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SPORTS | BASKETBALL

They Just Got Beat By 141 Points. They Want a Rematch.

The College of Biblical Studies, an evangelical school with an enrollment of 400, is trying its hand at college basketball. The results haven't been pretty.

by [Jared Diamond](#) [Follow](#)

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The College of Biblical Studies lost to Grambling State, 159-18, on Jan. 2. PHOTO: COLLEGE OF BIBLICAL STUDIES - HOUSTON

On Monday night, more than 70,000 people will cram into [NRG](#) Stadium in Houston to watch Michigan and Washington compete for the football national championship—the ultimate display of college sports' almost unfathomable economic excess.

To witness the opposite end of that spectrum, just drive about 10 miles up the road. That's where you'll find the College of Biblical Studies, an evangelical institution with a total enrollment of under 500 students and a fledgling basketball program barely two months into its existence.

The Lady Ambassadors, whose roster consists of eight unheralded freshmen who went mostly unrecruited out of high school, made a strange sort of history last week. They suffered a 159-18 beatdown at the hands of Grambling State, the largest margin of victory ever produced in a game featuring a Division I squad.

The unprecedented drubbing became national news, earning Grambling State a spot on SportsCenter to go with its place in the record books. But in the aftermath of the win, one key question remained unanswered: Why would Grambling State, which qualified for the NCAA tournament as recently in 2018, schedule an opponent like the College of Biblical Studies in the first place?

The answer provides a window into the fragile financial landscape of small-time collegiate sports, far removed from the seemingly limitless wealth that adorns the NCAA's top rungs. One surefire way for the little guys to raise funds? Agree to be massacred by a far superior Division I program in exchange for cash.

"We have zero budget," said Lynden Rose, a star point guard for Houston during the "Phi Slama Jama" era in the 1980s and a member of the Board of Trustees at the College of Biblical Studies. "We have to pray that we can put a team together. We don't have a shoe company that sponsors us. We don't have anything."

[Big schools like Michigan and Washington](#) can afford to pay their coaches millions of dollars and train in lavish practice facilities funded by billionaire donors. The College of Biblical Studies, which participates in Division II of the National Christian College Athletic Association, is playing its home games at the gym of a local church.

Dan Wood, the executive director of the NCCAA, said that Division I programs will often pay these small schools anywhere from \$1,500 to \$10,000 to come play them—a practice known as a "guarantee game" or a "buy game." Sometimes, they kick in new gear, like warm-up uniforms, in addition to covering travel

expenses. This happens because mid-major Division I teams often have trouble scheduling home games during nonconference play, since their larger counterparts aren't willing to travel to face them.

For schools like the College of Biblical Studies, one such game can fund 10 to 15% of the entire annual athletic budget.

So while Wood said that the NCCAA primarily exists to “use athletics to serve the Great Commission of Jesus Christ,” he is not naive to the economic realities.

“They don't take guarantee games to give the money away to charity. I don't want to make it sound like it's all so pure, that they took the guarantee and gave it away to the Salvation Army,” Wood said. “It's simply helping fund their athletic program.”



For schools like the College of Biblical Studies, one such game can fund 10 to 15% of the entire annual athletic budget. PHOTO: COLLEGE OF BIBLICAL STUDIES – HOUSTON

College of Biblical Studies President Bill Blocker said the school primarily looks for students in need of second chances or who come from difficult

circumstances. The school offers full scholarships to churchgoing men under the age of 30 who grew up without a father figure at home.

Rose, who initially proposed the idea of bringing athletics to the school, believed that basketball could be a way to attract students who might not have imagined attending college otherwise. He ultimately convinced the administration that sports could help increase enrollment.

“Coming into this, our board, our executive staff prayed that we want as a school to make our brand awareness increase nationally,” Blocker said.

In a way, that’s what happened, which is why when Rose saw the final score against Grambling State, one thought popped into his mind.

“Wow, this is working,” Rose said. “Now people know about the College of Biblical Studies.”

The College of Biblical Studies isn’t the only small, religious school to be blown out this season. In November, the North Carolina Central women’s team beat Mid-Atlantic Christian—which has around 175 students—by the score of 132-22. Last month, the men’s side at Oak Hill Christian, a NCCAA program in Minnesota with about 100 students, received national attention after losing, 108-14, to North Dakota State.

But none of those games compared with the Ambassadors’ 141-point shellacking. The College of Biblical Studies allowed 34 points before scoring its first basket, shot 8 of 43 from the field and committed a whopping 57 turnovers in 40 minutes of action. Afterward, Grambling State coach Courtney Simmons posted on X that “the goal set out was not to win by this margin.”

For their part, Blocker and Rose took no issue with Grambling State despite the lopsided result. In fact, they hope they square off again.

“Maybe next year they beat us by 100,” Rose said. “But in year four, maybe we’re competitive.”