



# The Secret Game: A Wartime Story of Courage, Change, and Basketball's Lost Triumph

*Scott Ellsworth*

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**The true story of the game that never should have happened--and of a nation on the brink of monumental change**

In the fall of 1943, at the little-known North Carolina College for Negroes, Coach John McLendon was on the verge of changing basketball forever. A protégé of James Naismith, the game's inventor, McLendon taught his team to play the full-court press and run a fast break that no one could catch. His Eagles would become the highest-scoring college team in America--a basketball juggernaut that shattered its opponents by as many as sixty points per game. Yet his players faced danger whenever they traveled backcountry roads.

Across town, at Duke University, the best basketball squad on campus wasn't the Blue Devils, but an all-white military team from the Duke medical school. Composed of former college stars from across the country, the team dismantled everyone they faced, including the Duke varsity. They were prepared to take on anyone--until an audacious invitation arrived, one that was years ahead of anything the South had ever seen before. What happened next wasn't on anyone's schedule.

Based on years of research, *The Secret Game* is a story of courage and determination, and of an incredible, long-buried moment in the nation's sporting past. The riveting, true account of a remarkable season, it is the story of how a group of forgotten college basketball players, aided by a pair of refugees from Nazi Germany and a group of daring student activists, not only blazed a trail for a new kind of America, but helped create one of the most meaningful moments in basketball history.

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