

The Thrill of Victory

It's safe to say that I am a bit of a sports junky. For years I have been an avid Chicago Cubs, Bulls, Bears and Blackhawks fan. Some people say, how can you be from Wisconsin and like all those Chicago teams? Well, before our family bought a dairy farm here in southern Wisconsin back in 1972, we lived in northwest Indiana, which is basically a suburb of Chicago. My brothers and I became avid fans of these teams because we lived so close by and could listen to all their games and hear about them continually on the news. However, as I have gotten older, I'm finding it much harder to stay enthusiastic about these professional teams. It's been disheartening in recent years to see how money and a lack of integrity have so corrupted the professional sports world in general.

So, that being said, I'm still a sports junky, but my two favorite sports teams these days are from the college ranks. They are the Wisconsin Badger football team and the Wisconsin Badger basketball team. Not only have both of these teams become consistent winners in the Big Ten Conference over the last twenty years, but they have been in the running for national championships as well. When I was a kid growing up this kind of success by the Badgers was unheard of. The Badgers were the doormats of the Big Ten Conference for years and years in every major sport before about 1990.

I also have another connection with both of these teams through my student years at the University of Wisconsin, Platteville. When I was a baseball player there in the mid-eighties, Paul Chryst, who is now the head football coach at Wisconsin was in high school. Paul's dad, George, was the football coach and athletic director at UWP, so we saw quite a bit of Paul around the fieldhouse. In fact, Paul and a couple of our baseball coaches' kids were best friends and hung around the team a lot. At the same time Greg Gard, the current Badger head basketball coach was a student with me. Greg joined Bo Ryan's staff at that same time, and we saw quite a bit of him as well. It's fun to have that connection with both teams.

Last Saturday, I watched with bated breath as the Badgers went on a 12-0 run to overcome a nine-point deficit late in the game and knock off the Indiana Hoosiers to win a share of the Big Ten basketball championship. I found my heart just pounding in my chest as they battled and battled down the stretch. I can't tell you how happy I am for Coach Gard and his staff. He is just a small-town boy from Wisconsin and yet it's those very small-town values that have helped him and Paul Chryst teach a great work ethic to their players. Neither one of these guys is arrogant or showy, they just work hard and speak from the heart.

Their attitudes remind me of our Savior's attitude, who being God in the flesh, came to this earth as a strong Savior and a humble servant. The Bible says in Philippians 2 that "*He did not consider equality with God as something to be grasped, but became obedient to death on the cross*" His humble death and glorious resurrection makes it possible for us to become God's children by believing in Him. As we enter the Easter season, I pray that all of us will again reflect on this incredible truth from the word of God. Until next week, God bless.