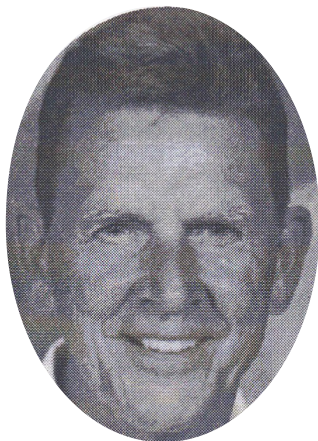


Connie Carpenter



Nearly a half-century after sinking his last jump shot on a Norwalk basketball court – and undoubtedly hitting nothing but net – Conrad “Connie” Carpenter remains one of the deadliest outside shooters to ever come out of this city.

He proved that during the 1955-56 season when his shooting, as well as his rebounding, helped lead the Norwalk High School basketball team to the County Conference championship.

But Carpenter, who was born in South Norwalk, showed signs of the pure shooter he would become in high school in the late 1940s while attending St. Joseph’s School and playing on the basketball team coached by Joe DeFlorio.

After graduating from St. Joe’s in 1952, Carpenter didn’t go directly to Norwalk High. Instead he attended Fairfield Prep and played basketball there during the 1952-53 and ’53-54 seasons.

He finally arrived at NHS in the fall of 1954 as a junior and quickly became a key part of the basketball team for the next two seasons. As a senior forward, Carpenter joined the likes of Jim McLean, Jim Romanello, Earl Stabell, Jack Pape, Nels Anderson and Dave Spears to help the Green and White go undefeated in conference play and win the school’s first County championship.

All Carpenter did that season was lead the team in rebounding with 187 and in free throw shooting, once converting 22 straight shots from the line. He also finished second on the club in field goal percentage, hitting 50 percent of his

attempts, most of them from outside the arc.

Norwalk High also qualified for the state tournament that season and won its first-round game, but was then upset in the quarterfinals by Carpenter’s former teammates at Fairfield Prep, ending the most successful basketball season in NHS history up to that point.

Carpenter’s basketball days were far from over, however. He went on to play for Burndy Corporation in the Norwalk Industrial League, and once scored 104 points in a doubleheader during a tournament in New Britain. In the quarterfinals at 10:30 a.m., Carpenter poured in 53 points to lead Burndy to victory. Then in the semifinals that night, he scored another 51 points to lead his team to the championship game.

Burndy lost to Pratt & Whitney in the finals the next evening as Carpenter led the locals with 27 points to cap off a remarkable tournament.

Carpenter, who also played baseball at Norwalk High his senior year, played in several other basketball leagues around the county, including one in Greenwich in which he averaged over 30 points a game and was named the league MVP.

But Carpenter was just warming up. He went on to attend Greenbrier Military School in Lewisburg, West Virginia, whose basketball schedule included a number of freshmen teams from major college programs. GMS captured the Eastern States Prep Tournament championship in 1959 with a win over St. Francis (PA) in the finals as Carpenter averaged a team-high 23 points a game in the tournament.

Several players from that team went on to play for major colleges themselves, including Carpenter, who went to the University of Maryland of the Atlantic Coast Conference, considered the best college conference in the country at the time.

In fact, Carpenter played in three consecutive ACC Tournaments and as a senior in 1962-63 was named a tri-captain. At the age of 25, he was the oldest player in the ACC, and led the Terrapins in field goal percentage that season with a marksmanship of 48 percent. In one game against the University of Virginia, he made seven straight field goals, 11-of-19 overall, to finish with 23 points in a win at VA.

Besides the three ACC tourneys, Carpenter also played in the last Dixie Classic Tournament at North Carolina State in the 1960-61 season, and in the Sugar Bowl Tournament in New Orleans in 1961-62. Among some of the great players Carpenter played against during his career at Maryland were Art Heyman and Jeff Mullin of Duke, Billy Packard and Lenny Chappell of Wake Forest, and Billy Cunningham, Doug Moe and Larry Brown of North Carolina.

And while completing his fifth year at Maryland in 1963-64, Carpenter was an assistant coach on the freshmen basketball team, where one of his players was current Maryland basketball coach Garry Williams.

Carpenter, who has lived in Maryland for more than 40 years, is still very involved with his alma mater. He is a past president of the Maryland M-Club, an organization of former lettermen that raises funds for the school’s athletic department. He has also been an active member on the M-Club Board of Governors for 27 years.

The sharp-shooting Carpenter never lost his touch from the outside and continued to play basketball in various adult leagues in Maryland until he was 45 years-old. For many years he also played slow-pitch softball, and bowled in duckpin pro leagues for 10 years.

His 40-year professional career in business development included working for Federal Government and Department of Defense contractors, such as the Vitro Corporation where he spent 29 years. He retired five years ago and now plays “a great deal of golf and loving every minute of it.”

Carpenter and his wife Judi, who is originally from West Virginia, reside in Silver Spring, MD.