

BOXSCORE

A Publication of the Indiana High School Basketball Historical Society

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2017 FALL ISSUE

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THE 1940 INDIANA ALL-STARS (and first annual classic against Kentucky)

by Cliff Johnson, Editor

This was the initial year for the long-standing series of games still being played between the Indiana and Kentucky All-Star teams. The Indiana All-Star selection process was actually started the year before, in 1939, and a game was indeed staged that summer by the

Indianapolis Star. But it was not against Kentucky. It employed a different schematic, pitting the Hoosier All-Star team against the Indiana state champions of that year, the Frankfort Hot Dogs. Disappointingly, the contest was not considered much of a success either

time that evening, it was apparent that most seats at Butler Fieldhouse were going to remain empty due to a heavy downpour that had begun in late afternoon. It had gained more momentum by early evening and undoubtedly was keeping most fans at home. Even more significantly, as



The 1940 Indiana All-Stars. Front Row: Bud Dunn, Gosport; Gene Yates, Anderson; Warren Lewis, New Castle; Ed Scheinbein, Southport; Oliver Troth, Spencer. Back Row: Coach Paul Hinkle, Butler University; Henry Percy, Martinsville; Bill Fowler, Marion; Chet Gabriel, Kokomo; Dick Heacox, Bloomington; Jim Mace, Sheridan; Coach Glenn Curtis, Indiana State.

in terms of total gate receipts or by team match-up levels. Before game

it was soon realized, was the fact that the teams were unevenly matched.

This was largely attributable to an IHSAA eligibility rule that prohibited several key Frankfort players from participating. The end result was therefore predictable, and by the next morning most sportswriters had declared the game an obvious mismatch in their write-ups.

But the idea of staging some kind of a post-season All-Star game did not fade away before the 1939-40 season had concluded. By the spring of 1940, officials of the Kentucky High School Athletic Association had met to discuss a proposal of using its own All-Star team selection to annually challenge the Hoosiers in a bi-state classic that might perpetuate year-to-year. Travel expenses to Indianapolis had to be considered though, since there was no high school arena in Kentucky large enough to bring in the required gate receipts to make such a game financially attractive. Nor were the larger state universities interested in getting involved with high school-level athletic endeavors at the risk of sustaining damage or financial loss. The 15,000-seat capacity of Butler Fieldhouse, however, became the deciding factor. A sufficient revenue sharing arrangement of the gate receipts could cover the travel costs and possibly even yield a profit for Kentucky, if interest in such an interstate basketball rivalry were high enough. Officials agreed that it probably would be, with adequate publicizing via the media. Plans for the first interstate classic All-Star game were thus executed and the game scheduled for 8:30 p.m. on August 16, 1940.

ROSTERS:

Indiana All-Stars

Chet Gabriel (Kokomo), 6-7
 Bill Fowler (Marion), 6-5
 Dick Heacox (Bloomington), 6-4
 Henry Percy (Martinsville), 6-2
 Jim Mace (Sheridan), 6-2

Warren Lewis (New Castle), 6-1
 Gene Yate (Anderson), 6-0
 Bud Dunn (Gosport), 5-10
 Ed Scheinbein (Southport), 5-10
 Oliver Troth (Spencer), 5-9

Kentucky All-Stars

Len Metcalfe (Calvert City), 6-4
 Joe Fulks (Kuttawa), 6-4
 Maury House (Manchester), 6-3
 Russ Van Noy (Hickman), 6-2
 Norbert Walsh (L'ville. Xavier), 6-1
 Bernard Sloan (Ashland), 6-1
 J.T. Harper (Nelson), 6-0
 Elbert Nickel (Fullerton), 6-0
 George Ashford (Southgate), 6-0
 Foster Kaiser (L'ville Male), 5-11

The very first All-Star contest between the two basketball-minded states was a thriller, by almost anyone's measure. The two teams battled to an 8-8 draw at the end of the first quarter of play, then Kentucky, with sharp-shooting Joe Fulks leading the way, shot into the lead 18-12 at halftime. At the end of the three-quarter mark, Kentucky had been able to maintain its marginal advantage, 27-22, although the Hoosiers seemed determined to halt the Blue Grassers' offense. Neither team could successfully put more points onto the scoreboard throughout the first four minutes of the final quarter, but suddenly the Hoosiers came to life with field goals by Dunn and Percy. The gap was closed to within a single point, 27-26, with three minutes remaining. Kentucky's strategy of protecting its lead was obviously failing, and Indiana began to take more shots at its goal. Kentucky committed three straight defensive fouls, and consecutive free throws by Scheinbein, Yates, and Heacox gave the Hoosiers a 29-27 lead with limited time remaining on the clock. Another field goal by Lewis widened the margin to 31-27 before Fulks sank his final goal for Kentucky, bringing the end result to 31-29, Hoosiers winning. The final minute of play, however, brought spectators

to their feet when twice Kentucky gained ball possession and narrowly missed tying the game when its two FG attempts rolled the rim and spun out. "Jumping" Joe Fulks was the recipient of the "Star of Stars" award, scoring 16 points in a losing effort. Henry Percy was high for the Hoosiers, with 10. Here is a box score recap:

Kentucky (29)

	FG	FT	TP
Metcalfe, f	0	0	0
Walsh, f	1	2	4
Fulks, c	6	4	16
Sloan, g	2	0	4
Kaiser, g	1	2	4
Harper, g	0	0	0
Van Noy, f	0	0	0
House, f	0	0	0
Ashford, g	0	1	1

Indiana (31)

	FG	FT	TP
Scheinbein, f	2	1	5
Percy, f	3	4	10
Gabriel, c	1	0	2
Dunn, g	2	0	4
Troth, g	1	0	2
Lewis, g	1	0	2
Yates, g	1	1	3
Mace, f	0	0	0
Heacox, c	0	1	1
Fowler, c	1	0	2

Glenn Curtis and Tony Hinkle were the Indiana coaches, while Ed Diddle and Ted Hornback handled the reins for Kentucky. Joe Fulks went on to have a great career in professional basketball. After a brief two-year stay at Murray State, he joined the Marines in May, 1942, not long after the U.S. had entered WW II. He remained in the Corps for four full years before being discharged in May, 1946. That fall he joined the Philadelphia Warriors of the BAA, at age 25. In his rookie season (1946-47) he captured the league's scoring title, averaging 23.2 points per game and leading the Warriors to the league's championship title. He was equally prolific the next several seasons,

with a high mark of 26.0 points per game in 1949. His specialty was the jump shot. On Feb. 10, 1949, he set a new pro record by netting 63 points in a single game. That record stood for a full decade before it was broken by Elgin Baylor, and then later on by Wilt Chamberlain. Joe remained with the Philadelphia team until retiring in 1954 at age 33.

One final comment about the Kentucky/Indiana ongoing series: After 77 years, controversy has begun to grow recently about its viability to continue. Many factors have given rise to the issue, not the least of which are (1) selectees often not showing up for the games, (2) a dwindling year-by-year spectator attendance number, and (3) Indiana's overall dominance in total wins. This summer the series was split, but coming in Indiana had strung together 9 straight victories in the last five years, and historically had won 93 of the 136 games played since 1940. The fate of the series may soon be sealed unless something unforeseen materializes to reverse the present trends.

2017 STATE TOURNAMENTS: A RECAP

by Tim Puet

The 2017 State Finals were dominated by Indianapolis teams, which went three-for-three--the first time three teams from one city have been champions in the same year. All three victories came in close games, as Ben Davis defeated Fort Wayne North Side 55-52 in Class 4A, Crispus Attacks added to its legacy by edging Twin Lakes 73-71 in 3A, and Tindley got by Lafayette Central Catholic 51-49 in 1A. The day's only rout was Frankton's 60-32 snoozer over Crawford County in 2A.

Class 3a Finals

I'll start my review of the day with Attacks' victory because Attacks

was the team everyone was talking about going into the day, as a result of its history. As I'm sure most readers of this story already know, Attacks was created as an all-black school in the 1920s, was denied a chance to be an IHSAA member for years because of racial attitudes of those times, won Indianapolis' first two state basketball titles in 1955 and 1956 with teams led by the great Oscar Robertson (after losing to eventual champion Milan in the semistate finals in 1954, Robertson's sophomore year), and won a third state title in 1959. The building was closed as a high school in 1986 because of citywide declining enrollment. It served as a junior high and then a middle school for 20 years before reopening as a medical magnet high school in 2006. Eleven years later, the Tigers won their fourth state title on a rebound basket by Jamal Harris with 0.9 seconds to play.

No one was happier about that result than Oscar, who jumped to his feet immediately. He and his teammates were on hand, and he presented the Tigers with their championship medals--something normally done by an IHSAA official. (Somehow, I don't think he would have been the presenter had Twin Lakes won. Having him do so was a nice nod to history and a slap in the face to the ghost of former IHSAA Commissioner Arthur Trester, who was mainly responsible for keeping Attacks, as well as other black schools and Catholic schools, out of the tournament decades ago.) It was a classic "game of runs." Twin Lakes, from Monticello in White County, went on a 10-0 run to start the second quarter, followed by runs of 10-3 by Attacks, 9-0 by Twin Lakes, 8-2 by Attacks, and 5-0 by Twin Lakes. Attacks overcame a seven-point fourth-quarter deficit to lead 71-70 with less than a minute

left and Twin Lakes' Bryce Bennington tied the game with a free throw with 36.4 seconds to play, leading to the final sequence. Alex Cooley tried a 3-point shot from the top of the key, missed, and Harris soared over Twin Lakes' Blake Bennington, Bryce's brother, to make the winning shot.

Teyon Scanlan had 24 points and Nike Sibande 23 for Attacks, with Chris Hawkins taking home a state title in his first year as coach. Bryce Bennington had 32 for Twin Lakes, which set a Class 3A record by making 61.1 percent of its 3-point attempts (11 of 18), was playing in its first state title game, and was coached by 29-year veteran Kent Adams. Justin Crabb of the Indians won the Trester Award. Both teams finished with 25-4 records.

Class 4a Finals

In last year's tournament review, I had written that I anticipated hearing the familiar tune of the alma mater of Indiana University (and many other schools) being played at the end of the 2017 Class 4A title game. That's because it serves as New Albany High School's fight song, and New Albany entered the season as a strong favorite to defend the state title it won in 2016. But the Bulldogs lost 72-64 to Castle in the Seymour regional finals. Instead, I heard another familiar tune at the end of this year's 4A championship game -- "Here's to Old Ben Davis High," which is unique to the school and which I became familiar with during the Giants' 1995 and 1996 title runs and their consecutive appearances in the one-class finals from 1993 to 1996. Ben Davis' Mark James won his first state crown in 35 years as a head coach and the first for the school since 1996, in what he said was his first trip to Bankers Life Fieldhouse. He explained that he didn't want to come there until he could do so as coach of a state

finalist. The victory was his 100th at Ben Davis. He earlier spent 26 years at Franklin Central, after starting his career at Covington.

The game had an exciting finish, but started very slowly, especially when compared to the 3A game which preceded it. Ben Davis was 3-for-12 from the floor in the first quarter and trailed 13-9 at the end of the quarter. Fort Wayne North led 27-23 at the end of a half in which no one was hitting their free throws. North was 5-for-13 and Ben Davis was 5-for-11 from the line at halftime. For the game, their respective figures were 7-for-20 and 9-for-18. Things got interesting in the final minutes. Jalen Windham hit a 3-pointer with 3:12 left to give Ben Davis a 49-46 lead. Trester Award winner R.J. Turner made the first of two free throws and a rebound basket off his missed second shot to make it 52-46 at the 1:19 mark. North got to within 54-52 with 18 seconds left, BD's Josh Brewer hit the first end of a one-and-one to advance the margin to three, and North's Devontae Kinnie missed a 3-point attempt at the buzzer. Ben Davis had only four turnovers, while North had 10. Windham had 15 points, Datrion Harper 14, and Aaron Henry 12 for the Giants, who finished 23-5 and were an "under the radar" team all year, finishing 12th in the Associated Press poll.

North Side had two well-publicized players in DePaul recruit Jaylen Butz and sophomore Keion Brooks Jr., whose father, Keion Sr., was an assistant coach on this year's team and led the (then) Redskins to a regional title in 1995. Both were disappointments in the title game, with Butz scoring 11 and Brooks 8. Juan Quarles added 11 and Kinnie 10 for North, whose nickname was changed this year to the more politically correct Legends. One other thing about North, which was

coached by Shabaz Kaliq and finished 27-3--its uniform numbers, in black bordered by orange on a black uniform, were probably the hardest to read that I've ever seen. It must have been extremely difficult for writers and broadcasters unfamiliar with the team to figure out who was doing what, at least early in the game. And the school's colors aren't orange and black, but red and white.

Returning to New Albany for a moment: After his performance in last year's 4A title game, not just as a scorer but all around, I had been looking forward to the chance of seeing the Bulldogs' Romeo Langford again at Bankers Life Fieldhouse. With 2,079 points, he needs 1,056 in his senior year to break Damon Bailey's state scoring record, and I'd love to see him with a shot at both another title and Damon's mark next year in late March in Indianapolis.

Class 1a Finals

Tindley's victory in the 1A finals was a pleasing one because of what I learned during the tournament about that school. This was thanks to seeing the Tigers' girls and boys teams through the magic of archived Internet TV on, of all places, the Greene County Sports Network, which televised the regionals in which both Tindley teams played. Tindley Accelerated School is the final destination of a six-school network of public charter schools for urban students--three elementary, two middle, and the high school, all located on Indianapolis' east side. The schools enroll a total of 1,800 students, and their unofficial model is "College or Die!" because their ultimate goal is to get all of their students into college. From what I've read about the schools, they have been successful in reaching that goal and provide a model worth emulating by other charter schools. I

don't know what the general situation concerning charters is in Indiana, but in Ohio, they've been a disappointment to a large degree, with many seeming to be run more for the benefit of their operators than for students. The Tindley system was founded in 2004 (it started in an old Cub Foods store) and is named after Charles Tindley, a noted black Methodist minister and Gospel music composer.

Enough history; back to basketball. The Tindley-Lafayette Central Catholic game was a back-and-forth contest much like the Attucks-Twin Lakes game. LCC was up 26-20 late in the first half, but Tindley went on an 18-6 run in the late second and early third quarters to take a 38-32 lead. The Knights cut the margin to 44-42 after three and went ahead 46-44 while holding the Tigers scoreless in the first five minutes of the fourth quarter. Sincere McMahan, a freshman, hit a 3-pointer, then stole the ball and scored to put Tindley up 49-46. LCC's Carson Barrett hit a layup and followed that with one of two free throws after a turnover, tying the score at 49. Tindley's Hunter White made a driving layup with five seconds left to put the Tigers ahead, and Tindley's Eric Hunter stole an in-bounds pass on the final play.

Chris Murff had 13 points and McMahan 10 for the 24-5 Tigers, coached by Bob Wonnell for each of the school's 10 seasons of basketball. The Knights, coached by David Barrett, finished 22-7 and were led by Avery Denhart with 17 points. LCC was looking for its fourth 1A title, having won championships in 1998 (the first year of the class era), 2000, and 2003.

Perhaps no school has benefited from class basketball more than Lafayette Central Catholic. Besides the three state titles, the Knights

have won 16 straight sectionals--by far the longest sectional streak of the class era. That's not the longest streak for a Lafayette team, though. Lafayette Jefferson has what I believe is the state's longest-ever string of sectional victories, winning 29 in a row from 1944 to 1972. LCC was the team which ended the streak in 1973 and I'm sure was the loser in several of Jeff's sectional championship games during that 29-season stretch. Jacob Page of LCC was the winner of the Ray Craft Mental Attitude Award. Tindley started four juniors, so don't be surprised to see the Tigers make a return trip to the finals next year.

Class 2a Finals

Frankton also might be back. The Eagles start two sophomores and two juniors. Their 28-point margin over Crawford County in the 2A final game was one point more than the previous 2A record, set by Park Tudor in 2014 and 2015. Frankton was the opponent in the 2015 game. Frankton also set an all-class record with 19 steals, and that pretty much tells the story of the game.

The championship was the second straight for schools in the Frankton-Lapel school district, with Lapel having won the title in 2016, and the third championship game appearance in a row for the district. It also was the eighth title won by a Madison County school (three by Anderson during the single-class era, two by Lapel, and one each by Alexandria, Liberty Christian, and Frankton during the multi-class years.) Lapel and Liberty Christian won titles last year, and Frankton's latest win gives the county three championships in two years. Marion County schools have won the most championships, with this year's three bringing their total to 30, including 21 during the multi-class era.

Maurice Knight, Frankton's lone senior starter, was scoreless in the

first quarter but had 23 for the game as the Eagles finished 23-6 under coach Brent Brobston, a Frankton graduate. The Wolfpack, in their first championship game and coached by Levi Carmichael, ended with a 22-7 mark and were led by Tyrell Nickleson's 14 points. The Trester Award went to Frankton's Keegan Freestone.

The IHSAA added a new award this year, the Richard Lugar Award for distinguished service to interscholastic athletics, and the first winner was – Richard Lugar! (What a surprise!) Seriously, he is a deserving honoree, as someone who truly has been a distinguished public servant and, in the minds of many, an example of what a politician ought to be like.

Closing Comments

It seems strange to be talking about Ben Davis as an “upset” winner, considering it has 4,138 students, but at least the 4A champ wasn't Carmel. I have to admit that's one school I'm biased against just because it's so big and is in such a wealthy area. I was stunned to see the latest IHSAA enrollment figures show Carmel at 5,000 students. That's 1,500 more than the largest school in Ohio--Mason High School, in the Cincinnati suburb of Mason, where Kings Island is located. I can't say with certainty that Carmel is the largest public high school in the nation outside of New York City, but it's certainly one of the largest, based on the limited Internet research I've done on this. It's no wonder the Greyhounds have won so many championships. Attendance for this year's state finals was about what it's been in recent years – 14,908 in the evening, 10,036 in the morning, for a total of 24,944. As I've said before, those numbers aren't what they used to be, but it's worse in Ohio, where attendance at four state title games (separate

sessions for each) totaled 40,692, for an average of only 10,173.

MARION PIERCE, LEWISVILLE'S ALL-TIME SCORING ACE

by Gregg Doyel, IndyStar
columnist

STATE SCORING RECORDS	
Career Scoring Leaders	
Rank	Player, School, Final Year
1.	Damon Bailey, Bedford North Lawrence, 1990
2.	Marion Pierce, Lewisville, 1961
3.	Deshaun Thomas, Fort Wayne Bishop Luers, 2010
4.	Brody Boyd, Union (Dugger) 2000
5.	Rick Mount, Lebanon, 1966
6.	Trevon Bluiett, Park Tudor, 2014
7.	Cooper Neese, Cloverdale, 2017
8.	Billy Shepherd, Carmel, 1968
9.	Alan Henderson, Brebeuf Jesuit, 1991
10.	James Blackmon, Jr., Marion, 2014

Here, take a look at my computer screen. See what I see almost every week, for reasons I cannot explain. There are days when I'm visiting the IHSAA website and clicking the link for “career scoring leaders” – just to study a list of names I've already memorized. A new name joined the top 10 this spring when Cloverdale senior Cooper Neese launched an assault on the top scorers in state history. He passed the likes of Kyle Macy and Eric Gordon, Delray Brooks and Chris Thomas, then took aim at IU stars James Blackmon Jr. and Alan Henderson, and Butler's Billy Shepherd. Neese finished just ahead of those three to sit seventh all time at 2,496 points, behind players – behind names – I no longer have to look up. But from time to time I still do, for reasons I cannot explain: Trevon Bluiett. Rick Mount. Brody Boyd. Deshaun Thomas. Marion Pierce. Damon Bailey.

Look at those names. That's always my first thought. Followed by this: Who's the guy way up there at No. 2? Who is Marion Pierce? Had to find out. Which is why I'm walking into this garage in Lewisville, about an hour east of downtown Indianapolis. There's a man here changing the oil on his big

orange riding mower. He's about 6-4, and everything about him is huge: his head, his hands, his thick swell of silver hair.



Marion Pierce 2017

The big guy, he sees me coming. He's smiling. This happens to him, from time to time. He sure does wish he had that old rim, mm-hmm. Oh, sorry. That's how 75-year-old Marion Pierce talks: Short sentences that he ends by confirming what he has just said. Mm-hmm. And that old rim, that was the one Marion Pierce used to hone the shot that scored 3,019 points in four years at Lewisville, nearly 1,000 more than anyone in state history had scored when Pierce was done in 1961. Kids don't make rims like that anymore. Kids don't make rims at all, do they? Marion was about 10 when he decided he needed a rim. His dad, who was just starting an auto salvage business, decided Marion needed to make it himself.

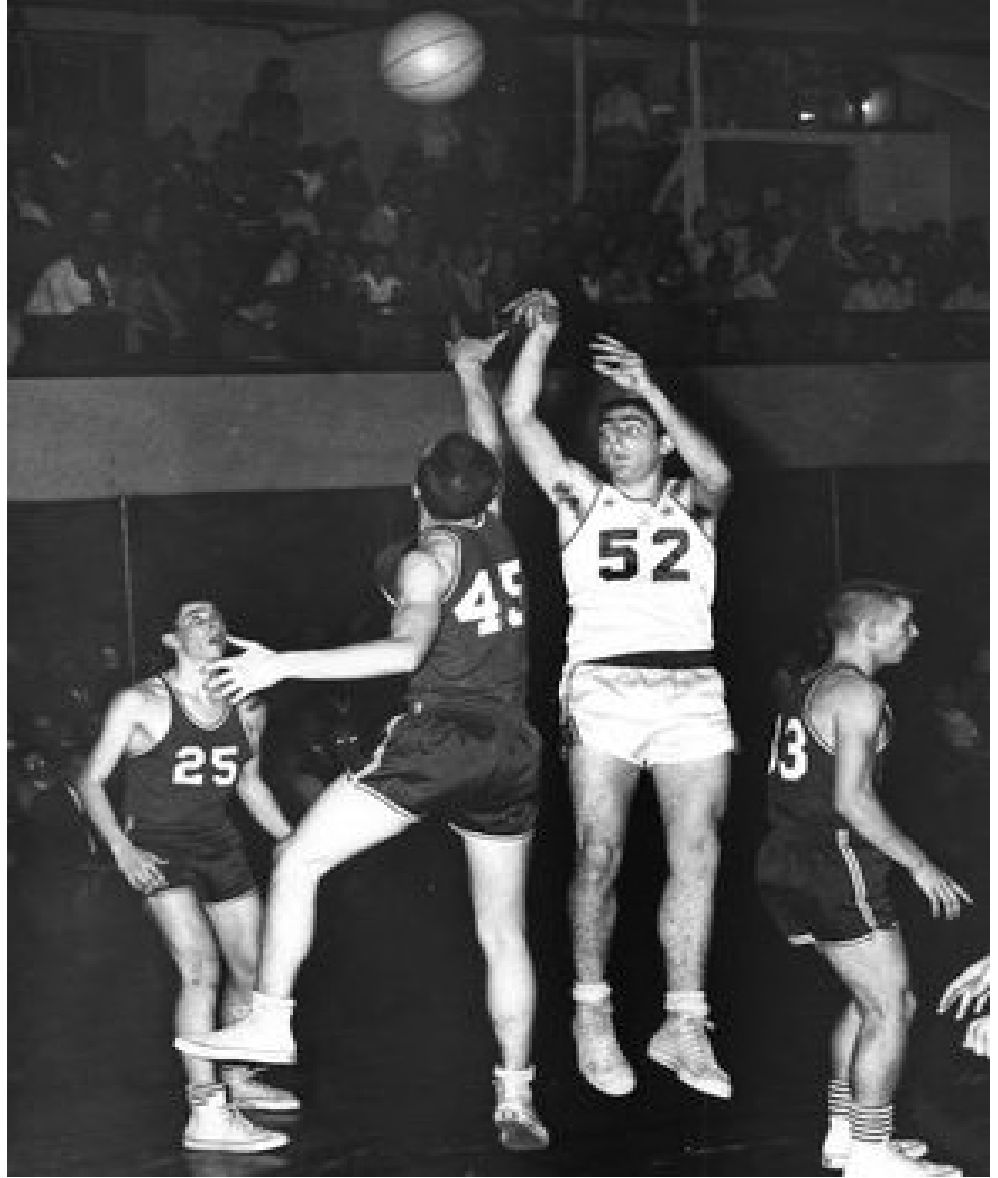
So here's what Marion did: He worked some steel off an old Chevy and took it to a local welder. They hammered it into a circle. Marion took it home, took it out back and attached it to a corn crib. He didn't have a net at first, but eventually he had to put something below the rim. He used a burlap bag. "If you didn't

hit the rim, you almost couldn't tell if it went in or was an air ball," he says. "My buddies and me got in a lot of arguments over that, mm-hmm."

By the time he was a freshman at Lewisville High, he was 6-4 and averaging 24 points per game. As a senior he scored 38 ppg. His favorite shot was a turnaround jumper. "I'd post up anywhere in a 15-foot radius," he says. "You might as well turn and run to the other end, because I'm going to bury it, mm-hmm." So that's how the basketball legend of Marion Pierce starts, with a rim and a gunnysack. How it

straight out of small town Indiana. Pierce went to Lindsey Wilson, a junior college in Columbia, Ky., and averaged 32 ppg as a freshman. He scored 79 in one game. He quit before his sophomore season. Told his coach: "Hey, this isn't for me." Marion Pierce went back home. Still here, 55 years later.

The keys are in the ignition. Marion Pierce leaves them there, the truck parked in his driveway, because this is Lewisville. "Nobody would even think about stealing it," he says. "Mm-hmm." We'd been talking in his garage about growing



Marion Pierce (No. 52), 1961.

ends? Well, that's another story up here when Pierce decides to show

me Lewisville himself. Who is Marion Pierce? Pinch me: He's the guy driving me around town. That's where the old high school was, mm-hmm, though it was torn down after Lewisville High consolidated with two others into Tri High. He takes me a mile north on Ind. 103 and shows me the new school. On our way back into town we pass a large wooden sign welcoming folks to Lewisville. Just behind that is a smaller green sign that says, in white letters: The Home of Marion Pierce.



Inside the truck, Marion Pierce looks at me. Just wants to know if I saw that. "Mm-hmm," I tell him.

This town of about 350 people had six filling stations when he was a boy. In those days U.S. 40 – it's called Main Street in downtown Lewisville – was the main east-west thoroughfare in this part of Indiana. They built I-70 in the 1960s just north of Lewisville, just 4 miles away, the difference between economic life and death. There are no gas stations in Lewisville anymore. See that antique shop on Main Street? Used to be Peyton's Corner Store, where everybody went after games to relive the action over a milkshake and tenderloin. "You just about couldn't get in," he says. "Mm-hmm." Nearly everywhere we go, Marion is pointing out a home he owns. He owns 14 rental properties in all, including most of several blocks near the old baseball field where he hit .392 as a senior first baseman.

Life in Lewisville has been good, see. His dad turned that old salvage yard into a used auto parts empire, with lots in Lewisville and Muncie and New Castle and even New Paris, Ohio. Cars were stripped and stacked, far as the eye could see. "We had 256 acres of cars," he says. "Mm-hmm." Marion and his eight brothers inherited the business and ran it until a few years ago, when they passed it down to some of their boys. Marion's retired now, he and his high school sweetheart, Sandy Cooley. They've been married more than 50 years. Lived in the same house for more than 40. Ol' Tucker's buried out back. Tucker was the last dog in Marion's house, and the last dog he'll ever have. Broke his heart, what happened to Tucker. They were together at the foot of his driveway a few years back when Marion headed for the house. Tucker usually followed, but not this time. He went into the road instead. A car was driving by and--. Marion buried him behind the evergreens in his back yard. "Tucker jogged with me. Did everything with me," Marion says. "No, I can't do that again."

Marion still jogs most days, jogs on that track right below his house, the one ringing the high school's softball field. Tri High is building a new field, but for now the Titans still play on Lewisville's old field. His granddaughter played softball last year. Marion would get on that riding mower and cut his grass on the hill above, while he watched Karly playing below. Today, Tri High is playing Cowan, a small school near Muncie. The Titans are on the field warming up as we drive past. Marion Pierce stops his truck behind the third-base dugout and calls out: "Hey Brian!" Yeah? "Come here!" Out of the dugout pops Brian Peggs, the Tri High coach. He has a team to prepare, but

this is Marion. So he walks over with a big smile. "Everyone knows Marion," the coach says. "This is one of the best guys in town. And if there'd been a 3-point line when he played, nobody would've touched the guy." I look at Marion. He nods. "Mm-hmm."

He doesn't play anymore. Not competitively, anyway. He played in men's leagues for years, played with friends and nephews and had no plans to quit, but he was 68 when he suffered the first major injury of his basketball career, a busted ankle. The ankle never did come back, and his team just sort of drifted away. Now when he gets the urge to shoot, he goes onto the slab of concrete he carved into the yard next to his house and shoots on a basket he installed about 40 years ago. Real rim, real net, real glass backboard, though the glass is so old it's a frosty white. Marion figures he can still shoot. "It's a gift," he says. "I was just born with it, but you've got to work at it. You don't want to get tangled up with me in H-O-R-S-E. Mm-hmm."

In a town time seems to have forgotten, Lewisville remembers Marion Pierce. Strangers stop by his house, just as I did, just to see the man who scored all those points. They see him out at the local pizza place or in New Castle and talk about 1961. Marion is telling me that he took Sandy to La Hacienda on Indianapolis' east side a while back, and it happened there, too! He throws back that big head of his, and he just laughs. He's happiest at home anyway, with three kids, eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren – toddlers he and Sandy are baby-sitting the day I show up. When it gets a little warmer, Marion will take Sandy and some of the kids out to Lake Cumberland. They water ski and go tubing on his 25-foot Baja.

Yeah, life's been good to Marion Pierce. He was passed on the IHSAA scoring list in 1990 by Bedford North Lawrence's Damon Bailey (3,134), and he never became the college player that everyone else on that list did, but he's OK with that. Three of the top 10 scorers in state history played at IU, one at Purdue, one at Iowa, one at Ohio State. Two went to Butler. One to Xavier.

And then there's Marion Pierce, who left junior college as a sophomore and never went back. After an hour with the state's mystery scoring machine, I try to ask him something. Those names on the scoring list, I tell him. Your name is different from the rest. If you had to do it over again ... my voice trails off. Marion Pierce rescues me. "You know how people will say there's always something in your life you'd like to change?" he asks. "Well, I don't know what that would be. I wouldn't change a thing, mm-hmm."

IHSAA's All-time boys basketball scoring leaders:

1. Damon Bailey, Bedford North Lawrence (1990); 3,134
2. Marion Pierce, Lewisville (1961); 3,019
3. Deshaun Thomas, FW Bishop Luers (2010); 3,018
4. Brody Boyd, Union – Dugger (2000); 2,632
5. Rick Mount, Lebanon (1966); 2,595
6. Trevon Bluiett, Park Tudor (2014); 2,568
7. Cooper Neese, Cloverdale (2017); 2,496
8. Billy Shepherd, Carmel (1968); 2,465
9. Alan Henderson, Brebeuf Jesuit (1991); 2,419
10. James Blackmon Jr., Marion (2014); 2,387

THE CROSSROADS OF HOOSIER HYSTERIA

by Mark Titus

Editor's Note: This article was penned by Mark Titus, a staff writer for the online sports publishing organization "The Ringer." It's quite nostalgic, reflecting the same general sentiments that many of our senior IHSBHS members still express.

It was a few months before my 10th birthday in 1997 when my dad and I went to the Indiana high school state basketball finals at the RCA Dome in downtown Indianapolis. I was too young to know much of anything at the time, but this I knew for certain: I loved basketball. I mean, I *loooooooved* it, to the point that I judged my third-grade classmates based solely on their basketball ability. It consumed my every thought.

I guess I never really had a choice. My dad went to high school in the 1970s in Logansport—a small Rust Belt city that's 90 minutes north of Indianapolis and is every bit of what you'd picture a small Rust Belt city to be like. It's easy to be drawn to the chapters in Indiana basketball lore that tell stories of tiny farm towns or mention the great players who came from cities such as Indianapolis, Fort Wayne, and Gary. But make no mistake: The small manufacturing cities like Logansport, New Castle, Marion, Kokomo, Anderson, Richmond, and Muncie are where Hoosier Hysteria reached its apex, especially during the '60s, '70s, and '80s. By 1985, seven of the eight schools in my dad's high school conference (North Central Conference) played in gyms that held more than 6,500 people, while the smallest gym in the NCC had a capacity of nearly 6,000.

Like so many Hoosier fathers before him, my dad wasted no time

sinking his basketball claws into his son. My first memories are hurling a tiny plastic ball toward a Little Tikes basket in our driveway as my dad shot on a full-sized hoop. If his bedtime stories weren't about former Kentucky star Kyle Macy scoring 47 points on him in high school, or how all of those mammoth gyms he played in were always packed to the rafters, they were about Pete Maravich or Larry Bird. The doctor who delivered me didn't hand a son to a father as much as he handed a giant block of marble to a basketball-crazed maniac eager to sculpt.

As I got older, Friday nights in the winter began to follow a familiar script: My dad would come home from work and leave his '92 Buick Century running in the driveway so that he wouldn't have to warm it back up later. He'd shove whatever meat and potatoes my mom had made for dinner into his mouth before we'd jump into the car and drive through one snow-covered cornfield after another, the monotony broken only by three-room churches, cemeteries with fewer than 20 headstones, and barns with basketball rims affixed to their sides. We'd arrive at a high school somewhere in central Indiana—usually the one where my dad was the athletic director—and I'd watch perfectly ordinary 17-year-old kids transform into superheroes.

After a high school game ended, my dad would get the game ball from the refs so that I could shoot around after all of the fans, players, and coaches had left. Then, with my audience consisting of janitors, I'd recreate the plays I saw that night while dreaming of someday creating highlights of my very own. On the drive home, we'd throw on Bob Lovell's Indiana high school basketball radio show as background noise, talk about the game we'd just watched, and formulate a plan to

persuade my mom to buy us a pizza when we got back. This was what I knew for as long as I can remember. Basketball wasn't just a big part of my life—it was essentially the only part, and high school basketball was the epicenter of my childhood world. And now I was going to my first state finals game, one that represented the end of an era.

“As everyone knows, Indiana is divided into two parts: 1. Basketball. 2. All That Other Stuff.”—James Alexander Thom

The 1997 Indiana state championship was, by almost any measure, a bad basketball game. Bloomington North High School, ranked no. 1 in the state and fronted by Kueth Duany (who would go on to captain the 2002–03 national champion Syracuse team), led unranked Delta High School 7–0 at the end of the first quarter and cruised to an easy 75–54 win. It's only by re-watching the game on YouTube that I can report Delta's entire roster. Tom McKinney, Bloomington North's coach, kept a pen wedged behind his ear, and Delta's best player was a kid named Patrick “Petie” Jackson. He had an Anthony Mason haircut and would go on to break Kansas point guard Aaron Miles's ankles en route to making Ball State's game-winning layup in the 2001 Maui Invitational. In truth, I can remember only a single thing about that '97 title game: “We believe.”

That was Delta's rallying cry throughout its state tournament run, and one I heard fans yell a few hundred times that day in late March. See, Delta was and still is a rural school, surrounded by cornfields on the outskirts of Muncie, with an enrollment under 1,000. In its 30 years of existence to that point, Delta had never produced a boys'

basketball team that even made the Sweet 16 of the state tournament.

The 1996–97 team lost to Muncie Southside High School by 27 points earlier in the season, suggesting that Delta wasn't even the best team in its own city. In its second game of the state tournament, it required a made free throw with one second remaining to squeak past Wapahani High School, a team it had previously lost to by 18. That January, Delta head coach Paul Keller benched three of his starters (two of whom had scored more than 1,000 points in their respective careers) because the team was doing so poorly. In February, Delta's sixth man broke his arm and was forced to play in a soft cast for the remainder of the season. Delta averaged 12.5 turnovers a game, started a center who was 6-foot-1, and had to erase deficits of 16 and 14 points just to get to the state championship.



I'd admittedly be laying the romanticism on a little bit thick if I likened Delta to the 1954 Milan High state champion team that inspired *Hoosiers*, even though Delta used the same Hinkle Fieldhouse locker room during its state tournament run that Hickory High used in the movie. Regardless, the point remains: The Delta Eagles had no business playing in the 1997 state championship. And yet there they were, fueled by thousands of fans from east central Indiana who believed.

As the game wore on and Bloomington North sustained its dominance, Delta's cheerleaders

assumed the role of the orchestra members on the Titanic, continuing to lead the “We believe” chant either out of habit or because they really were crazy enough to believe a miracle was imminent. I was captivated. The game itself no longer mattered. My attention was squarely focused on these lunatics from Muncie who didn't seem to notice that their team was getting its ass kicked.

I later learned that so much of this passion stemmed from the fact that the '97 title game was the final one in which Indiana would crown a single high school boys' basketball state champion. The Indiana High School Athletic Association was set to institute a class system based on enrollment the following season, bringing an end to an 87-year tradition that was, for my money, the best high school athletic tournament in the world. Delta would compete in class 3A (the second-largest class), meaning the chance to beat a school twice its size, in this setting, with the entire state watching would never come again. This game—win or lose—was the culmination of a Cinderella run that would forever be the last of its kind.

The cheers from Delta's fan base weren't solely for this one basketball game that was going very, very poorly; they were for the three weeks of magic that led to that point, and the 87 years of underdog stories that came before. They were a declaration that a blowout loss could do nothing to soil a memory that would last a lifetime.

“An Indiana player has the enthusiasm of an evangelist, the discipline of a monk, and the heart of a warrior who never loses the honesty and character of a small boy.”—Bob Knight

It's hard to articulate to people from outside Indiana what Hoosier Hysteria really is. The simple answer is that it's a term used to describe the love affair people in the state have with basketball. But it's not enough to understand the *what*. Far more important is the *why*. Basketball took hold in Indiana shortly after its invention at the turn of the 20th century, primarily because of the state's farming culture. With so many young Hoosier men busy planting crops in the spring, fertilizing them in the summer, and harvesting them in the fall, baseball and football couldn't catch on in Indiana as they did in states where manufacturing was king: Ohio, Michigan, and Pennsylvania. But basketball checked every box that Hoosiers needed out of a sport. It was played during the winter, the one season in which farmers had a significant amount of free time. It was played indoors, giving thousands of Hoosiers an activity that didn't involve trekking out into the harsh winter weather. And most importantly, unlike football and baseball, it could be played with just a handful of people, meaning even tiny farm schools could put together a team. Over time, basketball in Indiana developed from a curious oddity to a convenient distraction to a passionate pastime to a full-blown obsession, until it finally became the thing that lies at the heart of Hoosier Hysteria: a point of pride.

There's no denying that Indiana isn't the first state that comes to mind when thinking about the best America has to offer. The obesity and pollution statistics are awful, the archaic alcohol laws are worse, and venturing too far from Indianapolis is to discover what true boredom looks like. Indiana was recently named the meth capital of the country, which would probably be the state's biggest disgrace if not for the KKK's

pervasive presence there in the 1920s. For the most part, we Hoosiers are simple folks who work our asses off, earn what we get, and are among the nicest people you'll ever meet. But the same could be said about much of the United States populace. The list of things that set Indiana apart includes, regrettably, a lot of bullshit. But the shining beacon of hope at the top of that list is basketball.

And that's the important distinction: Basketball isn't just something we love. It's intertwined with our identity. It's the ace up our sleeve when anyone tries to put us down. The Indianapolis 500 is great, but it's really a race that belongs to the world and happens to take place in Indiana. Basketball is our one true export. It's the thing that Hoosiers can point to and say, "We may not bring much to the table, but we bring this. And goddammit, we couldn't be more proud."

It's pretentious, I know, but it should also be noted that basketball itself *is* different in Indiana. Or at least, that's what Hoosiers would like to believe. We like to think that ours is a form of basketball in which fundamentals, teamwork, and effort supersede size and athleticism. We like to think our players are perfectly crafted and can't be found anywhere else in the world. Whether basketball in Indiana really is akin to cigars from Cuba or wine from the south of France is irrelevant. To Hoosiers, there's basketball, and then there's Indiana Basketball. That, I suppose, is why Delta fans chanting "We believe" in 1997 has stuck so vividly in my mind. That entire scene—an undersized and undermanned Cinderella with a community cheering it on—was quintessential Indiana Basketball. If words can't properly define what Hoosier Hysteria is, those two hours can—because above all else Hoosier

Hysteria is about celebrating the underdog.

Just think about the Indiana basketball stories you know. Aside from Bob Knight's three national titles at IU, virtually every notable thing that has happened with a basketball team from the state could be framed as an underdog story: Milan in 1954; Larry Bird and Indiana State in 1979; Purdue's Final Four run as a no. 6 seed in 1980; Indiana's run to the national title game as a no. 5 seed in 2002; Christian Watford's shot to upset top-ranked Kentucky in 2011; Butler's back-to-back national title game appearances, the first of which included Gordon Hayward's near-miss that came inches away from going down as the greatest shot in sports history; Notre Dame snapping UCLA's 88-game winning streak in 1974 and coming a shot away from ending Kentucky's perfect season in the 2015 Elite Eight; Ball State's run to the 1990 Sweet 16, where the 12th-seeded Cardinals gave eventual national champion UNLV its only tournament scare in a 69–67 loss; Reggie Miller's Pacers taking part in the "Hicks vs. Knicks" rivalry from the '90s, almost derailing Michael Jordan's Bulls dynasty in the 1998 Eastern Conference finals, and going up against Shaq and Kobe in the 2000 NBA Finals.

Hell, Indiana loves underdogs so much that when our teams aren't in that role, it's almost as if we find new ways to screw things up. The 1974–75 Hoosiers were undefeated until Scott May's broken arm preceded an Elite Eight loss to the same Kentucky team that IU had beaten by 24 points earlier that year. The 1990–91, 1992–93, and 2012–13 Hoosiers were arguably the best teams in the country during those respective seasons, yet each also failed to reach the Final Four. Gene Keady had six 25-win seasons in his 25-year

coaching tenure at Purdue yet he never made a Final Four, and only one of those six campaigns resulted in a trip to the Elite Eight. The 2005 Pacers were favorites to win the East and maybe even the NBA Finals before The Malice at the Palace set the franchise back a decade. And Butler hasn't done much since the college basketball world started treating it as more than a tournament darling. It's like any time an Indiana team starts shedding its underdog label, the universe steps in to correct its mistake. Isn't it a little curious how a state that prides itself on its rich basketball history always seems to be an underdog? If Indiana Basketball really is one of the world's most prestigious brands, why has it been almost 30 years since the state last produced a basketball juggernaut?

"A Hoosier talks about basketball for an hour after he is dead and has stopped breathing."—Kurt Vonnegut

The 2016–17 Indiana high school boys' basketball season officially began (last fall), marking the start of the 20th season of class basketball in the state. Depending on who you ask, this signifies either the 20th anniversary of the biggest mistake an Indiana governing body has ever made or two decades of pride and joy for small communities that otherwise would've lacked the chance to experience a state title. No matter which side a person falls on, all Hoosiers who are old enough to remember the 1990s can agree on one thing: Indiana high school basketball is drastically different from what it used to be.

If I were alarmist, this is where I'd make the case that Hoosier Hysteria is dying. And honestly, part of me worries that it is. Anecdotally, attendance for high school games has been steadily declining for decades,

and some of the most historic and iconic gyms in the state are on their deathbeds. The reasons are plenty, and people all over the state will gladly say which they believe are most at fault: AAU culture, the internet, the rise of football following the success of the Peyton Manning–era Colts, Title IX, the economy and job market, and the emergence of all sorts of entertainment alternatives. But every one of these discussions circles back to the advent of class basketball.

If nothing else, that 1997 state title game was a clear turning point in the Indiana basketball history books. The installation of the class system isn't directly responsible for everything that followed, of course, but the landscape of basketball in the state has unquestionably changed since. Knight was fired from IU in 2000. Keady retired from Purdue in 2005. On two separate occasions (2005 and 2014), no team from the state participated in the NCAA tournament, an occurrence that hadn't previously happened since 1972, when the tournament fielded only 25 teams. During the final 19 years of the one-class system, 14 of the 21 Mr. Basketballs (there were two ties) chose in-state schools for college. Only nine of the last 19 Mr. Basketballs stayed in Indiana, and only one (Purdue's Caleb Swanigan) has stayed since 2012. Over the past 19 seasons, the 10 Division I college programs in Indiana have combined for 17 Sweet 16 berths, six Elite Eights, three Final Fours, and zero national titles. For comparison, over that same span Duke has 15 Sweet 16 berths, seven Elite Eights, five Final Fours, and three national titles. The Pacers, who were perpetually in NBA championship contention near the turn of the millennium, blew up the foundation of their franchise when Miller retired in 2005. They've won 50 games in a season just once

since. Put more succinctly, there are kids all over Indiana who will play in high school games this week having never lived in a world where the Hoosiers were in the Final Four. And there are parents of those kids who have never lived in a world where Purdue or Notre Dame have played in a Final Four.

For anyone brainwashed on the religion that is basketball in Indiana, that's jarring. For everyone else, it should explain the current psyche of fans across the state pretty well. This is why so many IU and Purdue fans jumped on the Butler bandwagon in 2010 and 2011. There was more at stake than just loyalty to a particular school. Butler represented the Indiana Basketball brand. At a certain point, we've grown so desperate to relive the magic of Hoosier Hysteria that we're willing to embrace anything that slightly resembles it. That explains how the Robbie Hummel–era Boilermakers have given Matt Painter more job security than he probably deserves. It's also why IU fans stormed the court against Kentucky in 2011, why the loss to Syracuse in the 2013 Sweet 16 felt like the death of a loved one, and why Indiana's win over third-ranked Kansas in the season opener last November 11 has left Hoosier fans delirious. It's like Tywin Lannister says on *Game of Thrones*: "Any man who must say 'I am the king' is no true king." Hoosiers have been forced to remind the rest of the country who the basketball king is with increasing frequency over the last two decades, to the point that many of us are really just trying to remind ourselves.

"They took basketball away from the whole state of Indiana and gave it to the individual communities."—Paul Keller, coach of Delta's 1997 state runner-up, on class basketball

I recently noticed that my beard is graying. Not enough to panic just yet, but enough to make an indestructible man in his 20s suddenly feel vulnerable; enough to pause and think about exactly what that gray represents. Maybe it's revisionist history to look back almost 20 years ago to when my dad took me to my first state finals and claims that Indiana Basketball was better then. Maybe certain negative aspects were always there and maybe I just didn't notice them until I got older. That, after all, is how nostalgia works: You hold onto the great memories and let everything that was less than perfect fade away. Even if the one-class high school system would've stuck around, things likely wouldn't be all that different than they are today.

Still, when I close my eyes, those Friday nights in the winter are there in vivid detail. I remember worshipping guys like Damon Frierson, Eric Riggs, and Chad Jobe—names that mean nothing to you but may as well have been Jordan, Magic, and Bird to 7-year-old me. I remember having the same conversation with my dad every time we'd consider moving to a new house: "Where would we put a basketball hoop?" I remember spending countless summer nights in my backyard trying to get as many shots up as I could before the sun went down, and then staying out for a few more hours since shooting in the dark was better than doing anything else. I remember the popcorn, the cheerleaders, the bands, the warmth of a packed gym on a freezing Indiana night, the long drives with my dad to dots on a map I'll never visit again. That's the Indiana I will always love, and the Indiana I'd give anything to go back to.

Is Hoosier Hysteria dying? It can't die. Hoosier Hysteria is a religion, and I mean that in the literal sense.



It's a belief in an idea that's so strong it permeates every aspect of its followers' existence. It's a way of life and a reverence of something bigger than self, with places of worship that hold entire town populations, and gods who wear jerseys and red sweaters and comb-overs.

As a new Indiana high school basketball season tips off, the part of me that's graying worries that it doesn't mean as much as it used to. I don't know if Hoosier kids are still raised to have an unhealthy obsession with basketball. I don't know if the college teams throughout the state will ever return to their previous levels of prominence. I don't know if the magic of Hoosier Hysteria can ever be recaptured, or if it was forever lost after the 1997 state championship. But that's life: You get older, you move onto what's next, and you hope the generation behind you cares just as much about the things that mattered most to you, even though you know they can't. All you can really do is keep the faith. And if you're asking the millions of Hoosiers who feel like I do ... well, we still believe.

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