ON THE LINE

A ONE-HOUR, SCRIPTED DRAMA SERIES

SERIES BIBLE
BY
MARK KREBS JR.

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WRITER'S GUILD OF AMERICA
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SCOUTING REPORT

A ONE-HOUR, SCRIPTED DRAMA SERIES SET IN THE CONFLICTING, PRESSURE-PACKED WORLD OF MAJOR DIVISION-I BASKETBALL

⇒ Basketball is the hook, Life is the subject

⇒ Real people's lives lived out under a microscope

⇒ The curtain between life on and off the court is pulled back

- The everyday private lives of the "BIG MEN ON CAMPUS" – partying, sex, relationships, and family issues – are revealed

⇒ *Blue Chips* meets *Friday Night Lights* and *Entourage*

MAIN FEATURES OF ON THE LINE

⇒ Drama, Comedy, and Sports Action

⇒ Combined elements from real-life Major D-I basketball programs

- Kentucky, Duke, UCLA, North Carolina, Indiana, & Kansas

⇒ 100%, no holds barred, authentic college basketball atmosphere

⇒ NBA stars, famous sports figures, and celebrities as guest-starring characters

⇒ Sets trends in fashion and music

THE TIME FOR ON THE LINE IS NOW

⇒ "Reality Shows" and "Inside Looks" fail to convey full truth of the sport

⇒ NCAA Athletics – a multi-billion dollar industry

⇒ The many episodes of a TV series allow **ON THE LINE** to properly treat the rich, ever-changing themes surrounding college basketball and the lives involved

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SERIES CONCEPT

Naismith University was the powerhouse in college basketball for over sixty years. The school enjoyed championship runs every season; they racked up the most wins of any program in the country; and they pumped out All-Americans and professionals like a factory assembly line. Their rich history created a hungry, rabid fan base with sky-high expectations. However, prolonged success doing it "the old-fashioned way" bred complacency and stubbornness in the rapidly changing landscape of college athletics. It really is true, all rises come with a fall, and Naismith University was no exception.

Last season, Naismith missed The Tournament for the first time in over thirty years – a culmination to the coldest decade in school history. The head coach, Todd Warden, was subsequently fired.

Now, the time has come for the great machine to be rebuilt. The team is in disarray, rivals are closing in on Naismith's long-held place in the record books, and fans demand not improvement but a Championship. This scripted drama series – set in the conflicting, pressure-packed world of major division-I basketball – delves behind the scenes of Naismith's legendary basketball program – the good, the bad, and the ugly – the triumphs and tribulations.

Told through the eyes of protagonist and new head coach at Naismith, John Wise, *On The Line* tears down the walls of Major Division-I athletics to give a clear, unobstructed view of the partying, sex, relationships, and family issues of those performing on and off the court with the weight of a prestigious program on their back and millions of dollars on the line. This may be a collegiate game, but there is nothing amateur about it. The players, coaches, and administration are held to an exorbitant standard – a professional standard.

Will John Wise, the charismatic coach on the rise, take Naismith back to the promised land? Or will he crack under the pressures of caring for a sick wife and two kids at home, meshing players from vastly different backgrounds, and satisfying a campus hell-bent on winning? Every Hero has a call to action. Naismith University is the stage.

ABOUT NAISMITH UNIVERSITY

The seemingly quaint campus of Naismith University is located in the beautiful midwestern college town called Riverside. The economy goes as the school goes. Green rolling hills and horse farms enclose Riverside's historic yet hip downtown area as well as the university grounds, where enrollment stands at roughly 30,000 students.

Academically, Naismith is known for its flagship business program, The Beverly School of Business and Economics, as well as Floyd College of Law, which are both ranked top-10 nationally. But even with all that, the key recruitment tool for prospective undergrads is still the legendary basketball program.

The university has built its identity around having the most all-time wins, twelve National Championships, and being home to the largest number of All-Americans in the country. Even in the MAC-12, one of the toughest conferences in the country, Naismith has more Conference Tournament Championships than some schools have Conference Tournament wins. The other sports like football and baseball are competitive, but they fly under the radar. With the majority of donations being earmarked specifically for the heroes of the hardwood, university officials know where their bread is buttered.

THE BROAD APPEAL

Dramatic Appeal – Young men from all over the country – and the world for that matter – are brought together for no other reason than to win. Their cultural and societal differences are to be checked at the door effortlessly. They are expected to unify instantly. Unfortunately, unity is often difficult to achieve. These young men, who are just being introduced to a newfound independence, are being thrust into the national spotlight – pressure on them from every angle. Players may seek camaraderie, but it's undermined by conflicting ambitions. One guy's playing time increases, another's decreases. Athletes compete for the same girls as they do for the same starting position. And, like all young people, the desire for immediate gratification – frat parties, girls, and drugs – competes with the requirements for future success.

It's the job of new Head Coach, John Wise, to create one heartbeat among the team regardless of these issues. He must split time at home with his sick wife and two young children and on the court with his other family. He must pacify conflicting parties – University President, Athletic Director, Boosters, and fervent fans. And most importantly, he must perform with the weight of a prestigious program on his back and millions of dollars on the line.

Sports Appeal – The inner workings of medicine, law, politics, and military have all been revealed through television shows. Countless police and detective dramas have gone behind the scenes to give the public a truthful account of their respective duties. However, other than football, accurate and authentic sports shows have been few and far between. *On the Line* dives head first into one of the most popular and topical sports – college basketball. More specifically, major Division-I college basketball, where life is lived under a microscope for all involved. It's big-time competition combined with a sea of incomprehensible rules and guidelines on amateurism. Viewers are put on the court and in the timeout huddles. They are in the locker room for pregame, postgame, and at halftime. Boys become men in the public eye.

Star Appeal – An unlimited well of NBA stars, Sports Personalities, and Celebrities can be drawn from to play guest-starring characters in *On The Line.*

Universal Appeal – Young adults and high school athletes are passionate about Naismith University. The show deals with issues that directly affect their lives. Some of the athletes mature successfully and learn to navigate the rough terrain into adulthood; others fail. Men live vicariously through the victories and defeats. They react with intense emotion to the complex worlds of the main characters, the heart pulsing sports action, and the pressures of performing at such a high level. Women enjoy the drama surrounding the personal lives of the athletes and head coach, John Wise – the journey of the players through the possible pitfalls all college students face and the manner in which Coach Wise tends to his family struggles as well as the needs of his team. Commercially, *On The Line* sets trends in fashion and music. The characters and fictitious logo are worn and talked about just like real universities and athletes.

International Appeal – Basketball is an international sport played and adored in over two hundred countries. Naismith's basketball team, like many teams around the country, has a mixed roster of domestic and foreign players.

THE CHARACTERS

JOHN WISE (45)

The new head basketball coach at Naismith University. A good-looking and charismatic middle-age man tagged with the difficult task of getting the fallen powerhouse back to the top.

The complexities of his professional and personal life both make him and fight to break him. On the court, he's a powerful motivator who uses any method possible to remain effective. He's even the top salesman in the country when it comes to High School All-Americans. But at home, he's a loving husband and father of two. Wife, Cara, and two kids, Ellie (17) and Deuce (11), humble this hard working basketball genius and first-class recruiter every night he walks in the door. Even though he's at the top of his game, they never let him forget he's a father and husband first.

Coach Wise got his coaching start as a graduate assistant at Naismith University in the early-90's under a true legend, Coach Jude Wyatt. After bouncing around from mid-major to mid-major and moving up the ranks as an assistant coach, he finally landed the head-coaching job at BCU. He excelled there four years before being gobbled up by Manhattan State University in 2007.

In his first season at MSU, a traditionally difficult place to win in the past, Coach Wise's effective recruiting technique landed him the first top-20 recruiting class in school history. He followed it up with a top-10 class in 2009 and a top-5 class in 2010, 2011, and 2012. Over a five-year span in the heart of Manhattan, Coach Wise compiled a record of 135-40 with two Final-Four appearances and a National Runner-Up. He also won Coach of the Year three times over that span. John Wise became a name on every Athletic Director's list and the hottest coach in America without a Championship. Others came knocking, but Coach Wise had his sights set on only one school, Naismith University.

K PIERCE (20)

Junior power forward out of Miami, FL. K is a freakishly athletic post player that can bang with the best or show some finesse. He can either dunk on you or hit you with a smooth fade-away jumper. His skill-set is extensive and he's a sure-fire professional if he gets his head on straight. Unfortunately, K has a nose for trouble. Getting him to class is a chore. Women and parties are his weakness. He's a likable team cancer that causes problems everywhere he goes.

KNIGHT FREEMAN (18)

Freshman point guard out of New York City. He's originally from Louisiana but bounced around at a young age until finally ending up at Hudson Prep in the Big Apple. He's a jaw-dropping performer, craves the spotlight, and has the complete package to back it all up. He breaks the mold when it comes to five-star, High School All-Americans. He even gets it done in the classroom. Because of the influence of his strong single mother, schoolwork was just as important to him as time spent in the gym. He's smart and driven, but then again, the pitfalls of college were never before present.

TONY QUICK (22)

Senior point guard out of Los Angeles. A Steve Nash type player – flashy with phenomenal footwork and ball-handling skills. The things he lacks, though, are true leadership skills and a knockdown jumper. While Todd Warden was head coach at Naismith, Tony was a starter and focal point of the offense. Everything ran through him. Now, John Wise is in charge and Knight Freeman, the High School All-American, is on the roster. The question remains, will Tony have to win his starting spot back? Or will he accept a new role in the updated system? What will his legacy be?

HAGAN BEAL (20)

Red-shirt sophomore walk-on, shooting guard/small forward out of Riverside. He's a local talent who has never been given much respect. Throughout his tough upbringing, Naismith Basketball was something positive to which he could always cling. He's a deadeye shooter, but a little slow of foot. He fears his spot on the team may be jeopardized with the firing of Coach Todd Warden. Being a walk-on is tough during coaching changes as they are usually the first to go if the new coach brings in his own guys or if his style doesn't involve an extensive roster. The pressure is on him to prove his value to the team.

THE SUPPORTING CAST

ELLIE WISE – A typical 17-year-old girl. She's beautiful, temperamental, and "ready" for independence – a tough age to handle for Coach Wise. The transition from the Big Apple to Riverside for her senior year is met with some challenges.

DEUCE WISE – A fun-loving 11-year-old boy. Born John Wise Jr., he's affectionately called Deuce to differentiate him from his father. He's comical without trying and cute. He loves being around the team and his dad. In his free time, like most 11-year-olds, he plays video games.

CARA WISE – Coach Wise's beautiful wife and rock at home. She takes care of the house and kids while he is on the road recruiting and winning games. An unfortunate blow came in 2010 when she was diagnosed with breast cancer. With a strong will and solid support system, she maintained a positive attitude through the early, tough struggles of treatment. It's three years later and she's still fighting. Her spirit has never weakened. She serves as an inspiration to Coach Wise and his teams as well as every community and organization she touches.

RALPH TINNY – The 65-year-old African-American Athletic Director at Naismith University. The pressures of the job have aged him over the last ten years. He has a weathered face, graying beard, and deep, honest eyes. John Wise was his pick to lead Naismith, so ultimately, the success or failure of his tenure as coach directly affects his job. He doesn't want to leave the program in worse shape than when he found it.

EVERETT CLARE – A plump, authoritative man in his mid-60s. He's the founder and CEO of CEG (Clare Energy Group), a company that provides much of the Midwest with power and electricity. Aside from being a distinguished businessman, he's also the face of Naismith Basketball Program's demanding collection of boosters. He's not your cookie-cutter, sleazy booster, but an honest, rational one that wants production from his monetary contributions.

GUS BEAUMONT – sophomore, center out of Birmingham, Alabama. He's a massive, borderline out-of-shape big man who says what's on his mind – a loose cannon of sorts.

OFIR DIAZ – sophomore, guard/forward out of Latin America – Argentina to be exact. He's levelheaded and tame for the most part. The midwestern girls love his accent.

GENEVIEVE HAYWARD – Better known as Eve. She's a 21-year-old tutor at the university – mostly for the basketball team. Cute girl – pretty with minimal make-up. Very intelligent and funny without even knowing it. She doesn't know her worth yet.

JUDE WYATT – Legendary coach at Naismith back in the heyday. Coach Wise got his start as a graduate assistant under him. He becomes a very important mentor to Coach Wise during his transition at Naismith.

CORY SANDERS – A team manager for Naismith. He's a good kid that goes above and beyond to help. He does a thankless job with dignity and class. His visions of someday being a college coach carry him through.

BARRY BRENNAN – An All-American at Naismith during their Championship run in 1997. A fan-favorite from Riverside who went on to have a successful career in the NBA. Now, he's looking to become a coach at the collegiate level – something he's always had a knack for. After a few years as graduate assistant at Naismith and not getting hired on following the Warden firing, he has moved on to lead the very strong Manhattan State Stallions. A team with a lot to prove after Coach Wise left them the way he did.

TODD WARDEN - Head Coach at Naismith for two seasons before being let go by the administration for failure deliver enough wins. He's out to prove his worth at a new school, and a position has just opened at Naismith's rival, Kentucky Tech.

REBECCA FULLER – 38 years old, attractive, and genuine. She's a Naismith dropout who now runs a very successful real-estate business in Riverside. Relationships have come and gone in her life, but work has always been number one. She sells The Wise's their home but gets more than she ever bargained for when sparks fly between her and coach. Can it last? Is the timing right?

TONE AND STYLE

On The Line is a serial drama told primarily through the eyes of the protagonist and new head coach of Naismith Basketball, John Wise, drawing the audience into his life at work and at home. In addition, the main players have countless opportunities to contribute their unique perspectives throughout the series' fresh, dynamic web of storylines. This gives the audience the advantage of seeing it all – intense locker room chatter, on the court banter, college nightlife at frat parties and bars, heated encounters behind closed doors, and private discussions revealing the often-conflicting motives of coaches, players, administrators, boosters, and journalists. *On The Line* is gritty and provocative to the core. It holds nothing back. If it's happening, the camera shows it – all of it. Shot in much the same way as the critically acclaimed series, *Friday Night Lights*, *On The Line* gets up close and personal with the characters and their circumstances.

Tone-wise, three main ingredients make up this series: drama, comedy, and sports action.

DRAMA – Just as HBO's *Entourage* went behind the scenes of Hollywood – giving the glitz and glamour a gripping, relatable back-story – *On The Line* dives into the captivating world of intercollegiate athletics at its paramount. *On The Line* is a drama about college-life and family dynamics, only it's taken to another level where the stakes are raised, the pressure is high, and the consequences of every action are life changing. The microscope that is the public eye amplifies the already-charged back-stories and intertwining narratives.

COMEDY – Sports, just like many things in life, innately create hilarious situations. The best comedy stems out of truth and with *On The Line's* gritty, no holds barred style, comedy has no choice but to rear its head from time to time.

SPORTS ACTION – Basketball fans are used to being disappointed by the level of play in fictionalized accounts of the game; trash talk is usually overdone; and the characters are generally unrealistic and unbelievable. In *On The Line*, however, the audience sees an intense level of play that punctuates the off-camera life of the athletes. Realism in the basketball action sequences is of utmost importance. The unique camera angles and sounds enhance the overall drama – bringing the viewers onto the court and into the huddles during the big games. Likewise, scenes from the practice sessions combine the drama and the comedy that make *On The Line* so special.

EPISODE SYNOPSES - SEASON ONE

1.1 – Pilot – Guardian Angel

Naismith University, located in a beautiful midwestern college town called Riverside, has a long, rich tradition – twelve National Championships, the most wins in college basketball history, and is home to the largest number of All-Americans in the country. Unfortunately, the past decade has been a cold one. Naismith hit its lowest point last season when they failed to make The Tournament for the first time in more than thirty years. The head coach, TODD WARDEN, was subsequently fired. Now, the time has come for the giant machine to be rebuilt. The fans are hungry for a Championship. The team is in disarray. A coaching search has begun.

Naismith's Athletic-Director-on-the-hot-seat, RALPH TINNY, passes on Naismith-Alum, BARRY BRENNAN, and other well-deserving coaches in order to fight for the guy he knows is right for the job, John Wise. Even without a Championship under his belt, Wise has a history at Naismith and is one of the best recruiters in the country. He's a winner on and off the court, but the boosters and administration are hesitant to endorse him. They've seen coaches crack under the pressure before and feel the next coach should be a proven champion. Regardless, a decision needs to be made because the fanbase is growing restless, and the long process of choosing a coach has the players on edge. They're rightfully worried if the new regime will renew their scholarship or bring them back for another season.

Up in New York City, John Wise yearns for the Naismith job. He loves the idea of being back in the Midwest, but dreads the conversation he'll have to have with his family if the call ever comes. The move would be tough on his wife, CARA, who has been battling cancer for some time, and the kids are now accustomed to big city life.

One night, as Coach waits for the call from Naismith, tragedy strikes the Wise family, and his dream job takes a backseat to his family's needs. Basketball becomes the furthest thing from his mind. Another opportunity seems lost.

Perhaps it's destiny, but the tragedy garners some national press as well as the attention of Naismith decision makers. Seeing the stoicism and charisma of John Wise in the face of adversity forces a call. Tinny gives it one last shot, and thanks to the blessing of his understanding children, John Wise accepts Naismith's offer to be the new head basketball coach. He arrives the next morning in Riverside to greet his team full of conflicted young men who are excited to embark on a journey but are unsure where that journey may lead.

1.2 – Lucky Number Thirteen

Put up the yellow tape. Naismith Basketball is under construction. Coach John Wise hits the ground running in Riverside. He faces the most difficult task of trying to balance personal needs and those of the program. With ELLIE and DEUCE still back in New York City finishing up the school year, Coach's mind is in two different places. Luckily, his retired parents don't mind spending a few weeks in the Big Apple to help him out because amidst the welcoming party from the university, media, and fans, there is work to be done.

First and foremost, the extensive roster needs trimming. It's no secret Coach likes his team lean – around thirteen players – and this includes the incoming freshman class. Make no mistake about it, players will be cleaning out their lockers by the end of spring. That makes K PIERCE'S public "sexcapade", TONY QUICK and the other seniors' brawl at the bar, and HAGAN BEAL being one of eight walk-ons all the more problematic.

Another issue facing Coach Wise is the fact that five-star recruit, KNIGHT FREEMAN, has yet to re-sign with him at Naismith. One reason for this is Manhattan State made a bold, vengeful hire to fill Coach Wise's vacancy. They took a chance on Naismith-alum, Barry Brennan, a coach that intrigues Knight considering his history in the NBA. With Knight's Mom and love interest, REGAN BRENNER, also being rooted in New York, tough decisions weigh heavily on the high school phenom. Even though his heart has always been with John Wise as a coach, it's not easy leaving home.

With pressure mounting, Coach Wise makes a surprise visit to see legendary coach, JUDE WYATT; the man Coach got his start under at Naismith back in the early-90's. Jude plays a vital role in mentoring Coach as he settles into the new, overwhelming job. The meeting clears a few things up, and finally, after dealing with the off-court issues of his current players, signing Knight, and assessing the overall talent – both returning and incoming – Coach Wise decides on the roster. K, Tony, OFIR, GUS, and Hagan (barely) make the cut. They'll all be back for another season.

The craziness of spring ends with Coach Wise visiting the house he and Cara looked at online before she passed away. The realtor, REBECCA FULLER, walks him through the house. It's emotional for him, but it's too perfect to pass up. He makes an offer on the spot.

1.3 – Poise And Girls

May, the only month of summer vacation for a college basketball player, has ended. The guys return to campus recharged after a brief, well-needed break from the hoopla surrounding Naismith Basketball. Meanwhile, across town, the balancing act continues for Coach Wise as priorities begin piling up. Before embarking on a four-day tour around

the Midwest, he must secure his kids' educational future and address his new team, who are finally all together for the first time as a whole unit. After two productive meetings with Riverside Academy (the premier private school in the area, K-12) and his team, Coach leaves the nest on his "publicity tour" feeling like everything is coming together just right.

However, when the coach is away, the players will play.

While Coach Wise pounds the pavement shaking hands and rubbing elbows with fans and boosters, K plans a summer bash to christen the upcoming season. Attitudes clash and alliances form between the guys as alcohol, drugs, and girls come into the picture. The wet and wild shindig heats up even more when Ellie's new friend drags her to the party. Ellie lets peer pressure get the best of her, and she winds up drinking. At one point, she even kisses Hagan in a drunken stupor. He doesn't mind, though, he'd been eyeballing her all night oblivious that she is Coach Wise's daughter.

After police bust the party, Hagan finds himself driving Tony's car with Tony hammered in the backseat and Knight riding shotgun. Stumbling on the side of the road is Ellie. She's fleeing the scene. Knight encourages Hagan to pick her up. He recognizes her from when Coach Wise was recruiting him up in New York. Hagan can't believe the revelation but proceeds to deliver her safely home anyway – into the hands of 11-year-old Deuce.

When K and the others who live in the apartment complex are only slapped with noise violations, it seems as if everyone's in the clear after a potentially disastrous night. That is until an officer discovers Ellie's wallet at the apartment complex. It fell out of her purse in all the commotion. When Coach Wise is jarred awake by a series of disturbing phone calls from Deuce and the police, shit hits the fan.

Coach Wise decides to end the tour and head home. As a result, the fans and boosters understandably lash out. Even the Old quartet of men at the diner are livid. It's months before the season and already Coach is making enemies. AD Ralph Tinny jokes that the tour has quickly become the "Detour" and the "Bad Publicity Tour", but nevertheless, Coach Wise sticks to his gut. He realizes how important this time is for the team and his family.

The Clare Center is the first stop on Coach's new tour – a retribution tour of sorts. He has returned with guns blazing, and to the surprise of the players and coaches, is there bright and early before workouts for a team meeting. He makes no mention of the previous night's mischief, just a simple caveat that workouts will be a bit more grueling and intense than originally thought necessary.

Now, the more difficult confrontation awaits Coach at home. He realizes rather quickly that he's better at disciplining a team full of young men than he is his own daughter – especially without Cara there to lend a helping hand. The conversation about her getting drunk at a college party and ignoring her responsibilities as a big sister spirals out of control. The situation ultimately blows up in his face. Meanwhile, COACH LOCK, the new

Strength and Conditioning Coach brought in by Wise, pulls out all the stops in his summer program. Day after day of early wake-up times, intense training, and class. It's a schedule that's met with difficulty by K, causing him to quit by the end of summer.

It isn't until Coach Wise sits down with the family of major recruit, BAZ MOORE, during an in-home visit, that he finally has a chance to reflect on his own family dynamic. It's an opportunity for him to assess how he's performed as a father to both his kids and his players. He returns from the trip with a new outlook.

First, he wins over Ellie by making a surprise appearance and speech at the Cure Breast Cancer Relay. He helps the event become a huge success. Then, he deals with Deuce's baseball coach – a smartass who's been giving Deuce a hard time because he's the son of John Wise, the worst possible coaching choice for his beloved Naismith University. Lastly, after weeks of solid work and good behavior, the team receives a little slack. Coach invites the players and assistants over to his house for a grill-out. He also invites a few surprise guests, Ellie and Deuce's grandparents. They know the season is closing in, and more help will be needed with the kids. This move takes the pressure off of Ellie and gives a presence around the big, empty house. The barbeque also allows Ellie and Hagan to set straight anything that happened when she was drunk. Unfortunately, their conversation happens under the watchful eye of Coach – who now realizes his daughter is growing up.

1.4 – Great Expectations

Rex Hall, the upscale dorm which houses the basketball players and others associated with the program, is officially reopened for the start of a new school year. The campus pulses with life as students return to Riverside eager to take on the fall semester. In the men's basketball office, however, the mood is a little different. Pre-season rankings are released, and the polls have Naismith rated high – too high. The addition of John Wise and Knight Freeman apparently makes Naismith a top-five team in the country. Even though fans love it, boosters rejoice, and the administration slaps high-fives all around as ticket sales skyrocket, Coach Wise knows better. He understands the pressure this puts on his team full of uncertainties and can already predict inflated egos among his players.

In an interview with a national outlet, Knight Freeman guarantees a National Championship during his time in college. The flabbergasted reporter responds, "But odds are you'll only be here one year before turning pro."

Knight replies with a devilish grin, "Well then, I guess we'll be winning this year."

That's a lot of pressure to put on a team waist-deep in turmoil. Knight's popularity poses a problem for returning point guard and senior, Tony Quick. Also, K wants back on the team after he receives the shock of a lifetime from BROOKE, the volleyball player he nailed in the Clare Center before Wise arrived. She's four months pregnant,

and the baby is most likely K's. Naismith booster, EVERETT CLARE, gives K the money for an abortion, but Brooke refuses. Regardless, the gesture alone sends Coach over the edge, creating some tension between he and the booster/administration.

With the first game fast approaching, Coach pulls out every trick in the coaches' manual to inspire his team -- even using moments like Hagan receiving the team's final scholarship as a motivational talking point. The two victories in pre-season exhibition games don't blind Coach. He sees his team's shortcomings. They're soft and rely too heavily on outside shooting, but he can't seem to get that through to them.

Naismith's first game is at home on national television against a very tough, unranked opponent, Springfield University. It's Coach Wise against hall-of-famer, HENRY KLIPP – a battle destined to be a dogfight till the end. At any other school, this game would be a good educator for a young team, but not at Naismith. The pressure is squarely on Coach's shoulders. This is a must win.

After Springfield jumps out to a hefty first half lead, Naismith climbs back in the second half thanks to the hot hand of K Pierce. It takes a barrage of three-pointers, but they finally snag the lead late in the game on a Knight Freeman jumper – a much needed boost after struggling most of the night. A missed last-second shot by Springfield seals the win for Naismith. While fans go wild, and the media plays up the miraculous comeback, Coach Wise enters the locker room pissed off. He knows that type of win is "fools gold" and gives the team an earful.

1.5 – Unranked

The team checks into their hotel. It's the night before the first away game of the season. They eat their catered meal in one of the hotel ballrooms and head up to Coach's suite for one last powwow before bed. Once again, the pressure is on highly-ranked Naismith, and Coach preaches that an away game atmosphere is unlike anything they've ever experienced. When the meeting concludes, the guys disperse to their rooms for a good night's sleep. They understand they're in for another tough battle… Or do they?

As Deuce returns to his dad's suite after hanging out with Cory and some of the managers, he sees Ofir and Gus sneaking girls into their hotel room. The next night, following the inevitable and embarrassing loss, Deuce accidentally rats on them during the flight back to Riverside.

Needless to say, the next practice isn't pleasant. The Clare Center turns into a warzone, and things go from bad to worse in a hurry. During one of Coach's intense rebounding drills, K goes down with a severe pain in his foot. He tries to walk it off, but it's no use. Disgusted, Coach calls off the rest of practice. After all, he may have just witnessed Naismith's season – and his job – go spiraling down the drain.

Over in the Doctor's office, K receives his diagnosis. The X-rays reveal a stress fracture. He'll be out a minimum of six-weeks and should be back around Christmas – just in time for conference play. It's tough news, but Coach realizes it could've been much worse. To this point, K's performance has been the only bright spot during an otherwise rough start. The rest of the team has been streaky at best. Knight and Tony remain pre-occupied with competition at the point guard position – a fight that's moving from the court into each other's personal life. Knight sleeps with Tony's girl to get back at him for sabotaging his first two games. A brawl breaks out at practice the following day. It's pandemonium. Even Hagan's mind is elsewhere trying to forget about a certain, forbidden girl he likes. The players are living in their own little worlds instead of having their minds on the game.

That being said, Coach's goal now becomes limiting non-conference losses and using this misfortune to get everyone headed in the right direction – including K. In order for him to be game-ready when his foot heals, he needs to alter his lifestyle and habits. So Coach invites K into his office and sits down with him for a heart to heart. The emotionally moving conversation covers everything from future-fatherhood to playing in the NBA, but Coach actually gets through to him. The light bulb finally goes off in his head. For the first time, we see a changed K… a changed John Wise.

K's injury may actually be a blessing in disguise after all. Even though Naismith falls in the rankings, Coach has never been more inspired. Coach decides to spend a couple days at home with his family. He'll be helping Ellie decide where she wants to go to college.

1.6 – Therapy

It's winter break, which means no class and more time for practice. This is the time of year that Coach Wise's teams usually get better. They work out the kinks and get the season going in the right direction. Considering the issues plaguing the guys thus far, this season needs every ounce of that "Christmas magic". It's only the halfway point and hope is already fading fast throughout the administration and fanbase. Knight and Tony are still battling one another instead of opponents; K is fighting to stay in shape as his foot heals and fatherhood closes in fast. (Brooke is due any day); and Hagan continues to wrestle with pressure to party and drink like some of the other guys.

Over in the basketball office, Coach has his own troubles. Tinny and Everett Clare are frustrated with the season. They want a solution, and a game plan. Naismith has zero quality wins, and the only opportunity left before conference play is against heated rival, Kentucky Tech, and old friend, Todd Warden. If Naismith doesn't win this game, the school looks foolish for having fired him. Coach Wise lays out a plan

for the rest of the season that will get Naismith to the "Big Dance". It adds pressure to the season but sets the old guys at ease.

At home, Coach also receives pressure from his parents to start moving on with his love life. The parents will be leaving after the season to tend to things back at their home in Kansas. With Ellie heading off to college, Deuce will be left alone at home or forced to live his childhood on the road. Coach knows the transition won't be easy but sees the importance to at least try – after the rivalry game of course.

As the game against KTech approaches, the team finally makes a few strides in the right direction. Tony has a chance to retaliate against Knight for sleeping with his girlfriend but chooses to take the high road. At last, he makes the decision of a leader. He and Knight decide to hash out their troubles. To help, Coach employs the services of a veteran mediator, his Mom. The mediation goes late into the night and veers off into hilarious directions, but amazingly, it works. Knight decides to play the two, and Tony takes the point. They agree to put the past behind them where it belongs.

K's situation, on the other hand, doesn't go as smoothly. Team physicians clear him to play in the big game, but Brooke goes into labor. K decides to be by her side in the delivery room when his baby is born. However, the baby comes out white. All white. After everything he's gone through in preparation for this baby, it's not his. Silence fills the room until K throws up his hands in excitement and exclaims, "Yes! It's not mine!"

He races out of the hospital as fast as he can headed straight for the arena. The uppity mother looks at Brooke and says, "Honey, how many boys have you slept with?"

K arrives just before tip, and Naismith proceeds to put together one hell of a game. But KTech is good. They're a top-25 team, and as expected, the game goes neck and neck down the stretch. Naismith finds themselves down two with five seconds remaining and need to cover the length of the court. Coach makes a bold decision and sends Hagan into the game because of his three-point shooting ability. It turns out to be a "wise" move. The ball is inbounded to a cutting Knight, but after a few dribbles, he loses a handle on it. The ball bounces down the court – into the hands of Hagan. He snatches the loose ball, turns, and fires with time expiring. Swish! Naismith wins.

1.7 – Senior Day

Naismith has kicked it into high gear during conference play, amassing a solid record of 9-6. After such a terrible start, Naismith has clawed back into the mix, putting themselves in serious contention for an at-large bid. Coach has stated all

along that a 10-6 conference record would get Naismith a bye in the first round of the MAC-12 Tournament and put them one step closer to getting in the "Big Dance".

Everything rides on this final game of the regular season against OU and Head Coach, CHARLIE QUEEN, another guy Wise beat out for the Naismith job. To add to the hoopla, the game is also Senior Day for Tony Quick. After a brief ceremony and highlight reel for the lone-senior, the crowd rises to its feet. Naismith never looks back. They keep the momentum high until the final buzzer sounds. It's the best game of the year thus far, and it leads to a big victory for Wise and company.

After the arena clears and positive post-game interviews wrap up, Coach confronts Knight about a certain celebrity sitting with his Mom during the game. Naismith is on an upswing and he doesn't want surprises to surface that could hurt the team. In addition, Coach fears Knight's drastic improvement and marketability make him a hot target for people trying to latch on. However, Knight assures Coach there is no reason to worry. Unfortunately, in the bowels of the media world, all it takes is a little smoke to create a wild fire. One reporter, DONNY DEELY, a Manhattan State alumnus and investigative sports journalist for *American Globe*, is already scrambling to write any smut possible on the young phenom. Trouble brews on the horizon.

Downtown later that night, the team rendezvous at Blue Bar and Grill. It seems like the perfect place for the team to celebrate a strong finish to the season. The attitudes of the bouncers are much different this time around – the players are ushered in regardless if they're 21 or not. Likewise, inside the bar, the experience is much improved. The guys, on a small scale, are treated as celebrities.

Meanwhile, Coach prepares for his blind date. He's rusty when it comes to these things, and the idea alone has him a mess. He sneaks out of his own house like a teenager to stay unnoticed by his family. He chooses a place on the outskirts of town to stay away from everyone else. He finally arrives at the restaurant for the moment of truth. None other than Fox Sports Host, ERIN ANDREWS, rises from the table to greet a speechless Coach. Unfortunately, the date is quickly interrupted by an emergency phone call from Ellie. Deuce hurt himself playing Manhunt with his friends. It's nothing serious, but Coach cuts the evening short to take care of business at home.

Back downtown, the guys battle through their individual predicaments of the night. Hagan finds himself in a love triangle with GRACE PARKER, a hot jersey-chaser looking for a good time, and EVE HAYWARD, his tutor for the past two years. Good girl vs. Bad girl. It's a problem he didn't have before the big shot against KTech that's for sure. Outside on the patio, Knight gears up for a difficult talk with his girlfriend, Regan, who made a surprise move to Riverside from NYC over Christmas break. Knight confesses that he has been unfaithful, multiple times. The stunned, hurt Regan rightfully slaps him and exits the bar. At the entrance, Tony runs into two familiar faces, his senior counterparts Coach Wise sent packing before the season. It

seems like a perfect reunion considering the Senior Night festivities, but suddenly things take a turn for the worst. Tony gets drunk and passes out while his ex-teammates wreak havoc in the dorms. They enact a little revenge on the university that shunned them.

The next morning, the team awakes to sheer destruction at Rex Hall – lights busted, doors kicked in, and trash cans overturned. Sadly, Tony's left responsible because according to the front desk, they were his guests.

1.8 – Breaking The Press

After Coach sifts through the destruction at Rex Hall, he meets with Tinny and Everett Clare to discuss what needs to be done with the vandals. During the meeting, Coach receives a disturbing call from Knight's mother. Apparently, Donny Deely, the conniving sports journalist for *American Globe*, is currently turning over rocks in Knight's birthplace of New Orleans, Louisiana and trying to follow any lead possible to a juicy story. Coach Wise knew this would happen, but now he must decide how far he's willing to go to protect a player. Coach Jude Wyatt tells him, "Take care of the big problems yourself – with utmost discretion. That way nothing can come back to bite you in the ass. In this business, everyone has teeth."

It's not clear exactly what Ms. Freeman said to Coach, but it's urgent enough for him to borrow Everett's private jet and fly south to NOLA.

Back on campus, Tony finds himself in a heap of trouble. All he has to do is turn in the other seniors who actually destroyed the dorm, but there's a catch. Tony can't snitch on guys who know a thing or two about him. If they're reprimanded by the administration, they could roll over on him for something bigger. Meanwhile, Hagan sees his tutor in a whole new light. Eve shows up to the next tutoring session looking gorgeous. Unfortunately, his teammates have taken notice too.

In NOLA, Coach utilizes the cover of a High School Hoops Showcase to locate Donny Deely. Deely reveals exactly what Coach fears the most, and it has nothing to do with Knight's grades or eligibility. The smut he plans to write goes much deeper than that. It's something that would shake the very core of Knight if ever published. Knight's Mom survived a rough upbringing in New Orleans by stripping and whoring to pay the bills. That is, until she wound up pregnant with Knight and got her life in order. Coach realizes his hands are going to have to get dirty so Knight doesn't find out – especially from a national newspaper – that he's actually the product of a trick. His Mom wants that part of her life to stay in past.

Up in Riverside, Tony sits in front of the Resident Director, a burly woman with a grudge against athletes, and Ralph Tinny, a guy doing everything he can to keep Tony clean, and the University President. After everything is said and done, Tony

sticks to the story claiming he's responsible. He must sit out the next game, which happens to be in the ever-so-important conference tournament. However, it's better than indefinite suspension, which the RD was certainly pushing.

Down in the Bayou, things heat up as Coach follows the slimy reporter to Bourbon Street. While Coach is staking out, trying to figure out how to handle the situation, he runs into his attractive realtor, Rebecca Fuller. She's in New Orleans finishing up a convention. The two hit it off so well that Coach discards the advice of Jude Wyatt. With the help of Rebecca, Coach "convinces" Donny to scrap the story and gives him something worthy to write instead. He has the chance to invite Rebecca to fly home with him in the private jet but he can't pull the trigger. The opportunity slips away.

Coach may have taken care of one issue, but he is flying into a nasty storm back home. Not only is Tony out for the MAC-12 Tournament game, but K and Knight may have found some hot water of their own.

1.9 – Music 101

To this point, Coach's game plan for getting Naismith into The Tournament has played out perfectly. They went 10-6 in conference, received a bye in the MAC-12 Tournament, and currently sit on the bubble with only one win left to be a sure-fire at-large bid. The team faces an uphill battle with Tony's one game suspension, but Coach remains positive – enthusiastic even – as he puts together a strategy in response to the roster change.

Meanwhile, among the chaos of post-season preparation, Hagan finally builds up the courage to ask Eve on a date. Since he blew his opportunity at the bar after Senior Day, he decides to give it another try. He approaches her at study hall, but she breaks the news that someone else – another player – has already asked her out. While Hagan patches up his wounds wondering who could've beaten him to the punch, Coach struggles with how to proceed with Rebecca. After all, the media is hungry for stories, the administration is breathing down his neck, and his two kids are most likely not ready for him to move on. Love needs to be the last thing on his mind – especially when Naismith's post-season dreams take another blow.

Apparently, the moderator for Knight and K's online class, Music 101, is accusing the two of cheating on a paper. MR. CHAPULCHO sits down with Coach and presents him the material. Coach tries to smooth the problem over with his usually effective charisma, but only makes matters worse. When Dr. Scranton, Everett Clare, and Ralph Tinny get involved, Coach is forced to take action so he meets privately with Knight and K to get the story. It turns out Knight actually cheated off K because he was bogged down with assignments for other classes. It was a last ditch effort on a trivial paper about wind instruments, and he didn't think it would be a big deal. Unfortunately, after all the performance issues early in the season and now

character issues, it's actually a huge deal. Coach's job is on the line if Naismith doesn't make it to The Tournament – a nearly impossible task without their three best players.

Luckily, a shimmer of hope comes Coach's way. In an unbelievable display of sacrifice, K decides to take the fall. He recognizes the team has no chance with both point guards out. He also understands that Knight has a reputation and a G.P.A. to uphold. His has been shot for a long time. K explains himself to Mr. Chapulcho, takes the failing grade, and agrees to sit out the upcoming game.

Since K and Tony can't play, this game now takes on a whole new meaning. Each player knows they're fighting for more than just a tournament birth. The ball is tipped, and Naismith jumps out to an early lead on the superb play of Knight and hot shooting by Hagan and Ofir. They maintain the lead through the second half until a late surge by the opposition. Coach can feel the wheels falling off, but he never loses hope. He urges them to keep fighting until the end. It takes a last-second layup by the opposition as time expires to beat them. It's so close that officials have to confirm by review that the basket is good. K and Tony crumble on the sideline.

In his post-game interview, Coach says, "All I can hope for is that the selection committee remembers what we're capable of when everyone is healthy. It's amazing how far we've come since the beginning of the season. I'll tell you right now, no one wants to face us in the tournament. Hopefully we get the chance."

The team returns home uncertain of their future. Their season now rests in the hands of the selection committee. Coach, on the other hand, returns home to "For Sale" signs in his yard and his dad scraping egg off the porch. Coach's entire livelihood now rests in the hands of the selection committee.

1.10 – Guts & Glory

The team and a few media members gather around the film room at the Clare Center for the Selection Show. The first three regions of the bracket get filled in – no Naismith. As the panel moves to the fourth and final region of the bracket – the North Region – panic sets in. Spaces are running out and still no Naismith. Finally, with only a few spots left, the panel announces Naismith as the 12-seed. A collective sigh of relief fills the room, none bigger than Coach Wise. The next team called is their 5-seed opponent – Manhattan State University.

As Coach goes to work preparing for the ever-so personal first-round matchup, he gets a disturbing call that stops him in his tracks. Coach Jude Wyatt has fallen sick with pancreatic cancer, and the doctors are unsure how much time he has left. Coach rushes to the hospital to show his support. In that visit, Coach discovers a

new inspiration for the post-season. He plans to make his friend and mentor's last tournament one where Naismith brings home the title… But it won't be easy.

On the way to their chartered flight to Chicago, Knight discovers he lost his favorite chain. The bus erupts into a discussion about superstitions, but Knight refuses to believe the chain held that much power. That's when things get interesting. Severe weather in Chicago forces the team to bus it seven hours north instead of fly. Also, at the hotel, Knight catches food poisoning the night before the big game – sabotage from some unruly MSU fans. It sends trainers and physicians scrambling to get him ready to play.

Through everything, Knight maintains the view that you create your own luck. He battles the sickness and nausea the entire game, refusing to be defeated. Knight's guts, along with the help of his teammates, lead to an incredible first round win. It's the kind of win that gets the wheels turning for a team on the rise. Coach's strategies work to perfection as Naismith proceeds to win the second, third, and fourth round games in route to the Final Four.

The team, now the closest knit group in the country, heads back to Riverside as rock stars. K's stock is as high as it's ever been; Tony has rectified his college career; Knight is a lottery-pick; and Hagan is living out his childhood dream (with Eve as a girlfriend). Back at Rex Hall, the team eagerly awaits their next opponent. Coach watches from Jude Wyatt's hospital room as KTech wins big in their Elite Eight game. It will be Naismith's toughest test yet in The Tournament… and most hyped considering the multitude of storylines.

1.11 – Tick Tock

The team prepares for their departure to New Orleans for the Final Four amid a flurry of fans and press hyping up the game against KTech. Before leaving Riverside, Coach meets Rebecca for coffee – a typical "date" for the slow-moving John Wise – but this particular time, he takes it a step further. He brings Rebecca to the hospital for a visit with Jude Wyatt. It's an endearing gesture to the woman with whom he may be falling in love.

Down in New Orleans, the team partakes in the hoopla that precedes the Final Four games – an abundance of gear, gifting suite, interviews, etc. As Coach finishes up a radio interview, probably his twentieth of the day, Erin Andrews appears at the window. She's charming as usual and reminds him that he owes her a drink since he bolted midway through their blind date a few weeks earlier. Coach obliges, but only because she assures him that her favorite bar is off the beaten path.

Meanwhile, the players navigate through their schedules of obligations and personal endeavors – Knight and K shoot a promo for the tournament; Tony falls in love on

twitter, but it regrettably turns out to be his teammates playing a rather intricate prank; and Hagan embarks on a journey with Ofir and Gus to find the best oysters in town. The hijinks end without anyone being injured or incarcerated. It's more proof of the team's growth throughout the season. They're ready for the battle against KTech.

Across town, it's a different story for Coach. During the rendezvous with Erin, he does the noble thing and spills the beans. He tells her about Rebecca and that he's sorry their date didn't work out. She's a bit disappointed, but she totally understands. The two finish their drinks and leave the bar – no sweat. However, unbeknownst to Erin and Coach, *American Globe* reporter, Donny Deely, has been spying on them from the corner booth. It's finally his turn for revenge.

In a pre-game interview, Coach is made aware of a picture that was anonymously deposited at media village. It has already begun surfacing all over New Orleans and Riverside, and people want to know about he and Erin's relationship. Coach's history of being distracted for big games (three Final Fours, zero Championships) continues.

The first half of the game only adds to Coach's nightmare as Naismith gets outplayed in every facet of the game. It takes an epiphany at halftime for Coach to be able to inspire his guys. They start the second half as a new team full of tenacity and guts. KTech's 20-point lead fades little by little until Naismith finds themselves down one point with only seven seconds to go. The game – and season for that matter – rests in the hands of Knight Freeman. He breaks his defender down with a fantastic display of spin moves and between-the-legs dribbling. As the game clock winds down toward zero, so does Jude Wyatt's heart monitor back home. In slow motion, Knight maneuvers his way to the basket, breaking free at the last second for a relatively easy layup. The ball leaves Knight's fingertips as the buzzer sounds and Jude's heart monitor flattens. Cut to black. Roll credits.

1.12 – Shining Armor

Knight makes his moves to the basket. The ball rolls off his fingertips toward the hoop. The buzzer sounds as the ball kisses off the glass, bounces around the rim, and falls out of the cylinder and to the floor – no good. Naismith loses. The team buckles to their knees. Coach can't believe his eyes. The season is over. Meanwhile, back in the hospital, nurses revive Jude Wyatt. At this point, it's only prolonging the inevitable, but this buys his family (and Coach) another day or two with the coaching legend.

Getting out of New Orleans after the loss is a nightmare. Reporters mob together in the faces of Coach and the players wanting answers. Why did they lose the game?

Was Coach distracted by his date the night before? What's next for Knight and K? These are all questions that can't rewind the clock and get the Final Four game back.

When the team lands in Riverside, the same questions arise. Luckily for Coach, he clears up the rumors about he and Erin with the fans, administration, and his kids. However, Rebecca is a different story. After overhearing Coach talk to Ellie on the phone saying there is absolutely no one in his life, Rebecca storms off. She refuses to talk to him, and he's too scared to pursue her and make things right.

It takes one final meeting with Jude Wyatt to set Coach straight. He gives Coach confidence to face his issues head on. He assures Coach that he has all the tools to make him the greatest head coach to ever walk the sidelines. It's not easy, but that night, Coach says goodbye to a longtime friend and mentor. He leaves the hospital having now lost two guiding lights in the same calendar year. From this point forward, whenever issues arise at home or at Naismith, he will problem solve alone. That is, until he finds another soul mate.

Coach wastes no time in apologizing to Rebecca – driving it home with a long, overdue kiss. He also counsels K and Knight on their decision to either stay in school for another year or declare for the NBA draft. He lays out the pros and cons of both choices. Both opt to stay another year so they can hunt down a National Championship. K understands the progress he made this season not only as a player but also as a man. Knight wants retribution for the missed layup against KTech. He also wants to be the greatest player to ever play the game. In his mind, Michael Jordan won titles in both college and the pros. By leaving early, Knight would be cutting out the possibility for a college title.

At home, Ellie tells her Dad she has finally decided on a college. She will be attending Naismith University in the fall to be close to her family as well as take advantage of the top-10 Beverly School of Business & Economics. To celebrate, the family throws a dinner party. Coach calls Ellie and asks if he can bring a guest…

While Coach and Rebecca prepare to enter the house for the potentially difficult introductions, the Grandparents turn on the television to watch star-recruit Baz Moore make his college decision. It's down to three schools: Naismith, KTech, and OU. He chooses Naismith, but in an interview afterward, Moore says, "It came down to the fact that Coach Wise can get my family to Riverside. Family is real important to me, so them being able to come with me is a big deal."

The house falls silent. Somewhere reporters are scrambling for more on the story and the league is launching an investigation into Coach Wise and his #1 team in the country.

Future Storylines

- Coach and Rebecca adjust to their relationship under a microscope. As if winning over the kids wasn't hard enough, Rebecca has to fight off other bachelorettes trying to squeeze in on the action. It takes patience and strong-will to grow a healthy relationship in the public eye. Do either of them have enough?

- The signing of Baz Moore out of Boulder Prep in Las Vegas initially does more harm than good to the program and Coach's reputation. It takes weeks to totally clear up the damage caused by Baz's ill-advised interview suggesting Coach Wise signed him by offering illegal benefits.

- Ellie falls into the wrong relationship during her first semester at Naismith and makes a costly mistake. She takes nude photos for who she thinks is her boyfriend. As it turns out, however, he's nothing more than a sports blogger trying to get a leg up on the competition. He uses the photos to blackmail Coach, forcing him to do exclusive things for his site only. It takes months for Coach to defeat the asshole.

- The players continue their struggles to survive on the court, in the classroom, and at the parties. Eve leaves Hagan for the spring semester to study abroad; at which point, he and Ellie begin a hot, steamy relationship right under Coach's nose. K falls off the wagon for a girl, leading him into dangerous territory involving alcohol, drugs, and suffering performance on the court. Tony returns as a Graduate Assistant at Naismith, while Knight battles all new distractions as the best player on the #1 team in the country.

- Naismith brings home the title in Coach's second season, but unfortunately, they have to win in order to live up to the hype. Naismith was a sleeping giant for years, but now they're awake, and every team is gunning for them – every rival wants to see them put back to sleep. With great success comes many adversaries – both on and off the court.

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