

## The Cinderella Story

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From HBC's Sound Bites Blog ([www.hellermanbaretz.com/soundbites](http://www.hellermanbaretz.com/soundbites))

Tonight, two teams will play each other for the national championship in college basketball. In what everyone is calling a "David vs. Goliath" matchup, the game features [little Butler University](#) v. the mighty Duke Blue Devils.

At one end of the court will be a team that has been a powerhouse in NCAA basketball all year, boasting a [top-10 ranking](#) in the pre-season ESPN/USA Today poll, a roster with future [NBA talent](#), and the nation's longest winning streak of 25 games.

At the other end of the court will be the scrappy team known as . . . Duke.

Yes, that's right. Butler is hardly the [Cinderella](#) that [the headlines](#) would have you believe. But still, sportswriters simply cannot resist the urge to lump Butler in with NCAA underdogs from years' past. Take this article from the [USA Today](#), which opens by comparing Butler's tournament run to that of the 1985 Villanova team that beat a heavily favored Georgetown to win the whole thing.

Villanova's 1985 team and Butler's 2010 have virtually nothing in common. Villanova was [never ranked](#) in the top 25 all year; Butler was never ranked **out of** the top 25 all year. Villanova entered the tournament with 10 losses; Butler entered with 4 losses and a 25-game winning streak.

The writer of the USA Today article -- and many other writers and commentators -- knows this, and yet he still can't resist calling Butler a Cinderella. Why? Because Butler **feels** like a Cinderella.

They're from a small school. You don't hear about them very much (unless you actually follow basketball). They've got some white guys. They're from Indiana, aka [Hoosiers](#) country. Not only that, they play in the exact same fieldhouse where the final game in Hoosiers was filmed!

**People have a basic human instinct to impose storylines over events.** So whenever a team has a pre-packaged story -- as Butler does here, with the delicious Hoosiers connections making the Cinderella claim irresistible -- the media is going to repeat that story over and over and over, whether it reflects reality or not.

It may be bad journalism, but for PR professionals, this can be a good thing. The reporters you are dealing with **want** to be told stories. You just have to give them one about your firm.

Use the narrative impulse to create an identity for your firm. Is your firm the scrappy guy that takes on big business? Are you the smartest guys in the room, only taking recruits from the top five law schools? Are you quirky and imaginative, as reflected your wacky, untraditional offices? Are you tough-as-nails litigators who find inspiration in your Clint Eastwood-like founder?

While a tad cartoonish as written, any of these stories might be one that a BigLaw firm would like to embrace. Don't worry if all the facts don't line up just right. If you create a story for your firm, and if it has enough truth to it, it will get repeated and repeated and repeated.

Just as surely as Butler is being touted as a Cinderella, that identity will become yours. Now all you have to do is write it.