

My Life on a Napkin
Pillow Mints, Playground Dreams, and Coaching the Runnin' Utes
By Rick Majerus
[Fertig notes]

- All I ever wanted was to be part of something.
- That's our job: to put him in a position where he can be successful. Don Nelson
- Nellie used to say, "You know what the five most important minutes of the game are? It's the five minutes in the press conference after the game."
It was the only time you could put your spin on a game.
- I try not to remember the bad things in life.
- You're a very bright person, but unless you can communicate your thoughts to other people, the thoughts are worth nothing.
- Evaluation is so important. When I'm looking at a player, I look for guys who love to play. I look for guys who have a feel for the game, a sense of the game. That's very hard to find. I'll look for guys whose teams win. I look for improvement, for physical maturation. If a guy is really well coached, then sometimes he'll have a talent ceiling. You've got to spend a lot of time looking at their best games, but also at their worst games, to see how they react to adversity.
- What first attracted me to Keith Van Horn was his passion for the game. He was totally committed to the game, maybe even a little obsessed by it.
- People always say nobody remembers who comes in second place, and they're exactly right.
- The college game is in better shape than the professional game. You get these guys coming out early who can't live their own age, and they're not ready for the lifestyle. Kids like Tracy McGrady, a high school kid. . . they make a deal with the devil coming out early. Yes, you will get a lot of money in your life. But then, after money, what else do you have? You don't know how to deal with it. You don't have friends. You don't develop a sense of self. You compromise your self-esteem. You see yourself as a basketball player only, and not something beyond that.
- The reality of life is you can't always do what you want to do.
- I believe I could go on there forever with mediocrity, as long as the kids played hard. I couldn't have kids who didn't play hard. But I could have kids who weren't good players.
- Problems create opportunities.
- I finally had about a three hour talk with Jordie's dad. I said, "Ian, everybody sees things different. I'm the coach. I'm a successful coach. I'm a committed coach. Your son is not good enough to play here. You think he's really good, so, A) you should coach him, or, B) find someone else who feels the way you do, or, C) step out of the way and let it take its course. If you want to coach him, then I'm all for it. But you won't step aside and let it take its course. So your other option is to go find somebody who feels Jordie is a hell of a player."
- Sometimes it just doesn't work out. I miscalculate. A player miscalculates. It doesn't mean I'm a bad guy or that the player is a bad guy. There's no right or wrong in that situation.
- The next best thing to playing on a team is coaching a team.
- I can never watch a game just to watch it. Everything serves either as affirmation or as a point of comparison. That's the fun of it too. You look at what other coaches are doing. You decide if it's better than what you do.
- Nellie taught me to look at what players could do and then put them in spots where they could succeed, as opposed to dwelling on what they couldn't do. Nellie also taught me the importance of respecting players, and understanding that they're human and will make mistakes – just like coaches.