

A Tribute to Barry Leghorn

By James A. Johnson © 2018

“The secret of a life well-lived is not counting the years but in making the years count.”

Author Unknown

Introduction

In 1959 a first class stamp cost 4 cents, gas 17 9/10 cents per gallon, bread 20 cents per loaf and Xerox launches the first commercial photocopier. The award winning film “Ben-Hur” premieres on November 18th starring actor Charlton Heston. Alaska becomes the 49th state and Hawaii becomes the 50th state in America. Jimmy Johnson, basketball star at Conard H. S. in West Hartford, Connecticut is riding around town in his 1957 red Ford convertible. Basketball practice in the Greater Hartford Area high schools starts on November 1, 1959. The top basketball player in Hartford stands 6’ 3” with a jump shot that is as pure and as soft as newly fallen snow. *Enter Barry Leghorn of Bulkeley H. S. on Maple Avenue.*



Bulldogs

The argument about the greatest Bulkeley basketball player during this period usually resolves into a simple either or proposition, either Carmen Perrone or Barry Leghorn. However, an argument can be made that Charlie Mazurek should be included in this discussion. Charlie was a bonafide two-time All-State player in 1949 and 1950. Moreover, he set the Trinity

College single game record of 40 points in 1954. I contend that it is Barry Leghorn. Standing 6' 3" he had all the basketball skill and all the basketball sense that can be imagined in one player. *Shot making, foul shooting, defending and rebounding on both backboards – all superlatively.* Barry Leghorn had the ability to see what is happening, to anticipate what will happen, to know what should be done and to adjust instantly to get it done – all superlatively.



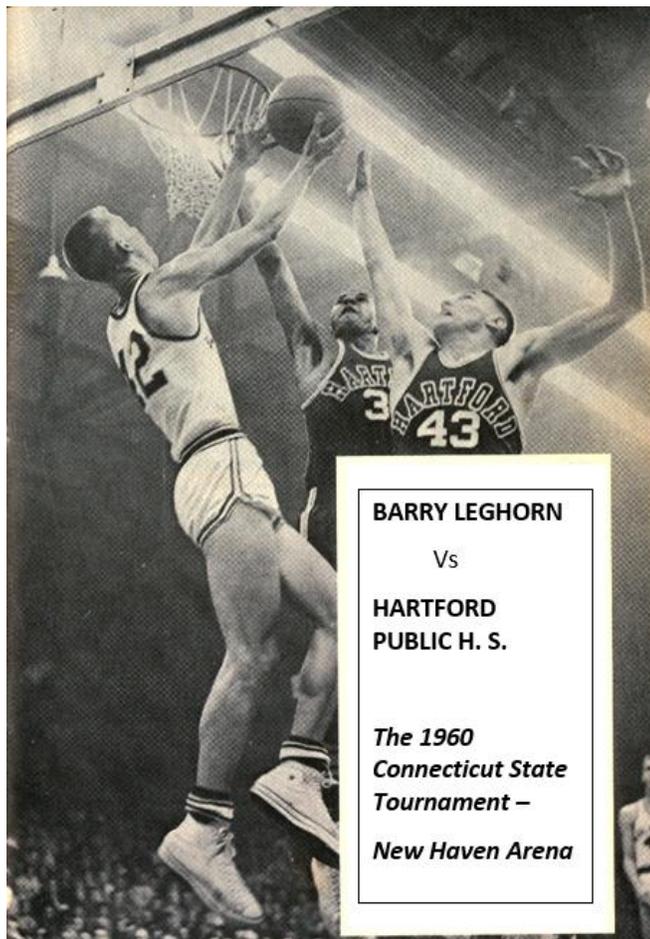
Barry Leghorn 1960

Keep in mind that I was the basketball captain at Conard H. S. during this period and one of its outstanding players. In short, I was the top all-around basketball player in West Hartford and Barry was the top player in Hartford. My point is to take my words as gospel truth because I am a basketball cognoscente. For example, 6' 3" Charlie Jones of Weaver H. S. was a tremendous leaper. He could dunk a basketball with one hand while standing under the basket and catch it on the way down with the other hand. In one game in 1959 against Weaver I saw Charlie elevate and cleanly block Barry's jump shot. Not only could a spectator see it, but also

could hear it – Whop! Most players would be intimidated at this point, but not Barry. On the next play Barry rose a tad higher on his jump shot and the ball went cleanly into the netting.

Supreme Skill

Barry, affectionately called “Legs” did not possess great quickness but he could perform 3 offensive moves with great skill. He was a forward who played a corner and could jump shoot at 20 feet at the rate of 48 per cent from the field. This is off the chain in the late 1950’s and even today is considered outstanding marksmanship. Next, he could put the ball on the floor and drive the baseline and finish, including a reverse layup. *And, if you fouled him he converted 83 percent of his foul shots.* In one stretch, Barry converted 28 consecutive free throws. This is 58 years ago and these numbers would be outstanding today. Bottom line, Barry Leghorn had all the moves and all the shots performed with a grace and timing that allowed no wasted motion. As a senior in 1960 he had games of 39 and 41 points and averaged 22.4 points per game for the season. Barry, captain of the 1960 Bulkeley Team was selected First Team All-State and First Team-Capital District Conference. Bulkeley qualified for the state tournament for the third consecutive year.



Trinity College

The next stop for student-athlete Barry Leghorn is Trinity College in Hartford, CT. He was the first player to score over 1,000 points in a career and voted MVP in 1964. In 1981 Barry was inducted into the Trinity College Basketball Hall of Fame and in 2015 the New England Hall of Fame. For the uninformed, Trinity was founded in 1823. It is a private college with a high academic standing and reputation. The projected cost for 2017-18 is \$54,770. Take my word for it, if you can get admitted it is worth every penny because employers, graduate and professional schools are keenly aware of the rigorous preparation required of its students.

As an interesting aside, before Barry, there is Charlie Mazurek in 1950. In the fall of 1962 comes 6'1" Jim Belifiore. All matriculated at Trinity College. Each player set records during their time and broke scoring records of the previous player. Case in point, Jim Belifiore in 1966 exploded for 47 points in one game and this record has been equaled but not surpassed.

Conclusion

Let's put this debate to rest as to the greatest Bulldog of the decade of the 1950's. Carmen Perrone took his team to the finals of the Connecticut Tournament and the New England Tournament at Boston Garden in 1958. With all due respect to Carmen it has to be Barry Leghorn because of his height of 6' 3". He was a better rebounder and superior foul shooter. ***Carmen and Barry were equals in scoring but rebounding the ball is the deciding factor.*** The take away from this story is to practice hard and enjoy your chosen sport. And, make certain to put forth the same hard work in your classes so you can be labeled a student-athlete like Barry Leghorn.

The next debate is Wayne Leghorn, Barry's younger brother. Wayne played for Bulkeley in 1966 and averaged 24.2 points per game. He broke Barry's and Carmen's single game record with 44 points. Stay tuned because this is a story for another day.

About the Author

James A. Johnson is a Conard H. S. alum in West Hartford. He is an accomplished Trial Lawyer and concentrates on serious Personal Injury, Insurance Coverages under the Comprehensive General Liability policy, Entertainment & Sports Law, Intellectual Property and Federal Criminal Defense. Jim is an active member of the Massachusetts, Michigan, Texas and Federal Court Bars. He can be reached at www.JamesAJohnsonEsq.com or E-Mail at johnsonjajmf@hotmail.com