

Hooper, Harper, Barnhart elected to AYB's Hall of Fame

The board of directors at Amherst Youth Basketball has elected Rich Hooper, and the late Bob Barnhart and Bob Harper to the AYB's Hall of Fame.

Hooper, Harper and Barnhart were instrumental in establishing Amherst Youth Basketball. They join former AYB Presidents Brad Tichenor and Bill Casey in the Hall of Fame, which recognizes previous board members for their service to the league and community that is above and beyond.

In his letter announcing the award, AYB President Dr. Russ Miller said, "Due in large part to your time and effort in establishing Amherst Youth Basketball, originally Williamsville Youth Basketball, as we understand it, you might find it interesting to know that the league now provides the opportunity for approximately 1,000 players in third through 12th grade to participate in AYB. In addition, we support six travel teams. Our understanding is that we are the largest youth sports program in Western New York. [That is larger than any of the baseball, soccer, hockey, and other basketball leagues.] Further, we believe that the closest house basketball league anywhere close to our size is in Syracuse."

Truly considered the founder of AYB, Hooper said, "I'm incredibly honored to be named to the AYB Hall of Fame. I'm thrilled the league is thriving and there is no doubt that it is my greatest legacy. There were lots of others involved, but to say the least, it has really grown to places I never envisioned."

Hooper explained more about the beginning of AYB in 1978.

"I was really involved in youth football in the fall and baseball in the spring," he said. "We wanted

something to do in the winter and since we partnered with the Williamsville School District, the league was actually called 'Williamsville Youth Basketball' in the beginning. The guys that started the league did registration, coached teams, refereed games and cleaned the gyms. We only played at Mill Middle School, but we were there all day every Saturday."

Hooper lived in Williamsville for many years and currently resides in Wheatfield.

Although Harper died many years ago, his daughter Jennifer said she is absolutely delighted to hear about inducting her father, along with Hooper and Barnhart, into the AYB Hall of Fame.

"I know my dad would have been extremely honored," she said. "He truly loved AYB and he once told me the most special aspect of it was giving kids an opportunity to learn and grow as kind and thoughtful people through sports. Without the good parents of my day creating youth sports in our community, I might not have had my own opportunity to play and being able to do so defined me as a person to this day. My dad, Hooper and Barnhart were

trailblazers and they did it solely for us kids. In fact, I remember Barnhart and Hooper, and for years as a little kid, I thought that was their first names since dad just called them Hooper and Barnhart."

Jennifer Harper said her father would have been so gratified to know how AYB has thrived over the years.

"My dad loved all sports, but basketball was his true passion," she said. "He honestly believed that giving kids in the community an opportunity to play ball would enrich our lives beyond the court. The lessons learned through sport — fairness, teamwork, individual responsibility, dedication and

commitment, but most of all friendship and fun — are all values I carry with me today."

Known as the first president of AYB in 1980, Barnhart served on the board of AYB for 16 years.

Additionally, his son Kris was also involved in AYB.

"My dad was incredibly humbled by this honor," Kris Barnhart said. "He spent 16 winters — from 1980 through 1996 — dedicated to that league so it was a huge part of his life. Harper and Hooper were like second (and third) fathers to me. I played, coached and refereed from 1980 to 1992 so the league was also a very special part of my life. From what I understand, you have built a top-notch organization so thank you for this special honor for three very important people in my life."

Hearing the news via Facebook, Andy Ritter, a former player, said, "As a kid, Coach Barnhart was arguably my least favorite coach but as I've aged and coached myself, I realize what a profound effect he had on my development as an athlete. He pushed buttons to maximize my potential, but as a snot-nosed kid, I was too immature to realize how important people like Bob are in our lives. I want to thank him for enhancing my development as both an athlete and as a man."

Barnhart passed away in October 2019, about three weeks after being inducted.

AYB, which is in its 42nd season, has approximately 1,000 participants during the winter house league program in grades three through 12.

To play on a boys team, members must reside in the Town of Amherst or attend a Town of Amherst school. There is no residency requirement for the girls divisions.

AYB also offers various clinics and programs throughout the year. For more information, visit www.amherst-basketball.com or www.facebook.com/AmherstYouthBasketball.



Bob Barnhart

East boys basketball edges crosstown rival

■ Flames finish regular season 17-3

by PATRICK J. NAGY
Reporter

Williamsville East's boys basketball team got everything they had from crosstown rival Williamsville South and pulled out a 66-61 home win on Friday.

The Flames finished with a 17-3 record and is the top seed for the Section VI Class A-1 Tournament.

East led 21-20 after the first quarter and 32-30 at halftime,

and tied the score at 52-52 after three quarters. East outscored South, 14-9, in the fourth quarter.

East coach R.J. Killinger said he was not necessarily pleased with the play, but he was pleased with the effort.

"South played a very good game," Killinger said. "When the game was on the line, we played our best in the fourth quarter."

South coach Mike Trzybinski said his team got open looks in the final five minutes that they didn't knock down.

"That to me was the biggest difference in the game," Trzy-

binski said. "We couldn't get over the hump."

Trzybinski said his team had a difficult time containing East sophomore point guard Max Schneider, who led the Flames with 22 points and eight assists. Eighteen of Schneider's 22 points came in the second half.

"He was outstanding in the second half," Killinger said.

"He got in the lane and caused us problems," Trzybinski said.

East senior Cal Shifflet scored 11 of his 13 points in the first half and grabbed 10 rebounds.

Junior Joe Mack added 10 points, 11 rebounds, two blocks and two steals.

Senior Cole Ronan started and added nine points and five rebounds.

Junior Yusuf Hashmi added four points and eight rebounds.

South senior Mike DiGiulio led the Billies with 33 points, five rebounds, three assists, one block and one steal.

"He played a solid all-around game and spent the majority of the game guarding Cal, and held him to 13," Trzybinski said.

"He was outstanding," Killinger said. "We switched defenses up, and I had probably had five or six different guys attempting to guard him, and he was scoring on everybody. He gave us a lot of problems."

Junior Michael Kelly was also in double figures with 10 points. Junior Robert Kelly did not score but tallied three assists and nine rebounds.

Sophomore P.J. Mariarana tacked on five points and did a good job of controlling tempo and pace, Trzybinski said.

South (8-12), winners of

five of their last six games, is the eighth seed for the Section VI Class A-2 Tournament and hosts ninth-seed Cheektowaga in a prequarterfinal game at 7 p.m. Wednesday.

"From where we started at the beginning of the year to where we ended up, I like the direction that we are moving in," Trzybinski said.

East hosts Hamburg or Niagara Wheatfield in an A-1 quarterfinal at 7 p.m. Friday.

"We have had a great season regardless of what happens," Killinger said. "It's nice to be the top seed. We have a few extra days of rest. You only have to win one game to get to Buff State and win three games, and you're a sectional champion, so it makes the road a little bit easier."

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Lady Billies clinch ECIC II title

Williamsville South's girls basketball team clinched the ECIC II title outright after beating Hamburg, 48-37, at home on Feb. 18.

"Along with good solid defense, we took care of the ball and played smart, which is what we need to do at this point in the season," Lady Billies coach Kristen Dolan said.

South came out firing and took a 15-5 first quarter lead. Both teams traded baskets in the second with the Lady Billies leading, 24-14, heading into halftime.

In the third quarter, Hamburg stole the momentum and outscored South, 13-12.

"We got lazy on defense and lost our focus as we couldn't get anything going," coach Dolan said. "It was also tough playing without our point guard [Hannah Dolan] as we didn't have our same rhythm."

In the fourth quarter, the Lady Billies pulled it together and outscored Hamburg, 12-10.

Amari DeBerry recorded a double-double with 21 points and 10 rebounds and Gretchen Dolan chipped in with 16 points, three assists and four steals.

Others who contributed to the Lady Billies' offense were Riley Domin (6 points, 4 steals, 3 assists); Ava Urbaniak (3 points, 4 rebounds, 2 steals); and Sarah Foster (2 points, 6 rebounds).

South (16-3, 12-0) is the top seed for the Section VI Class A-1 Tournament and hosts a quarterfinal game against either South Park or West Seneca East at 7 p.m. on Thursday.

"The girls know what they need to do and we'll continue to work hard and prepare," coach Dolan said.

Sweet Home track (Continued from page 18)

Junior Eve Giancarlo finished second in the girls pole vault with a height of 11-feet.

Senior Claire Koepnick finished second in the girls weight throw, breaking the school record in 45-8¹/₄. She will also be competing in the event at the New Balance Indoor National Championships on March 14.

Senior Darius Carter finished second in the boys shot put with a throw of 48-6¹/₂. His season best is 49-8¹/₂.

Senior Alex Makayed had a season best in the boys pole vault in 11 feet, 6 inches and placed fourth.

The boys 4x400 relay of sophomore Rodney Garnett and seniors Jared Kapuszcak, Ean Pokorski, Chukwudi Illozue and Dan Gutsu broke its season-best time twice, running a 3:46.60 in semifinals and 3:46.11 in finals, placing them fifth.

Senior Jared Kapuszcak recorded a season-best time in the boys 55 hurdles in 8.71.

Senior Isaiah Killian had a season best in the boys 55 dash in 6.94.

Senior Kyle Durwald recorded a season-best time in the boys 300 in 38.18.

Sophomore Shannon Sullivan placed sixth in the girls 600 meters in 1:43.37, coming close to breaking her season best of 1:43.02.

Williamsville East

At Saturday's Section VI Indoor Track and Field State Qualifiers at Houghton College, Williamsville East junior Kayla Myers competed in three events.

Myers' best finish was in the high jump where she finished third overall, clearing a height of 5 feet, 1 inch.

In the 55-meter hurdles, she qualified for the finals, finishing eighth overall. She qualified by running close to her personal best, 9.33 seconds.

In the long jump, Myers jumped a distance of 15-11, placing her 14th overall.