

INDUCTEE PROFILE

Len Zandy 'was so good'

But his greatness was matched by his humility

By Jim Lane

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In the mid-1960s, if you were 6-feet-5 or taller, you probably were one of the biggest people in your school and hometown. And at that size, you were expected to play basketball.

Len Zandy played basketball and baseball, too.

On the hardwood, Zandy enjoyed success at Bishop Guilfoyle High School and then Fordham University. On the diamond, he attracted the attention of major league scouts, was drafted twice and eventually played two years in the Kansas City (and then Oakland) Athletics organization.

Zandy, who passed away at the age of 63 in 2007, will be inducted posthumously into the Blair County Sports Hall of Fame.

Zandy grew up in Coupon and went to Gallitzin High School before transferring to Bishop Guilfoyle for his junior and senior years. He was a centerpiece athlete during BG's richest era, the 1960s, when the school produced more than a dozen Division I athletes.

More than one area high school tried to lure Zandy away from Gallitzin and, as former Guilfoyle teammate Mike Irwin recalls: "Everybody tried to get him."

"Len came to Bishop Guilfoyle as a junior and lived with an aunt in Altoona," recalled Bill Huber, another former teammate and close friend.

Irwin and Huber, who both went on to play football at Penn State, were basketball teammates with Zandy on squads that included the likes of Tom Wiley, Bill Hoff, Rick Kaiser and Eddie Miller. John Hyder was the coach.

"He was a gentle, soft-spoken, team player," Huber said. "He was a very graceful big man for that day. He



Len Zandy was a three-year letterman, two-year starter and leading scorer for Fordham (1963-66).

handled himself well under the boards and had a good, outside jump shot.

"He was a great guy to be around and compete with, and he certainly made our squad that year."

Huber was referring to the 1961-62 team that compiled a 21-3 record and won the Altoona-Johnstown Diocese championship before losing to Pittsburgh North Catholic in the state playoffs.

Zandy averaged 21.8 points a game and set several Marauder scoring records. During his two seasons at BG, Zandy had games of 41 against Williamsburg, 44 against Bellwood and 45 against Bald Eagle. As a senior, he finished second to Williamsburg's Don Appleman among Blair County high school scorers.

"He was a great shooter in the day before the 3-point shot," Irwin said. "He was a big guy with a soft touch. He was strong inside, too. He just dominated games. He was so good."

Zandy played both sports at Fordham from 1963-66. He was a two-year starter in basketball and led the Rams in scoring (17.3 ppg), field-goal percentage (44.2) and free-throw percentage (80) as a senior during an era when Fordham made two NIT appearances and played the best teams in the East, some at Madison Square Garden.

Zandy scored 951 points in three seasons (freshmen were ineligible for the varsity then). That was before the 3-point shot and teams played only 25 games — now it's 30 or more — so, adjusted to modern times, Zandy easily would have surpassed the 1,000-point mark.

Coached by John Bach, who later guided Penn State, Fordham beat the likes of Temple, Army, St. John's, Pitt, Memphis State, Holy Cross, Seton Hall and UConn. The Rams lost at North Carolina by six points during Zandy's junior season.

Fifty years later, the impression Zandy left on Bach remains strong.

"I've never forgotten Len Zandy," said Bach, now 89 and residing in the Chicago area after a long and distinguished NBA coaching career. "He did a good job for us. The hardest part of putting a program together is getting a big guy, and Len was a big guy who provided what we needed — rebounding and some presence."

Bach said Zandy's athletic ability helped separate him.

"He was good — footwork, nice strong body, he played well," Bach said, adding he was "delighted" Zandy is being recognized. "And I enjoyed him as a person."

An imposing, right-handed pitcher in baseball, Zandy was drafted by Kansas City in the 27th round in 1965, but elected to stay in school instead of signing. He later was selected by the Athletics in the second round and played professionally for two years on the Class A level, pitching in 23 games as a starter and reliever.

Some of his pro baseball teammates were Reggie Jackson, Vida Blue, Reggie Sanders and George Hendrick.

Zandy's widow, Patty, recalled that she knew nothing about Len's athletic prowess when they first met.

"I was working at First National Bank

when Bill Hoyne, who was a vice president, introduced us," she said.

"Len was done with (pro) baseball and was working for Atlantic Richfield and would come into the bank to do his finances.

"I had no clue who he was," she said. "I just knew he was tall. In fact, I was reluctant to go out with him because I didn't know him."



A right-handed pitcher, Zandy was twice drafted by the Kansas City Athletics.



Zandy bio

Sport: Basketball, baseball

High school: Bishop Guilfoyle

College: Fordham

Hall of Fame achievement: Fordham's leading scorer in basketball as a senior and was drafted twice as a pitcher by the Kansas City (later Oakland) Athletics, signing in 1967.

FYI: Len died in 2007 at the age of 63 and will be honored posthumously.



Len (front row, left) was a key part of the Altoona Beverage team that won the 1962 Altoona YMCA Tournament championship, a popular and highly competitive regional tournament that followed the high school season. The team was made up of Bishop Guilfoyle players, many of whom went on to Division I colleges, and represents the Marauders' richest sports era. Other team members beside Len include (front row, from left), Bill Huber (PSU football), Dave Costlow, Mike Irwin (PSU football), Tom Tipton, Terry Buchanan. Back row: Rick Kaiser (St. Francis basketball), Eddie Miller (Mississippi basketball), Bill Hoff (Buffalo football), Tom Wiley (Purdue football), Joe Durbin, Allan Conrad, sponsor Lou Mangiacarne, Dick Graupensperger. Costlow, Tipton and Buchanan represented Altoona High School in the 1962 tourney.

Patty said that after she got to know Len and his family she watched him play in area basketball leagues and in the Greater City Baseball League.

She fondly remembers his humility.

"Through different conversations, I learned about his athletic ability," she said. "He wasn't a bragger. He played because he wanted to. He did his best, and his best was really good."

The Zandys had three daughters (Nicole, Kimberly and Pam) and lived in Dillsburg, near Harrisburg, for many years when Ford Motor Credit transferred Len there for his job. But his heart was always in Altoona, where he is buried.

"He loved Altoona," Patty said. "He'd schedule his work to get back there every chance he could. The girls didn't really know a lot about his athletics, either. They knew him as Dad. He was always a family man."

The Zandys, Patty and her daughters, are planning to attend the Hall of Fame festivities.

"I know that it's a big deal," she said of Len's induction. "We're thrilled. It's an honor, and I think he would be humbled. He loved sports, loved playing and loved the camaraderie with the guys."

"I just wish he was here to enjoy it."



Fordham coach John Bach presented Len with the President's Cup award for his outstanding play in the New York City series between Fordham, St. John's, NYU and Manhattan.