

## HALL OF FAME TEAM AWARD



Williamsburg won the 1958 PIAA Class C championship. Team members include, from left, First row — manager Jack Snyder, Ben Homsey, Larry Biddle, manager Sam Baughman. Back row — assistant coach Mike Hoffer, Bill Graziano, Tim Kavel, Roger Michelone, Ron Sollenberger, Ned Beaver, Tom Forshey, Eldin Lower, Galen Hall, Don Zeiders, Tim Eastep, head coach Bill Casper.

# The pride of

## '58 team, led by Hall and Lower, credited with blazing trail

By Jim Lane  
*Altoona Mirror*

Few small communities — at least in this region — have had as much tradition in high school sports as Williamsburg.

Particularly from the mid-1950s to the late-1960s, Williamsburg High School had a tremendous run in basketball, football and baseball.

From the 1954-55 school year through the 1967-68 campaign, or 14 scholastic seasons, Blue Pirate teams racked up two PIAA state championships, six western titles, nine District 6 crowns and 12 Juniata Valley League honors.

Galen Hall, no doubt the school's greatest athlete, has fond memories.

"We packed that little gym every night," Hall, who now lives in Florida, said. "Williamsburg was just a great place to grow up."

Hall was a standout in football, basketball and baseball at Williamsburg and went on to Penn State and the NFL Washington Redskins before becoming a successful college and pro football coach.

Among his many achievements at Williamsburg was leading the Blue

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# Williamsburg

## Kagarise led high-scoring '66 team to perfect mark, second title

By Michael Boytim  
*Altoona Mirror*

During the 1965-66 high school basketball season, there was a buzz across the state of Pennsylvania about an outlandishly high-scoring team from a small town.

Expectations were so high for Williamsburg and its star Bill Kagarise that when Don Ap-

pleman, a former Blue Pirates star who was playing Division I college basketball at Saint Francis in 1965, walked into the gym late in a game that season, he was shocked.

Appleman noticed Williamsburg was losing, 35-28, late in the fourth quarter.

“I had just gotten back from college for the weekend and was very surprised to see we were behind,” he

said. “It wasn’t long until I realized the scoreboard wasn’t able to display the real score, which was 128-35.”

It was a scene that played out several times during that season in which Williamsburg averaged 96 points per game, won the PIAA Class C championship game and finished 25-0.

The team earned just the second high school basketball state championship in Blair County history

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**The Blue Pirates of '66 celebrate their state championship victory and undefeated season.**

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— Williamsburg's 1958 team won the first title — and will be enshrined as part of the Hall of Fame's 17th class.

Kagarise was the 1966 team's centerpiece.

"One of my biggest goals in life was to win a state championship," he said. "Right after high school, I had to leave Williamsburg because my dad had been commuting from Virginia since I was a sophomore. I've been back to the area and went up to the (Blair County Sports Hall of Fame) banquet over the years and thought 'it has to be our turn sometime.' I wasn't surprised, because I knew it had to happen. I think about that season constantly, and our induction is the icing on the cake."

Kagarise, who now lives near Smith Mountain Lake in Virginia, averaged 34 points per game for Williamsburg during its championship season and eventually played Division I college basketball at American University.

"He had no shyness about shooting the ball as soon as he got across halfcourt," said Jeff Appleman, a sophomore reserve on the team who later went on to be the all-time Blair County leader in coaching wins. "He was always trying to take the shot off the dribble and got shots off before people could even guard him.

"When he got hot, he didn't miss. I remember one time against Central, they had three guys guarding him, and he still scored in the 60s."

Though Kagarise was the team's star, he had plenty of help.

"There was a lot of pride," said Dick Buckley, Williamsburg's coach at the time. "There was precedent set with the



**Coach Dick Buckley is hoisted by the Williamsburg players, including Bill Kagarise (15) and Dick Wilkinson.**

teams before, and they worked together very well. We had seven or eight guys who could come in and do the job, and they were very close."

The team was so deep with talent that the scores would often get out of hand unintentionally.

"I think the important thing for everyone to understand was that Coach Buckley didn't run up the score," Kagarise said. "He'd sub in guys in each quarter, and a lot of guys played a lot of minutes. Whoever was in would just keep adding to our lead."

Kagarise prided himself on his range.

"For me, it was the further out the better as far as shooting, and we had some other guys who could shoot the lights out," he said. "If we had the 3-point line back then, our scores would have been even more impressive."

Kagarise scored 843 points in 1965-66 as a senior and finished his high school career with 1,748 points. Vince "Pepper" Appleman, Wayne Detwiler, Ken Aurandt and Dick Wilkinson rounded out the rest of Williamsburg's starting five that season.

Other team members included Chris Detweiller, Bruce Houck, Rich Tate, Tom Frye and Jeff Appleman. Don Grannas and Ken Weimert were the team managers.

Jerry Campbell, the team's assistant coach, presented Buckley for induction into the Blair County Hall of Fame in 2006. From 1959-69, Buckley amassed an overall coaching record of 211-42 at Williamsburg, and from 1964 through 1967, Buckley's Williamsburg teams racked up a composite record of 123-7, reeling off an amazing 66 consecutive victories over three seasons.

"You look at our record at the time, and kids wanted to

be a part of that," Buckley, who now resides in Clarion County, said. "There were good leaders in every sport at the school, and one after another kids wanted to be a part of our team."

The championship came at an important time for the Williamsburg community, which saw its paper mill reduce its staff by 75 percent in 1964, drastically cutting employment opportunities in the town.

Kagarise's father, Bill, was one of the workers transferred to another job.

"I just have great appreciation for my mom (Mary) and dad," Kagarise said. "When I was in 10th grade, my dad was transferred to Virginia, 220 miles away. The three of us sat in the kitchen in Williamsburg and debated it. I loved the fever of basketball, and they made it happen and allowed me to stay. My mom did a lot of stuff to make it work. Dad made the commute every 10-14 days, and I would have never had that state championship if it wasn't for them."

The team continued to win despite the economic struggles, and the community took note.

"When we were young, I don't know if we realized how special it was to the community," Tate said. "The old gym was typical of gyms of the '50s; it was like 'Hoosiers' the movie. People would start standing in line at 5, and the doors didn't open until 6."

"When there were playoff games, there were caravans of cars. Hundreds of people were at those games. If you were a criminal, it was the perfect time to rob a house because no one was home."

Buckley, who lived just a block away from the school, could see the lines forming from his house.

"People would line up, and the fire chief would stay away even though



**The Pirates hoop it up following their victory over Jim Thorpe, which took place at the Civic Arena in Pittsburgh.**

cramming all those people in had to be a fire hazard," Buckley said. "The team brought the town together, and people wanted to follow our team."

The perfect season nearly came to an end during the 1965 Christmas tournament. The Blue Pirates were down by nine points with 90 seconds to play against Bishop Guilfoyle.

"We had great chemistry, and the best example of that was playing Altoona Catholic (BG)," Kagarise said. "They took me out of the game with a unique defense, and I only scored 14 points."

"The other guys stepped up. We made the greatest comeback I was ever part of. From that moment on, I knew we had something special, and we sure did."

Everything continued to go right for Williamsburg in the playoffs.

"We played the western final in Huntingdon," Jeff Appleman said.

"We had this big guy named Wayne Detwiler, and he wasn't known for his shooting prowess, but he banked some in some shots from deep that weren't expected. We just knew it was our day."

"It was probably the closest game we had in the playoffs, and Coach Buckley looked down the bench and everyone looked away. He called my name, and I had to guard one of their better players. I was just glad I did a good job and didn't mess anything up."

Williamsburg defeated Jim Thorpe, 89-55, in the state championship to cap the perfect season and Kagarise's career.

"The best memory I have from Williamsburg is that state championship," Buckley said. "We played a number of B schools and scrimmaged A and B teams before the season, and I think that really had the kids prepared to make history."



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Pirates to the PIAA Class C basketball state championship in the 1957-58 season. The Pirates actually played for the Class C basketball title three years in a row, losing in 1956 and '57 before beating Jenkintown in the '58 final, which was played at Juniata College.

That same school year, Williamsburg had an unbeaten football season and won the Blair County Baseball League title.

The 1957-58 basketball team, along with Williamsburg's 1965-66 team, will be inducted into the Hall of Fame's 2016 class. Hall was a member of the first class in 1987 and also was a member of the 1957 Altoona NABF team, which was inducted in 2008.

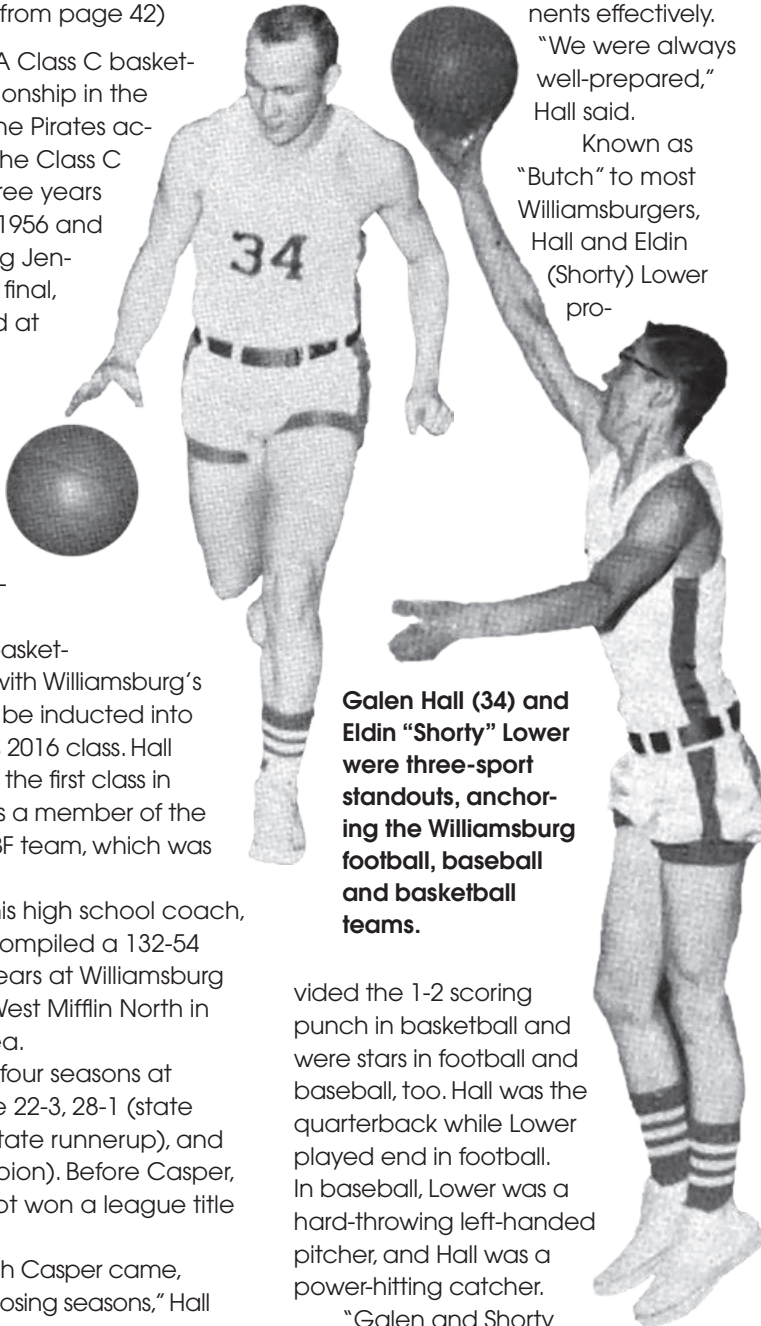
Hall praised his high school coach, Bill Casper, who compiled a 132-54 record in eight years at Williamsburg before going to West Mifflin North in the Pittsburgh area.

Casper's last four seasons at Williamsburg were 22-3, 28-1 (state runnerup), 23-3 (state runnerup), and 24-1 (state champion). Before Casper, the Pirates had not won a league title since 1937.

"Before Coach Casper came, Williamsburg had losing seasons," Hall recalled. "When he came, we always thought we had a chance. We got a lot of experience playing against the older guys, and that definitely helped us to a successful season the year we won it.

"We played fast," Hall said. "They call it up-tempo today. Casper liked the run-and-shoot style, and we adapted to it. Our court at Williamsburg was very small, but that probably helped us when we played on a bigger court. We practiced a lot of full-court passes, and we were ready for bigger courts."

The team featured outstanding defense, chemistry and leadership. Hall said Casper was a disciplinarian, very knowledgeable and scouted oppo-



**Galen Hall (34) and Eldin "Shorty" Lower were three-sport standouts, anchoring the Williamsburg football, baseball and basketball teams.**

vided the 1-2 scoring punch in basketball and were stars in football and baseball, too. Hall was the quarterback while Lower played end in football. In baseball, Lower was a hard-throwing left-handed pitcher, and Hall was a power-hitting catcher.

"Galen and Shorty were both outstanding in three sports," 1962 Williamsburg Don Appleman, who went on to an outstanding basketball career as a player and coach, said. "They complemented each other and while Galen went to Penn State for football, they both had interest from major league scouts for baseball."

While Hall and Lower were the stars, the basketball team also had outstanding role players, including Ron Sollenberger, who could run the point, play guard or forward and was a good rebounder and defender. Other key players were Ben Homsey, Tom

nents effectively. "We were always well-prepared," Hall said.

Known as "Butch" to most Williamsburgers, Hall and Eldin (Shorty) Lower pro-



**Bill Casper was the architect of the 1958 team.**

Forshey, and Larry Biddle, who had a big scoring game in the western final.

Tim Kavel, Don Zeiders, Roger Michelone, Bill Graziano, Ned Beaver and Tim Eastep also came off the bench and supplied depth. Mike Hoffer was the assistant coach.

The same year Williamsburg won the PIAA Class C state championship, Altoona was runnerup in the Class A division. The two teams met in the finals of the Altoona YMCA Tournament a few months later.

"I think they beat us in three overtimes," Hall recalled.

Appleman, who was an eighth grader in 1958 and the basketball statistician for the state championship team, went on to a stellar career as a player and a coach. After setting the state scoring record with 2,100 points, which stood for 30 years, he earned a scholarship to Penn State, then transferred to Saint Francis before returning to coach the boys and girls programs at Williamsburg.

Appleman credits Casper with starting the basketball tradition at Williamsburg, which carried over to Dick Buckley (coach of the 1965-66 champs), and several others, including Charlie Funk and Jeff Appleman, who guided the Williamsburg girls to the 1997 PIAA Class A crown.

"I think the key to Casper's success was his summer recreation program at the school," Don Appleman said. "Guys started playing year-round, it carried over for decades and became a tradition."

# 'Heyday' was thrill for Blue Pirate fans

## As a youth, Mirror reporter never missed a game

*Editor's note: Walt Frank has been a member of the Blair County media for 45 years — first as a radio newsman and broadcaster of high school sports and then a Mirror reporter for the past 25 years.*

**By Walt Frank**  
*Altoona Mirror*

If you liked sports, particularly basketball, Williamsburg was a neat place in which to grow up during the 1950s and 1960s.

The Blue Pirates captured PIAA Class C state championships in both 1958 and 1966.

Back in those days, there wasn't a lot to do in town so we played ball year round.

You could drive through town and find basketball hoops in backyards and on garages.

My next-door neighbor, Rich Tate, who played on the 1966 championship team, had a small court in his backyard. We would shovel off the court and play in gloves and boots when necessary.

It was common to shovel off the court at the Robeson Extension playground to play in the winter. Can you image that today with kids clinging to their hand-held gadgets?

I grew up on East Third Street and was lucky to have some friends and neighbors who were pretty good athletes. Galen Hall and Ron Sollenberger were key players on the 1958 team, and Tate and Ken Aurandt were on the 1966 team.

I have fond memories of the 1966 championship season, I was a sophomore in high school.

I did not have the athletic ability of my friends and classmates and friends so I became a fan and didn't miss a game that season.

Getting to some of the away games was a challenge, but when the school didn't provide a student bus, my mother, the late Thelma Frank, would always step up and take a carload of us to the games.

I will never forget the game when we defeated Bishop Guilfoyle in the Philipsburg-Osceola tournament over the Christmas holidays.

Down by nine points with about 90 seconds to go, the team rallied and pulled out a one-point win.

The season had lots of incredible moments as the team averaged about 96 points per game. Scoring more than 100 points per game was almost the norm as we ran up some incredible numbers topped by a 143-38 win over Southern Huntingdon.

Bill Kagarise had an incredible season, averaging 34 points per game. He scored 60 against Glendale and had 62 in a 130-65 romp over Bellwood-Antis.

Kagarise specialized in long-range shooting. We had a small gym, and once he crossed half court he was in scoring range. Back then there was no 3-point shot so who knows how many more points he would have scored if that was in place? On the other hand, maybe our gym was too small for a 3-point line!

I remember the western regional final game at Juniata College against a very good Clarion team featuring standout players Frank Brooks and 6-foot-6 Kendall King. We won, 79-73. Clarion may have been the best team we played that season.

The state championship game at the Civic Arena in Pittsburgh turned into a rout as we crushed Jim Thorpe, 89-55.

I remember reading an article before the game in the Harrisburg Patriot-News that Jim Thorpe was a 3-point favorite to win the game. Obviously, they didn't know much about our team.

Since our gym was small with a limited seating capacity, I remember going up to the school many nights by 5 p.m. just to get a seat for the game. The gym was packed for every game.

I was only in second grade when Williamsburg won its first state championship.

I can remember my dad telling me stories about how good the teams were back in the 1950s. He said coach Bill Casper let people in to watch practice and he would often go up to watch.

In later years, Galen Hall's mother, Grace, who was one of my high school teachers and a good friend of my mother, let me look through Galen's scrapbook of the championship season.

We Williamsburgers had enormous pride in our basketball teams. In later years when I would travel around the state, I would often run into people. When I told them I was from Williamsburg, they remembered the great basketball teams.

I am proud to be from Williamsburg and was lucky enough to grow up during the heyday of Williamsburg Blue Pirate basketball.

### ONE REMARKABLE ERA

Following is Williamsburg's 13-year period that produced two PIAA Class C titles and six trips to the state championship game:

SEASON	RECORD	NOTABLE
1955-56	26-1	Lost in PIAA Class C final to Jenkintown.
1956-57	20-3	Lost to Fleetwood 64-63 for state title.
1957-58	23-1	Captured team's first PIAA Class C title.
1958-59	7-14	Bill Casper left after state championship.
1959-60	14-9	Dick Buckley's first season.
1960-61	25-3	Lost to West Reading in state final.
1961-62	18-6	Don Appleman caps 2100-point career.
1962-63	15-9	Lost in District 6 to state champ Rothrock.
1963-64	23-2	Everett loss started 69-game regular-season streak.
1964-65	23-1	First of consecutive teams to average 96 ppg.
1965-66	25-0	Bill Kagarise led march to second Class C title.
1966-67	25-1	Loss in western final snapped 50-game win streak.
1967-68	25-3	Beaten for state final by Mount Penn 62-61.