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THE AUDIBLE COMMENTARY

Who needs another tournament? We do

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Saturday, March 22, 2008


It was a strange thing to learn about in the newsroom, so I'm sure it was even stranger elsewhere. The men's College Basketball Invitational tournament popped up out of nowhere. The what?

Well, it is a third postseason men's basketball tournament basically for teams that didn't make the NCAA or NIT field. Of course, the NCAA tournament includes 65 teams and the NIT includes 32. So who on earth could be left? The idea and the existence of the CBI seemed utterly ridiculous, so the guys sitting around me laughed it off, as did I.

But the more I thought about it, the less I laughed. Pretty soon I wasn't laughing at all. It seems like a pretty good idea, and we have a prime example right here in river city. Wright State had a 21-10 season. The Raiders whipped a ranked team in Butler and provided area basketball fans with plenty of down-to-the wire games. And after all of that, they were rewarded with nothing. That's wrong. The CBI, run by the Gazelle Group, a Princeton, N.J., sports marketing firm, is right.

Consider that the NIT last year reduced its field from 40 to 32. In addition, teams that win league regular-season titles but lose in league tournaments automatically qualify for the NIT, which the NCAA owns. So a lot of good teams have nowhere to go. Teams like Wright State, which didn't even get an invite to the 16-team CBI field.

I hope this tournament lasts and expands, just to say "good job" to not-so-rich teams that give everything they have and get good results. For some hard-working kids, it's just a pat on the back, and we all like those.

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