

# WABASH VALLEY

P R O F I L E S

*A series of tributes to hometown heroes who have made a difference.*

## Clyde Lovellette

**T**hough he is enshrined in the National Basketball Hall of Fame (1988), the Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame (1982) and the Kansas Sports Hall of Fame (1998), some basketball experts insist that Clyde Edward Lovellette is underrated.



*Lovellette (holding basketball) in his freshman year at Garfield*

No one in college basketball history dominated the sport as completely as Lovellette did in 1951-52. Not only did his University of Kansas Jayhawks win the NCAA championship, but the 6-foot-9 Terre Haute product led the nation in scoring with a 28.4 average. No other player has been the nation's top scorer *and* a member of an NCAA championship team. Clyde also eclipsed the NCAA tournament scoring record by 58 points, scoring 141 points in four games. On March 22, 1952, he tallied 44 points against St. Louis University, a single-game tournament record, and added 33 points and 17 rebounds in the title game against St. John's. He was named NCAA Most Valuable Player and Helms Foundation Player of the Year. A two-time consensus All-America, Lovellette followed up those feats by leading the 1952 U.S. Olympic team to the gold medal in Helsinki, where he was equally dominating. Though selected by the Minneapolis Lakers April 26, 1952, in the first round of the NBA draft, he retained his amateur status to be eligible for the Olympics by playing with the Bartlesville (Okla.) Phillips 66 Oilers in the National Industrial Basketball League in 1952-53. He was the leading scorer and all-NIBL.

Lovellette joined the Lakers in 1953, becoming a starter when George Mikan retired in 1954. During his 11-year career, he scored 11,947 points (an average of 17 points per game); earned three championship rings while playing with the Lakers, Cincinnati Royals, St. Louis Hawks and Boston Celtics; and made three NBA all-star teams. He also accumulated nicknames: "Man Mountain," "Cloudburst Clyde" and "The Prolific Pachyderm," among others.

Born in Petersburg, Ind., on Sept. 29, 1929, Clyde moved to Terre Haute with his parents, John and Myrtle Lovellette, in 1932. His father was an engineer with the New York Central. The family first located at 2400 North 15th Street but later moved to 1458 Maple Avenue and finally to 2027 North Eighth Street. Clyde was 6-foot-4 and growing when esteemed Garfield basketball coach Willard Kehrt prescribed drills to improve his coordination and confidence. In 1946-47, Clyde's junior year, the Purple Eagles won 31 straight games before losing to Shelbyville in the IHSAA title game. Considered the nation's finest high school prospect in 1948, he was swayed from the recruiting efforts of Indiana University basketball coach Branch McCracken by Kansas coach Forrest "Phog" Allen.

Returning to Terre Haute after retiring from the professional ranks, Lovellette was a radio announcer and car salesman before being elected Vigo County sheriff as a Republican in 1966. Defeated for re-election in 1970, he thrived as a teacher, counselor, director of vocational rehabilitation and eighth grade basketball coach at White's Institute, a school for troubled youngsters in Wabash, Ind., from which he recently retired.

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