



Jeff was voted into the Big 5 Hall of Fame in 1984.

Jeff Neuman:

An Ivy Leaguer on and off the court

By Neil Rudel

It was 1966, and Jeff Neuman had come off an outstanding basketball career at Penn, where he was a three-year Ivy League selection and impressive enough to be inducted into the Big Five Hall of Fame in 1984.

Neuman was drafted in the fifth round by the then Baltimore Bullets and shortly into training camp was sold to the Philadelphia 76ers.

"Alex Hannum was coaching then and he thought I would make the team, but they had five or six guards," Neuman was recalling from his Santa Monica home. "It would have been difficult, but maybe I would have. They had (Wilt) Chamberlain and were loaded. They obviously didn't need me."

But more than that, Neuman's competi-

ive spirit had been exhausted. A two-year starter at point guard for the Altoona High School (1962 graduate) under Frank Mastrocola, Neuman went on to average 17 points per game as a playmaker under Jack McCloskey at Penn. After leaving the 76ers, he was the No. 1 draft pick and played weekends for one season in the Eastern Professional Basketball League against the likes of K.C. Jones, and attended Penn's Wharton Business School at the same time.

Both proved to be a valuable learning experience as Neuman went on to be an enormously successful Wall Street broker for 17 years.

"Wall Street is no different from being an athlete," said Neuman, now 42. "There's total commitment, high pressure and it's very exciting."

Neuman did well enough to change

career directions in 1985. His life is now slower paced and includes managing investment portfolios, producing musical workshops, and studying acting as he contemplates his next move with no pressure to make it.

Neuman also travels extensively, staying at his apartments in New York and Paris.

"I decided to go off and do things on my own," he said of his decision to leave Wall Street. "Sometimes, when you reach 40, you start looking at things differently. I think it's good to be switching worlds again. For me, it's a path that's very interesting. I'm fortunate because of my work on Wall Street that I can do things I haven't done."

Neuman has fond memories of playing at Penn under McCloskey, now the general manager of the Detroit Pistons, and Quaker freshman coach Dick Harter, the former

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Penn State coach who recruited Neuman.

Neuman played regularly in the Palestra, against the likes of Bill Bradley (Princeton), Wally Jones (Villanova) and Matt Goukas (St. Joseph's). He was a key player on the '66 Quakers, which won the Ivy League, but did not go to the NCAA tournament because of a dispute between the league and the NCAA over academic standards.

"After Bradley left Princeton, we won the Ivy League," Neuman said. "We would have gotten a chance to play Syracuse, with Dave Bing, in the NCAA and that was disappointing."

Neuman, who chose Penn over NYU, felt he matured after he left Altoona, which then played its games in front of large crowds at the Jaffa Mosque.

Neuman was part of one of Altoona's better teams over the years that included Dave Costlow ("He was a wonderful player," Neuman said) and Dick Leipold ("Dick was magical underneath") John Myers, Tom McGee and, during their senior year, Ronnie Gamble.

"There were about four of us who played together in junior high school and then at the

high school," Neuman said. "It was exciting traveling and playing in front of a lot of people. But frankly, it was a tough time when you're 15, 16, 17 years old. I felt it was stressful time and I felt internally that I had to be playing great all the time and there was a lot of self-imposed pressure.

"The camaraderie was wonderful, but I don't see it as one of the happier times in my life. It's character building. I wasn't playing with a tremendous amount of confidence. Mine seemed to come later."

Part of that may have come from being a product of a family with an outstanding athletic tradition. Neuman's father, Milt, played minor league baseball in addition to managing Altoona's 1957 NABF national champions. His uncles, Maurice "Babe" Patt and Lou Patt, played professional football and semi-pro basketball, respectively. Neuman's brother, Rick, played basketball at Princeton and his sister, Nancy, was a swimmer-tennis player at Penn.

"Fathers have tremendous influences on their sons and what the father has done or what he has liked to have done is often imparted on the son," said Neuman, whose

father passed away in 1988. "Just from the men in our family, sports were very important and coming up in a town like Altoona, that is how one is admired - to be a wonderful athlete. Certainly at that time, one wasn't going to become a dancer or an actor. In the family tradition on both sides, there was a great amount of emphasis on being an athlete."

Neuman, who played in the 1965 Maccabian Games in Israel for Jewish athletes, rarely plays basketball anymore but stays in shape by performing martial arts and yoga.

Neuman has become a big boxing fan - but has resisted his surroundings and has yet to become attached to the Los Angeles Lakers.

"I'm a Celtic fan," he said. "To me, Boston represents how I came up as an athlete, blue collar, hard-working and tough. Eastern players have been raised like that. In Altoona, we played tough and we hung in there at Penn. I relate to the blue-collar approach at Boston."

Best Wishes

JEFF NEUMAN

TOM CORBO