

TAKE ME BACK TO THE BALL GAME

U. Magazine's top 10 college sports highlights... and a few more, too

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IT IS THE ESSENCE OF SPORT TO ACHIEVE, TO WITNESS and to recall the spectacular, the improbable, the unbelievable. But the world of college sports has provided far too many extraordinary achievements and moments of shining excellence to mention them all. So we've chosen what we think are the 10 greatest accomplishments from an era you should easily recall — since 1980. Do you remember...



1. The play

The conclusion to the Nov. 20, 1982, U. of California, Berkeley vs. Stanford U. game remains the most famous play in the history of college football. Cal's amazing five-lateral kickoff return for a touchdown sealed the Bears' 25-20 win over Stanford and earned it a place on highlight reels for generations to come.

Stanford went ahead 20-19 on a field goal with a now infamous four seconds left, but it wasn't in the cards for the Cardinal. With only 10 men on the field, Cal's Kevin Moen fielded the Stanford on-side kick and lateraled to special teams captain Richard Rodgers. Rodgers bid called the play by ordering his teammates to pass the ball off every time a tackle appeared imminent.

Rodgers then lateraled to Dwight Garner, who lateraled back to Rodgers, who lateraled to Marlet Ford, who lateraled to Kevin Moen. Moen finally scored the touchdown, setting up the legendary crash scene between him and Stanford trombone player Gary Tyrell, a member of the Cardinal marching band who had stormed the field before the conclusion of the play. How does the old saying go... it's not over till the trombone player is flattened?

period of years. U. of North Carolina's women's soccer team has dominated a lot of moments over a lot of years. The Tar Heels have won 11 of the 13 NCAA women's soccer titles since the first was awarded in 1983, including nine straight from 1986 to 1994. They have an overall record of 231-2-8 since the 1986 season and a 42-2 mark in NCAA tournament play. In that stretch, the Tar Heels have logged win streaks of an NCAA-record 103 matches, 101 matches, 92 matches and 35 matches. They have an all-time record of 348-10-10 in their 17 years of existence and are 153-2-2 at Chapel Hill. Talk about a home-field advantage.



UNC booters get a leg up on the competition.

3. The miracle in Miami

Remember the old confidence-building story about the little engine that could? This isn't the first time Doug Flutie's 1984 season as the Boston College quarterback has been compared to it. On Nov. 23, 1984, the 5-foot-9 3/4-inch Flutie, short by big-game quarterback standards, turned in one of the biggest conclusions ever to a college football game. His 48-yard touchdown pass over three defenders and into the waiting hands of Gerald Thelan with no time left gave BC a 47-45 upset-win over host U. of Miami. The pass capped an 80-yard drive Flutie engineered in the final 28 seconds without the benefit of the two timeouts he had at his disposal. The nationally televised game was the most-watched game of the season, and it propelled Flutie to the 1984 Heisman Trophy.

4. More than corn

The U. of Iowa wrestling team knows a little something about big finishes. The Hawkeyes have won 11 of the 16 NCAA Division I championships since 1980, including a stretch of seven from 1980 to



Hawkeye wrestlers: the half-nelson kings.

1986. The team has won 22 straight Big Ten Conference championships (16 since 1980) and four additional national titles prior to 1980. In the 19 seasons (including two prior to 1980) legendary coach Dan Gable has headed the program, it has produced 137 All-Americans, 72 NCAA finalists and 37 national champions — far outdistancing any other team in all three categories.

5. Destiny's darlings

The march North Carolina State U. made to the 1983 NCAA Division I men's basketball title may be the most improbable and heart-warming stretch run ever. Under late coach Jim Valvano, the Wolfpack earned its NCAA tournament berth with narrow wins over Wake Forest U., North Carolina and U. of Virginia in the Atlantic Coast Conference Tournament. Its slim margins of victory continued into the NCAA Tournament, with five of its six games decided by seven points or less and four of those by just one or two points. NC State took the trophy on

the strength of Lorenzo Charles' put-back slam with two seconds remaining in the 'pack's thrilling 54-52 championship win over a heavily favored U. of Houston team.

6. Batman

Many people say it's the hardest thing to do in sports — to hit with a wooden stick a ball moving at speeds up to 100 mph. Oklahoma State U. baseball player Robin Ventura not only did that quite frequently during the 1987 season but often reached base safely in the process. Ventura got hits in 68 of OSU's 72 games that year, including an NCAA-record 58-game hitting streak.

7. A perfect 35

When the U. of Connecticut women's hoops squad finished the 1994-95 season with a perfect 35-0 record, it marked the most wins in a season by a college basketball team — men's or women's — without a loss. The Huskies' march to the national title included wins over traditional powers U. of Tennessee and Stanford. It's considered by many to be the most dominating season ever in the history of collegiate team sports.

8. Devils of a time

Christian Laettner's overtime buzzer-beater against U. of Kentucky in the 1992 NCAA men's basketball semifinals lifted Duke U. to its fifth consecutive Final Four appearance — second only to the record 10 UCLA earned from 1967 to 1976 —



Hey, Duke! Raise your hand if you're No. 1.

and ultimately to its second straight national title. The 104-103 Blue Devil win is considered by many to be the greatest game in NCAA Tournament history.

9. Volunteers of America

Since the 1982 creation of an NCAA Division I basketball championship for women, Tennessee's team has fared better than any other. The Lady Vols won it all in 1987, 1989 and 1991, finished second in 1984 and 1995 and third in 1982, 1986 and 1988. No team can match Tennessee's overall record of 389-81 (.828 winning percentage) during that span or its 273-33



Lady Vols win — again and again and again.

(.892 pct.) mark since its 1986-87 championship season. The Lady Vols have won 30 or more games five times during that same stretch.

10. Champ of champs

Until 1994, overall excellence in college athletic departments was seldom recognized nationally. That all changed with the introduction of the Sears Director's Cup, the collegiate all-sports trophy awarded to the school with the best overall athletic finishes in a single academic year. Not only did Stanford win the 1995 trophy, but the Cardinal athletic department is also believed to have won the most national team championships since 1980 with 46 — 28 for men and 18 for women. The 18 women's championships is an all-time record.

So, you think we forgot...

Keith Smart's buzzer-beater for U. of Indiana in the 1987 NCAA men's basketball final; the 1994 Kentucky men's basketball team's 31-point comeback win over Louisiana State U.; Charlie Ward's two-sport excellence at Florida State U. from 1990 to 1994; Virginia's streak of four consecutive men's soccer titles from 1991 to 1994; Villanova U.'s thrilling win over Georgetown U. in the 1985 NCAA men's basketball final; U. of Arkansas' dominance in men's track and cross country; Louisiana State's dominance in women's track; Kordell Stewart's Hail Mary touchdown pass to Michael Westbrook ending the 1994 U. of Colorado at U. of Michigan football game; Michael Jordan's game-winning shot for North Carolina in the 1982 NCAA Tournament; Tyus Edney's layup against U. of Missouri to keep UCLA's bid for the 1995 NCAA men's hoops title alive; and Stanford's dominance of women's tennis?

We didn't.

Robert Manker holds the unofficial U. Magazine record of 1,432 days without physical activity. That mark is not expected to be broken.