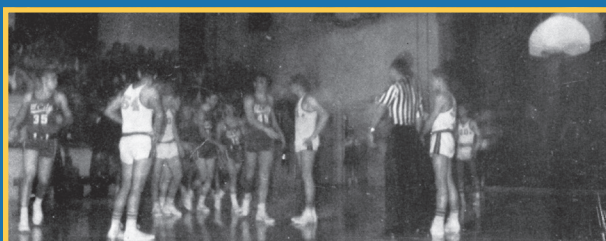
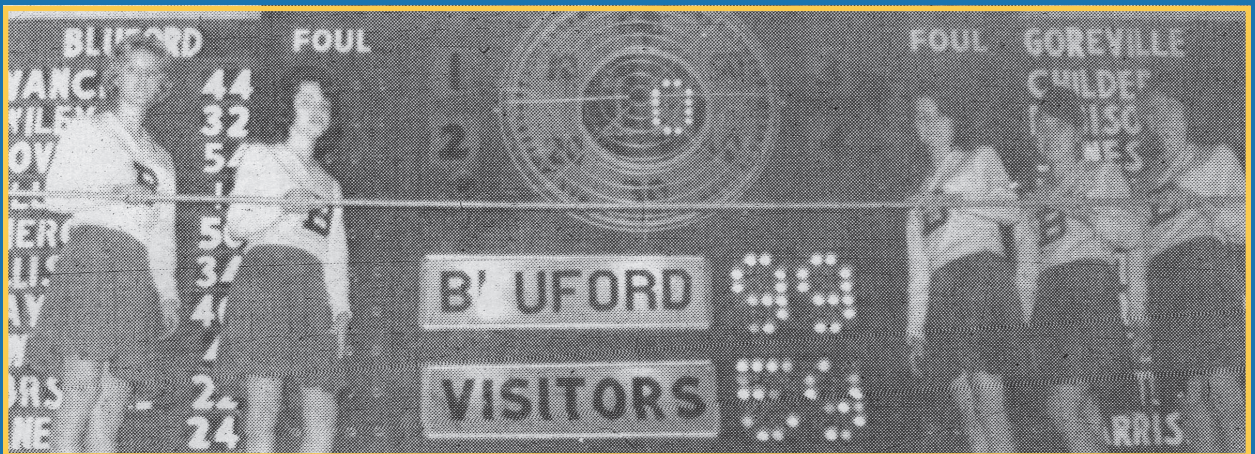
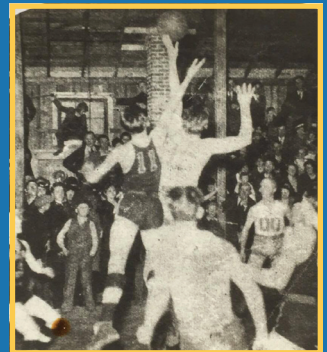


Bluford/Webber
Township High School



Inaugural Sports Hall of Fame

2020



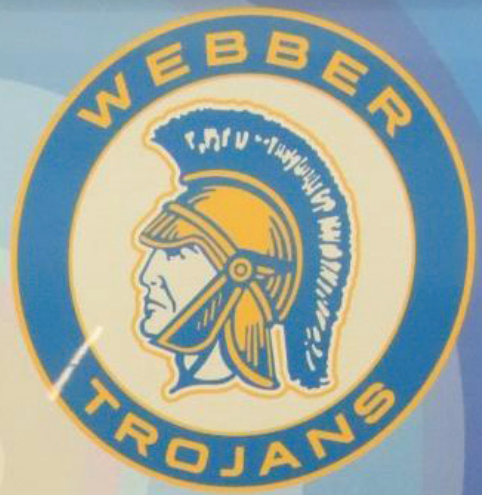
Bluford Still Streaking On

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Introduction

In 2020, a committee formed to create the Bluford/Webber Township High School Sports Hall of Fame. Bluford/Webber has a rich sports history, and it was an exciting and sometimes difficult process for the committee to choose the individuals and the teams for induction into the inaugural group of recipients for 2020. Bob Hamerski serves as chairman of the hall of fame committee. Other member of the committee are Michelle Marlow, Dale Colwell, Roger Yates, Rod Stover, and Bob Herzing. Randy Mills serves as research advisor. There are nine individual athletes, one coach, and two individuals in the Friend of the Program category, along with two teams selected for induction into the inaugural 2020 class of the Bluford/Webber High School Sports Hall of Fame. Now let us celebrate the inductees' accomplishments.



Cross Country/Track

Breanna (Bergbower) Ragain Bio

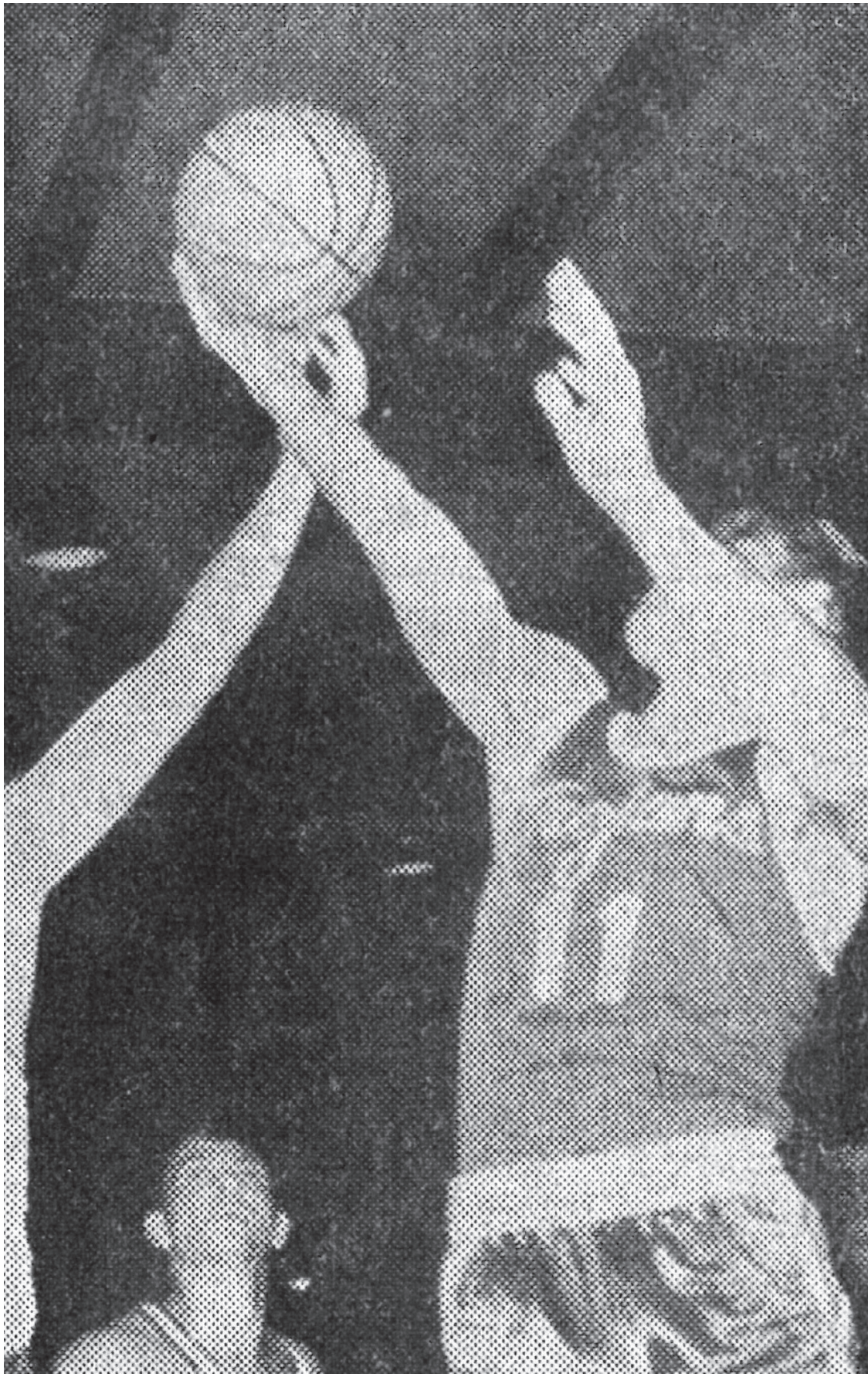
Breanna Bergbower is one of the most successful athletes in Bluford/Webber High School history. Competing in Class A, during her freshman year in cross country, she finished in first place in her first four races against much older and very strong competition, amazing coaches, and spectators alike. An early injury, however, caused her to just miss advancing to the state meet that year, but she did advance through regional and sectional levels. Breanna advanced to state level competition in cross country her sophomore, junior, and senior years. A two-mile runner, Breanna also advanced to the state finals in track. Her cross country coach, Roger Yates, remembers her “as totally competitive with such an intense desire to win. No pacing for her. She’d start a race full throttle and dare the rest to keep up.” Breanna made the first team All-South Cross-Country squad her sophomore, junior and senior years. As a sophomore, Breanna won three tough invitational meets and became the first Trojan to ever qualify for the state cross country meet. During her junior year, her performance at the prestigious Benton Plus Six meet caught the eye of one sports writer who noted, “In her first year of a three-class cross country playoff system, Bergbower held off athletes from Class 2A Benton and Class A powerhouses Sparta and Columbia before crossing the finish line first under cloudy and humid skies” (*Southern Illinoisian*). Her senior year, Breanna made the 2008 All-South Cross-Country Team again, after winning the highly competitive Cartersville Invitational and Murphysboro Invitational and placing second at the Benton Invitational. That year she finished first at regionals and fourth at sectionals, the latter effort qualifying her again for state. An excellent student, Breanna Bergbower went on to compete in cross country and track at Eastern Illinois University.



Cross Country/Track

Mallory Bergbower Bio

As an eighth grader at Bluford Grade School in 2008, Mallory Bergbower won the Illinois Junior High State Cross-Country championship. This accomplishment foreshadowed her record-breaking efforts during all four of her years running cross-country and track at Bluford/Webber Township High School. Incredibly, Mallory advanced to the Class A state finals all four years and made the All-South Cross-Country first team all four years as well. Her coach, Roger Yates, recalls that “Mallory was the full package—speed, endurance, pacing. She could really explode in a race, especially if she got bumped by another runner and became mad. It really brought out her competitive spirit.” Her explosive finishes can be seen in a race her sophomore year at the Marion Invitational, the *Southern Illinoian* reporting how by sheer will, “Webber Township sophomore Mallory Bergbower edged Carterville sophomore Joanna Bean at the finish line by .01 seconds to finish second.” Her senior year, Mallory won the Herrin and Fairfield invitationals and placed high up in several other especially competitive invitational meets. Her tenth place performance in sectional qualified her for state final competition. To add to her laurels, Mallory also advanced to the Class A state finals in track, running in the two-mile category.



Basketball

Ed Case Bio

In the spring of 1966, Bluford/Webber High School basketball fans were anxiously anticipating a boy named Ed Case graduating from the eighth grade. During his eighth-grade year, Case had shot an amazing sixty-five percent from the field in basketball (*Mt. Vernon Register News*). Ed did not disappoint. Starting as a sophomore during the 1967-1968 season, Ed was one of the team's primary scorers, hitting last second shots in two important games that helped make it possible for the Trojans to claim the regular season Little Egyptian Conference title for the first time in ten years (*Mt. Vernon Register News*). Ed was the team's leading scorer during the 1968-1969 season when the Trojans went on a tear that gained them twenty-five wins in a row. That year the Trojans also won the regular season conference championship, the conference tournament, the Wayne City Holiday Tournament, and the district tournament. Case's brilliant efforts at the Wayne City tourney that year garnered him a place as one of five players on the all-tournament team, the only Trojan to receive that honor. During Ed's three varsity years, Bluford won three regular season Little Egyptian Conference titles, with Ed showcasing his beautiful left-hand jump shot that was so accurate one of his teammates remembered "being tempted, when I saw him release one of those smooth left hand shots, to start running down the court to get back on defense. Those shots almost always went in." One sports reporter spoke in glowing terms of Ed's play, his great shooting accuracy, and his "good moves to the basket" (*Southern Illinoian*). Case's scoring was amazingly consistent. He typically scored twenty or more points a game during his sophomore, junior, and senior years, scoring over thirty points or more in four games in those pre-three-point-line days. Ed Case ranks eighth on the all-time male scoring list and is a member of the select Bluford/Webber Township High School basketball's 1,000-points club.



Basketball/Baseball

Craig Colwell Bio

A winner of All-Conference honors during all four years he played varsity basketball and baseball at Bluford/Webber High School from 1977-1981, Craig Colwell was “a leader on and off the court and the field.” His basketball coach, Rod Stover, remembers how “he had a terrific basketball IQ and was one of the school’s most fundamentally sound players of all time. He could shoot and score, rebound, and handle the ball. He would certainly be my first choice for a Bluford/Webber dream team.” Colwell’s basketball stats bear out his coach’s words. He went over the thirty-point mark in four games before the days of three-point-line shooting, and his shooting percentage his junior year, an amazing 64.5%, stands as the highest field goal shooting percentage in the school’s history. He holds the record for career field goal shooting percentage as well. Craig is also near the top of the list of most-points-scored in a season. His baseball accomplishments while playing at Bluford/Webber High School were also of the highest caliber. He could play every position, even throwing a no-hitter as a pitcher. Catching, however, was his best position, his efforts there earning him a college scholarship. Craig Colwell truly led by example, displaying the highest level of play and sportsmanship. Craig Colwell ranks sixth on the all-time male scoring list in basketball and is a member of the select Bluford/Webber Township High School basketball’s 1000-points Club.



Basketball/Coaching/ Friend of the Program

Donald Gene Colwell Bio

Donald Colwell is a Bluford Webber Township High School sports legend, having served the school's basketball program in several ways—as one of the best Trojan players of the late 1940s and early 1950s era, as a coach and mentor in the 1960s, and as a scoring official for many years after coaching. During his junior year as a Trojan, in the 1948-1949 season, he was the team's leading scorer, his play in the regional game against eventual state champion Mt. Vernon catching the eye of one sports reporter. The reporter noted that Colwell led the Trojans "in actually outscoring the Rams" for a brief time in that game, hitting "jump shots, tip-ins, drives, and free throws" (*Mt. Vernon Register News*). In the 1949-1950 season, the Bluford Trojans racked up an incredible 18-1 record in the regular season, its sole regular season game lost by a single point. The team moved to the semi-final game of the regional state tournament, where it lost to Fairfield. Playing center, Colwell was the Trojans' leading scorer and the team's leader during the 1949-1950 campaign. Averaging over twenty points a game, he bagged twenty-six points in the first regional game and was "outstanding as he turned in a neat defensive game to match his 26-point output" (*Mt. Vernon Register News*). Colwell played college basketball at Virginia Military Institute, where he moved to the guard position and was their "playmaker" (*Newport News Daily Press*). The 1957-1958 high school season saw the appearance of Don Colwell as the head Bluford basketball coach, returning to his high school roots. He coached until the spring of 1966, his teams playing just on either side of .500 mark but always competitive. Players remembered him as making the game fun, as well as providing positive instruction in practices, in games, and in life. Colwell is a member of the select Bluford/Webber Township High School basketball's 1000-points Club.



Basketball

Ed Donoho Bio

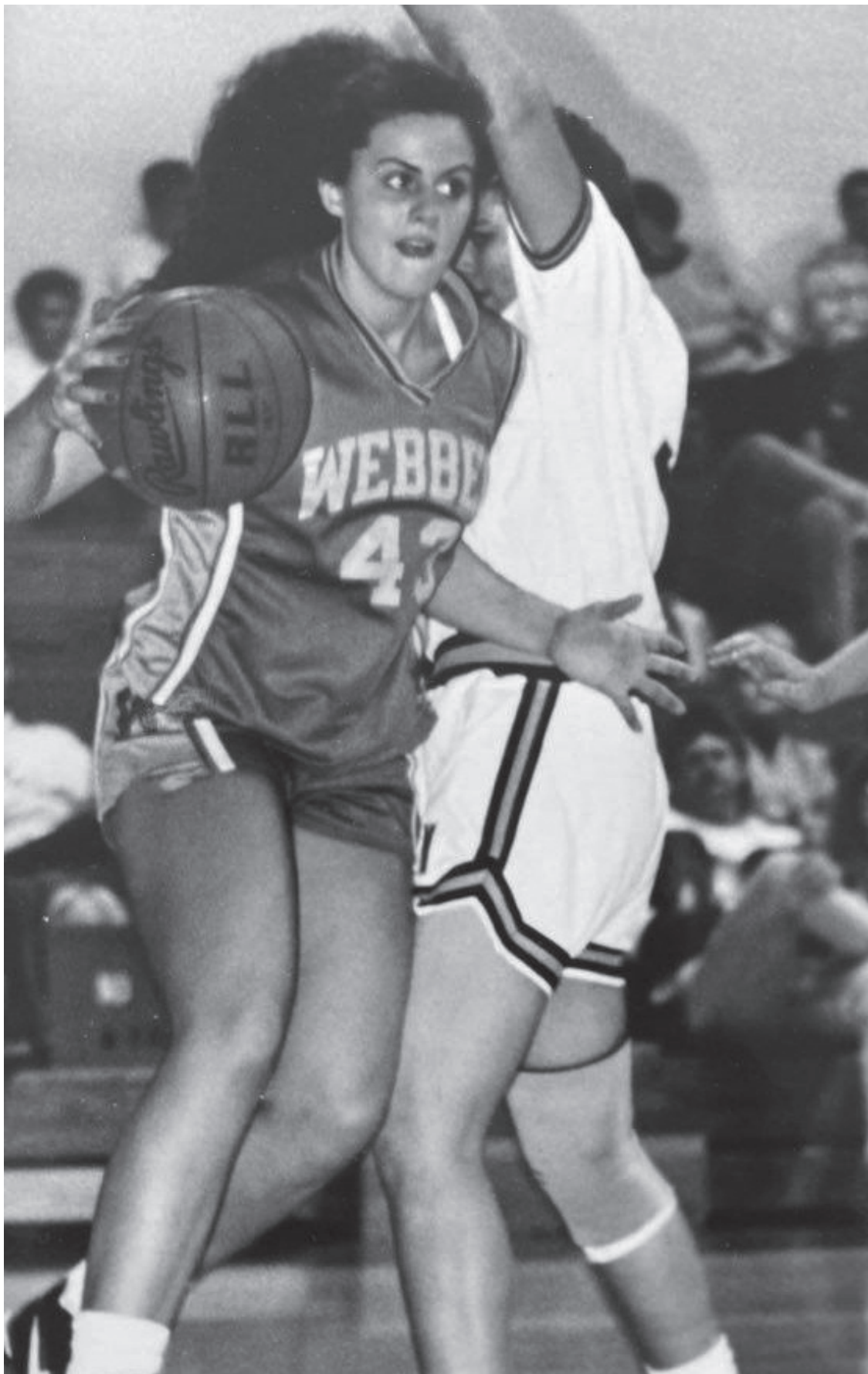
For many years Ed Donoho was Bluford/Webber Township High School's all-time leading boys' basketball scorer, breaking into the Bluford High School varsity basketball line-up as a freshman in the second half of the season, his explosive moves to the basket making him an important part of the team by the end of the 1966-1967 basketball campaign. Donoho hit his stride by the end of his sophomore year. The team's leading scorer, he helped the Trojans go from a 1-16 regular season record the year before to a 20-win campaign during the 1967-1968 season. Donoho's outstanding game in Bluford's upset of Sesser in regional play that year caught the attention of southern Illinois' premier sportswriter, Merle Jones, of the **Southern Illinoian**. Jones called Donoho "the hero of the game" and wrote that his "one-man offensive show" compared to the very best players in southern Illinois that year. In Ed's junior year, he was a key part of one of the best basketball teams Bluford would ever produce, the Trojans gaining the longest winning streak in southern Illinois and winning the Little Egyptian conference regular season title, the conference tournament, the Wayne City Holiday Tournament, and the district tournament. His senior year, Ed helped the Trojans to a twenty-win season and another Little Egyptian regular season conference title. A prolific scorer, Donoho often broke the thirty point barrier during the days before the three-point line. Coach Roger Yates remembers Ed Donoho as one of the most athletic players he ever coached. "Ed had amazing quickness off the floor, making him a fierce rebounder, and giving him such a quick first step, that his moves close to the basket were a guaranteed two points." During his last three years of varsity play, Ed averaged over twenty points a game. Donoho ranks fifth on the all-time male basketball scoring list and is a member of the Bluford/Webber Township High School's 1,000-points club.



Basketball

Jared Payne Bio

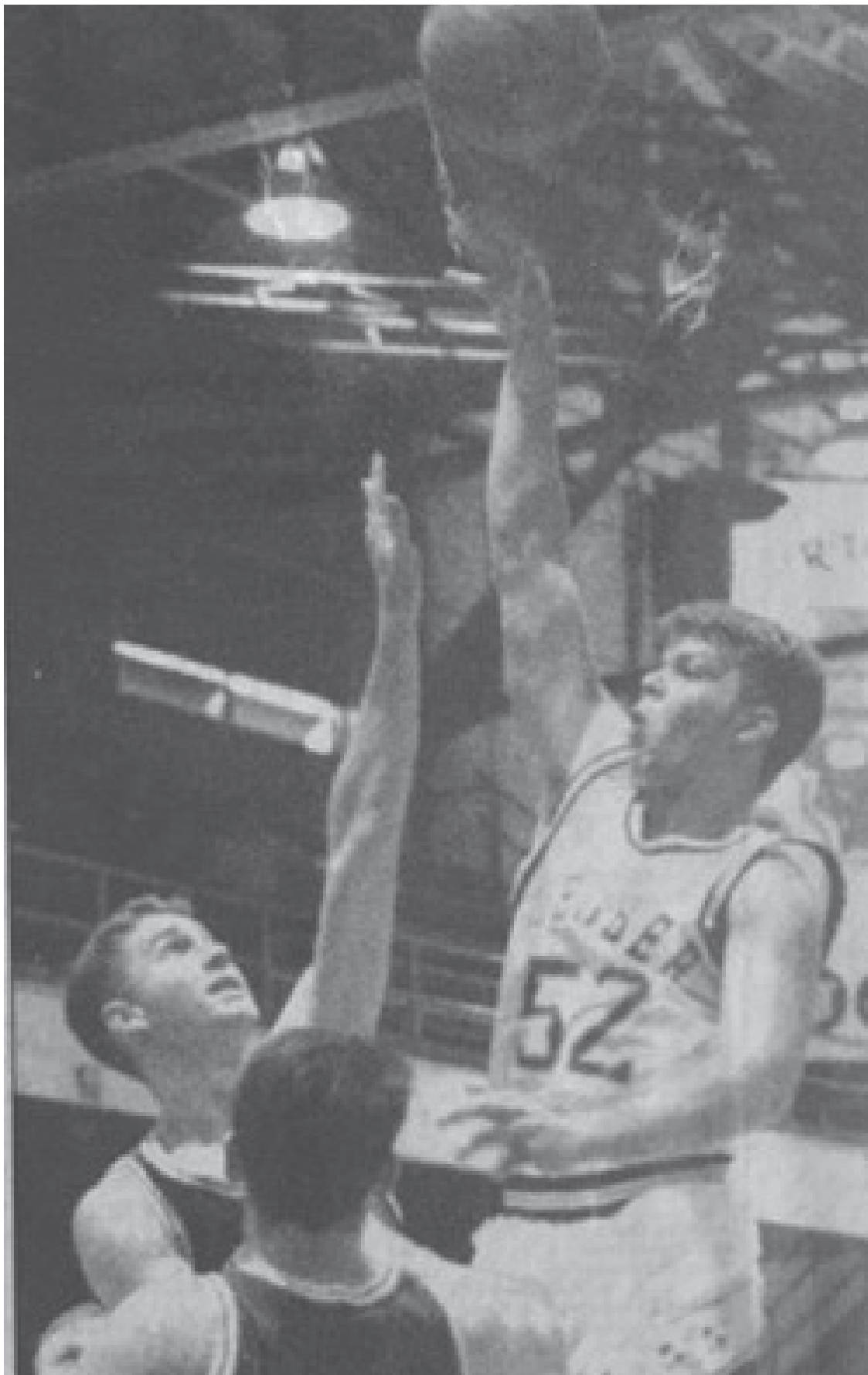
Jared Payne was the “Mr. Inside” (**Southern Illinoisan**) component of one of Bluford/Webber Township High School’s very best basketball teams, the 1995-1996 squad. A year younger than his “Mr. Outside” brother, Jeremy, Jarod Payne was a fierce rebounder and point maker beneath the basket, a place where few could stop him from scoring. During his career, Jared started all four years and would set the all-time Bluford/Webber scoring and rebounding records. One sports reporter noted in awe, “He’s just unstoppable inside” (**Southern Illinoisan**). In his sophomore and junior years of playing a key role on the Bluford/Webber team, Jared helped the Trojans forge an incredible 43-5 record. His coach remembers Jared as “Powerful. He was so strong, other players often bounced off him. He was a back-to-the-basket kind of player. Anytime the ball came off the rim, we could count on him being there. His explosive rebounding and put-backs energized the team and our fans.” Jared was among the top ten scorers in southern Illinois his senior year and would be an honorable mention for All State basketball honors his last two years of play. Jared Payne is one of only two players to belong to the Bluford/Webber 2000-point club and his 2,088 total career points, the most of any Trojan player, is proudly noted on a banner hanging in the Bluford/Webber gymnasium.



Basketball

Jessica Payne (Case) Bio

The Bluford/Webber Township High School girls' basketball team would have their best season to date during the 1992-1993 campaign. Coached by Kelly Brookman, the Lady Trojans posted a record of 17-8, with Jessica Payne serving as an essential part of the team's success. At 5' 11," Jessica was a fierce rebounder who scored on offensive rebounds almost at will. During her four years of varsity play, she would be chosen for several all-star teams, her senior year being capped by being chosen for the Kaskaskia All-Tournament team. Her quiet but consistent efforts made her the Bluford/Webber girls' leading scorer and rebounder in a single season, and all-time leading scorer overall at the end of her senior year, having posted 1,101 points. After high school, Jessica continued her basketball successes at Rend Lake Community College. Jessica Payne is ranked fourth on the all-time female basketball scoring list and is a member of the select Bluford/Webber Township High School basketball's 1,000-points club.



Basketball

Jeremy Payne Bio

Jeremy Payne was the “Mr. Outside” (Southern Illinoian) portion of one of Bluford/Webber Township High School’s very best basketball teams. He started varsity all four years that he played. In his last two years of leading the Trojans, 1994-1995 and 1995-1996, Jeremy helped the team forge an incredible 43-5 record. His coach remembers Jeremy as “relentless, with powerful moves to the basket. He could play guard or power forward and shoot the three pointer. He was also a consistent shot-blocker and assist leader, the latter making other team members play better. He brought great excitement to the program, and our packed little gym was often forced to set up a live television remote in a classroom on campus so fans could watch Jeremy and the team play.” The first Bluford/Webber player to break the 2,000-point barrier his senior year, Jeremy would lead the Trojans that season to a 26-2 record, helping the team gain the conference and two invitational tournament championships and capturing the Trojans’ first regional title ever (Class A). He was a three-time All-State honorable mention. For his overall efforts his senior year, Jeremy Payne would be nominated to the prestigious McDonald’s All-American prep team, the first Trojan athlete to receive national recognition. Jeremy Payne ranks second in all-time male basketball scoring and is one of only two members to belong to the Bluford/Webber 2000-point club.



Coaching

Rod Stover Bio

Shortly after his college graduation, Rod Stover, a 1969 Bluford/Webber Township High School graduate, came back to Bluford in the 1975-1976 school year as the head basketball and baseball coach. At the time of Stover's hiring, a southern Illinois sportswriter pointed out, "Coaching any sport in one's hometown is often said to be an occupational hazard" (**Southern Illinoisan**). In Rod Stover's case, the opposite turned out to be true. Stover would have the longest coaching tenure at the school (21 years), but it was not always an easy journey. In his first year of basketball coaching, he went 5-18. However, before his career ended, Stover would become the winningest coach in Webber basketball history (261-239). His many fine basketball teams reached what one sportswriter called "its high tide" when the 1995-1996 team went 25-3 and won the first basketball regional championship in the school's history, missing going to the semifinal Class A tournament by a single basket (**Southern Illinoisan**). That year, Rod Stover was voted the Illinois Basketball Coaches Association's Coach of the Year for District 21, the only Webber basketball coach to be so honored. Altogether, Rod Stover's teams won 12 team championships, and Stover coached five basketball players that were honorable mention IBCA All-State members. Under his tutelage, one of his players was a McDonald's All-American nominee, and several of his basketball players received college basketball scholarships. Stover's successes as baseball coach were just as spectacular, taking over a baseball program in 1975 that had won only one game in the previous seven years and in the next fifteen seasons as head baseball coach compiling a 162-139 record. Again, his coaching talent helped players move to a higher level—several players receiving college baseball scholarships and one player being drafted into major league baseball.



Team Inductee

2013-2014 Baseball Team (State Runner-Up)

For a team that would be Bluford/Webber's only group to reach a state tournament final game, the 2013-2014 Bluford/Webber Township High School baseball team experienced its ups and downs in the regular season, entering the Class A state regional level with a 17-6 record. The team struggled to defeat Steeleville, 5-4, in ten innings in the final game of the regional, but they finally caught fire, easily pushing through the sectional and meeting a powerful 28-8 Windsor team in the semi-state tournament round at Marion. The Trojans prevailed 8-6, thanks to Webber's Logan Ganieany, who was the winning pitcher and went 4-4 in hitting with two doubles and four RBIs. At state, Bluford/Webber faced a gritty 19-17 New Athens team in a semi-final contest. The game was an epic fight to the finish, with New Athens leading 4-1 heading into the seventh inning. The never-say-die Trojans scored three runs at the top of the inning to tie the game and then escaped a bases-loaded no-out situation in the bottom of the 7th, winning the game in 10 innings, 5-4. A reporter later said that the Trojan's pitcher, Jordan Wheeler, "may not have had the best pitching performance of the state tournament, but it was the most talked about." Wheeler threw 175 pitches in the team's hard-fought win. Christian Bush led the team's offense in the game, knocking in three RBIs. Illinois Lutheran (Crete), a 26-2 state baseball powerhouse ended Bluford/Webber's dream of a state championship, but the Trojans ended up with a splendid record of 23-7 and a state-runner-up trophy, while Trojan players Lane Moser and Zane Austin were selected for the Class A state baseball team. Sam Root coached the 2013-2014 squad, along with assistant coach, Ryan Stine. Members of the team were Jordan Wheeler, Logan Ganieany, Christian Bush, Zane Austin, Gage Raudenbush, Lane Moser, Dylan Burrell, Michael Gartin, Mark Knepler, and Jaxon Helm.



1968-1969 Basketball Team

The 1968-1969 Bluford basketball team, coached by Roger Yates, was arguably the school's best basketball team of the 1950 through 1970 era, ending its season with a 25-2 record. Bluford's first five wins that year were won by an average of forty points a game, and the Trojans ended up with a twenty-two-point victory average that year over their opponents. But offensive fire power was just half of the Trojans' story that season. One sportswriter observed that the Bluford team had a defense that "could not be penetrated except with burglar tools" (*Evansville Sunday Courier and Press*). Local coaches and sportswriters were often awed with the 1968-1969 team, especially their discipline, their never getting rattled. Sportswriter John Rackaway believed that Bluford "could provide a stiff test for most of the big southern Illinois teams" (*Mt. Vernon Register News*). Merle Jones, the premiere sportswriter of southern Illinois wrote,

Team Inductee

“Bluford plays with more poise and skill than most big school teams I have seen this year” (*Southern Illinoisan*). Waltonville High School’s basketball coach, David Simpson, after watching the Trojans easily walk away with the championship of the Little Egyptian Conference Tournament that season, told one sportswriter, “Bluford is one of the better teams we’ve ever had in the Little Egyptian Conference” (*Evansville Sunday Courier and Press*). The same accolades followed Bluford’s surprisingly easy championship drive at the Wayne City Holiday Tournament, rated that year as one of the toughest small school holiday tourneys in the region (*Mt. Vernon Register News*).

A list of this team’s accomplishments includes the following:

- Garnered most wins in a season (tied with two other teams)
- Won the prestigious sixteen-team Wayne City Holiday Tournament (first time for a Bluford team).
- Won the regular season Little Egyptian Conference with an undefeated record.
- Won the Little Egyptian Conference Tournament.
- Owned the longest winning streak among the fifty-six teams in southern Illinois—25 straight games (*Southern Illinoisian*). This was the second-best record in the state in the single class basketball system that season and is the longest winning streak of any Bluford/Webber basketball team.
- Consistently ranked among the top ten teams in the fifty-six-school region of southern Illinois (*Evansville Sunday Courier and Press*).
- Ranked among the best teams in the state among small schools throughout the season (*Sports Prep Special Magazine*).

Roger Yates, a Mt. Vernon High School graduate and basketball star, was the coach of the Bluford 1968-1969 team. Members of the team were Bob Osborn, Randy Mills, Jack Michels, Rod Stover, Ed Case, Ed Donoho, John Shields, Rick Huff, Duane Catron, and Lanny Donoho. Kenny Gream served as manager.



Friends of the Program

Loren and Geraldine (Jerri) Osborn bios

The Bluford/Webber Township High School basketball program found itself at its lowest ebb in its long history as the 1967-1968 season arrived. The year before, the Trojans had won but a single game, limiting fan support and dampening the spirit of the players. A new coach helped bring back vitality to the program, and the young team of juniors and sophomores soon gelled and garnered a twenty-win season. An unforeseen uplifting also came from Bluford fans Loren and Geraldine (Jerri) Osborn. Leaders in the Bluford community, they attended every game and arranged for the team to rent sharp looking blazer sport jackets, adding to the teams' pride whenever they walked into a gym. Coach Roger Yates recalls the players "having an extra bounce to their steps when they came into an opponent's place wearing the blazers. It also caught the admiration of the teams we were playing against, an added intangible factor that could have only helped us." After the exciting season was over, Loren and Jerri graciously hosted a special gathering in their rec room basement for the players and cheerleaders—a great meal and wonderful conversations. Their support at that pivotal time is recognized with their induction into the inaugural Bluford/Webber Sports Hall of Fame.

