

## HALL OF FAME TEAM AWARD



include, from left: First row — Dave Benton, Tim Lambour, head coach Tom Lane, assistant coach Tom McGee, Bill Gibbons, Charlie Tate. Middle row — Bub Kilcoyne, Joe Bernhart, Steve Skelley, Bob Landolfi, Denny Tomassetti, Denny McDonald, Jerry Milliron. Back row — managers Fred Bennetti and Dave Mason, Steve McManus, Tom Furrer, managers Andrew Miller and Ted Beam. Team members not present for the photo were assistant coach Tom Wiley, athletic director Rev. Donald Boslet, assistant athletic director John Riley and managers Dan Lettieri and Bill Quinlen.

# After 50 years, 'still bonded'

## Tomassetti's shot lifted BG to 1970 PCIAA title

By Jim Lane  
*Altoona Mirror*

It's been 52 years since the Bishop Guilfoyle Marauders won the PCIAA Class A boys state basketball championship.

No Blair County boys basketball team has won a state title since.

Several Blair County girls teams — most notably Bishop Guilfoyle, Altoona and Bellwood-Antis — have captured PIAA crowns, but no boys team has won a coveted state title since the Marauders beat Allentown Central Catholic, 76-74, on Friday, March 13, 1970 at the Harrisburg Farm Show Arena.

The Pennsylvania Catholic Inter-scholastic Athletic Association and PIAA merged in 1974.

There are six classifications of schools now but, back then, there were only three — A, B, and C. Despite its small size, Guilfoyle chose to play in the highest (A).

"We rejoiced that a small school won the highest class state championship and have always been proud of that great achievement," then BG coach Tom Lane said recently from his home in Bradenton, FL. "We played the best and, in the end, were the best."

For years, Guilfoyle has played a

schedule that included many bigger schools — both public and private — and the 1969-70 slate was no different as the Marauders faced the likes of Schenley, Penn Hall Academy and DeMatha Catholic.

Lane emphasized four Ds while guiding the Marauders to the top of the scholastic basketball ladder — desire, determination, drive and defense.

"Defense was our staple," Lane said. "In my opinion, our success centered on a number of things — attitude, hard work, discipline, excellent defense, balance, intelligent players

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After beating Allentown Central Catholic, the BG celebration was on.



Denny Tomassetti (22) drove against Erie Prep (left) and then watched his game-winning shot against Allentown Central Catholic swish through the net (right).



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and great subs."

Lane said his coaching mentor, John Wiberg, always encouraged playing bigger schools.

"He taught me you have to play the best to be the best," Lane said, "so we always played numerous Class A schools from Pittsburgh."

The players felt the scheduling contributed to BG's success.

"Those games helped prepare us for the playoffs," said Tim Lambour, a standout guard for the Marauders who went on to play at Georgetown. "That goes back to coaching — Coach Lane and John Riley (then BG's athletic director) put the schedule together — and that schedule really helped us."

Guilfoyle, which finished with a 20-4 record, defeated Bishop Carroll and Bishop McCort to win the Altoona-Johnstown Diocesan championship, marking the first time the Marauders had won back-to-back diocesan crowns.

The diocesan title sent the Marauders to the Class A Western Regional title game against Erie Cathedral Prep at the Cambria County War Memorial Arena in Johnstown. BG prevailed 69-63 with Bob Landolfi and Denny Tomassetti



accounting for 46 points.

The win over Erie Prep propelled the Marauders to the PCIAA Class A final against Allentown Central Catholic at the Farm Show Arena. BG won, 76-74, when Tomassetti connected on a 15-foot corner jumper with only three seconds to play.

It was a back-and-forth game with both teams holding leads at various times.

BG jumped out 26-17 in the first quarter as Landolfi scored 11 points. The Marauders led by 14 in the second before Allentown cut it to 41-37 at the half.

Steve Skelley picked up his fourth foul in the third quarter and, with Skelley on the bench, Allentown took advantage to grab a 60-54 lead after three periods.

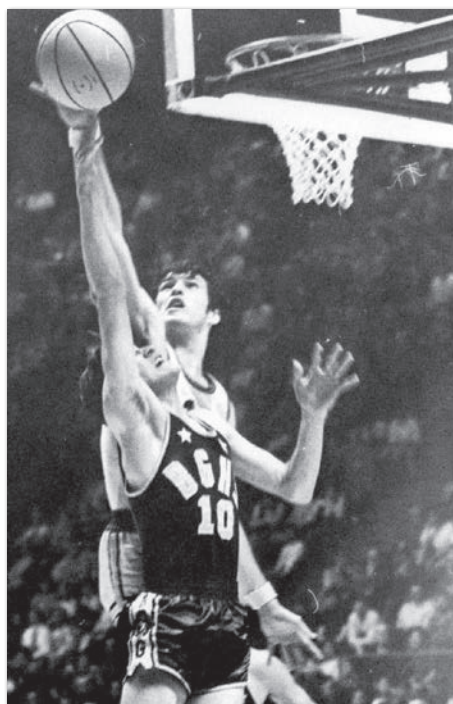
However, the Marauders rallied and, despite trailing 74-70 in the waning moments, dug deep to pull out the win. Baskets by Bill Gibbons and Tomassetti tied the game with 55 seconds left.

"I remember Denny (Tomassetti) blocking a shot that set up a jump ball — a huge play," Lambour recalled. "Gibbons brought the ball up, and I got open on the wing to start the flow. I saw Denny in the corner and passed him the ball.

"He shot. It went in. I looked at the



**BG home games packed the Pleasant Valley Gym.**



**Tim Lambour (10) and Bill Gibbons (12) provided a solid backcourt for the Marauders.**

clock. There were 3 seconds left and all I could think of was to get back and don't let them score. Things went our way."

Tomassetti concurred.

"It was one of the biggest nights of my life," Tomassetti said. "We went into that game confident. We expected to perform."

Like Lambour, he noted that BG got off to a quick lead with Landolfi leading the way.

"I think we got up by 13 or 14, but things changed by halftime," Tomassetti said. "We were down by six going into the fourth and they were charging. Then the tide started turning and the last minute or two ... actually they were a lot of fun."

In the closing seconds, Allentown had possession and driving for a tie-breaking (and perhaps winning basket) when BG came up with the ball.

"I helped a little and blocked a shot that forced a jump," Tomassetti said.

Landolfi won the tap, and BG called a timeout with only a handful of seconds left.

"There was no nervousness in the huddle," Tomassetti remembered. "Coach Lane told us to run the offense and we did.

"Gibbons was able to break the press like he always did. He got the ball to Lambour, who passed to me



and I made the shot, without thinking, because it was a shot I had made before.

"I was fortunate to be in position to make it."

Just over 50 years have passed since that memorable night, but it's something those BG players and coaches will not forget, and the team is pleased to be inducted into the Hall of Fame.

"It's quite an honor," said Tomassetti, who went to Waynesburg College and then worked as a CPA for UPMC Hospitals in Pittsburgh for 30 years before retiring to Oakmont. "To be put into that group (Blair Hall of Fame) ... well, it's super, like winning the state championship again.

"It's really special because not too many get that honor," Tomassetti continued. "After 50 years, our group is still bonded."

The team is looking forward to the weekend celebration.

"Obviously, it's an honor," said Lambour, 67, who has lived in Milford, N.J. since 1980. "It's nice to go back to the glory days. It's fun to relive and it's great there are so many of us still alive.

"We'll get a chance to thank a lot of people who supported us," Lambour continued. "The school. The teachers. The bus loads of fans. It'll be kind of like honoring the whole program."