

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.

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!

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.

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.

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.

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.



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.

Memories (Part 2)

As I continue to recall memories, I should point out that these are selective and representative. There are many more, but these stand out to illustrate the faithfulness of God in both good and bad times. (Read Part One [here](#).)

The Sweet Fellowship of College

“Yesterday, Today, Forever” was a medley of songs popular during my college years at the Free Will Baptist Bible College, [1. Welch College now.] that we dorm students would sing during informal gatherings. One evening, around 1970 or 1971, as the students frequently did, we’d gathered in front of the sliding curtain opening into the dining hall (where the student lounge and later “Common Grounds” were) about five minutes to six, and as was often the case, we started to sing:

Yesterday, Today, Forever Jesus is the same.

All may change, but Jesus never, glory to His name!

Glory to His name, glory to His name.

All may change but Jesus never, glory to His name!

Precious name, oh how sweet, hope of earth and joy of Heaven.

Precious name, oh how sweet, hope of earth and joy of Heaven.

Heaven is better than this, praise God what joy and bliss

*Walking down streets of purest gold, living in a land where
we’ll never grow old.*

Heaven is better than this, praise God what joy and bliss

*I like Bible College down here, but Heaven is better than,
Heaven is better than*

Heaven is better than this.

This world is not my home, I'm just a passing through

My treasures are laid up, somewhere beyond the blue.

The angels beckon me to Heaven's golden shore,

And I can't feel at home in this world any more.

More, more about Jesus, more, more about Jesus

*More of His saving fullness see, more of His love who died for
me.*

It's me, it's me, oh Lord, standing in the need of prayer

It's me, it's me oh Lord, standing in the need of prayer.

*Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer, that calls me from
a world of care*

*And bids me at my Father's throne make all my wants and wishes
known.*

*In seasons of distress and grief, my soul has often found
relief*

*And oft escaped the tempter's snare, by thy return, sweet hour
of prayer.*

With a key word, one song would flow into the next:
name...name, Heaven...Heaven,

This...this, more...more, and prayer...prayer. That particular
night, though, as we approached the final song, there seemed
to be a holy hush, a sense of God's Spirit. The curtain came

open well before the end. The dining hall hostess stood there smiling. She didn't hush our singing and call for someone to ask the blessing right away. Instead, she joined us as we finished out the medley with the the beautiful and poignant "Sweet Hour of Prayer," and then we prayed and went into the dining hall to eat. A beautiful moment, a precious memory, which to me highlights the camaraderie, the sweet fellowship, the closeness of our student body during our unforgettable college years.

First Visit to Cuba

It was the summer of 1986. We had just come home from our second term in Panama to begin stateside assignment. Brother Eugene Waddell, who had recently been named as General Director of Free Will Baptist Foreign Missions, called me, and asked me if I would go with him to Cuba to be his interpreter/translator. I felt greatly honored to be asked to go. Over the years, we had met a number of our FWB people from Cuba who migrated to Panama en route to the United States. I'd heard so much about the country and the church there. In addition, visits from the US to Cuba were very infrequent, and no one from the Mission office had gone in nearly thirty years.

It was one of the most unforgettable weeks of my life. We were in Pinar del Río, at the site where the seminary had operated for almost 20 years up until the time of the Cuban revolution. Since that time it had been closed, and the government would not allow the seminary to reopen. Eugene Waddell spoke several times during the youth camp we were attending; the FWB Church in Cuba was still permitted to use the facility for camps and conventions. Never have I seen such anointing or heard such pertinent messages as those he brought that week. His messages from the book of Daniel, and how God used this young man and his three friends as witnesses in a

foreign, hostile culture, tremendously blessed and encouraged our Cuban brothers and sisters, especially the youth.

We laughed, we cried, we worshipped, and we forged friendships that would last for a lifetime and into eternity. There were also strategic discussions and the working out of a viable strategy for the Mission to again become involved in the life of the Cuban church, but in a healthy way that would honor our brothers and not create unhealthy dependency. What has resulted in Cuba these past 30 years owes much to the wisdom God gave to Bro. Waddell and Bro. Gilberto Díaz, who was president of the Cuban Association.

The 1989 US Invasion of Panama

Things had been hot and chaotic in Panama since 1987, when frequent demonstrations started taking place against the dictatorship that had ruled the country since October 1968. Then, in early 1988, the U.S. froze Panamanian assets in an effort to force dictator Manuel Antonio Noriega to step down, and charged him with drug trafficking and other illegal activities. Banks closed, and we had difficulty getting money to even buy groceries. Things calmed down a bit, but then in May, 1989, after Noriega had the presidential election annulled when it was evident that the opposing candidate had one, violence erupted, and images of Guillermo Endara and Guillermo "Billy" Ford beaten and bloodied by Noriega's thugs flashed across the television screen. The tension grew almost daily.

Judy shares the following memory:

Since public transportation was so difficult during this time, one afternoon, I decided to take our friend Lola to a bus stop closer to her house so she wouldn't have to wait for hours. We were chatting in the car as we arrived to the area called San

Miguelito. Suddenly, we were in the middle of a political demonstration. The traffic was totally stopped. I looked around. There was a river of cars in front of us, behind us and on both sides. The angry mob was shouting, "Kill the Gringos, kill the Gringos." There was no escape. The car had tinted windows, thank the Lord, because one protester approached my car and laid his AK-47 right on the hood and continued to shout! Lola was praying like there was no tomorrow and I was saying a few prayers myself. Just as suddenly as we found ourselves in this horribly frightening situation, it seemed like God parted the Red Sea. That river of cars opened up and I didn't wait to see if the traffic light was red or green. I gunned it and we were out of there safe and sound. Only God could do that!

There were a couple of coup attempts to have Noriega step down, which failed and resulted in Noriega's men being killed. October and November slowly went, the tension growing, and no one knowing what might happen. Noriega shook a machete in the face of the United States, and declared Panama to be in a state of war. It was now late December, Christmas season, stores crowded with customers and their Christmas merchandise.

December 20, 12:00 a.m.: My family and I – our three boys were there with us, ages 14, 12, and 8 – will never forget "Operation Just Cause." The bombing, the strong military presence for weeks that followed, the terrible Friday, December 22 following the Wednesday a.m. invasion; a day of looting as people ransacked the stores, including those nearby us, and carried things up the street in front of our house. Everyone was concerned that once the stores were wiped out, looters would start breaking into homes. That night, by common consent, believers set a time to pray and call upon the Lord for His protection. I'll never forget when the prayer time ended, at that very moment, we heard the first U.S. helicopters passing over the neighborhoods, and heard that a curfew had been instituted! We were able to sleep in peace, in

spite of the uncertainty. The next day, we saw the first troops, patrolling the city. Things began to quickly calm down.

Parents' Home-going

These memories, though separated by over 25 years, have special significance: the passing of our parents, their departing this earth on their Heavenly journey. My dad died in 1981, after a year and a half struggle with pancreatic and liver cancer. He was not quite 70, and I was only 31 when he left us. We are thankful he lived longer than the doctors' had predicted, and enjoyed several months relatively pain-free. Judy's mom, Lillian Hovis, left us in 1993, at age 68. She had taken care of Judy's dad, who had lived in declining health for some time, when she was stricken with pancreatic and liver cancer in 1992. In less than a year, she was gone. That left Judy's dad, who lived for almost three years after his wife of 46 years was taken. He passed in 1996, at home. My mom suffered from Alzheimer's for more than 8 years, before the Lord took her home in 2007.

These very selective memories, spread over a period of 30 plus years, show God's love, faithfulness, protection, and comfort. From a precious, unforgettable moment of fellowship and camaraderie, to the Holy Spirit's mighty working among believers in Cuba, to God's hand of protection during a time of uncertainty and danger, to His comfort as we said our earthly goodbyes to those we love, He was there!

Memories (Part 1)

Memories are indicators, reminding us where we've been, what we've experienced, and the faithfulness of God throughout our lives.

Memories are signposts, pointing us backward for remembrance and reflection so that we can then look forward to God in faith and anticipation.

Memories are not in and of themselves infallible or "stand alone." Truth, fact, and reality are all much more important. At the same time, memories are our recollection and impression of those events and realities.

Some memories seem to always be around, just under the surface, easily recalled. Others pop up out the blue, after not having been remembered or thought of for years.

It would be negligent to fail to point out that there are bad memories, awful memories, that constitute nightmares in our lives. These don't bring joy as do good, positive memories, but sometimes we can still learn from them. We can trust the Lord to heal them and to help us learn from them.

Memories can be faulty or false. My memory of Judy's nurse's cap, for example. The first time I went to see her in Missouri in 1970 after we started dating, I arrived at her house, and her dad took me with him to go pick her up. I used to tell people of seeing her come out of the doctor's office where she worked, so pretty with her nurse's cap on. She reminded me that she was not wearing a cap; I was remembering a picture of her in her nurse's garb on a shelf at home. I had conflated the two things and thus had a faulty memory.

Memories can have great value, even if we don't remember everything. While it's great to remember one's salvation experience – and many do in great detail – it is even more important to know that today we are relying on Jesus' finished work on the cross, and are believing in and following him. It's not necessary to remember the date and all the circumstances.

God constantly reminded His people of His mighty workings on their behalf in the past and urged them to go back and recall His faithfulness. (Psalm 78 is a lengthy recall of what God had done in the life of Israel, and how the people still didn't obey and follow Him.) Psalm 77:11: "I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your wonders of old." (Psalm 103:2)

So, with those foundational observations, some memories "from my personal storehouse." I've selected them as representative, and for their value as teaching experiences. Over time, I hope to do a couple more of these, that cover the years of my life. I'm convinced that memories can have great value as teachers.

1966 (I think that's the year.) "Who Am I?" Sunday morning service at my home church. I was 16. A group of young women, slightly older than me, was singing one Sunday morning, a beautiful song that was very popular during those years. As they sang "who am I that a King would bleed and die for, who am I that He would pray not my will thine for?," [1. Who Am I: Charles "Rusty Goodman" 1965] tears began to flow, and several of the girls totally lost it. In fact, they couldn't continue. The emotion spread throughout the church, as the Holy Spirit ministered to hearts. I think that some people came to the altar. Our pastor, as this went on for several minutes, realized he couldn't preach the sermon he'd prepared, but deftly and with wisdom, began to exhort and encourage the people. A tremendous memory indeed, one of many times when "God showed up" and blessed His people.

1968 Testimonies of enrolling college freshmen. Again, at my church. Again, a Sunday morning. This time, our pastor had asked those of us going off to college in a few weeks (it was early August) to briefly share. I – the shy, inhibited one – was first. All I can say is that I poured out my heart, after spending hours going over what I wanted to say, and a Power greater than mine took over, and my testimony (exhortation) touched hearts in a way I couldn't have imagined. It may have been the first time in my life I had ever thought that God might somehow use me in the ministry as a preacher.

1977 First service in Panama that Judy and I led. John 4 the Samaritan woman and the living water Jesus gives. We had five people present – the Cáceres family, father, mother, and three teenaged daughters. I was nervous. My Spanish was not all that good, since we had just finished one year of language school, and had arrived in Panama only two months earlier. We put the chairs in a circle. Judy played the piano and led the singing. That was the small beginning of a church plant in Bethania, Panama City – quite a memory, indeed!

1982 Phillip's epiglottitis. I was on a trip to Panama's interior, about two hours from home. Up in Buenos Aires, there was no electricity and no running water. There was no way to keep in touch with Judy and the three boys. When I got home four days later, there was a sign on the door: "Phillip is in the hospital. Don't worry – he's much better. Come as soon as you can."

I rushed over to Paitilla Hospital to find Phillip in a hospital room under an oxygen tent. Judy explained that after I left on my trip, Phill had started running a high fever, and didn't seem to be breathing well; in fact, he was wheezing. After an entire morning of this, she grew very concerned and had a neighbor take him to the clinic for a 2:00 p.m. appointment. (I had the car.) The clinic was full that afternoon, but the receptionist realized Phillip was very sick and moved him to the front. Dr. Vásquez looked at him and said

“I don’t want to alarm you, but we need to get him in the hospital. I think he has epiglottitis.”

In a matter of minutes, the doctor had diagnosed our son with something rather rare in Panama – an infection of the epiglottis – which led to its swelling and producing thick saliva. Phillip was slowly smothering to death. The doctor immediately started two antibiotics and ordered an oxygen tent to help Phillip’s breathing. Unknown to Judy at the time, he spent that first night at the hospital, because of his concern, and to be able to monitor Phillip closely.

God was so merciful, and though I came into the picture “after the fact,” my heart is no less grateful to the Lord for sparing our son. Jehovah-Rapha, the Lord our healer.

Memories...we all have them. Let’s benefit from them.

Precious Memories how they linger

How they ever flood my soul.

In the stillness of the midnight

Precious sacred scenes unfold. [2. Precious Memories: J.B.F. Wright, 1925]