

**Basketball Women**  
by  
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When I was young, I enjoyed playing basketball against the older guys because it made me a better player . Now that I'm a relic, I like to play basketball against the younger guys just so I don't get any worse.

Recently, I was once again asked to play with a couple other valley area basketball friends in the 3 on 3 basketball tournament at Three Rivers Stadium. I know what you are thinking. You're thinking I have absolutely no business playing against 18 year old kids who can slam the ball over my head. You're absolutely right. But something in my hollow little cranium can't make the connection yet that I'm washed up. Thus I played.

The tournament is real street basketball. There is a referee but he's more like an ornament that keeps score. The yelling, cursing, pushing and shoving that goes on at these things is almost comical. It's a manly game for manly men.

My goals were not to embarrass myself, score a few baskets and win at least one game (in that order). After losing our second of two heartbreaking losses, I began resigning myself to the fact that I was over the hill.

But then a very inspirational story began unfolding on the court ahead of us as we rested between games. Unknown to us, a group of young women had entered our manly tournament. I thought it was neat that these college gals wanted to play against manly competition. They were playing a team that was very good and I admired their courage.

I clapped politely when they made their first basket. It was sweet. A little pick & roll and boom, the shot went through. The guys on the team smiled, patted the scorer on the back and started to ease into the game. They joked a little between themselves and started to play a little more intensely. But then all of a sudden, one of the girls bolted out of nowhere, made a steal and in one swift motion lobbed a pass under the hoop to a teammate who promptly made another basket. Wow!

Now they really had my attention. Another pick & roll and boom, they scored again. It was awesome. They were so fundamentally sound. It was poetry in motion.

I had once dated a girl who played Division I college basketball so the talent level didn't surprise me. But I had never seen three girls play the game so skillfully, athletically and gracefully together as one unit.

It began dawning on all of us that these gals didn't come just to sharpen their skills, they came to win. Soon, the manly egos of the opposition gave way to bickering and taunting. They began elbowing, pushing and shoving the girls as rigorously as any of the games we

had witnessed. The girls kept their cool and just played the game the way it is supposed to be played - relentlessly.

Then we all witnessed the worst acts of sportsmanship. Usually when an opponent gets pushed and falls, it is good form to help that player up. All three girls got knocked down at least once in the game and none of the players offered a hand to help them up. It was not cool.

The girls continued to play their game at a torrid pace. The guys literally fought back. It was nip and tuck, down to the wire. The girls had several chances to win but missed their shots. It looked like the guys were going to take them. The game was tied, the next basket won and the guys had the ball. Incredibly one of the girls stole the ball and shot a prayer of a shot as she was fouled tumbling down to the ground. Somehow the ball found its way through the hoop. They won. It was one of the more remarkable athletic accomplishments I had ever witnessed.

I made my way over to the girls after the game and told them how much I enjoyed the way they played. They smiled graciously.

Their determination inspired my fossilized remains. I played the next game the way it is supposed to be played - relentlessly. We won. Eventually we faced the girls in the playoffs. And I forgot what happened after that.



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