

The Perfect Season: A Memoir of the 1964–1965 Evansville College Purple Aces

By Russell Grieger

(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016. Pp. xiii, 246. Illustrations. Paper, \$28.00.)

Sacred to Indiana's cultural history is basketball. I believe it is safe to say that in a state that has long claimed to represent the true spirit of basketball in America, Evansville has produced its share of iconic basketball stories and heroes, mostly through the extraordinary efforts of the Evansville College Purple Aces. Russell Grieger, in his detailed book, *The Perfect Season: A Memoir of the 1964–1965 Evansville College Purple Aces*, adds new light to this element of Indiana sports and cultural history. A bit of context is helpful in framing Grieger's work.

The Evansville College basketball program moved to NCAA Division II in 1955, winning national championships in 1959, 1960, 1964, 1965, and 1971 under the leadership of Aces' coach Arad McCutchan. McCutchan, a small school John Wooden, was the first Division II coach elected to the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame; under his direction, the program produced NBA defensive star Jerry Sloan and ABA All-Star player Don Buse. Never tall teams, the Aces were hard-nosed and gritty, even taking down a few Big Ten teams over the years in Evansville's Roberts Stadium. They were fun and exciting to watch, often packing the stadium with over eight-thousand screaming fans per game during the glory years. Part of the entertainment involved the unique and

colorful floor-length warm-up robes McCutchan had the players wear, along with the T-shirt-style bright orange jerseys. As a starting guard on the undefeated 1964–1965 season team, Russell Grieger reveals the hidden dynamics of the Purple Aces program at that time. He takes the reader for a personal ride into grinding gym practices in the old National Guard Armory gym and in the campus's small Carson Center gym, into intense game huddles, and into floor episodes of some of the most exciting games in Indiana college basketball.

The book also shows Coach McCutchan blending a rich mixture of different personalities into a well-functioning basketball team—an essential hallmark of so many successful college and high-school-level teams throughout Indiana history. Containing several illustrations of Indiana college basketball in the 1960s, including the haze hanging in the gymnasium air from the smoke of cigarettes, *The Perfect Season* is an important addition to Indiana's cultural sports history, evoking a time forever past.

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with his wife, Roxanne, is scheduled for release in October 2017.

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Above the Shots: An Oral History of the Kent State Shootings

By Craig S. Simpson and Gregory S. Wilson

(Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2016. Pp. 272. Illustrations, notes, index. Paper, \$28.95.)

Was there an order to fire? Did the protests of the previous weekend justify the presence of the Ohio National Guard on campus? Debates persist, even forty-six years after guardsmen opened fire on student protestors at Kent State University. Craig S. Simpson and Gregory S. Wilson's *Above the Shots* provides a critical examination of the Kent State shootings. The authors draw from numerous archival sources, as well as fifty oral history interviews collected between 1990 and 2010 as part of the Kent State Shootings Oral History Project, to arrive at a more complete understanding of the events of May 1-4, 1970. Their use of these interviews provides the lynchpin that sets this book apart from the wealth of other scholarship about Kent State, most of which has sought to assess the veracity of contradictory claims. Simpson and Wilson begin by acknowledging that the oral histories frequently depart from factual evidence, verging even into the realm of rumor, but argue that they provide the reader with a more

thorough understanding not only of the events that transpired, but also of the motivations and meanings assigned to these events by participants.

The authors frequently bring to life the social nature of memory, highlighting how racial, economic, and political realities of the time may have contributed to varying interpretations of the same event. For example, interviews with local citizens highlight how the extreme levels of fear and animosity directed toward students were shaped to some extent by residents' inability to access accurate information over the course of the weekend. The authors' weaving together of scholarly accounts and oral history interviews allows the reader to empathize with these narrators' perspectives, while simultaneously drawing attention to potential fallacies in individual memory shaped by ongoing public narratives and the process of memorialization. One narrator's remembrance of Allison Krause putting a flower in the gun barrel of a guardsman was, as Simpson and Wilson note, most likely constructed