAN WHALEY

*I'll always remember the final timeout of the season.*

We were sitting on a one-point lead after turning the ball over against the Saint Francis press. In the huddle, we focused on everyone's responsibilities if the ball went in the post. As we broke the huddle, I grabbed Josh Mawhorr's arm and said, "If you get this rebound, we win the game!"

I'll never forget the certainty in Josh's voice as he stopped dead in his tracks and looked me in the eye.

"I got you, Coach. It's my ball!"

I knew Josh wasn't going to let us lose because of the intensity of his response. Even as the play unfolded and Saint Francis got a good look, I was confident that if they missed that shot, Josh was coming up with the ball.

As the ball came off the rim, it got batted around by several players (for what seemed like a few minutes) before it found Josh. When he finally got his hands on it, I wasn't sure if he would be able to hang on to the ball because it was on top of his head where another player easily could have grabbed it. Josh scratched and clawed with four Saint Francis defenders as they reached in for the ball like football players knocking the ball loose in a scrum at the bottom of the pile! Somehow, he managed to hang on until a foul was called.

As Josh showed his excitement and passion walking down the court preparing to shoot free throws with 7.9 seconds left, I remember thinking it was so fitting that the guy who had battled for his teammates all season long, both spiritually and physically, earned the opportunity to solidify our National Championship victory with the toughest rebound of his career.

### DIG DEEPER

*Read Proverbs 18:21 and Luke 6:45*

How did Coach Whaley use his words to speak life into Josh in a big moment?

Dig some ditches for the people who are helping you pursue your big dream. Find a way to speak words of life about the potential you see in them.

# THE FINAL PRAYER

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## KAR RENG | #32

*I'll always remember the last time the team prayed together.*

Throughout the season we began every game with a huddled prayer. Lane had started this about halfway through the season, and it was always a meaningful moment. As we continued the postseason, God became more and more central in the minds of everyone in our program. Everything we did connected back to the Lord.

Once we made it to Branson, it felt like the Holy Spirit was with us the whole time. It was such a surreal moment winning the national championship. But the part that hit home for me was when the buzzer went off, instead of going to claim our trophy, our senior leaders wanted to pray together and give all of our glory to God. We knelt together as a team, and Josh Mawhorr thanked God—not for winning but for how He had moved through our team.

In that moment it felt as if nothing else mattered because we came to do what we intended to do. On top of that I believe we showcased what a tightly bound team should look like, a team that puts God first, others second and ourselves. At the end of it all I realized that we didn't do it for ourselves. We really did it for him, because he is the one who gives us the power to do anything, I found out that through Christ anything is possible. That's why I am 3rd.

## DIG DEEPER

*Read Proverbs 29:2-4*

Skim back through the past stories and notice how often seniors Josh Mawhorr and Jonny Marlin are mentioned. What words and patterns do you see as their followers describe them?

What is the effect of strong spiritual leadership over time as a group of people pursues a big dream?



# COUNTER-CULTURAL

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## COACH DAVID DIMMICH



### DIG DEEPER

#### *Read 1 Corinthians 1:25-31*

Reflect back on the past stories and think of the ways that IWU players acted in a way that was 'counter-cultural' and may have seemed foolish in the eyes of the world. List as many as you can.

As you pursue your big dreams, what about your life is foolish in the eyes of the world? Ask God if there are any 'foolish' steps He wants you to take today.

*I'll always remember how different this team was from what culture tells us a basketball team should be.*

In today's college athletic scene, what with the myriad of media opportunities and social networking tools available, it is difficult for most athletes to avoid the pitfalls of self edification. It is widely acceptable within our culture to point to ourselves after achieving athletic success, and taking credit for those successes.

After winning our second national championship in three years, a far different approach was taken. One of our Senior leaders, Josh Mawhor, gathered the team and staff together almost immediately after the final horn for a prayer of thanksgiving and praise. It was so moving to hear this large hulk of a man humble himself before God and praise Him for the miracles that have occurred in our midst during this memorable season. Not just athletic accomplishments, but miracles of spiritual transformation, restoration, and affirmation that were evident among us.

This is the product of the "I am Third" culture that has been developed over the past eleven years, that seeks to mold men of character that will abide daily in the Lord, by living the Word and helping to transform a lost and dying world. That may be counter cultural, but it sure is more satisfying to be a part of!

# ON TOP OF THE LADDER

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## JOSH MAWHORR | #33

*I'll always remember climbing the ladder to cut down the nets.*

After the buzzer went off, I remember hugging all of our coaches and my Mom. Then I knew we had to gather as a team and pray. On the biggest stage we could have as a team, there was nothing we could do but surrender the moment to Him. It was so powerful to share that moment with my brothers who I love and care about way beyond basketball.

After we celebrated with family, friends, and the hundreds of loyal IWU fans, it was time to cut down the nets. I was the first to climb up the ladder and when I got to the top, I looked around and saw tons of people watching and taking pictures.

I was overwhelmed with gratitude to see so many people supporting me but to be honest, I felt out of place. I didn't feel like I should be the one getting so much praise and recognition. Our team had achieved at the highest level but it all happened because we fell to our knees. I've learned that in my walk with the Lord I can only be elevated when I first fall to my knees. When I was on that ladder standing elevated above everybody I couldn't help but think of some of those times we had bowed before Him.

I remembered late the night before the national championship game when I got out of bed and heard a voice in the bathroom and found Jonny Marlin on his knees. He was pleading with the Lord, not for the game itself but to use him as he spoke to our Dad's the following morning. I remembered Trevor Waite praying for our guys to be leaders in their relationships and families. I remembered Grant Zawadzki sending out texts of scripture he felt led to encourage us with. I remembered Ben loving prison inmates like Christ would. As these thoughts flooded my mind on top of that ladder, I realized that it was only because of God's faithfulness and answer to prayer that our team had been elevated as National Champs. One of the biggest lessons I learned this season is that this holds true in all areas of life. God elevates marriages, relationships, and families when they are surrendered in prayer. I can't wait to see what else God elevates in my life and in the lives of my teammates because the prayers won't stop even when the ball stops bouncing. It's a lesson I will never forget.

### DIG DEEPER

*Read Matthew 20:25-28, John 13:3-5 and Mark 1:35*

In what ways do we see Jesus setting the pattern that those who go 'down' will end up being elevated?

Ask God if there are any steps 'down' that He wants you to take today.

# THE CELEBRATION

## GRANT ZAWADZKI | #52



### DIG DEEPER

*Read Psalms 68:4-10, 19-20, 32-35*

After winning a big battle, where was King David's focus?

When you achieve your greatest dream or have your greatest success, where will you place your focus? Commit today to giving praise to God.

*I'll always remember what I was doing at 3 AM after winning the national championship.*

I had wondered the night before what national champs do to celebrate...

Do they throw a party? Maybe.

Do they pop bottles of champagne in the locker room? Maybe.

Do they smoke a cigar like Michael Jordan did after his championships? Maybe.

But that's not how we celebrated our national championship.

I'll never forget the emotions after we won. We couldn't have been happier than that night. It was the ultimate accomplishment. Everything our team worked for, everything our team had to overcome was all rewarded with a national championship.

After we cut down the nets I thought to myself "what's next?" After hours and hours of work, how are we going to celebrate this national championship?

So, I was surprised when we celebrated by...sitting in our hotel rooms!

Pretty lame, right?

Wrong!

We stayed up till the break of dawn talking and investing in each other's lives. There were some pretty amazing conversations that night between the guys. We stayed up reminiscing on everything we accomplished, everything we overcame. We talked about how we saw God work in our lives throughout the season

That wasn't the coolest part. I'll never forget sitting with Coach Tonagel and Coach Clark in their room at 3 AM just talking about life. Josh Mawhorr was there as well, and we talked about everything from basketball to God to relationships. It was one of the coolest moments I've had.

Here I am in college after winning a national championship and I'm in the coaches' room talking about things with them that will make me a better servant of God, leader, basketball player, and future husband. I mean, how cool is that? What does that say about 'The Heartbeat' of our program?

They weren't out partying, celebrating, getting hammered or doing things for themselves. No, they were investing into my life.

That is how Indiana Wesleyan celebrates a National Championship.

And that's why I'm so glad God brought me here.

# DIGGING DITCHES

COACH GREG TONAGEL

*I'll always remember "digging ditches."*

Our team learned a very important principle that has shaped our lives and will impact us forever. This season taught us the principle that small steps and hard work often precipitate a movement of God! That human action prepares the way for supernatural favor. Sometimes God asks us to make preparations for receiving a miracle. John Wooden once said that "when opportunity comes, it's too late for preparation." I wonder if the same concept can apply to our spiritual lives?

I'm always asking myself: Why do some teams never reach their potential? Why do some seem to get stuck? Why is this person not reaching his potential? Why is he stuck?

In his book *Greater*, Steven Furtick would say it comes down to two simple concepts.

1. We often don't think God is big enough.
2. We aren't willing to start small enough.

Most of us don't think how big God is and what he wants to do in our lives. He has big dreams for our lives but too often we settle for less. I wish my default thinking was Ephesians 3:20 and I always believed God's could do more than I could ever ask or imagine!

*"You can't expect God to entrust you with a big dream if He can't trust you to make a small start. God won't do big things in our lives simply because we sit and dream. We can't accomplish these big things by sitting on the couch or just talking about them. The active ingredient in joining God's big vision is our willingness to start with small steps."*

— Steven Furtick

If God really does have big dreams for us, how do we see it through?

I'll always remember overlooking the New River gorge in West Virginia with all our fathers. It was the last day of our Father-Son Retreat. We had an absolute blast spending time in the wild with our dads. We laughed, played and had some incredible talks around the fire. On that Sunday, as we watched the fog burn off the mountain side, one of our seniors passionately shared that he believed God was calling this team to something "greater." Nervous but with affection in his voice, he challenged all of us to begin "digging ditches!"

## DIG DEEPER

*Read 2 Kings 3*

Over these past four weeks, what big dream has God stirred in your heart? Have you experienced any rain?

What small step has God asked you to take? Will you keep digging ditches in expectation?



The team was challenged with a “blue collar faith.” The vision was big and audacious but the steps to take were small and ordinary. This wasn’t any ordinary team discussion. You could sense God was in this circle. It was obvious the team’s faith was moving beyond a state of mind and into a course of action. Faith was about to become work in the form of “digging ditches.”

Nobody understood this ditch digging faith more than Elisha. In 2 Kings 3, the story unfolds. Israel finds itself with its back against the wall. As par for the course, they decide that they now need a miracle from God. If they don’t get one, they will die of thirst stuck out in the desert. Elisha steps up and receives a word from God. Just as a coach gathering his team, Elisha summons his men and boldly lays the plan. “Get out your shovels boys and start digging ditches. For tomorrow, the Lord will deliver the rain.” Pretty odd game plan considering the circumstances, right? As history has it, the Israelites dug all night and the next morning the ditches were full of water. This was enough to fuel their eventual victory over their enemies.

I’ll always remember the way the message resonated with our team that morning. God is about to do something big. Don’t sit around and wait for it. Put your work gloves on, grab your shovel and start digging. And we ought to dig ditches using every means available. We can dig ditches with our words, our prayers, our expectations, and even with our thoughts. We would dig them in our locker room, our dorms, the gym and in the weight room. We, like the Israelites, were going to make the “valley full of ditches!”

Prayer became our ditch-digging. It took on a whole new meaning in our season! We prayed bold prayers. We prayed specific prayers. We prayed expectant prayers! I’ll always remember Lane stopping the team before making the triumphal entry into the gym for pre-game warm-ups. The band was playing, crowd cheering but all would be on pause until the team was done praying. I’ll always remember meeting Grant Zawadzki at 6 AM Thursday mornings in our locker room to hit our knees for his teammates. Those prayers changed me as much as anybody we were praying for. I’ll never forget the stories of Father-Son relationships being strengthened because they were praying and the joy that brought upon the face of a young man.

It wasn’t always easy. There were moments when we began to question God’s faithfulness. Things didn’t always seem clear. When the injuries piled up, we began to wonder if the rain was coming. Doubt and fatigue encircled us after losing to the same team for the third time. It was during these times that God was developing our spiritual muscles! It wasn’t time to put down the shovel, it was time to keep digging. Small steps, hard work, expecting rain...

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I’ll always remember the ditch we dug the night before the championship game. I needed that prayer time more than anybody. Sleepless night combined with the stress of post-season play will attack and leave any coach vulnerable. As we transitioned from our Final Four victory and onto the National Championship, the only thing on my heart was revenge. However, God’s desire for fearless coaching couldn’t coincide with a vengeful heart. Through a powerful prayer time with our team, He transformed my heart from revenge to redemption. Isn’t that the story of the Gospel? Focus shifted off of our opponent and onto the work God had been doing in our team throughout the year. It amazes me the circumstances God chooses to reveal to us his nature.

We walked into the gym the next day with unified hearts and fearless minds. We had spent months digging ditches. When the horn sounded it was a spectacular sight to experience the rain. Instead of running to the cameras and making a statement that this victory was about us, the team gathered and knelt to make a statement that this moment was about His redemptive work in our lives. Yes, we think God is big enough and yes we were willing to start small enough in order to experience His greater things for our lives!

God has a downpour scheduled for all of our lives. The question is, what ditch is God calling you to dig so you are ready for the rain?







— THE HEARTBEAT —



— **IAM  
THIRD 3** —

**IF YOU WANT TO BE 1<sup>ST</sup>, FIRST FIND A WAY TO BE 3<sup>RD</sup>**

I W U M E N ' S B A S K E T B A L L