

Headlines[Archives](#) [Back to all stories](#)**Friday's Required Reading: Tourney Hoops, Gov't Spending, Daring Rescues**Posted March 25th 8:38am by [HVnews](#)Read More: Tags: [Austerity Measures](#), [Butler](#), [Duke](#), [europe](#), [government spending](#), [Ira Glass](#), [James Spring](#), [Luke Winn](#), [mexico](#), [NCAA Tournament](#), [Paul Krugman](#), [Required Reading](#), [This American Life](#)

Recommend

2 people recommend this.

As you coast into the weekend, there will undoubtedly be some free time where you're looking for things to read. But just when you think there's nothing out there for you, and that perhaps you've reached the end of the Internets, remember that there's always something right here to peruse.

So here are a few places to start. We'll begin with some sporting:



—As stated last week, there isn't a better college basketball source working today than [SI's Luke Winn](#). His Tourney Blog has been a staple for years, providing high-quality Xs and Os analysis, statistical geekery, and thorough entertainment. It's a one-stop shop for hoops knowledge and the lighter side of the game. Winn posted a piece called "[Butler, Not Duke, Is On Brink of Final Four](#)" after the Sweet Sixteen matchups last night, and it's by far the most must-read of the morning on the games last night. Here are two samples of what Winn provides — game recap and statistical analysis:

[Matt] Howard's offensive rebound of Mack's missed free throw with 28 seconds left — and the two free throws Howard sunk after that — gave Butler a safe, 59-52 lead. When he stood at the line 25 seconds later to hit two more, he cut a curious figure, with black tape haphazardly wrapped around both knees, skin showing through in places; his arms reddened from knocking around UW's front line; and a giant, wet mop of hair that he hasn't as much as trimmed since practice started in October. ("It's kind of a tradition," he said of the grow-out.) The current poster boy of Butler basketball is a mangy, beat-up throwback of a forward.

Later:

Butler's coaches are avowed fans of tempo-free statistics — Stevens told the New York Times he browsed kenpom.com to get a sense of Duke prior to last year's title game — and it was cool to see references to offensive and defensive rebounding percentage on the Bulldogs' whiteboard (seen at right). They break down "margins" at halftime, including raw turnover margin (they had four to Wisconsin's eight at the break) and loose ball margin. But OReb% and DReb% are parts of the kenpom lexicon, and while Butler trailed in both categories at the break, it won them on the game, getting 36.1 percent of ORebs and 69.3 percent of DRebs. One interesting tempo-free stat that wasn't on the Bulldogs' whiteboard: While they won the game, this was the first time they scored less than one point per possession (0.969 PPP) since their last loss, on Feb. 3 to Youngstown State.

And make sure to follow along throughout the rest of the tournament. Amazing stuff.



—From hoops to government spending, a simple transition. New York Times columnist Paul Krugman won the Nobel Prize in economics back in 2008, so you might say the guy knows his shit (not sure the committee said it quite like that). Sure he's a liberal economist, but he's as fact-based a lefty as you'll find in the so-called "lamestream media." His op-ed column on Thursday called "[The Austerity Delusion](#)" is beyond must-read — it's must-read, must-pass along, must-shout from the mountaintops.

Krugman argues, quite successfully, that all the people in Congress and in the Tea Party clamoring for a drastic reduction in government spending need to look to Europe right now to see what that did for them. Not only did it fail to help European economies, it hurt them tremendously. Here's one example:

Just ask the Irish, whose government — having taken on an unsustainable debt burden by trying to bail out runaway banks — tried to reassure markets by imposing savage austerity measures on ordinary citizens. The same people urging spending cuts on America cheered. "Ireland offers an admirable lesson in fiscal responsibility," declared Alan Reynolds of the Cato Institute, who said that the spending cuts had removed fears

over Irish solvency and predicted rapid economic recovery.

That was in June 2009. Since then, the interest rate on Irish debt has doubled; Ireland's unemployment rate now stands at 13.5 percent.


This might be the most important talking point he's ever created. Help spread that one along.

—Okay, so this third and final piece isn't exactly "reading," but it is required listening. Ira Glass is back from vacation after two weeks of reporting away from his [This American Life](#) show, but this week's episode dusted off some old stories anyway, a show that originally aired in March 2010. And that's just fine with us, because it contains one of the greatest stories ever told — ever. In nearly 30 minutes, James Spring tells a first-person narrative about how he had hit his late 30s and found his life utterly unremarkable. "He needed to do something big. So James decided to try to rescue two kids who had been kidnapped by suspected murderers, and taken to Mexico."

But just when you think he'd be happy about his exploits, he begins to realize it may not have been such a great idea after all. It's truly an amazing tale, and it starts about 11 minutes in:

Originally aired 3.12.2010

402: Save the Day



Stories about one person single-handedly taking charge of a situation gone wrong— including one man's mission to rescue two kids who were kidnapped by alleged murderers and taken to Mexico, and another about a professor's mission to keep the educators of a liberal arts college from extinction.

© 1995-2011 Chicago Public Media & Ira Glass

Alright, that should help out the boredom that creeps into your Friday. Go forth.