

Still trying to unearth that odd 40-point game in Venango County basketball from an era that not only didn't produce many points but nobody remembers anyway.

So, I went to newspapers.com and searched Joe Szafran who once was sports editor of the now defunct Oil City Blizzard. (And, he also happens to be the guy who hired me at The Derrick years later.)

Well, it didn't take long before I came across these gems – some of which will shock you.

### **Really, Meadville?**

Number 1: (and when you read this, think of how the Bulldogs dominated from the 1950s through the 1970s to get the full impact.)] Meadville actually had a 17-game *losing* streak in basketball. It ended on Feb. 12, 1946, with a 39-28 victory over Greenville.

Wrote Szafran in his column "Scanning the Field:" "Although the records are not available, it is doubtful if ever a high school in this district suffered so many basketball setbacks in a row before winning a game..." Heh, well, 17 has since been topped. By many.

### **Wanted: officials, Part I**

Number 2: Officials in all sports are desperately needed in the here and now. The same was true 80 years ago – but in the midst of World War II.

"The PIAA fears a shortage of basketball officials due to the war, and as a result are urging all those who know a little about the game to take the officials examination to be given tonight in various schools throughout the state," Szafran wrote on Jan. 9, 1942.

Me: "Know a little about the game" would certainly apply to those who do all the yelling/criticizing from the stands today. Little being the key word.

### **He knew about Al Foster**

Number 3: Dutch Burch, Oil City's "GOAT," scored 28 points in a 70-41 romp over Erie Tech on Feb. 17, 1950, and with it, tongues were wagging: "Isn't that a record?"

Szafran pointed out that, no, it was not, recalling Al Foster's 51-point game on Feb. 8, 1918, when the Oilers trounced Titusville, 105-14.

That was *not* the case in 1966 when Ron McCoid scored 44, or in 1970 when Tom Mix tallied 45 or in 1971 when Mike Emick bucketed 56. Foster's big game had been forgotten – or not recognized anymore.

It was reported after his 44-point game against Corry that McCoid set the "modern" day OCHS record shared by Lou Kraft (1950) and Bob Hartz (1958) with 35 points. Kraft went for his 35 just a week after Burch's signature game. Don't know who decided what was "modern" – they quit using peach baskets in 1906.

More on Burch, Szafran pointed out: 12-for-14 from the floor and 4-for-4 from the line while handing out five assists against Tech. Plus, in his last two games (the Oilers were coming off a victory against Grove City), Burch was 20-for-24 from the field and 6-for-6 from the line with 13 assists.

All-state stuff.

### **Franklin-Meadville 'spat'**

Number 4: A few days after Meadville ended its losing streak, the Bulldogs played Franklin and things didn't go well – to the point that The News-Herald urged the Nurserymen (as they were called then) to "break off athletic relations with (MASH) immediately."

Szafran said he hoped this didn't happen since, for one thing, it would leave Franklin out of Section 2 and the championship picture in hoops. (Remember, all-stater Ted Marchibroda's career was just getting started.)

The News-Herald railed about the conduct of the 'Dogs: "We've seen hundreds of basketball teams in our time, but we never witnessed the kind of stuff pulled by Meadville last night," wrote whoever covered the game.

The list of transgressions was long, really long. Included, "We saw (the Meadville coach) stick out his tongue like a 3-year-old spoiled child as an insult to the Franklin coach (Ed Treadwell). We saw a Meadville player stand in front of the Franklin bench and thumb his nose no less than three times and utter catcalls at the Franklin bench," TNH said. Me: wow.

And apparently the strained relations had gone back some time.

Szafran wrote the issue was something to be sorted between the two schools. And apparently it was. And all lived happily ever after...