

MARYLAND

By Toby Cork

Everybody loves the underdog. We cheered when #16 UMBC defeated #1 Virginia last year during March Madness. We celebrated when the Chicago Cubs won their first World Series in over 108 years. In the movies, we rooted for Jimmy Chitwood to hit the game winning shot in Hoosiers.

Everybody hates the best teams. We wanted the Patriots to lose the Superbowl. We root for anybody to beat the Duke Blue Devils. We got mad when Kevin Durant decided to join the Golden State Warriors and win the NBA championship.

So which team should you be rooting for at this year's Big 10 Women's Basketball Tournament? I'll give you a hint. It's not the underdog. This team joined the Big 10 Conference in 2014 and has won 4 out of the last 5 Big 10 championships, is ranked 8th in the country with a record of 26-3, and is the number one seed in this year's Big 10 tournament. This team's coach has over 500 career wins and a 77% winning percentage (which is better than Bill Belichick and Coach K). This team's players include seven McDonald's All-American nominees. This team is Maryland.

You should root for Maryland because the Terrapins play together, not for themselves. I asked Coach Frese, "What makes this team different or special compared to the other teams you have coached?" Coach responded with, "What makes this team really special is their chemistry. We have ten players and they love each other like sisters and they're always looking out for each other." I asked leading scorer Kaila Charles, "How do you know when to take over a game by scoring versus when to get your teammates involved?" Kaila said, "Sometimes other people have the hot hand, so you want to keep going to them." This teamwork is the reason why 8 out of the 10 players on the team have scored in double digits this season.

You should root for Maryland because of their heart and determination. For one example, Freshman Taylor Mikesell goes into the gym every morning and makes 500-1,000 shots each day. For another example, just look at a few of their recent games. Against Minnesota, down by 7 points with one minute to play, the Terrapins refused to give up.

Led by Kaila Charles, they ended the game with 9 straight points and won at the buzzer. The following game against Purdue they only had 8 players available. They trailed the entire game but never gave up, finally taking the lead from the Boilermakers in the fourth quarter to win the game.

You should root for Maryland because they are a fun team. I asked Freshman Shakira Austin, "What has been your favorite part about your first year in the Big 10?" Shakira said, "Being around my teammates. Playing around with them in practice even though we should probably be serious." Also, in the locker room after every win the Terrapins have, the player of the game gets to break through a piñata which is followed by a mad dash to claim the most candy.

Even though they may be the number one seed in the Big 10 Tournament, it is hard to root against Maryland. This team is very impressive and fun to watch. Bankers Life Fieldhouse better be ready for a candy cleanup when the Terrapins take home the championship. Fear the turtle.

