

Written by Allan Besselink
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The month of March has some very important attributes tied to it. March was originally the first month of the Roman Calendar - before the winter months of January and February were added. Those who know me realize that I could do without winter at all ... so I think that March is as good a starting point as any.

We now have Daylight Savings Time beginning in March - and as you all know, I definitely have a strong appreciation for sunshine!

March 14 is Albert Einstein's birthday. Given that Einstein was one of the great thinkers of our time, then I certainly appreciate March even more. March 14 is also Pi Day - a day to celebrate the mathematical constant pi (which, I will have you know, is 3.1415926535 ... without looking at Google. Why do I know that? Read the previous posts!). I am still not quite sure why we'd celebrate pi ... unless, of course, I am a circle, and then it makes sense of my world.

I guess we'd need to include St. Patrick's Day - an excuse to drink green beer (which, frankly, should never be green, but I digress), Mardi Gras (which makes me think of New Orleans, which is definitely not on my short list of places to hang out). Oh and let us not forget Texas Independence Day!

The month of March is one of my favorite months of the year. But not solely for any of these reasons.

March Madness - now there's a reason to celebrate.

Yes, it's all about college basketball at this time of year. "March Madness", as it's come to be known, is a time to enjoy the true spirit of sport. A playoff format - to showcase the top 65 teams in the country - and to establish a true National Champion. None of this "seven game playoff" crap - one and you're done. Period. No further. Play well, and you advance.

I love the purity and simplicity of it all - and I love the true sportsmanship that is exhibited. This

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is the beauty of the NCAA tournament.

Best of all though is the most elemental level - a bunch of kids playing street ball on the big stage. You can see the enjoyment in their eyes. For an 18 year-old kid, this is the big time. Some will go on to play in the pros - most won't. Many will go on to finish their degrees - many won't. But for 20 days in March, sport is reduced to it's basic elements. Most college basketball programs are now almost "professional" in the degree of financial support (and income generated) - so don't let the "college" aspect fool you. But the game of college basketball has many things that the pros lack - passion, excitement, desire, intensity - a win or leave mentality - and an undying love of the game.

I've followed the tournament since I was a high schooler in Canada. Yes, our lives were inundated with US college basketball, and CBS dominated our world for three weeks every March. I fondly go back to many memories of that era. Living in Ontario, we got a lot of Big East basketball - in the glory years of Syracuse and Georgetown dominance. I remember watching the 1983 final and the dramatic story of Jim Valvano and the NC State Wolfpack beating Houston in the dying seconds. Of course, there is the legend that is Michael Jordan - playing for my favorite team, the North Carolina Tar Heels. Once I moved to Austin, I've been able to follow the tournament even more closely - with the Erwin Center hosting the tournament 4 times since I've been here. I can tell you that watching the regional finals live - is pretty amazing stuff. I watched Duke get beat by Michigan State here on my own turf - now THAT was a special moment! I've not missed a final on TV since 1980. That's a lot of years of hoop memories. And I won't be missing this year either.

It's such an amazing thing to experience "sport" in it's most elemental purity. You can't beat the true child-like qualities that bring such enjoyment to life. The Tournament - reminds me of this purity, reminds me of the days outside shooting baskets until after dark, the simplicity and pure enjoyment of it all. And it reminds me - how much I love March - for so many reasons.