

## Rick Bozich | Put a bow on these six books

Dr. Bo deserves a stocking packed with coal for predictions gone bad or misguided votes in the Associated Press top 25 college basketball poll. But that doesn't mean others in your life should be disappointed for Christmas.

I know it's late, but shopping has not moved into overtime yet. As always, I'm here to help with my annual list of books for your favorite sports fan.

### **1. Kentucky Colonels of the American Basketball Association: The Real Story of a Team Left Behind:** By Gary West and Lloyd "Pink" Gardner.

Readers 35 or younger will question this, but there was a time when Louisville had a pro basketball team that played in the same league with the Indiana Pacers, New Jersey Nets and Denver Nuggets. That team was the Kentucky Colonels, the 1975 champions of the ABA.

They didn't survive the 1976 merger with the NBA, but they were too colorful, entertaining and successful to forget. West, a freelance writer based in Bowling Green, and Gardner, the former Colonels' trainer and Fairdale High School coach, have ensured the Colonels will never be forgotten, tying together the delightful and melancholy stories involving Dan Issel, Artis Gilmore, Jim McDaniels, coach Hubie Brown and the other characters who made the Colonels a local treat.

### **2. These Guys Have All the Fun: Inside the World of ESPN:** By James Andrew Miller and Tom Shales.

Not all the back-stabbing, jealousy and double-dealing occurs in locker rooms and ownership suites. According to this best-seller, it's standard operating procedure in Bristol, Conn., home of America's most powerful sports media conglomerate.

Today ESPN is the dominant force in TV sports programming — and its website and radio network also drive sports talk. But the time was when people scratched their heads and wondered why this silly new cable company was televising slow-pitch softball games involving the Kentucky Bourbons.

### **3. Through My Eyes:** By Tim Tebow and Nathan Whitaker.

This book was written before Tebow became Must-See TV every Sunday.

His story is well-known: The Denver Broncos quarterback was born after his mother had been encouraged to abort the pregnancy by an obstetrician. The son of a Christian minister, Tebow was home-schooled and grew up in a family dedicated to mission work. He won two national titles at Florida while professing his Christian faith at every opportunity. This NFL season has only made the story more compelling.

**4. West by West: My Charmed, Tormented Life:** By Jerry West and Jonathan Coleman.

Who had a better basketball life than Jerry West? The most beloved player ever at West Virginia University. Hall of Fame guard who won one title playing for the Lakers and more as their general manager. Heck, his silhouette is the outline for the NBA logo.

Even logos have issues. West talks candidly about how he has dealt with depression as well the expectations instilled by an overbearing father.

**5. Swing Your Sword: Leading the Charge in Football and Life:** By Mike Leach, Bruce Feldman, Peter Berg and Michael Lewis.

Leach, once an assistant at UK, talks about his iconoclastic approach to coaching as well as his battles with Texas Tech and ESPN. In an era of sanitized coach-speak, his candor is refreshing.

**6. Sweetness: The Enigmatic Life of Walter Payton:** By Jeff Pearlman.

This book generated a tremendous backlash because Pearlman presented Payton, the Bears' Hall of Fame halfback, with all his flaws and glorious achievements on the football field. Pearlman interviewed more than 700 people and crafted a story that illuminates the complex but tragically short life that Payton lived.