



## Don't Put Me In, Coach: My Incredible NCAA Journey from the End of the Bench to the End of the Bench

By Mark Titus

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**An irreverent, hilarious insider's look at big-time NCAA basketball, through the eyes of the nation's most famous benchwarmer and author of the popular blog ClubTrillion.com (3.6m visits!). Mark Titus holds the Ohio State record for career wins, and made it to the 2007 national championship game. You would think Titus would be all over the highlight reels. You'd be wrong.**

In 2006, Mark Titus arrived on Ohio State's campus as a former high school basketball player who aspired to be an orthopedic surgeon. Somehow, he was added to the elite Buckeye basketball team, given a scholarship, and played alongside seven future NBA players on his way to setting the record for most individual career wins in Ohio State history. Think that's impressive? In four years, he scored a grand total of nine—yes, *nine*—points.

This book will give readers an uncensored and uproarious look inside an elite NCAA basketball program from Titus's unique perspective. In his four years at the end of the bench, Mark founded his wildly popular blog Club Trillion, became a hero to all guys picked last, and even got scouted by the Harlem Globetrotters. Mark Titus is not your average basketball star. This is a wild and completely true story of the most unlikely career in college basketball. **A must-read for all fans of March Madness and college sports!**

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"Mark Titus knows a lot of personal secrets of mine. If he revealed any of them in this book, I will kick him right in the testicles. I'm not joking."

-**Greg Oden** (#1 overall pick in 2007 NBA Draft, 2007 1st Team All-American)

"Of all the players I've coached in my career, Mark Titus is one of them."

-**Thad Matta** (head basketball coach at Ohio State)

"You want me to give you a quote? I guess I shouldn't be surprised. You've been riding my coattails for years, so of course you want to put my name on your book to sell more copies."

-**Evan Turner** (#2 overall pick in 2010 NBA Draft, 2010 college basketball National Player of The Year)

"I haven't read this book and probably never will, but the cover looks pretty cool I guess."

-**Mike Conley Jr.** (#4 overall pick in 2007 NBA Draft, 2007 NCAA Tournament South Regional MVP)

"If Mark Titus had been able to play basketball the way he can write, he would have joined his Ohio State team mates in the NBA. No kidding. This is nothing less than a modern-day basketball version of *Ball Four*, a terrific look behind the locker room door, funny and profane and real. Great stuff."

-**Leigh Montville**, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Ted Williams* and *Evel*

"Hilarious."

-**Chicago Tribune**

"As a good-humored book about what Titus calls 'normal kids who do stupid things' while playing big-time basketball, *Don't Put Me In, Coach* should appeal not just to Buckeyes fans but also to anyone looking for a frank, humanizing peek in to the locker room....A funny read."

-**Sports Illustrated**

"For a reminder of the fun that can be had in college sports, turn to Mark Titus...The book, a comic tale of coming to terms with failure, is littered with stories of pranks, jokes, and team hijinks that may turn around that understandably low opinion of college sports. Everybody seems to be having a great time."

-**TheAtlantic.com**

"It's not often we notice a college basketball player who, over his four year career, played a total of 48 minutes in 32 games while racking up just nine points. But when that player happens to be Mark Titus, a Brownsburg, Indiana native who parlayed his benchwarming days at Ohio State University into a blog with nearly 4 million views and a new book titled *Don't Put Me In, Coach*, we make exceptions."

-**The Onion's A.V. Club** (Indianapolis)

"*Don't Put Me In, Coach*, [is] a scabrously funny look at what it's like to almost play for a No. 1-ranked NCAA hoops team."

-**The Free Lance-Star** (Fredericksburg, VA)

"The unique combination of snort-inducing hilarity and insider perspective makes this required reading for younger (or just perpetually immature) hoop heads. A perfect way to pass the time during the tournament's endless TV timeouts."

*-Kirkus*

"The *Maxim* demographic will revel in Titus's rebellious tales, which come with a heaping portion of snarky, bro-friendly prose, scatological humor, and pop culture references....And under all the pranks and immaturity, Titus is a likable, forthright narrator."

*-Publishers Weekly*

About the Author

MARK TITUS's blog, <http://clubtrillion.blogspot.com>, has recorded over 3.6 million views since its debut in late 2008. He has been featured in the *New York Times*, ESPN.com, Yahoo.com, the *Associated Press*, and the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*. He has recently attempted to enter the NBA draft and tried out for the Harlem Globetrotters. Titus graduated from Ohio State in 2010, a hero to millions.

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*Excerpted from the Hardcover Edition*

ONE

Anybody who has ever been a walk-on for a Division I football or basketball team will tell you that being likened to Rudy at least once during a four-year career is pretty much an inevitability. The general public hears the term "walk-on" and immediately thinks that anyone who couldn't earn a scholarship must have been told his entire life that he wasn't good enough, before he relentlessly annoyed coaches for a spot on the team and got life-changing advice from what has to be the wisest field maintenance guy to ever live.

Sadly, this image of a short, white walk-on caring more about the success of the team than all of his teammates combined is reinforced every March, when the guys wearing all their warm-ups on the end of the bench react to routine plays in the NCAA Tournament like tween girls at a Bieber concert. These douches ruin it for the rest of us, as they cement a stereotype for all walk-ons that forever perpetuates the Rudy comparison. Well, you're never going to believe this, but not all walk-ons actually fit this description. I know, I know. It's hard to wrap your mind around the fact that there are sometimes exceptions to stereotypes, but you're just going to have to trust me with this one.

I was fully aware of the walk-on stereotype when I started my career at Ohio State, which is why I promised myself that I would do everything in my power to be an exception. Don't get me wrong, I think Rudy is full of all sorts of inspiration and is the second-best sports movie ever made. (I'm from Indiana and played basketball-I'll let you guess what I think the best sports movie of all time is.) But I've found that very few people make a Rudy comparison in a complimentary way. Instead, they seem to be saying, "I think it's adorable how you try really hard even though you suck balls and there's no way you'll ever get a chance to play." This is why, from day one, I tried to distance myself from the Rudy comparison by pulling pranks on superstar teammates, routinely falling asleep during film sessions, and basically spending every day with the team trying to figure out exactly how much I could get away with. And as it turned out, I could get away with a lot.

Whenever I reminisce with my friends and family about my four years of being a dickhead at Ohio State, they always seem to ask how exactly I was capable of getting away with some of the things I did. (Don't worry, we'll cover all of my shenanigans later.) After all, I was the bottom-feeder on the team who was supposed to just keep his mouth shut and stand on the sideline during practice until a coach told me to step in

for a drill and essentially get sodomized in my role as human punching bag. You'd think that it would only take one screwup on my part for Coach Matta to send my ass packing, but instead he seemed to embrace me as the comedic relief for the team.

In the history of the walk-on-head coach relationship, this was unprecedented. Never had someone in my position been given the freedom I was given, which is why I felt a great responsibility to use this privilege to my advantage. Which brings us back to the original question: how did I go from being a math major basketball manager who knew only three people on campus to one of the loudest voices in the locker room of the number-one-ranked college basketball team in less than a month? The answer to that lies deeply buried in a story about drugs, prostitution, love, betrayal, organized crime in the 1920s, and one man's pursuit of the American Dream.

And by that I mean that the answer has nothing to do with any of those things. Sorry if I got your hopes up.

## TWO

I don't want to brag or anything, but I honestly can't remember getting my first pubes. You might be confused as to how this could possibly be bragging, which is why I should also mention that I vividly remember third grade. Now, I don't want to jump to conclusions, but it seems like since I can remember third grade but I can't remember getting pubes, I must have started puberty before third grade. In other words, I had at least a two-year head start on the rest of my classmates in the race to become the guy all the ladies wanted to tongue-kiss under the bleachers at the varsity football games.

I towered over all my friends, and I was even taller than most of my brother's friends, despite them being three years older than me. In fact, I was so much bigger than other kids my age that I had to get a special desk made for me in elementary school because I couldn't fit in the regular desks. Seriously. I was basically just like Robin Williams in Jack, only I wasn't completely covered with hair, and instead of being socially awkward about my size I dunked on fools on the seven-foot rims during recess. (Also, I wouldn't have completely blown the chance to get it on with Fran Drescher like Jack did, but that's a discussion we'll have to save for another time.)

My size made me a natural fit for basketball, and I quickly fell in love with the game. Since my dad was the athletic director at a local high school when I was growing up, I always had access to a gym and would often stay for hours after the high school games on Friday and Saturday nights to shoot around. Sure this mostly consisted of me throwing up half-court shots and trying to drop-kick the ball in from the top row of the stands, but that's not the point. The point is that I sacrificed my Friday nights and therefore never got the chance to get a pants tent from watching Topanga during TGIF, all because I wanted to get in the gym, work on my game, and try to get better so I could make it to the NBA someday. Besides, those half-courters and shots from the bleachers proved to be useful years later when I made "Mr. Rainmaker," my critically acclaimed YouTube video.

All this "practice" also paid off in the short term, as I instantly became a beast in the local rec league. But after a few years of playing in a league with just kids from my town, I ended up quitting because (a) the refs were dads of other kids in the league, which is to say they secretly despised me for destroying their sons and took out their frustration by calling criminally unfair fouls on me, and (b) our league had a limit on the number of points one person could score in a game. That's right-the league punished kids for being talented, which is the most ass-backwards philosophy I've ever heard of. What kind of Communist thought process was behind this decision to deter success in the interest of fairness? Last time I checked, this is America. And in America it's not only encouraged to beat up on the little guys to get ahead in life-it's necessary. Anyway,

just so we're clear, I'm blaming my lack of an NBA career on the cheesedicks in charge of my youth rec league. They put handcuffs on me at an early age, and I never was able to break free from them.

I reached my boiling point with the rec league when I blocked the shot of some dweeb who wore shirts with wizards and dragons on them and the refs called me for yet another bogus foul, only because I was a foot taller than the other kid. Instead of throwing a tantrum and causing a scene like most kids my age would have done, I waited until the game started again, sat down at half-court, took my shoes off, and cried for my mom in the bleachers to take me home. (Remember, kids: always take the high road.) Sure my outburst was ridiculous, but there was solid reasoning behind my behavior, considering it was obvious to me that the rec league wasn't challenging me enough and I was in desperate need of better competition. Ya know, competition that didn't play in jean shorts or keep an inhaler in its back pocket during the game. Thanks to AAU basketball, I more than found what I was looking for.

For those who don't know, the Amateur Athletic Union oversees tournaments all over the country for amateur athletes in a variety of sports. But in basketball circles, "AAU" is basically just another way of saying "club basketball," as the fundamental idea behind AAU teams is that they are made up of the best players from several towns and even states, as opposed to teammates coming from just one town. The truth is that AAU governs only a very small fraction of the hundreds of tournaments that players could potentially play in during any given summer, but since it is the foremost organization in amateur sports, its name is synonymous with summer basketball. When I started playing AAU in 1997, it wasn't nearly as huge as it is now- some kids today would rather play AAU during the summer than play for their school teams-but it was still a good opportunity for me to test my skills against the best. More importantly, it gave me a chance to not feel like an ogre for being the only one on the court with armpit hair.

### THREE

I'll never forget the first time I played against Greg Oden and Mike Conley, mostly because that one game changed my life forever. I can't remember what year it was, but it was definitely during either the spring or the summer when my AAU team played theirs in some tournament somewhere in Indiana I think. They had nothing but athletic black guys (redundant, I know) from Indianapolis on their team and were by far the best AAU team in the country, despite the fact that back then Greg wore Rec-Specs that made him as intimidating as Richard Simmons's vagina. Meanwhile, my team was full of stereotypical white guys from the suburbs who masked our athletic deficiencies with solid fundamentals and the collective ability to make it rain from anywhere on the court. I would say that heading into the game the clash of cultures conjured up memories of the Princeton upset over UCLA in the 1996 NCAA Tournament, but the truth is that since I was barely in junior high, I was most likely oblivious to who we were playing and probably only agreed to go to the game because my dad promised to take me out for pizza afterward. Nonetheless, even though I was just a dipshit little kid who probably had no idea what was going on, I can say with absolute certainty that this singular game was the most pivotal moment in my basketball career and, to a lesser extent, my life.

I won't bore you with the play-by-play rundown of the game, but I will say that the first half played out exactly like you'd think it would. Mike and his absurd athleticism dribbled circles around us and either laid the ball in or dropped it off to Greg for a thunderous board-slap layup (the seventh-grade version of a dunk). Meanwhile, on the other end of the court, our offense was a well-oiled machine predicated on being in the triple-threat position, setting flawless screens, pump-faking way too much, and shooting almost nothing but threes. This back-and-forth contrast of styles went on for two quarters and left us trailing by 15 at halftime, mostly because Mike and Greg were getting layups every time down the court, and we couldn't make enough threes to keep up with them since we were in seventh grade and it was just short of a miracle that we could consistently get the ball to the rim in the first place. Still, despite our inability to play any defense

whatsoever, the fact of the matter was that we were only down by 15 to a team that should've been blowing us out. Wait, did I say only 15?

Heading into the second half, we knew that we had to make some adjustments to avoid getting run out of the gym, so our coach decided to implement a 2-3 zone. By switching to a zone and compacting our defense around the basket, we would hopefully negate the athleticism of the guys on the other team and force them to shoot jump shots instead of getting wide-open layups. In other words, we were going with the "if he's black play back and if he's white play tight" philosophy, which is unquestionably the greatest defensive strategy in the history of basketball (although it's not exactly clear on how to guard Latinos, Asians, or Native Americans).

This instantly proved to be a good move. Since Mike and the rest of the guards on the other team were accustomed to getting to the basket whenever they wanted, they had never had any reason to practice shooting threes and weren't all that great at it. Knowing this, we basically forced them to match our style of play, and for a while the game turned into a three-point contest that featured them bricking shot after shot and us having the exact amount of success that you would think white guys from Indiana would have. Eventually, they figured our zone out and turned up their defensive intensity when the game mattered most, but for a quick second we gave them a scare that would have surely turned the seventh-grade AAU basketball world upside down. Even though we ran out of gas down the stretch and came up a little short, we managed to expose a serious flaw in a seemingly flawless team and only lost by seven, which was by far the closest any team had come to beating them up to that point.

So, how did this game "change my life forever," or whatever dramatic phrase I used earlier to make this story sound more interesting? Well, what I failed to previously mention is that I was a mismatch nightmare for Greg and Mike's team and played out of my mind for most of the game. As a six-foot-two seventh-grader with a wet jumper, I was too big for little guys like Mike to guard me, and I was too good of a shooter for big guys like Greg, who usually never leave the paint on defense, to guard me. I was essentially a juniorhigh version of Dirk Nowitzki, all the way down to the fact that I also considered Detlef Schrempf a personal hero of mine (but only because his flat top was damn near immaculate-not quite on the same level as Chris Mullin's, but then again, whose is?). I lit Mike and Greg's team up to the tune of 18 points and 7 rebounds (and no assists because passing is entirely unnecessary), which doesn't sound like much at first, but when you consider that high school band parties have twice as much scoring as a typical seventh-grade basketball game, it arguably becomes just as impressive as Wilt's 100 or Kobe's 81.

## **Users Review**

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