

The girls have done better than boys in basketball upon crossing the Venango County line.

Here's a look at some star players at the collegiate level in Venango County history.

Susan Blauser

Cranberry (Rutgers/ Illinois)

Scored in the neighborhood of 1,600 points, including 1,023 in her last two years at Illinois. Tallied 307 points as a Rutgers freshman and was MVP in 1997 after averaging 10.1 points and 6.6 rebounds. She sat out a year after transferring to Illinois where she rejoined Theresa Grentz, who recruited her to Rutgers. The 6-1 forward started 64 of 65 games at Illinois where she also grabbed 494 rebounds. Coached at Clarion, Akron, Dayton in the early oughts. Her older sister, 6-1 Lauren, was a four-year starter at Youngstown State (1993-96), and another member of Cranberry's first state championship team, Susen Clark, played a prominent role at St. John Fisher in Rochester, N.Y..

Carrie Mason

Cranberry (Virginia Tech)

Named to the 10th annual class of ACC Women's Basketball Legends in 2014. Left VPI as the school's all-time leader in assists and 3-pointers along with 1,369 points in 123 games. She started a school record 121 games and helped the Hokies to four NCAA tournament appearances, including three first-round wins. She played for Virginia Tech from 2003-06 and was a member of the first VPI team to play in the ACC. Mason ranked in the school's top 10 in scoring, scoring average, three-pointers, steals and assists when she graduated.

Hillary Hager

Franklin (Vanderbilt)

A real scholar/athlete. She was a two-time captain and a starting guards for the Commodores who won the SEC tournament twice -- in 2002 and 2004. As a senior she averaged 12 points, six rebounds, two assists and two steals and received the Commodore Award as the team MVP. She shot 42 percent (142-338) from behind the arc. A CoSida Academic All-District player,

Hager received the inaugural SEC Basketball Scholar Athlete of the Year in '04. The neuroscience majors also played pro basketball in Belgium. She earned her PhD from Vanderbilt in 2006.

Martha Williams

Franklin (George Washington)

The 6-4 Williams helped GW to a 94-32 record in four years there. 250 blocks, 538 rebounds in 121 games. An alternate for the East team in the U.S. Olympic Basketball Festival.

Sune Swart

Cranberry (Bucknell)

Swart, 6-3, started only one game her first three seasons at Bucknell, but started all three as a senior and averaged 11.4 points and 6.1 rebounds while shooting 51.7 percent from the floor. She was named third team All-Patriot League as Bucknell won its third league title, made the NCAA tourney and finished with a 27-6 record. Swart was born in South Africa. She moved to Minneapolis in the fifth grade. Her family made another move at the end of her freshman year in high school, this time to Cranberry.

Mary Kay Lynch

Venango Catholic (Gannon)

A Division II All-American, Lynch was Gannon's leading rebounder and fourth all-time in scoring when she was inducted into the school's Hall of Fame in 2010. 1,743 career points and 1,194 career rebounds.

Bridget Hale

Oil City (Pitt-Johnstown)

Another Division II All-America, Hale scored 1,506 points, which was sixth all-time when she was inducted into the UPJ Hall of Fame in 2016. Single game high 40 points and 87.6% free throw shooter as a senior. She also was a member of her GTE Academic All-District team. She

graduated cum laude in business/economics-finance and management. Her older sister Melinda starred at Slippery Rock and was a member of the 1984 Olympics team handball squad.

Jodi Gault

Oil City (Slippery Rock/Pitt-Johnstown)

Wrapped up her coaching career at UPJ in 2007 with a 540-156 record. In 25 years, her teams made 15 NCAA tourney appearances and claimed five regionals. After starring at Oil City and Slippery Rock, Gault played with the Washington Metros and California Dreams in the Women's Professional Basketball League. In addition to Bridget Hale, Gault also coached former Franklin star Jody Billingsley at UPJ.

Melinda (Hale) Rhoads

(Oil City/ Slippery Rock)

Rhoads was a great all-around athlete who went to Slippery Rock to play hoops but ended up making a name for herself in team handball – to the point where she played in the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles. She was two years ahead of Gault at Oil City where she ran track; her sister, Bridget, starred for the Oilerettes 10 years later. Her daughter, Jence, is also big in team handball circles – this after a star-studded career at Slippery Rock High School and Vanderbilt. Rhoads, in her late 60s, is still active coaching young athletes in the Slippery Rock area.

Joan Smith

Oil City/Venango Catholic (Allegheny)

Outstanding two-sport athlete for the NCAA Division III Gators. Graduated in 1986 as Allegheny's all-time leading scorer with 1,135 points (now No. 8 on the all-time list). Her 412 points as a 5-7 senior forward was also a school record. The NCAC Player of the Year in 1986, Smith led nationally-ranked Allegheny to what is still the school's best record ever -- 26-2. The Gators were three-time conference champs with a record of 89-13 in Smith's four years. She also played first base and catcher for the nationally-ranked softball team, which posted a four-year record of 113-20 and reached the NCAA Division III playoffs in all four of her years, finishing fourth in 1985 and 1986. Smith was coached by Kay Gould in both sports. She is a member of the Allegheny Hall of Fame.

