

Decorated Author Melissa Isaacson's New Book "State" Chronicles Her IHSA Championship Basketball Team

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Current Northwestern University lecturer Melissa Isaacson is an award-winning sportswriter who has worked for ESPN and was a beat writer for the Michael Jordan-led Chicago Bulls during her decorated 30-plus year career.

Long before Isaacson authored books like *Transition Game: An Inside Look at Life with the Chicago Bulls* and *Sweet Lou – Lou Piniella: A Life in Baseball*, she was a student-athlete at Niles West High School, where she was a member of the school's 1979 IHSA Girls Basketball State Championship winning team.

The latter is the subject of her next book, the forthcoming *STATE: A Team, a Triumph, a Transformation* which is available for [pre-sale on Amazon and other outlets](#).

Isaacson and her teammates will be honored on Saturday, March 2 at the 2019 IHSA Girls Basketball State Finals as the team celebrates the 40th anniversary of capturing their state crown.

Isaacson will be available on the concourse at Redbird Arena throughout the day to chat about the book and her career. She will also appear at the IHSA's *March Madness Experience* inside the Peoria Civic Center exhibit halls on Saturday, March 9 as a part of the Country Financial IHSA Class 1A and 2A Boys Basketball State Finals, America's Original March Madness.

More from Isaacson on *STATE: A Team, a Triumph, a Transformation*:

They were a group of girls sitting innocently at the crossroads of history, a fledgling team of first-time athletes not permitted to play in the "Boys' Gym." Four years later, those girls performed before standing room-only crowds in that same gym and reached the pinnacle of Illinois high school basketball.

Celebrating the 40th anniversary of their magical state championship, the 1979 Niles West girls' basketball team will be among those honored at center court in Redbird Arena during halftime of the Class 4A state tournament consolation game on Saturday, March 2, and will be available for interviews before and after the festivities.

Among them will be Barb Atsaves, who still sits among the top DePaul women all-time in scoring, assists and steals; their charismatic Niles West coach Gene Earl, the sweetheart of the Champaign press corps 40 years ago and an IBCA Hall of Famer; and longtime sportswriter Melissa Isaacson, author of the upcoming book "STATE: A Team, a Triumph, a Transformation," the captivating first-person account of the journey to the state championship, which shaped the women they would grow up to be.

"We were unaware of the history we were making," Isaacson said. "But what we did know was that we were sharing something that would impact our lives forever."

Isaacson, on the faculty of Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism and the author of two previous books, was the first woman general sports columnist at the Chicago Tribune and the beat writer for the

Michael Jordan-led Bulls championship teams as well as the Bears, covering virtually every major sports championship for the Orlando Sentinel, USA Today, the Tribune and later, ESPN.com.

One of the most notable teams in IHSA history, Niles West defeated Jackie Joyner's East St. Louis team in the '79 state final with Joyner, now considered among the greatest female athletes of all-time, saying that loss propelled her team to an undefeated season and the 1980 state title.

For Niles West, for all of them, it was truly a special time.

"What happened to us, how basketball literally rescued us in a way previously only possible for boys, is a story that's important and I feel needs to be shared," Isaacson said.