

## Feature PITCH

Here's a **Moving "March Madness"** story that will capture the hearts of **People** readers, whether they're sports fans or not.

Each March when the "madness" hits, every college basketball team searches for the motivation or the little extra "something" to get them to the big dance – the NCAA tournament and a chance to capture the National Championship. This year, Monmouth University found their spark in an inspiring individual right on their bench. No not their coach, but team manager Rodney Herbert.

Herbert is 4-foot-9. He weighs 80 pounds.

He has Bloom's Syndrome, a genetic disorder so rare **only 250 people in the world are known to have it.**

This syndrome leads to stunted growth and a rash around the neck, but even more serious, people with Bloom's are predisposed to cancer and diabetes. Herbert, 23, lost most of his right leg to cancer as a child and deals with diabetes daily. He has suffered through at least 10 surgeries in his lifetime, yet **nothing has stopped Herbert from living life to its fullest.**

Some would find irony in the fact that Herbert has a passion for a sport where everyone around him is almost twice his size. Monmouth's players, however, only find it empowering. His best friend, the tallest player on the team at 7-foot-2, John Bunch, finds Herbert's spirit infectious. When Monmouth won the Northeast Conference Tournament this year to make it to the NCAA tournament, it was Bunch who lifted Herbert up to clip the net in an emotional post game ceremony.

Despite Monmouth's loss to Villanova in the first round of the tournament, the players feel the magic of a miracle in more ways than one thanks to Rodney Herbert.