

50 Years of Nelson Fieldhouse

Robert Dunkelberger, 2005H and Ed Coar, 1978



Throughout the 2022-23 basketball season, program inserts for each conference game will mark the 50th anniversary of the opening of the E. H. Nelson Fieldhouse. These inserts will feature various aspects of the histories of the five longest running sports housed by the fieldhouse: men's and women's basketball, men's and women's swimming, and wrestling. The final installment features a summary of the careers of a number of the top scorers in the history of the Bloomsburg men's basketball program.

The sport of basketball started in 1891 and began at Bloomsburg three years later, but it would be nearly 60 years before the scoring and offense modern fans are used to became prevalent. Only one player before the 1950s reached 700 career points. That was Ray Leidich, who appeared in 50 games (for which the statistics are known) from 1912 to



Captains Richard Lloyd (left) and Norm Shutovich (center) plotting strategy with head coach Bill Foster (right), 1960-61

1916. Even now, after more than a century, only 51 players have scored more than Leidich's total and he stands #16 on the all-time list of average points per game with 14.2.

It was during the decade of the 1950s when the Huskies, led by coach Harold Shelley, began routinely to score 80 to 90 or more points a game. Early in his senior season of 1956-57, Leonard Kozick became the program's new scoring leader, ending his career with 928. The following year Jim Gustave reached 955, then in 1958-59 Bill Swisher became the first Husky to hit 1,000 career points. His 1,014 total is now 28th all-time, while his 15.8 per game is 12th.

The offense continued into the 1960s with Richard Lloyd, who in just 69 career games scored 1,339 points and his 19.4 per game average remains the best in program history. He was joined his senior year by Robert Herzig, who in his four seasons broke Lloyd's record with 1,362 and his per game average of 17.5 is #9 all-time.

Top scorers in men's basketball history have tended to come in waves. The first was from the mid-1950s to mid-1960s. The next was at the start of Charlie Chronister's 31-year tenure as coach, from the early to mid-1970s, with John Willis and Jerry Radocha. Playing just three seasons, Willis was a dominant center, setting the career scoring mark with 1,428 points and on February 26, 1974, a still program record game high 48 points against York. His 18.8 a game is #3 all-time. Radocha overlapped with Willis one season and surpassed him. The forward became the new record holder with 1,778 career points, still third all-time, his 18.3 a game fourth best, and a season-high record 24.9 in 1976-77.

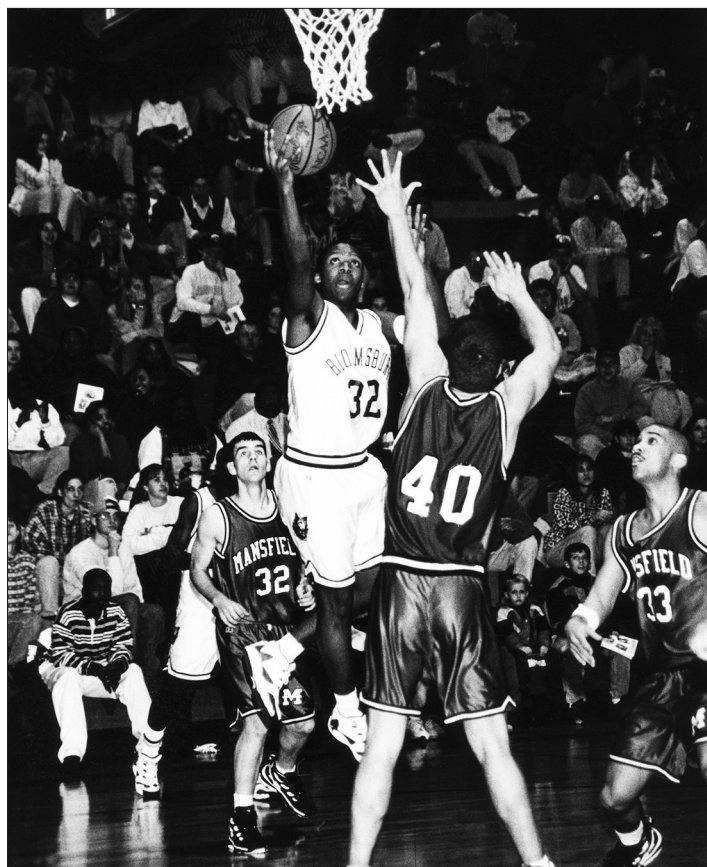
The decade of the 1980s saw another wave of talent sweep through the program, as the Huskies won 89 games from 1980 to 1984 and then a school record 27 in 1988-89. Four of the top nine scorers in school history played during this era. Mike Wenrich led the team his junior and senior seasons from 1980 to 1982, as Bloomsburg won the championship of the first PSAC tournament, defeating Indiana 72-63 on February 28, 1981, in Nelson Fieldhouse. The 6' 5" forward scored 29 points that day and ended his career ninth on the all-time list with 1,386 points.

Joining him his final two years was guard Barry Francisco, who from 1980 to 1984 played in a record 124 games and scored 1,479 points, sixth all-time. He was joined in 1982 by Glenn Noack, who in his four seasons at forward put in 1,504, currently fourth most. Overlapping him by one year was forward Bill Connelly, who scored 1,481 between 1985 and 1990, the fifth highest all-time.

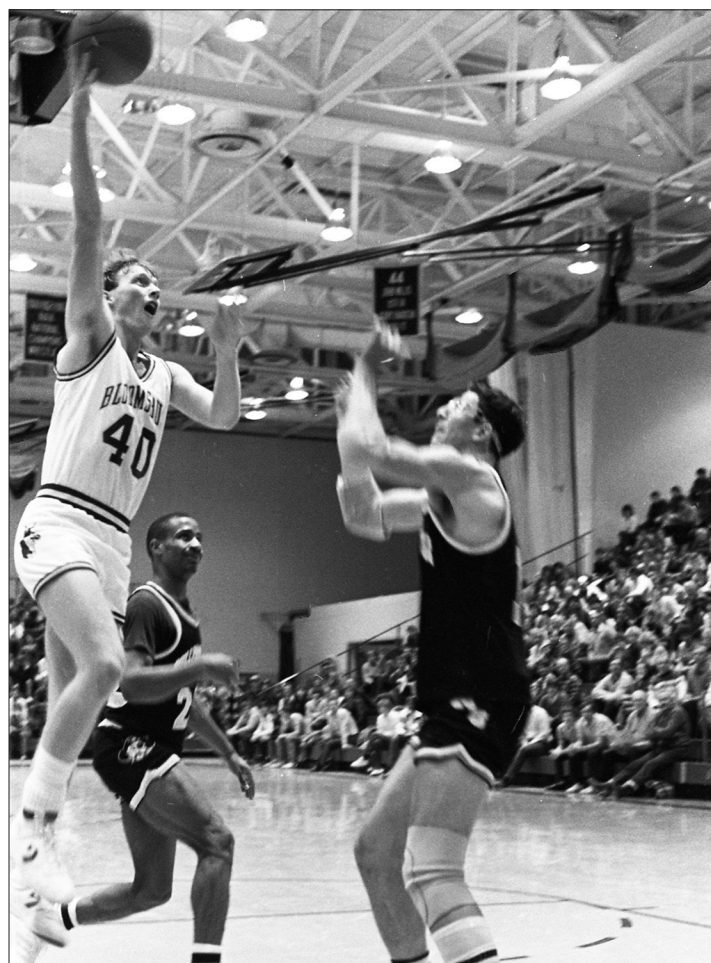
In the 1990s there were two Top Ten leading scorers, the first Lee Gump, a forward who joined Bloomsburg in

1992. He ended his career with the eighth best point total at 1,448. One of the best players to ever put on a Husky uniform joined Gump in 1993, guard Mike Ellzy. A multi-talented threat on the court, he averaged more than 20 points a game each of his last three seasons, leading the team in scoring and three-point shots. Also the team's career leader in steals with 217, he ended his career with a new record of 1,910 points and averaged a #5 best 18.2 per game.

When Jerry Radocha set the all-time scoring record for most points in 1977, he was the seventh Bloomsburg player to hold the title in the 20 years since Leonard Kozick in 1957, after Ray Leidich's had stood for 41 years



Mike Ellzy during a home game with Mansfield, January 24, 1996



Glenn Noack driving for the basket against Millersville, January 12, 1985

since 1916. Radocha's mark then lasted for 20 years until it was broken by Ellzy. The mark he set would be the best for 21 seasons, until another of the great Huskies concluded his career. He was Christian Mortellite, a forward who joined the team in 2014.

Mortellite could shoot from anywhere on the court: the free-throw line, from two-point range, and deep from three. As a junior, he scored 39 against Mansfield, the

most by a Husky player in nearly 40 years, and set the single season record for points at 613. As a senior, he passed Ellzy's total on January 31, 2018, and ended his career with a program record 2,037 and 19.2 per game, second behind Richard Lloyd.

Basketball has been played at Bloomsburg for 127 seasons, 50 of them in Nelson Fieldhouse, and given its students and fans thousands of fond memories. Here's to many more in the years to come.



Christian Mortellite, a Husky from 2014 to 2018, setting up for a shot in a game versus East Stroudsburg