



THE CITY OF BROTHERLY LOVE

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***Dedicated to Sonny Hill who was inducted into the Naismith Memorial Hall of Fame on Sept. 5, 2008 as co-recipient of the Mannie Jackson Basketball Human Spirit Award for his many contributions to basketball including but not limited to the Baker League in Philadelphia.**

Philadelphia with the Delaware River on its east and the Schuylkill River running through part of it on the west is home to Independence Hall. This is where John Hancock, Thomas Jefferson, George Washington and Ben Franklin signed the Declaration of Independence. This great city is also famous for its delicious cheese steak and hoagie sandwiches and the famous Reading Terminal Farmers Market. Even Rocky, the mythical heavyweight champion got his start in Philadelphia. **However, this story is about high school basketball and its contribution to the National Basketball Association.**

When Ben Franklin was flying his kite, he knew that he was on to something. But, not in his wildest dreams or inventive genius could he have envisioned that his beloved city would produce human sky walkers with such interplanetary funkmanship. Nor could he have known that a high school would be named after him that produces outstanding basketball players. In 1951, one of its students was the **Public High School Player of the Year**; none other than former Temple University coach, **John Chaney**.

With respect to interplanetary funkmenhip, I am referring to **Wilt Chamberlain, Joe Anderson, Hank Gathers** and a few others. In today's basketball parlance, players with serious "ups" or "hops" in rebounding and shot blocking. When it comes to vertical leap, two players from nearby Chester, Pennsylvania are at the absolute top of the list. **Horace Walker** at 6' 3" in 1956 could almost jump out of the building. He went to Michigan State and terrorized the Big "10" and then to the NBA. Next is **Emerson Baynard** at 6' 4" in 1961 who was a whirling dervish player with all kinds of moves in the air. He was Dr." J" before Julius with a significantly better jump shot. When it comes to the best all-around three-sport star student/ athlete at Chester H. S. that distinction belongs to **Bo Ryan** former Head Basketball Coach at the University of Wisconsin.

Here are the best High School Basketeers in Philadelphia history from 1951-2008. *The selections are based on what they accomplished in high school and in their time, which is the true measure of their skill. Peers lionized them.*

Tom Gola	LaSalle H.S.	1951	NBA
John Chaney	Ben Franklin	1951	
Hal Lear	Overbrook	1952	
Guy Rogers	Northeast	1954	NBA (Deceased)
Wilt Chamberlain	Overbrook	1955	NBA (Deceased)
Jimmy (Tee) Parham	Northeast	1955	
Ray (Chink) Scott	West	1956	NBA
Walt Hazzard	Overbrook	1960	NBA (Deceased)
Larry Cannon	Lincoln	1965	ABA
Andre McCarter	Overbrook	1971	NBA
Jimmy Baker	Olney	1971	
Joe (Jellybean) Bryant	Bartram	1972	NBA
Gene (Tinkerbelle) Banks	West	1977	NBA
Jeffery Clark	Frankford	1977	
Clarence (Egie) Tillman	West	1978	
Jadeane Day	West	1981	
Rico Washington	Ben Franklin	1983	

Jerome (Pooh) Richardson	Ben Franklin	1985	NBA
Eric (Hank) Gathers	Dobbins Tech	1985	(Deceased)
Brian Shorter	Simon Gratz	1986	
Lionel (L-Train) Simmons	South	1986	NBA
Dawn Staley	Dobbins Tech	1988	WNBA
Aaron Mckie	Simon Gratz	1990	
Jason Lawson	Olney	1993	
Rasheed Wallace	Simon Gratz	1993	NBA
Maureen Costello	Nazareth Acad.	1994	
Rasual Butler	Roman Cath.	1998	NBA
Kyle Lowry	Cardinal Dough.	2004	NBA
Mary Kate McDade	Nazareth Acad.	2005	
Maurice Rice	Lutheran Acad.	2008	

The above players were selected among hundreds. Consider the following outstanding high school players (and others too numerous to mention) clearly in the mix, but not chosen, in the top 30, namely:

Sonny Hill	Northeast	1955	Central State U.
Joe Ryan	St Joseph	1955	
Wayne Hightower	Overbrook	1958	NBA
Ralph Heywood	Overbrook	1959	NBA
Wally Jones	Overbrook	1960	NBA
Matt Guokas, Jr	St. Joseph	1962	NBA
Earl (The Pearl) Monroe	Bartram	1962	NBA
Lewis (Black Magic) Lloyd	Overbrook	1977	NBA
Michael Brooks	West Catholic	1985	NBA
Bo Kimble	Dobbins Tech	1985	NBA

If any reader does not recognize many of the names in the 1950's - 1960's take my word for it, as a basketball cognoscente – these players were off the chain. A few players were sidetracked

for various reasons and fell through the asphalt cracks. Contemporaries might say: *“if he had only”*-----every time his name comes up. Most went on to college and many to the NBA, ABA and the Eastern League, the predecessor to the Continental Basketball Association. All of the above players attained legendary status in the **City of Brotherly Love** and beyond. I cannot tell which players wore P. F. Flyers, Keds, Converse (Chuck Taylor-“All-Star”---high top or low cut), Adidas, Puma, Nike Air Jordan’s or Reebok, but I can tell you *all* brought palms together.

To those deserving, but omitted, please accept my apology. This is not an exact science, but certainly, **a bona fide ALL TIME-ALL TIME, Philadelphia High School Roster**. In the final analysis, Grantland Rice, The Dean of Sports Journalist said it best, for all players, *“When the one Great Scorer comes to mark against your name, it matters not, if you won or lost but how you the played the game.”*

If you are wondering why Kobe Bryant of the NBA Lakers is not listed in this article it is because he played high school ball in Ardmore, PA. But, his father **Joe (Jellybean) Bryant** is mentioned herein.

The following is a short list of Philly’s **playground legends**:

Maurice Rice – broke Wilt Chamberlain’s high school scoring record with 2,206 points.

Ronald “Flip Murray –has serious “hops” & now played in the NBA.

Galen Baker – a North Philly playground legend.

Reggie Wells – a dunking machine.

Sad Eyes Watson – a guard who can fill it up.

Emmanuel “Vel” Davis –now played in the NBA.

Aron “AO” Owens – a North Philly playground legend.

Get this: **Micah Mason of Highlands H. S. in Natrona Heights, PA.** in 2011 scored 64 points on 17 of 19 from the floor and 23 of 24 from the foul line. This is the second highest scoring performance in the history of the WPIAL League.

Get this: Amir Hinton of Abington, PA, 6'5" guard now playing for Shaw Univ. in Raleigh, N. C. is averaging over 30 ppg., shooting 50 percent from the floor and 89 percent from the foul line. I suggest that the NBA scouts should keep an eye on Amir Hinton.

About the Author

James A. Johnson is a basketball cognoscente and an accomplished Trial Lawyer. Jim is an active member of the Massachusetts, Michigan, Texas and U.S. Supreme Court Bars. He concentrates on serious Personal Injury, Sports & Entertainment Law, Insurance Coverages and be reached at www.JamesAJohnsonEsq.com