

**S**TARTING MONDAY MORNING, the American workforce suffers its annual dip in productivity as a large swath of the nation fills out brackets, enters office pools and watches hours and hours of college basketball. March Madness, aka the NCAA men's basketball tournament, culminates in the championship game April 4 in Houston. One perennial favorite, Duke University, coached for the past 31 years by Mike Krzyzewski, will once again be in the hunt for the national title.

Krzyzewski, known simply as Coach K, took the Blue Devils to their fourth NCAA title last year, less than two years after leading the USA to a gold medal in the 2008 Olympics. Last summer he directed a group of rising NBA stars to gold in

# Special

# K

How does Duke University's legendary basketball coach keep creating winners? We reveal **Mike Krzyzewski's** three greatest secrets.

BY MARLEN GARCIA

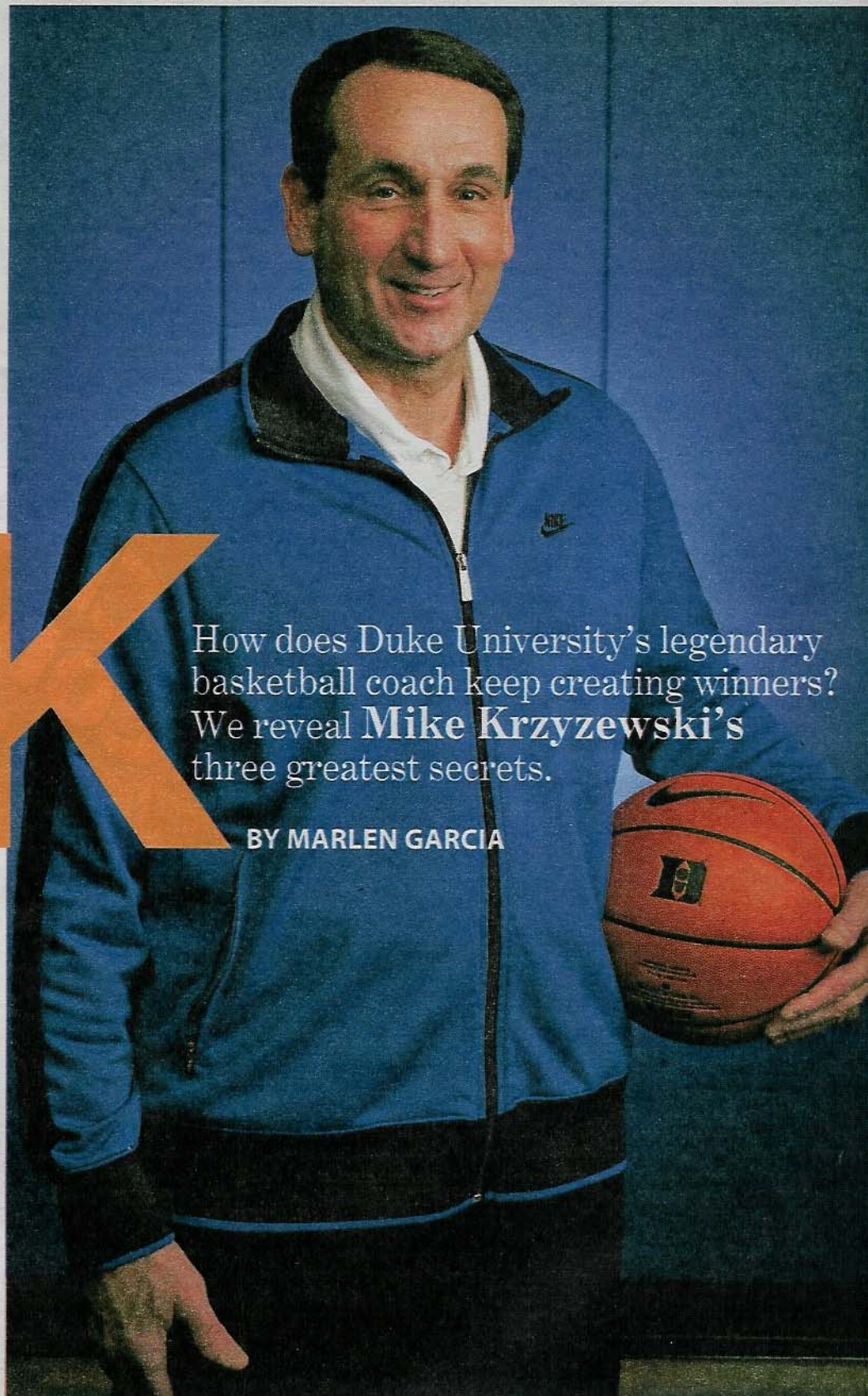
the FIBA world championships.

As a head coach, Krzyzewski owns nearly 900 victories (his mentor, Bob Knight, left the game in 2008 with 902 wins, second all-time and first in Division I). Still, at times, the winning didn't happen.

In the 1994-95 season, back surgery forced Krzyzewski to miss the last few months. He returned the next season with his program struggling. Yet by 2001, Duke won a third national championship in 11 years. Four years ago, a young, inexperienced team lost in the NCAA tournament first round. The following year, Duke didn't survive the second round.

"Maybe there was a thought he had had enough of an impact a couple of years back," says University of Pittsburgh coach Jamie Dixon. "You'd hate to call this a resurgence, but who else has won a world championship and a national championship in the same year?"

Looking at his record, three themes emerge as key to Coach K's success.



## BUILD A COHESIVE TEAM.

About four years ago, amid a rare rough season, Coach K treated his players to a show in the theater room of his home in Durham, N.C. Krzyzewski came out swinging. With boxing gloves on and a towel draped around his neck, the coach threw punches in the air, former Duke captain Jon Scheyer recalls.

"He looked like a fighter," says Scheyer. "It was non-stop energy. It was one of the coolest things I've seen a coach do. He lifted our spirits."

On the surface, it seems little has changed with Krzyzewski over three decades. He still talks about five players on the floor symbolizing fingers that can form a fist.

And he doesn't institute rules: He says he wants his teams to develop standards together. The coach known best for intensely directing his players to collective greatness on the court, whether college players or NBA superstars playing for Olympic

gold, isn't as rigid as some might think. Danny Granger, a forward for the Indiana Pacers, says that last summer Krzyzewski asked world team members to sign a contract.

"It was saying what our goal was — being committed to each other and the country," Granger says. "We all walked up to a board and signed it. It was a pact."

## INVOLVE EVERYONE.

Jerry Colangelo, USA Basketball senior team director and chairman of the Phoenix Suns, chose Krzyzewski to resurrect a program that was stunned by Argentina in the 2004 Olympic semifinals and settled for



2010: Coach K and his Duke team top Butler 61-59 ...



... and become national champs in Indianapolis

bronze. Krzyzewski fit two critical criteria for Colangelo: He bled red, white and blue since his days at West Point and he was a consistent winner.

"I knew one of the question marks people would throw up was how can he relate to the NBA player?" Colangelo says. "To me that was never a concern."

Krzyzewski and his staff sought a partnership with superstars such as LeBron James and Kobe Bryant. "I had no idea going in how much you could learn," Krzyzewski says. "What you want to do is not say, 'This is what we're going to do.' You say, 'This is the situation. What do you think?'"

His aversion to rules came from experiences while playing for the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, he says. "The rules I went to school under were never my rules. I definitely didn't agree with all of them."

It underscored to Krzyzewski a need for leaders to be flexible, and that was tested when he became national team coach. He had to adapt to the international game and find

common ground with NBA stars with a reputation for having supersized egos.

## INVOKe A HIGHER CAUSE.

Coaches and players are not paid to be part of the national team. "You get paid with a feeling you can't buy," says Krzyzewski, who has agreed to coach through the 2012 Olympics. "There's no greater honor than to have your hand over your heart when that national anthem is played."

All-star guard Derrick Rose of the Chicago Bulls, also a world team member, says Krzyzewski emphasized the significance of representing the nation.

"He was talking to us and saying, 'You're telling me you wouldn't dive on the floor for a ball for the whole USA?'" Rose says. "When you put it that way, it means a lot."

Before last summer, Rose knew little about Krzyzewski. "Most people look at him and think that he's mean and very strict with his players," he says. "But he's a cool coach, where he lets you play free."

The depiction of Krzyzewski as mean might have to do with his demanding nature. Players quickly find him down-to-earth, funny, fiercely loyal and protective of them, evident in terse words for reporters whose questions he finds unfair for his college players.

He says he loves his family, friends, dog and basketball. When he's ready to walk away, there will be no planned farewell tour, he promises.

"I am still hungry and believe me, I still have a sense of urgency," he says. "My team sees it in every ballgame." ❏



2008: Golden at Beijing Olympics



Love 'em or hate 'em ... Tell us how far you think Duke will make it in this year's tournament at [usaweekend.com](http://usaweekend.com)