

HALL OF FAME TEAM AWARD



BG players unfurl a state championship banner following the victory in Hershey in 1984.

Trail blazers

1984 Lady Marauders proud to be first county girls team to mine gold

By John Hartsock
Altoona Mirror

The Bishop Guilfoyle Catholic Lady Marauders have established a small-school high school girls basketball dynasty, with six state championships to their credit in the past quarter-century.

And the 1984 Lady Marauders were the players that got the ball rolling.

When BG brought home the school's first PIAA girls basketball championship in March of 1984, the Lady Marauders did it as a team.

John Frederick, who coached the Lady Marauders to Class AA girls basketball championships in both 1984 and 1991, remembers the unity of the 1984 squad 25 years later.

"They were a very unselfish group, a very team-oriented group," Frederick said of the 1983-84 BG squad. "They were not preoccupied with individual accomplishments.

There were things that each of the players on that team did particularly well, and that was the key to that team's success."

A quarter-century after the BG girls locked up the Lady Marauders' first-ever state title by defeating Pine Grove, 64-63 in the championship game at the HersheyPark Arena, Frederick vividly recalled the special talents of each member of that Lady Marauders team, which is collectively being inducted into the Blair County Sports Hall of Fame this weekend.

There was the shooting prowess, defensive smarts, and leadership presence provided by all-state shooting guard Chris (O'Connor) Lum, and the uncanny passing ability and pressure defense supplied by senior forward Diane (Carey) Stief. Senior center Jodi Cox was a force in the post, giving BG a rebounding edge and working to get open when she didn't have the basketball.

The team's two other starters, both juniors, were guards Lisa (Lightner) Georgiana, an outstanding shooter and defensive dean who often guarded the opposition's best scorer, and Kris (Bumann) Etter, who Frederick termed as the "consummate point guard" — a heads-up floor general who could both direct the game and put the ball in the basket.

But the starters weren't the whole show that year for BG — far from it.

"We had a great supporting cast on that team, and I think that was the thing that helped us to become such a great team and win the state championship," Frederick said.

Steady contributors off the bench for BG that year included junior Chris "Doc" Wessner — who would go on to become an all-state player herself the following season — as well as sophomore Ann (Aigner) Wilson, sophomore Tracy (O'Brian) Chaney, and freshman Tricia Riley. Other freshmen joining Riley on the varsity roster that year were Kathy (Crouse) Hammer, Kellie (Consiglio) Hurd, and Julie (Leipold) Della.

Then there was the solid work ethic provided by senior Sheila (Sullivan) Ramsey and junior Maryann (Winkler) Weber.

Yes, the 1983-84 Lady Marauders were truly a team with a capital "T."

"I would say that discipline was the key to the success of that team," said Georgiana, who operates her own public relations organization and lives in Hollidaysburg with her husband, John, and two sons. "Everybody on that team knew exactly what their role was, and what they were supposed to do."

Lum led the team in scoring average with 14.5 points per game, while Cox and Stief both averaged between 10 and 11 per game.

Georgiana checked in with a nine-point average, and Etter averaged 7.5 points per game.

Five players on the team — Lum (East Carolina), Stief and Hammer (St. Francis), Wessner (Virginia Commonwealth) and Riley (Massachusetts) went on to play Division I basketball.

"I just think we were so unselfish as a team," said Lum, who now works as a customer service representative for a company in Advance, N.C., where she lives with her husband, Phillip, and their two sons. "All our



From left: Tracie O'Brian, Kris Bumann, and Lisa Lightner celebrate in the aftermath of BG's victory over Pine Grove.

scoring averages were very similar.

And we had great team chemistry — we were all friends."

Back in the early 1980s, several area high school girls basketball teams, including BG, were playing a season schedule that began in September, ran through November, and, after a couple of months off in December and January, resumed in February and March. Now, all boys and girls basketball teams play their seasons continually through the winter months of December through February.

Frederick wasn't a fan of the split schedule.

"It was rough," he said. "It took us awhile to get our feet (after resuming play) in the spring again. But once we got into the playoffs, we really put things together."

After defeating archrival Bishop McCort, 54-50 in the District 6-AA championship game, BG upended District 7 power Mount Alvernia, 59-43 in the western final to punch its ticket to Hershey.

"That was a landmark game, a really big win," Frederick said. "(Mount Alvernia) was ranked 11th in the country by USA Today at the time. We just tried to instill in our kids the idea that we were the better team, and we played great defense and smart basketball that night."

That paved the way for the state championship game in Hershey, and

BG's thrilling victory over a Pine Grove team that battled back from a 14-point second-half deficit.

Wessner lives today in Richmond, Va., where she works as a product manager for a medical supply distributor and is also a yoga instructor and fitness trainer. Wessner led the Lady Marauders with 15 points in the 1984 state title game and believes that sharing in the success of BG's 1984 state championship team helped to shape her life.

"It was a life-changing experience for me," she said. "There are so many fond memories."

A great reception by the Lady Marauders' hometown fans awaited the team upon its return to Altoona from Hershey.

"An unbelievable crowd welcomed us back," said Frederick.

BG would also win state championships under current coach Mark Moschella in 1993, 2007, 2009 and 2010. The hometown greeting for the trailblazing 1984 champions is still one of Georgiana's fondest memories, 25 years later.

"I remember Hershey's kisses (thrown by BG fans) coming from the sky, hitting me on the head," she said. "We couldn't believe it when we got back into town, the people on the road, cheering us on. I was flabbergasted."

An unforgettable homecoming for an unforgettable team.



Lady Marauder team members include, from left: Front row — Kelly Crouse, Kris Bumann, Lisa Lightner, Kellie Consiglio, Trish Riley. Middle row: assistant coach Paul Hasson, Mary Ann Winkler, Tracie O'Brian, Ann Aigner, Julie Leipold, head coach John Frederick. Back row: Sheila Sullivan, Chris O'Connor, Diane Carey, Jodi Cox, Chris Wessner.

1983-84 Lady Marauders: Where they are now

Following is a list of team members of the BG state championship team of 1984. Included are their maiden names, married names, current residences and occupations:

Kristine Bumann Etter, Membership Account Rep for the American Economic Association at Vanderbilt University, Franklin, Tenn.

Traci O'Brien Chaney, Hairdresser at the Coliseum, Hollidaysburg

Kellie Consiglio Hurd, teacher, Hollidaysburg Jr. High School, Hollidaysburg.

Tricia Riley, State College, working on 2nd master's degree, counselor

Kathy Crouse Hammer, RN/Supervisor Trauma/Surgical Unit, Allegheny

General Hospital, Pittsburgh

Lisa Lightner Georgiana, President, The Georgiana Group, a strategic marketing organization, Hollidaysburg

Maryann Winkler Weber, Director of Quality Assurance, Crown Castle, USA Inc, Bridgeville, Pa.

Julie Leipold Della, Special Education Teacher, Appalachia Intermediate Unit 8, Cresson

Ann Aigner Wilson, Physical Therapist, Gentiva Home Care, Pilot Mountain, NC

Chris Wessner, Product Manager, Owens & Minor, and yoga instructor/fitness trainer. Richmond, Va.

Jodi Cox, Orientation and Mobility Specialist for the Blind, Carbon/Lehigh

Intermediate Unit, Allentown, Pa.

Diane Carey Stief, Homemaker, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Chris O'Connor Lum, Customer Service Representative, Direct Solution, Advance, NC

Sheila (Sullivan) Ramsay, Exercise Physiologist/Clinical Resource Coordinator, Peninsula Regional Medical Center, Snow Hill, MD

Head coach John Frederick, Executive Director, Intermunicipal Relations Committee Council of Governments, Bellwood

Assistant coach Paul Hasson, Principal at William P. Kimmel Alternative School and head boys basketball coach at Altoona Area High School.