

# WABASH VALLEY

P R O F I L E S

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

## Indiana State and the 1951 Pan American Games

**I**ndiana State University's basketball team officially begins its 1999-2000 home schedule Saturday at Hulman Center against traditional rival Ball State.

Fifty years ago this month, the 1949-50 Indiana State team launched what some alumni describe as the most successful basketball season in college history. That team won the National Association of Intercollegiate Basketball (NAIB) title; the only national basketball championship in school annals. The 1949-50 squad — consisting of Len Rzeszewski, Don McDonald, Dan Dimich, Bob Gilbert, Jim Powers, Bill Jagodzinski, Jim Berger, Jim Hans, Clarence Walker and Jerry Kunkel — disposed of Ball State, 69-48, enroute to compiling a 27-8 record. At the NAIB Tournament 32-team finals in Kansas City, the Sycamores waltzed by Southern Mississippi (65-59), Arkansas Tech (87-79), Baldwin-Wallace (61-39), Tampa (73-69) and East Central Oklahoma (61-57) to win the crown. All-America Rzeszewski was selected the tournament's most valuable player.

Coach John Longfellow and seven Sycamore players were invited to represent the United States in 1951 Pan American Games at Buenos Aires, Argentina. They returned with gold medals and a first-place trophy.

Since most members of the 1950 team graduated, Indiana State underclassman Bob Gilbert, a Gerstmeyer graduate, was the only member of the 1950 championship squad to play for the 1951 Pan American "Olympic" squad. Gilbert was joined by 1950-51 Sycamore teammates Roger Adkins, Dick Atha (who later played in the National Basketball Association), Gene Lambdin, Ed Longfellow, Tom Kern and Cliff Murray. Seven members of the Oakland (Calif.) Nuggets Amateur Athletic Union were also on the U.S. roster. The United States defeated national teams from Ecuador (74-32), Cuba (77-55), Panama (90-55) and Brazil (69-42) to reach the championship game against Argentina. The Americans defeated the hosts, 57-51, for first place.

There have been dramatic changes since 1951. Until recently, representing the U.S. in international competition was restricted to amateurs. The NAIB, founded exclusively as a national college basketball association, has changed its name to the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA). ISU basketball teams have participated in five association (NAIA and NCAA) championship games (1946, 1948, 1950, 1968 and 1979), a feat matched by few colleges. Coach Royce Waltman and his determined 1999-2000 Sycamores seek to build upon a proud tradition this season.



INDIANA STATE'S 1951 PAN AMERICAN GAMES REPRESENTATIVES— Cliff Murray, Tom Kern, Coach John Longfellow, Eddie Longfellow, Gene Lambdin, Bob Gilbert, Roger Adkins and Dick Atha.

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