

# Five Sports' Moments We Wish We Could Experience for the First Time

Not every sporting event is an instant classic. Most have their share of good and bad moments. A few are filled with so much bad that we wish we could forever wipe them from our memories. But then there are those special games, those special moments that keep us coming back again and again. The championship won on a last shot. The huge play that completely turned the game around. These games and moments become a part of us. Those memories will always be there but every now and then, wouldn't it be amazing if we could relive them for the first time? Wouldn't it be amazing if we could somehow go back in time and experience the excitement, tension, and overwhelming joy all over again? If we did have that ability, these are a few of the games and moments we would like to see again...for the first time.

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## **March 28, 1992 Duke vs. Kentucky by Steve Lytle**

My most memorable basketball game, and probably the most memorable sports event for me was Duke-Kentucky, March 28, 1992. I was traveling for the Mission (Free Will Baptist International Missions), and staying with a pastor in the mountains of Western North Carolina, probably less than 30 miles from Johnson City, Tennessee. The pastor and his wife graciously allowed me to watch the game, even as we conversed and fellowshipped. I knew my boys were watching it in Kingsport, TN where we lived that year home from Panama on stateside assignment.

Wikipedia sums up the game like this:

*The 1992 NCAA Tournament was highlighted by a game between Duke and Kentucky in the East Regional Final to determine the final spot in the Final Four. With 2.1 seconds remaining in overtime, defending national champion Duke trailed 103–102. Grant Hill threw a pass the length of the court to Christian Laettner, who faked right, dribbled once, turned, and hit a jumper as time expired for the 104–103 win. In 2004 Sports Illustrated deemed it the greatest college basketball game of all time, and ESPN included it as number 17 on its list of top 100 sports moments of the past 25 years (see ESPN25). It is ranked number one on the list of the greatest NCAA tournament games of all time compiled by USA Today in 2002.*

The game had everything: drama, history (two of the most storied schools in the history of NCAA basketball), importance (the right to go to the Final Four), great coaches (Mike Krzyzewski, Rick Pitino), and a huge television audience. I don't think there has ever been a more dramatic ending. (NC State – Houston, 1983 when Lorenzo Charles dunked the winning basket against the highly favored Cougars comes close; I jumped up and broke a couch in Panama that day!) My reaction in the Duke-Kentucky had to be subdued; I was a guest, they weren't basketball fans, it was late, but I immediately went to where the landline phone was and called my boys! They had had to celebrate in silence as well; Judy was in bed with a migraine!

It had everything: an underdog KY team that played well throughout, featuring 4 players who had hung in even though the school had just come off academic probation, and future NBA star Jamal Mashburn. Duke had outstanding point guard Bobby Hurley, the great Grant Hill, and Christian Laettner. Laettner would go on to the NBA where his game didn't quite translate to all-star status at that level (only once in his career), but at the college level he was versatile, intelligent, talented, and dominant. In this game for all

time, he scored 31 points, shooting 10-10 from the field, and 10-10 from the free throw line.

In short, one of the most entertaining games ever, and one of the most emotional, but neither my sons or I could express our emotions!

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## **2008 Summer Olympics – 4×100 Swimming Freestyle Relay by Gowdy Cannon**

The fact this was ten years ago is as good an example of any of how fast time flies because it feels like it was yesterday. The buzz around Michael Phelps potentially winning 8 golds was electric. We had seen this type of buzz in years prior with people failing to do it [1.I'm thinking of Matt Biondi in 1988, though let it be noted that he still had an incredible Olympics, and earned a mention in the book *Emotional Intelligence* for his grit in coming back to win 5 golds after he failed to win his first couple of events.]. And when you have events where you have to rely on others to help you win, as Phelps did for a couple of relay races that year, it makes it even more tenuous.

The one of the 8 that I will never ever forget was one of those relays, the 4×100 freestyle. Phelps swam the lead leg and did his part by setting an American record for 100 meters in the freestyle and putting the U.S. in first. But by the last leg, Jason Lezak found himself more than half a body length behind Frenchman Alain Bernard in the last half of the last lap. I remember thinking, "It's over. He's not going to get to 8." I knew very little about swimming races but it seemed obvious that it was too big a deficit to overcome. I was devastated for Phelps and our country. A repeat of 1988 was unfolding before our eyes.

But then, like a superhero moment in a movie, Lezak began to catch him. Yet time and distance were running out. He couldn't do it, could he? Swimming like they both were on fire, they rapidly approached the wall and touched it. It looked live like Lezak won by a finger tip, or maybe a fingernail. There was a second of anticipation for the official result...and he did it! He came from behind and won! I jumped around my apartment like a maniac, high-fiving and hugging people without a trace of inhibition. The official margin was .08 seconds. But Phelps earned his 2nd gold and kept the dream of 8 alive.

We love the Olympics for a million reasons and endings like this one are one of them. Phelps' 8 golds were not won in a vacuum. They were won with the help of teammates and that makes it feel like they were won by the whole nation.



Click the image above to watch the video of the race.

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## **Vince Young's 99 yard Walk Off Drive** **by Phill Lytle**

2009 is not a season that most Titans' fans remember fondly. The team finished the season 8-8. (A Jeff Fisher team finished 8-8? Whaaaaa?!?) Let's back up a bit to understand why that 8-8 finish was so disappointing.

The Tennessee Titans were one of the best teams in the NFL in 2008, finishing with a 13-3 record. They started that season 10-0. They lost in the playoffs to the eventual Super Bowl champs – the Baltimore Ravens. After a depressing early exit from the post-season, every Titans' fan just knew that 2009 was going to be another chance to watch their team make a run for a championship. Things worked out a little differently.

The Titans opened the season by losing their first 6 games. They lost their sixth straight game, falling to the New England Patriots 59-0. Yes, 59 to ZERO. Starting QB Kerry Collins was benched and Vince Young replaced him. What happened after that further solidified Young's place as one of the most enigmatic and confounding players to ever step on the field.

The Titans proceeded to reel off four straight wins. On November 29th, they faced the Matt Leinart led Arizona Cardinals. The game itself was nothing spectacular. It was two mediocre teams playing mostly mediocre football. But the final minute of the game was the stuff legends are made of.

With a little over two minutes to play and no timeouts, Vince Young led the Titans on a completely improbable 99 yard drive. (They needed a touchdown to win the game. A field goal would have done them no good.) Young ran, threw, and willed his team down the field, getting a little help by one favorable bounce, and converting multiple fourth down throws. Finally, with

seconds left, on 4th down from the ten yard line, Young, scrambled around hoping to find an open receiver, spotted Kenny Britt racing across the back of the end zone. Young threw the ball to an open spot and Britt flew through the air to make the catch.

I sat there in disbelief. While Young's professional career was never as good as people hoped, it was moments like this that proved that when the moment called for it, he seemed to come up with just the right play. To this day, it is one of the best performances I have ever seen and I would love to sit down and see it again for the first time.

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## **Jadaveon Clowney's Hit vs. Michigan in the 2013 Outback Bowl**

**by Gowdy Cannon**

South Carolina football has fallen on mediocre times recently, right where the program was for most of my life pre-Steve Spurrier. But for several years earlier this decade, the Gamecocks were a Top 10 team. The highlight of the run was a hit that got replayed over and over on sports highlight shows and to this day still fills people with a sense of awe.

The Gamecocks were battling the Wolverines in a January 1st Bowl in Tampa, FL. Ahead 22-21 midway through the 4th quarter, Michigan faked a punt but appeared to fail to convert the first down. A measurement seemed to confirm this—they were 2-3 chain lengths short. But the officials awarded the first down to Michigan, despite screams of protests from Spurrier.

The very next play it happened. Taylor Lewan had shut the All-American Clowney down all afternoon. But somehow someone missed a block on this play and as soon as Michigan QB Devin Gardner handed the ball Vincent Smith, Clowney was right there

to blow him up, knocking his helmet off and forcing a fumble which he himself recovered. It was a play that earned the Gamecocks justice but also just looked incredible as it unfolded, like this monster defensive end took matters into his own hands and would not be denied. Clowney may as well have been Chuck Norris for that moment.

I was at the game with my brothers and dad and were behind the play in the end zone. I would not trade seeing it live for anything but if I could watch it for the first time again I would love to see it from the 50 yard line or on TV because seeing it from left to right shows how visually spectacular it was.

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## **2014 NBA Finals by Phill Lytle**

Sometimes I feel like I am more defined by which teams I hate than the teams I love. Mainly, because the teams I hate win a lot. The Chicago Bulls. The New England Patriots. 2014 provided a wonderful convergence between the team I hated the most in the NBA at that time – the Miami Heat – and my favorite basketball team of the last 15 years or so – the San Antonio Spurs. The previous year, the Heat had made an impressive (and annoying) comeback and defeated the Spurs for the NBA championship. 2014 had no time for comebacks or heroics by the Heat. The Spurs put on a clinic, winning the series 4 games to 1. Every win for the Spurs was a blowout. To the casual fan, I'm sure it was not a very interesting series. To me, it was impossible to stop smiling as I watched my favorite team completely dismantle LeBron James and his band of front-running losers. Watching Kawhi Leonard win the Finals MVP while his team celebrated was the perfect conclusion to a perfect series. There are few times in my life as a sports' fan that have brought me more happiness. I could live in that moment again and again.



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Those are ours. What about you? What sports' moment do you wish you could see again for the first time? What game, play, or even series would you want to relive? Let us know in the comment section below. And please, if you enjoy this or any other of our articles, share them with your friends on social media. We are entirely dependent on word of mouth for advertising.