

WABASH VALLEY

P R O F I L E S

A series of tributes to hometown people and events that have shaped our history.

1936 Indiana State Olympic Trials Basketball Team



(Seated) Henry Stoffers, Jacob Hoffman, George St. Clair, James Carr, Don Eastabrooks, Robert Burton and Cletis Hinton; and (standing) Frank Miklozek, Verner Piety, John Miklozek, Herb Wey, Vinton Woodard, Harold Patterson and Coach Wally Marks.

Coach Wally Marks' 1935-36 Sycamores from Indiana State Teachers College gained national attention when, by invitation, they participated in the first national post-season collegiate basketball tournaments. The winning team would earn the right to name five players to represent the United States in the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, the first Games to feature the American sport of basketball. By earning the bid, the Sycamores joined a select group of college teams hand-picked by the Amateur Athletic Union, the U.S. governing organization.

The Olympic team members were selected from the best AAU teams and winners of the national collegiate tournament conducted in eight regional districts. DePaul and North-western were the only two seeded teams in District Five, comprised of Indiana, Illinois, Ohio and Michigan. ISTC and seven other schools — Miami of Ohio, Butler, Cincinnati, Central Normal (Danville, Ind.), Augustana (Ill.), Ball State and Wayne State (Mich.) — accepted invitations to compete for at-large berths in the district finals in Chicago. The Sycamores earned a bid by defeating every team on its schedule, including the 1935 national AAU champion Tulsa Diamond Oilers.

The Sycamores were led by co-captains John Miklozek and Jim Carr, both Terre Haute Wiley products. Don Eastabrooks of Aurora, Ill., Cletus Hinton of Pine Village, Ind., and Bob Burton of Graysville, were other starters. Jacob "Whitey" Hoffman and George St. Clair usually were the first reserves.

Led by the 6-foot-5 Miklozek, Indiana State and Central Normal advanced to the district finals at Chicago Stadium, DePaul's home court. The Sycamores were pitted against Coach Ray Meyer's Blue Demons. Despite vaulting to a 10-0 lead, maintaining a 16-10 halftime advantage and outscoring the hosts from the field, Marks' cagers lost on a long shot in the waning moments of the game, 29-28. Central Normal overwhelmed Northwestern but lost to DePaul in the title game, 41-36. The Blue Demons trounced the District Six champion Minnesota, to advance to the national finals at Madison Square Garden. The 1936 AAU champion, Universal Studios, won the overall New York tournament. Playing on an outdoor tennis court, the U.S. team easily defeated Canada in heavy rain to win the first Olympic gold medal in basketball.

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