

Bobby Miller



Bobby Miller was a big part of the proud basketball history in Norwalk both as a player and coach for more than four decades.

An outstanding playing career began in 1961 in the Norwalk Biddy Basketball League where he played for C.R. Gibson for three years and was named to the all-star team. In 1962, he made the basketball team at Tracy Elementary School, and from 1964-66 he led the varsity basketball team at West Rocks Junior High School.

But it was at Norwalk High School where Bobby Miller really left his mark. He arrived at NHS on East Avenue in the fall of 1966, just a few months after his brother, future NBA star and Hall of Famer Calvin Murphy, led the basketball team to its first state championship.

As a sophomore, Miller started on the junior varsity team and came off the bench for the varsity, averaging 3.4 points for the FCIAC Eastern Division champs, who finished 17-6. The following year, Miller broke into the varsity starting lineup and was second on the team and eighth in the FCIAC with a 19.1 scoring average, earning All-FCIAC Honorable Mention.

Then as a senior in 1968-69, Miller was named captain and led the team with 20.5 points a game. He scored in double figures in all 23 games for the 18-5 Green Wave, including a career-high 34 points in Norwalk's 79-49 first-round state-tournament win over Rippowam. He was fourth in the FCIAC scoring race, was named first-team All-FCIAC and second-team all-state, and finished with 897 career points.

Following his graduation, Miller, like his older brother, played at Niagara University for four years. Under NCAA rules, freshmen weren't allowed to play varsity back then, but Miller led the freshmen basketball team with an 18.1 scoring average.

He moved up to varsity and as a junior played in 29 of the team's 30 games and averaged 6.9 points for the 21-9 Purple Eagles. His senior year was cut short because of injury, but in the 16 games he played, Miller averaged 11.2 points a game while shooting 54.7 percent from the floor.

What's more, he led Niagara in scoring in three of its first five games that season and hit double figures four times, including a career-high 35 points against Clemson in the Purple Eagles' eighth game.

His basketball career wasn't over yet, however. After his college days, Miller spent one season playing for the Gold Coast Stars, a semipro team out of Stamford.

It wasn't long after that Miller embarked on his coaching career. When Ray Barry took over as head basketball coach at Norwalk High in 1976-77, he appointed Miller as coach of the NHS freshmen team where he coached many of the players who would help the Bears reach three straight FCIAC finals and win back to back league titles in 1980 and '81.

Miller became a varsity head coach in 1983-84 when he took over the reigns of the Norwalk High girls basketball team following the retirement of Don Foust, and promptly led the Lady Bears back to the FCIAC playoffs.

And then when the legendary Ralph King stepped down as coach of the boys basketball team at Brien McMahon following the 1986-87 season, Miller landed his first job as a boys varsity head coach. Miller was also a head coach on the collegiate level at both Norwalk Community College and Norwalk State Technical College.

But while Miller made his name in basketball, it wasn't the only sport he played while growing up at 117 Main Street — directly across the street from where he is being honored tonight. He also played Little League baseball with the VFW team in the National LL in Broad River, making the all-star team in 1962 and '63. He moved up to the Babe Ruth Baseball League and played with the Home Oil team from 1964-66 while again being named to the all-star squad.

The versatile Miller also excelled in football as a youngster. He played with the Norwalk Ramblers Pop Warner team in 1963 and '64, and with the West Rocks Junior High Trojans in the Norwalk Recreation Football League in 1965 and '66, serving as a team captain his final season.

While he coached three different teams at the high school level, Bobby Miller has made his biggest impact on kids as a guidance counselor in the Norwalk School System for 32 years, including two at Roton Middle School and then 29 at Briggs High School working with at-risk students. He returned to his alma mater as a counselor at NHS this fall.

Miller and his wife Patricia reside in Stamford and have two children and two grandchildren.