

# Foreword

**J**ohn Gasaway sat down in my office in late May, and as we recounted Butler University's run to the national championship game I found myself enthralled by our conversation. While we shared insights and talked specifically about Butler (and our opponents), many thoughts started racing through my mind. And that conversation reinforced a central principle of our program: *Every possession counts*.

As I said after the Duke game, when you lose by one possession in a game with 60-plus trips down the floor for each team, you have a tendency to break down every single play in your mind to somehow reverse the result. In our run to the national championship game we beat five great teams. Four of those games (against Murray State, Syracuse, Kansas State, and Michigan State) were decided by seven points or less. In fact we won both MSU games by just two points. Every single detail mattered, and executing those details when it mattered most was the difference between an early tournament exit and the ride of a lifetime.

Just one season before we had finished with a 26-6 record. What looked great on paper, though, was a little misleading because we played in 19 games decided by three possessions or less. All six of our losses were decided by nine points or less, and that got me dreaming about what we could accomplish if we were better on just two additional possessions per half. However, the flip side of that same equation

was very humbling. We won 13 games by nine points or less, which means if we'd been just four possessions worse per game we could have ended up with 13-19 record. There's a fine line between a championship season and a mediocre one.

As I look forward to the challenges of coaching a new team and the journey that we'll share together, my emphasis will continue to be on doing the little things well. No matter what team you're playing, if you don't take advantage of your possessions you're going to be on the losing side of the scoreboard. One thing I knew as a player, and it's been consistently driven home as a coach, is that no statistic adequately measures the disappointment of coming up short in a game.

There's a lot, however, that statistics *can* measure, particularly the kind of data you find not only articulated but dissected even further in Basketball Prospectus. As a coach Prospectus gives me insight into our opponents' tendencies and implores me to delve deeper into the analysis of my own team--using creative metrics to help us coach "outside the box." And as a fan, you'll be re-introduced to the game that you love through a unique lens, one that will make it even more enjoyable to watch throughout the regular season and into March, the greatest month of the year.

Brad Stevens  
Butler University Head Coach