



media information

1661 ramblewood drive • east lansing, mi 48823 • 517.332.5046 • fax - 517.332.4071 • www.mhsaa.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 15, 2001

Contact: John Johnson or Andy Frushour

517.332.5046 or www.mhsaa.com

1949, 1950 & 1951 Kalamazoo Central Boys Basketball Teams Honored In Legends Of The Games Program

EAST LANSING, Mich. – March 15 – The first school to ever win three consecutive Class A MHSAA Boys Basketball titles, the Kalamazoo Central High School teams of 1949, 1950 and 1951, will be honored through the Michigan High School Athletic Association’s “Legends Of The Games” program at ceremonies at halftime of the Class A championship game of the 2001 MHSAA Boys Basketball Finals at the Breslin Student Events Center in East Lansing on March 24. The game will begin at 4 p.m. (EST).

In its fourth year, the Legends program promotes educational athletics by showcasing some of the great teams of past years. At least 22 members of those teams are expected to be in attendance to receive commemorative plaques and a banner to display at the school during the ceremony.

(The story that follows was written for this year’s MHSAA Boys Basketball Finals Souvenir Program by Jack Moss, Kalamazoo Gazette Sports Editor, who covered the Maroon Giants during that time)

Kalamazoo Central made basketball history when it became the first school in Michigan High School Athletic Association history to win three consecutive Class A state tournament boys basketball championships.

The Maroon Giants, coached by Bob Quiring, won Class A titles at Michigan State University’s Jenison Field House in 1949, 1950 and 1951.

In becoming an MHSAA Legends of the Game group being honored this year, Kalamazoo Central actually qualified as a legend in prep sports annals with its 1949 Class A state title run. The Maroon Giants compiled a so-so 10-5 season record that included a reversal by forfeit of a game lost on the court as the result of a player ineligibility ruling.

To make Kalamazoo Central an even greater darkhorse at tournament time was the fact that its top player, 6-8 center Jim Wenke, had graduated in midyear, leaving Quiring without his top scorer and rebounder in a lineup that included three juniors and two seniors.

(more)

2-2-2 – Kalamazoo Central Honored In Legends Program

But Quiring, who died in May, 1983, brought his young team closer together after losing Wenke and it won its final three regular-season games against Lansing Sexton, Muskegon Heights and Jackson.

The unit made up of seniors Al Suter and Garth Stickney and juniors Bob Topp, George Heinrich and Dick Noble kept going from there. It beat Grand Rapids Central and Benton Harbor in regional play and then moved past Grand Rapids Ottawa Hills and Ferndale to make it to the championship game.

Waiting for the Maroon Giants was Saginaw Arthur Hill, unbeaten in 21 games and led by All-American Paul Hinkin. If ever there was a mismatch this was to be it.

Kalamazoo Central players, however, were non-believers. The Maroon Giants took an early lead and built upon it for a runaway victory over a team rated unbeatable by most. Heinrich led the way with 21 points, but it was a team effort all the way.

After the memorable tournament run in 1949, the road to two more Class A state championships proved easier.

The 1950 team, with Topp, Noble and Heinrich as holdover starters and Ron Jackson, who played in the 1949 title game as a sophomore, and Sam Grow filling out the starting lineup, breezed to a 20-1 record that included a 64-50 finals victory over Port Huron.

Kalamazoo's only loss was to Benton Harbor by a 28-22 score, but the Maroon Giants recovered to close the season with 13 wins in a row.

In 1951, Jackson, who went on to play baseball as well as basketball at Western Michigan University and then into major league baseball with the Chicago White Sox, was the only holdover starter and was joined by Bill Stuijbergen, who also was a Legend of the Game honoree a year ago, as assistant coach on the 1959 Lansing Sexton state championship team, Bob Parks, Jim Bishop, H.B. Gardner and Gar Toornman in a rotating lineup of starters.

But Kalamazoo posted another 20-1 record, losing only a 57-56 overtime decision to Muskegon as a field goal by Jackson at the buzzer was not allowed.

The Maroon Giants had their most difficult finals game of the threepeat in March, but finally prevailed over Highland Park, 50-47.

The amazing Kalamazoo Central Class A title run ended in 1952 with a 40-35 regional finals loss to a Holland team it had beaten twice during the regular season.

"It was a great run," said Quiring at the time. "I think we put Kalamazoo Central in the record book with indelible ink."

(more)

3-3-3 – Kalamazoo Central Honored In Legends Program

The Kalamazoo Central squad list from the threeppeat included Stickney, Terry Nulf, Keith Jones, Suter, Ron Dillingham, Topp, Tom Brennan, Noble, Heinrich, Grow, Bob Henry, John Gideon, Jack Doyle, Dale Steeby, Louie Jones, Bob Casler, Tom Reiger, Jackson, Terry Husband, Ron Harder, Ron Sines, Tom Herr, Stui Berger, Gardner and Terry Nye.

Members of the Kalamazoo Central team that fashioned the state championship repeat have scattered around the country and enjoyed careers that ranked from Air Force pilot (Heinrich) to physician (Topp) to coach (Stuifberger) to professional baseball player (Jackson). But many of them will regroup on March 24 to be honored as true Legends of the Games.

Expected to be in attendance or represented at the Legends ceremony are:

John Quiring -- Son of the late Bob Quiring, head coach

Garth Stickney -- 1949

Terry Nulf – Guard -- 1949

Robert Topp – Center -- 1949, 1950

Tom Brennan – Center -- 1949, 1950

Richard Noble – Guard -- 1949, 1950

George Heinrich – Guard -- 1949, 1950

Sam Grow – Guard -- 1949, 1950

Robert Henry -- Student Trainer -- 1949, 1950

Dale Steeby – Guard -- 1950, 1951

Louis Jones – Guard -- 1950, 1951

Robert Cassler – Guard -- 1950

Jim Bishop – Guard/Forward -- 1949, 1950, 1951

Gar Toornman – Guard -- 1950, 1951

Jack Bowen – Forward/Center -- 1950, 1951

Robert Parks – Forward -- 1951

Terry Husband – Forward -- 1950, 1951

Ron Harder – Center -- 1951

Tom Herr – Forward -- 1951

Bill Stui Berger – Forward -- 1950, 1951

H.B. Gardner – Guard -- 1950, 1951

Dave Fitzpatrick – Manager -- 1949, 1950

John Johnson – Manager -- 1951

The MHSAA is a private, not-for-profit corporation of voluntary membership by over 1,300 public and private senior high schools and junior high/middle schools which exists to develop common rules for athletic eligibility and competition. No government funds or tax dollars support the MHSAA, which was the first such association nationally to not accept membership dues or tournament entry fees from schools. Member schools which enforce these rules are permitted to participate in MHSAA tournaments, which attract approximately 1.6 million spectators each year.

-0-

RL01-064