

Harold "Clone" Ryan, '20



Although Harold Ryan spent the better part of his 74 years known to everyone who knew him as "Clone," his nickname had nothing to do with the genetic process of creating an exact duplicate from an original gene, much like the infamous Scottish sheep, Dolly, which was cloned back in 1996.

In fact Ryan, who was dubbed with the moniker during the mid-1910s because of his wild, windmill style of play on the basketball court, would have been much more suited to have been called "Abe." Why "Abe" you ask. Well, in those early days of hardwood play, Ryan was the epitome of an aberrant – a person whose behavior departs substantially from the standard. With the game of basketball only slightly more than 20 years old, most teams were hard pressed to reach 25 points an outing. But, in contrast, Ryan was amassing totals like that himself, thus becoming Norwich's round ball aberration as his acts on the court were far removed from the normal state of play.

It is over 96 years since Ryan last laced up his sneakers for the Purple, but he still holds the all-time scoring record for a game, ranks second in career points and was the catalyst who led Norwich to its first New York State basketball championship during the 1919-20 season. For those aberrant statistics, Harold "Clone" Ryan is one of the newest members of the seventh edition of the Norwich High School Sports Hall of Fame.

Ryan was born in South Otselic, the eighth youngest of 10 children (five each boys and girls), to Stephen W. and Etta M. (Cook) Ryan. The family moved to Norwich in 1905 and 10 years later Ryan, still only in junior high school, began his historic basketball career under the tutelage of first-year coach Frank Wassung – a fellow NHSSHOF inductee this year.

Prior to that 1915-16 season, Norwich had failed to produce a team for two straight winters, and that initial campaign was a challenge for both the youthful Ryan and the new untested Coach Wassung. All told, the Purple went 4-6 during a hodgepodge schedule that featured contests not only against other high schools, but colleges and company-sponsored teams, as well. And Ryan, after sitting out the first four games, saw his first official action as a Norwich cager in a 46-10 loss to the Colgate University sophomores on Feb. 11, 1916. The very next game, a 46-27 defeat to Binghamton seven days later, Ryan tabulated

his first NHS points with four field goals and a trio of free throws for 11 markers. The long march to greatness had begun.

Even though Ryan still had five more years ahead of him, let's fast forward to his final two seasons, years that resulted in Norwich posting a glowing 40-2-1 record, with Ryan pumping in 725 of the Purple's 1,426 points (50.8 percent). During that time period, Norwich won 37 straight games between Feb. 6, 1920 and Mar. 31, 1921, a streak that included a New York State championship. That run was matched over 70 years later – Dec. 4, 1992 to Dec. 29, 1993 – when Norwich again laid claim to not one but two state titles.

In leading Norwich to its initial state crown, Ryan tallied 274 of his team's 492 points (55.7 percent) during the 1919-20 campaign, when he averaged 18.3 points per game. That season in which Norwich went 13-1-1 and the aforementioned state championship was culminated with an 18-15 triumph over Ilion on March 27, 1920 at Syracuse University. During the course of the season, Ryan reached double digits on 13 occasions, with his season-high total of 32 points coming in a 42-16 blitzing of host Union-Endicott on Jan. 9, 1920 his year's best performance. As *The Norwich Sun* reported, "Captain Ryan of Norwich, playing center, towered head and shoulders over his two opponents and he played a splendid game, scoring a total of 32 points, more than doubling Endicott's entire score."

A week later, in a 32-28 victory at Deposit, Ryan added 22 points, and was lauded in *The Morning Sun* of Binghamton. "Ryan, star center on the Norwich 'Hi' basketball quintet, almost single-handedly downed the Deposit high school five in Deposit last night in a regularly scheduled league game by the score of 32 to 28. The big center was the big factor in the Norwich victory and the Deposit defeat. He caged seven field goals and eight foul goals and was a whirlwind of a floor man when Deposit tried to shoot baskets."

Although there would not be a repeat state championship performance during the 1920-21 season, that year solidified Ryan's place among the greatest NHS players to ever grace the hardwoods. While Norwich cruised to a 27-1 record, its sole defeat coming at the hands of Sherrill by a 22-15 tally in the state title game on April 1, 1921 at Syracuse University, Ryan again was the main offensive catalyst as he rang up 451 of the Purple's 934 markers (48.3 percent) in averaging 16.7 points per game.

Those 451 season points are the fifth most by an NHS cager, but two games early in the campaign stand out amongst all others. On Friday night, Dec. 17, 1920 in a

home encounter with Elmira Free Academy, Ryan produced the all-time greatest one-game show with 47 points as the Purple dominated EFA 90-24. And, two games later on Dec. 30, he tallied 43 more as the host Norwich five humiliated Johnson City 89-2. Those two outbursts rank first and third in single-game annals, sandwiched around John Stewart's effort of 45 against Little Falls on Feb. 5, 1954.

That record-setting total of 47 markers was made possible by Ryan sinking 20 field goals and seven charity stripe tosses, while 16 other field goals and 11 free throws resulted in the 43 point sum. The 20 two-pointers are the most ever charted by a Norwich cager and those other 16 are tied for fourth. Over the course of his career, Ryan netted 454 two-point field goals, second only to Bobby Lazor's 497. And, as far as free throws are concerned, Ryan was second to none as he topped the all-time Norwich charts with 177 freebies made during his final season of 1920-21.

Following his rookie season (1915-16) as a varsity cager, Ryan tallied sums of 133, 166 and 242 for 541 points, which when added to those aforementioned final two stellar season totals of 725 and his initial 26 markers brings his career numbers to 1,292. That number ranks second all-time, only bested by Lazor's 1,444. And, the sheer numbers that Ryan rang up are even more impressive when one realizes that there was a jump ball after every made basket in those days.

Twice Ryan captained the NHS five, first during the 1917-18 season and again for the 1919-20 campaign. His breakout game as a Norwich player occurred on Jan. 13, 1917, when he scored 28 points in a 52-24 Norwich triumph over the Syracuse Collegians. That was the season when his older brother, Clair "Smiler" Ryan, was the Purple captain. And, that scoring binge would be the first of 18 times that Ryan would eclipse the 20-point total for a game, totals that were barely reached by entire teams at the time.

When Ryan started his Norwich career in 1915, the Purple had just sat idle for two consecutive seasons, and during that first campaign they took to the court only 10 times. But, by the time Ryan began his final year, Norwich was attracting crowds of 1,000 or more to see the Purple compete in 28 games at either the City Hall court or at various road venues. And, when Ryan first laced up his sneakers he was living with his family at 22 Silver Street, but by the time when those throngs started coming out to see him play, his parents had moved to Syracuse. Not wanting to give up his final two seasons of eligibility, he remained in Norwich. It is not known whether he lived on his own or with another family, but in a related basketball article in *The Norwich Sun* in 1919, it was reported that after a particular game a benefit dance would be held at the Jewell

Block with all proceeds going to help "Clone" Ryan defray his living costs.

At the conclusion of Ryan's days at Norwich, Syracuse University expressed an interest in him playing collegiate ball for them, but he chose to marry his high school sweetheart, instead. On Nov. 3, 1923 Ryan and Ethel Winters, who originally hailed from Sussex, NJ, were united in marriage at the First Baptist Church. A honeymoon trip to Montreal was in the offing, but that Canadian visit was forced to take a back seat in order for them to attend the Penn State vs. Syracuse football game that afternoon at Archbold Stadium. Syracuse prevailed 10-0 that Saturday afternoon, and the next day the newlyweds ventured north to Montreal.

Following their marriage, the Ryans resided in Fulton where "Clone" was the manager of the Best Ice Cream Company. While there, he played semi-pro basketball, touring with the American Woolen Mills team. But, like the fabled Sirens tried to do to Odysseus, Norwich was successful in luring him back around 1928 when he took a job as a buyer and furniture salesman for Montgomery Ward Department Store—now the site of McLaughlin's Department Store. He retired in 1965.

Basketball wasn't the only sport that Ryan mastered as he was a charter member of the Norwich Bowling Association Hall of Fame when it inducted its first 20 members on Feb. 20, 1971. A dead-eye spare bowler, he averaged between 188 and 195 for a 10-year period and bowled in 12 national American Bowling Congress Tournaments.

Within three years of that bowling honor, "Clone" suffered a fatal heart attack on Jan. 3, 1974. He was predeceased by his longtime wife, Ethel, on April 4, 1972.

Having alluded to Ryan being a basketball aberration earlier in this article, his entire life may have been one, too. Not only did he achieve feats on the hardwoods that others would not enjoy for decades or more to come, but he was married to the same woman for over 48 years, was gainfully employed for more than 35 years with a single company and proved to be one of the best bowlers in Norwich at a time when kegling was king.

—Tom Rowe



NORWICH BOWLING HALL OF FAME CHARTER MEMBERS

Norwich High School Sports Hall of Fame 2017 inductee Harold "Clone" Ryan was among 20 initial members who were inducted into the Norwich Bowling Hall of Fame on Saturday, Feb. 20, 1971. Ten attended the ceremony, three were absent and seven were deceased.

Front: Dick Rowe, Claude Breed, Frank Santolucito, Ernie Finch and Evan Crandall.

Back: Ray Farley, Harold "Clone" Ryan, Bob Cumber, Verne "Bunny" Lindsey and Neil Cook.

Absent: George Graves, Frank Machio and Joe "Fat" Mirabito.

Deceased: Frank "Perry" Browne, Francis "Bish" Conley, Joe Gage, Barney Hogan, Larry Johnson, Fritz Markiewicz and Fred "Pop" Markle.

SOUTHERN TIER CHAMPIONS

<p>Norwich, 17; Colgate Collegiates, 14 Norwich, 48; Utica Assumption H. S., 5 Norwich, 42; Oneida High, 14 Norwich, 90; Elmira Free Academy, 24 Norwich, 26; Ilion High, 9 Norwich, 89; Johnson City High, 2 Norwich, 34; Auburn High, 16 Norwich, 39; Union-Endicott, 9 Norwich, 38; Colgate Freshmen, 22 Norwich, 35; Hamilton High, 20 Norwich, 17; Owego Free Academy, 12 Norwich, 36; Cortland Central High, 19 Norwich, 37; Hamilton High 35, Norwich, 34; Deposit High, 11 Norwich, 19; Binghamton Central, 14 Norwich, 29; Johnson City High, 7 Norwich, 23; Elmira Free Academy, 13 Norwich, 39; Union-Endicott, 15 Norwich, 36; Owego Free Academy, 12 Norwich, 16; Utica Free Academy, 13 Norwich, 24; Cortland Central High, 20 Norwich, 39; Deposit High, 17 Norwich, 29; Little Falls, 18 Norwich, 21; Binghamton Central, 19 Norwich, 29; Johnson City High, 24 Norwich, 2; Peekskill [forfeit] Norwich, 33; Batavia, 23 Norwich, 15; Sherrill High, 22</p>	<p>Norwich, 17; Colgate Collegiates, 14 Norwich, 48; Utica Assumption H. S., 5 Norwich, 42; Oneida High, 14 Norwich, 90; Elmira Free Academy, 24 Norwich, 26; Ilion High, 9 Norwich, 89; Johnson City High, 2 Norwich, 34; Auburn High, 16 Norwich, 39; Union-Endicott, 9 Norwich, 38; Colgate Freshmen, 22 Norwich, 35; Hamilton High, 20 Norwich, 17; Owego Free Academy, 12 Norwich, 36; Cortland Central High, 19 Norwich, 37; Hamilton High 35, Norwich, 34; Deposit High, 11 Norwich, 19; Binghamton Central, 14 Norwich, 29; Johnson City High, 7 Norwich, 23; Elmira Free Academy, 13 Norwich, 39; Union-Endicott, 15 Norwich, 36; Owego Free Academy, 12 Norwich, 16; Utica Free Academy, 13 Norwich, 24; Cortland Central High, 20 Norwich, 39; Deposit High, 17 Norwich, 29; Little Falls, 18 Norwich, 21; Binghamton Central, 19 Norwich, 29; Johnson City High, 24 Norwich, 2; Peekskill [forfeit] Norwich, 33; Batavia, 23 Norwich, 15; Sherrill High, 22</p>
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1920-21 NORWICH BASKETBALL TEAM

STANDING (left to right): Clarence "Jock" Taylor, Fred O'Hara, George "Paddy" Rourke, Truman Young and Don O'Hara

SEATED (left to right): Lynn Halbert, Edwin "Buck" Burrows and Harold "Clone" Ryan

MISSING: Head Coach Johnny Barsha