

(This story first appeared in The Derrick and The News-Herald on April 15, 2020.)

I have heard from a few people since I started writing about this local basketball business a few weeks ago.

One is Curt Miller, a retired biology teacher at Franklin who played with the late great Chuck Snell back in the day. He said Snell did have a 50-point game in about 1953 – putting him in junior high at the time.

The year gave me a starting point and I searched at Newspaper Archive through the Oil City Library, and it didn't take long for the game to come up.

The date was Feb. 13, 1953. Snell scored 57 points in a 103-24 rout of Cranberry. Snell's and the team's point totals were Junior High League records. (This league also consisted of Titusville and Cochranon and two teams from Oil City – Lincoln and South.)

Franklin's coach, John Uram, told his charges to feed Snell and the 5-4 "blond bomber," as the Oil City Blizzard newspaper described him, responded with 23 points in the first quarter and 21 in the second. And these, Miller pointed out, were six-minute quarters.

Snell finished the game with 23 field goals and 11-of-18 free throws to break the record of 36 points held by South's Bob Hartz. Hartz netted 38 against Cochranon the same day Snell scored his 57.

Light shines on Beam

After I handed this piece in to sports editor Ed Brannon, he told me that Rocky Grove's Tim Beam scored 52 in a junior high game against Meadville. Couldn't find it, though, but what I did dig out was a 51-point effort by Beam for the seventh- and eighth-grade team against Corry on Feb. 1, 1974. Close enough.

Beam began starring for the Grove varsity in the winter of 1975, but, alas, since his father was a Methodist minister (they move around a lot), the Beam family left for Beaver County.

Tim played a year of college ball at Geneva In Beaver Falls and decades later is a pastor himself, last seen serving at Elgin Bible College in Illinois.

Influx of 1,000 point scorers revisited

Earlier, Gary Henry of Rimersburg pointed out that more freshmen have been playing varsity ball since 1980, especially girls, and thus the increase in 1,000 point scorers. "A fair number of ninth-graders score 200 points or more as freshmen – a big boost toward reaching 1,000," he wrote.

That's true, and I told him I should have mentioned that. And not only that, there is the increase in games played, what with the expansion of the state playoffs in the 1970s. It used to be that only league champions went to the playoffs and only district champions advanced to regionals. Wilt Chamberlain, whose accomplishments were always maligned because, I think, he was 7-1, which was unheard of in the mid-1950s, scored 2,252 points (37.4 ppg) when he was in high school at Overbrook in Philadelphia. He played in only 61 games. Billy Owens, who scored 3,299 for Carlisle (1985-88), played in 129. Another future Syracuse star, Gerry McNamara, played in 128 for his high school near Scranton. McNamara just missed 3,000.

And, by the way, Chamberlain didn't even leave high school as the state's all-time leading scorer. Wampum's 5-8 Don Hennon, a future All-American at Pitt, scored 2,376 in 106 games and graduated the same year as Chamberlain – 1955.

Neither of those totals is anywhere near the state record. Four players have scored 3,000 or more. And while, we're at it, only one player on the state's top 10 scoring list – Kobe Bryant – played in an NBA all-star game, and only two others, Owens and Tom McMillen of Mansfield, ever saw the floor in an NBA game. Just sayin'.

Schill-Hadley-Burch connection

Jay Schill got in touch to note that his dad, Tony Schill, played a while for former Oil City/Pitt star Dutch Burch at Lycoming. One of Jay Schill's teammates his senior year at Oil City was Bill Hadley, whose dad, Bob "Bibs" Hadley, played two years for Burch at Lycoming before transferring to Youngstown. Bibs Hadley also played for Burch in high school at Oil City. He was a year ahead of Tony Schill in school.

"I was able to meet Mr. Burch and could have conceivably played for him, too, when I was looking for colleges (1989-90)," said Jay Schill, now an educator in Maryland. "Billy could have played college hoops, but chose baseball instead."

A few weeks before that, Jay wondered if his dad might have scored 1,000 points as he and his brother Ben had. But after some online research, Tony, a 1965 Venango Catholic graduate who missed some playing time with injuries, was just short at 956. Still, 3,700 points for a family of three is not too shabby.

Breaking news: 1,000 for Stubler

I have another 1,000-point scorer from Venango County after stumbling across a 43-point game by St. Joe's Dan Stubler on Jan. 7, 1962, against Kanty Prep. The 6-4 senior was averaging about 26 points, so I went looking. He was listed in the paper as having 489 points that year and 383 as a sophomore.

Went through the schedule, and figured he scored 301 as a junior, despite missing the first four games with a leg injury that also kept him out of the entire football season. Stubler's total of 1,173 still might be a game short. Not sure.

Teammate Bill Jarosz, a year older, looked to be a contender, too, but I came up with 964 points for him.