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WILLIAMSTOWN'S 1962 WEST VIRGINIA STATE CHAMPION BASKETBALL TEAM

By Dan Kincaid

AUTHORS NOTE - *Much of this information was taken from a newspaper column I wrote for The Marietta Times (OH) newspaper in 1987, honoring the 25th reunion of Williamstown High School's first state championship in any sport. I have added a few things in this article based upon information I received from Jim Reynolds, a player on that team. There are also some quotes added from my conversation with Reynolds.*

How many people remember Williamstown West Virginia's 1962 Class A state basketball champs? Quite a few, it seems. During a halftime ceremony at the Saturday Williamstown-Spencer game in 1987, the '62 team was honored. Nine members of that team made it back for the recognition: they were Jack McNutt of Fort Meade, Maryland; Roger Fitch and Bob Poynter of Marietta, Ohio; Jeff Heldman of Vienna, West Virginia; Stan Houchen of Friendly, West Virginia; and Mike Fenton, Tim Duval, Doug Stanley, and Jim Reynolds, all of Williamstown.

Bruce Schnabel, Dave Bradley, and Coach Jim Carpenter were unable to attend. Pat Woody, one of the stars of that team, was deceased. Williamstown Athletic Director Dike Goff and Head Basketball Coach Ron Lathey helped organize the 1987 recognition ceremony.

Several of those players mentioned above have since passed away, but I was able to talk recently with one of the key contributors from that team, Jim Reynolds. Several of his comments are included below.

The '62 group wasn't a bunch of flash-in-the-pan, one-sport performers either. They were excellent, all-around athletes. That same school year, the Yellowjackets football team, which included many of the same players, made it all the way to the state championship game before dropping a 19-12 decision to Winfield. "And I think we would have won that game, too," Reynolds recently told me, "except for the fact that our best running back was injured and couldn't play. That changed our entire offense, but we still almost won."

The previous spring, several of those players were also members of a Williamstown baseball squad that made it all the way to the state final four. And in those days, since classes A, AA, and AAA all competed in the same tourney for the baseball crown, it was rare for a small single A school to even be there.

"We were a small school, and most of us played all three sports," said Reynolds. "I think we only had about 20 players on the football team and around 12 or so on the baseball team.

But we had played together for years, and that helped. Not to mention that we had some excellent players come along during that time period.”

The 1962 basketball squad posted a 24-2 record, with the only blemishes being narrow, one-point losses to Belpre, Ohio (78-77) and Point Pleasant (72-71). The Belpre loss was later avenged by a 49-48 Jackets victory. “Belpre had a great team,” Reynolds said. “Both games could have gone either way, but that win over them the second time we faced them helped spur us to our post-season run.”

Williamstown’s march to the basketball title began in the sectionals with wins over Pennsboro, Cairo, and Harrisville. Then they rolled past Cameron 64-58 and Paden City 85-64 to win the regional tournament.

“We then beat Normantown, an old nemesis, 63-53, in what was then called an Area Tournament to advance to the states,” Reynolds said. “I was more or less a role player on the team. I mean, we had two guys who made All-State – Pat Woody and Doug Stanley. But in the win over Paden City, I was fortunate to score 27 points, the most ever in my career. I went 15-15 from the free throw line,” Reynolds continued. “What was funny about that was soon after that game, our team voted on who would be the MVP for the year, and, I guess, because the Paden City win was so fresh in everyone’s mind, they voted me the MVP.”



Front row (L-R) – Tim Duvall, Doug Stanley, Pat Woody, Jack McNutt, Jim Reynolds, and kneeling is Coach Jim Carpenter. Back row (L-R) – Bob Poynter, Roger Fitch, Jeff Heldman, Mike Fenton, Dave Bradley, Bruce Schnabel, Stan Houchen.

“I was actually a co-captain of the team, along with Pat (Woody), but really our best players were Stanley and Woody. Jack McNutt was good, too. He had big scoring games in the state tournament,” said Reynolds.

In the state semi-finals, Woody led Williamstown to an 84-59 victory over Tunnelton by pouring in 30 points and grabbing an amazing 19 rebounds. That performance was labeled by many state sports writers as “one of the finest ever” in the state tournament. Stanley and McNutt also had fine games, with each player scoring 21 points.

In the finals, many observers had already given Chattaroy, a school from Mingo County, the nod. But the Wood Countians paid no attention, as they posted a solid 60-53 win for the title. Woody and Stanley again led the way with 17 and 16 points, respectively. McNutt and Reynolds each posted 12 points.

The victory gave Williamstown High School its first state championship. Woody and Stanley went on to gain All-State honors in Class A; and Woody, who averaged 22 points a game

that season, was later named to the All-West Virginia squad, which featured players from all three classes – A, AA, and AAA.

Stanley and Woody each made All-State in basketball, football, and baseball, and both were signed to college football scholarships – Stanley to West Virginia University and Woody to Marshall University.

Bruce Schnabel was just a freshman on the 1962 basketball team. But three years later, his hoop prowess would earn him a scholarship to Ohio State, where in 1968 his Buckeyes team finished third in the national NCAA tournament. “Bruce was really good, even as a freshman,” said Reynolds. “He looked like he was about 12 years old, but he could really play. He basically became our sixth man that year and even helped us win a game earlier in the season by sinking two key free throws near the end of a game.”

“Our previous coach for several years had left to take a better-paying job in Ohio,” Reynolds said, “so Jim Carpenter became our coach for the championship season. He did a good job, but he left after one year. As I recall, he moved to Florida.”

Williamstown’s 1962 basketball team won the school’s first-ever state championship, but it set the stage and paved the way for many more to come in a variety of sports. I was told recently by a former coach at the school that Williamstown High School now has over 20 state championships to its credit, a record that only a few other schools in the state can match.

“I’m proud to have been a member of the 1962 championship team that kind of set the stage for the school,” Reynolds said. “But we’re all extremely proud of the numerous other championships Williamstown has won in recent years. And from the looks of things at the school, the Yellowjackets are going to win several more championships in the future.”

Author **DAN KINCAID** was born in Pocahontas County and grew up in Huntington. He has also lived in Charleston, Morgantown, and Williamstown. He is retired from the U.S. Forest Service and has written 19 books in retirement. Those books and other information can be viewed at his website: <https://dankincaid.com>. Several of his books have appeared in GOLDENSEAL’s annual review of new books available by West Virginia authors. Dan has previously contributed two stories to GOLDENSEAL: The Penicillin Kids, in the Spring 2018 issue, about Huntington Vinson’s 1966 state AA basketball championship; and Kirk Judd: West Virginia’s Spoken-Word Poet for the Spring 2020 issue. Dan and his wife currently live in Florida.