



Raise the Roof

Pat Summitt

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"It wasn't a team. It was a tent revival."

So says Pat Summitt, the legendary coach whose Tennessee Lady Vols entered the 1997-98 season aiming for an almost unprecedented "three-peat" of NCAA championships. *Raise the Roof* takes you right inside the locker room of her amazing team, whose inspired mixture of gifted freshmen and seasoned stars produced a standard of play that would change the game of women's basketball forever.

The 1997-98 season started innocently enough. One Saturday in August, four young freshmen--Semeka Randall, Tamika Catchings, Ace Clement and Teresa Geter--arrived on the Tennessee campus to begin their college careers. Welcoming them were a number of players from the previous year, including Chamique Holdsclaw and Kellie Jolly. But that night, in a sign of things to come, a simple pickup game turned into an amazing display of basketball brilliance--freshmen against established players, and with barely a shot missed by either side. Suddenly Pat Summitt glimpsed the future: fast, aggressive and hugely talented. This might be the team she'd worked her whole career to coach.

As the season got under way, other dramas unfolded. After one emotional team meeting, Summitt realized that many on the team were playing for something more than just the glory of the game: all four freshmen, for example, came from single-parent homes, and the tough circumstances of the majority of the other players seemed to add an extra edge to their desire to win it all. Further, Chamique Holdsclaw, widely regarded as the greatest female player ever, was being dogged by questions about turning pro--and she seemed reluctant to rule it out. Meanwhile, another member of the team began to notice the unwelcome attentions of a fan, who soon turned out to be a full-fledged stalker.

All this was behind the scenes; out on the court, the win column was swelling with every game: 8-0, 15-0, 21-0. As 1997 turned into 1998, Pat Summitt began privately to admit that this team had changed her: these kids were so lovable, funny and eager to please that she simply had to let them into her heart. Along the way, the Lady Vols were redefining what women were capable of, trading in old definitions of femininity for new ones--in short, they were keeping score. And by the time they entered the NCAA Final Four tournament in Kansas City, Summitt found herself believing the impossible: despite all the distractions, the 1997-98 Lady Vols could go undefeated, and, in doing so, raise the roof off the sport of women's basketball.

Packed with the excitement of a season on the brink of perfection and filled with the comedy and tragedy of one year in the life of a basketball team, *Raise the Roof* will have readers cheering from the bench for a team of all-conquering players and their astonishing coach.

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