



Thirteen Women Strong: The Making of a Team

Robert K. Wallace

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In 1974, Nancy Winstel joined the women's college basketball team at Northern Kentucky University as a walk-on. She had little basketball experience, never having played on a high school team?her high school didn't even have girl's basketball. Despite her inexperience, Winstel served NKU as a talented student athlete, but her legacy didn't end there. Appointed head coach at NKU in 1983, she gained a reputation as one of the most successful coaches in women's college basketball history with more than 500 wins. Winstel garnered these victories in an athletic landscape vastly different from the one she knew as an NKU undergraduate. Many of the student-athletes on her twenty-first-century squads have been playing organized basketball for most of their lives. In a post-title IX America, more women than ever are involved in team sports and their teams attract a large following of enthusiasts.

NKU professor Robert K. Wallace, one of many passionate fans of the Norse, has brought his appreciation for the team's players and their accomplishments to *Thirteen Women Strong: The Making of a Team*. Chronicling the 2006–07 season of twelve remarkable student-athletes and their legendary coach, Wallace was granted unprecedented access to the team. Sitting in on closed meetings and practice sessions, he follows the players through grueling training drills, intensely close games, exhilarating wins, and anguished losses.

During the 2005–06 season, a squad of NKU women with no seniors achieved unanticipated success, earning a 27–5 record that led to a Great Lakes Valley Conference championship. The entire team returned the following season to expectations of even greater success, but their 2006–07 season was plagued by injuries and other major obstacles. After a string of tough losses, the women mounted a comeback to earn a 21–8 record and reach the NCAA Division II Tournament once again. The team's story is one of loss, triumph, and personal growth.

Thirteen Women Strong profiles each member of the team, including the coach. Wallace provides keen insight into the emotional and physical demands of high-level competition. Exploring the impact of Title IX legislation on women's collegiate sports with the critical eye of a scholar and the love of a fan, Wallace documents the story of how thirteen women faced high expectations and difficult trials to come together as a team, their growth culminating in the 2007–08 national championship. *Thirteen Women Strong* is a fascinating study of this dynamic group of female student-athletes and their renowned leader.

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