

# The Classic Event of the Year, the Putnam County Tournament

## INTRODUCTION

Even though this book is devoted to BOYS BASKETBALL in Putnam County, it is impossible to leave out GIRLS BASKETBALL when discussing the Classic Event of the Year, the Putnam County Tournament.

The Putnam County Tournament, or the PCT, for boys' high school basketball existed from 1922-1964. Its purpose in 1922 was to determine which town had the best boys' basketball team in Putnam County. In 1924, its purpose was to determine which boys' teams could advance towards the state championship that was organized and run by the Ohio High School Athletic Association.

The PCT for girls' high school basketball existed from 1924-1940. The girls' tournament play stopped when the Putnam County Tournament ended since the OHSAA did not sponsor a state tournament for the girls.

There were many facets to the PCT that were unbelievable when compared to today's way of thinking. Can you believe the following facts?

A team could play its first two tournament games on its home floor. The girls' and boys' tournaments were at the same site on the same day. The coaches of the teams played a preliminary game to the finals to entertain the fans. It was common for only two officials to work twenty games in two days. It was possible for a team to play three games in one day. In one year, a pass for twenty games cost \$1. One tournament game ended in a tie with no winner declared?

## PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

In the forty-one-year history of the Putnam County Tournament, 18 high schools, at one time or another, had a boys or girls team participate.

The schools were as follows: Belmore, Blanchard, Columbus Grove, Continental, Crawfis College, Fort Jennings, Glandorf, Kalida, Leipsic, Miller City, Ottawa, Ottawa Public, Ottawa SPPS, Ottoville, Palmer, Pandora, Pandora-Gilboa and Vaughnsville.

## P.C. TOURNAMENT SITES

From 1922-1955, the PCT was held at three sites, the Ottawa Armory, the Fourth Street Gym in Ottawa and at Leipsic High School. Sites used from 1956-1964 were gyms at the following schools: Columbus Grove, Glandorf, Leipsic, Ottawa Public, Ottoville, Pandora-Gilboa and Delphos St. Johns.

The superintendents and coaches had to deal with many problems concerning sites over the years concerning the PCT. From 1924-1955, the major issue was so many games being played at one gym in a limited period of time.

The Armory and Fourth Street Gym were small gymnasiums compared to today's facilities. The floors were small, the seating was limited and there was minimal parking for the fans. These two gyms held less than a thousand fans at one time. Crowds of several hundred per session were recorded regularly during the 1920's, but the gyms were bursting at the seams for the big games. From 1922-1930, the PCT was still played in two days. The fans would stay from game to game and session to session. If the gym was full, fans would be allowed to enter as others left.

In 1925 the Putnam County Sentinel stated that "The series drew the largest crowds in Armory history. Every available bit of floor space was taken and hundreds stood during each session. Scores were refused admission to the final game because of lack of room to accommodate them."

In 1929 the Putnam County Gazette stated that "The crowd was so large that the playing floor had to be narrowed down to give standing room for the audience."

In 1931, the tournament was moved to Leipsic High School. This new gym, which could hold 1,600 people, was nearly twice the size of the previous sites. As a result, several changes quickly took place. In 1932, the tourney was moved to five days. This solved a major problem. Instead of playing two or three sessions in one day, only one would be played. Remember, a session still would have three or four games, but they would be played on separate days. Can you imagine eight Putnam County schools playing four games at one site, in one

## The Classic Event of the Year, the Putnam County Tournament

evening and EVERYONE getting in the gym at the same time?

Another change was concerned with time. In the earlier years, games were only fifty minutes apart. In 1932, they were scheduled one hour apart, in 1942, an hour and fifteen-minutes and, in 1948, an hour and a half.

Parking was a problem at the Leipsic site as mentioned in the Leipsic Free Press in 1947. It stated, "The city will handle the traffic and parking problems always a part of tournament crowds. Some streets will be closed to parking altogether to make a fire lane for residences behind the gym." In 1950, it stated "With the end of the County Basketball Tournament, the appearance of the residential streets in the vicinity of the Leipsic Gym is back to normal."

When the superintendents and coaches went to a multiple site format for the PCT, another problem developed concerning fairness and neutrality.

From 1956-1959, six sites, Columbus Grove, Glandorf, Leipsic, Ottawa Public, Ottoville and Pandora-Gilboa, were used for the tournament. The tournament committee stated that "No team will play on its home court and sites will be arranged to provide the least amount of travel for the competing schools."

In 1960, the championship and consolation games were moved to Delphos St. Johns for two reasons. It was a much larger gym than any of the current sites and the two games could be played on the same evening. The PCT's final two games were played in Delphos from 1960-1964. In 1960 the Sentinel reported that "The final two games Saturday drew a crowd of 2,300 people to St. John's gymnasium, the first time it was ever filled to capacity. It was also the biggest crowd ever to witness a PCT game." In 1964, it was reported that "A fire marshal's order has limited seating in the Delphos gym to 1,800 this year."

In 1961 and 1962, a controversial change was made. It was decided that a team would play on its home floor if it was a site for the first two rounds. The new changes were explained in the Putnam County Sentinel. "Putnam County gyms chosen are at Ottawa, Glandorf, Columbus Grove, Ottoville and

Pandora. As much as possible teams from these five towns will play at home during the first two rounds. A flip of a coin will decide the site should two teams, whose gyms both have been chosen as tournament sites, draw each other. The tournament committee will have the final decision on all sites. Semi-final games will be played on neutral courts. Playing games on the home courts is a departure from past years. The local superintendents voted the change this year in order to cut down on the travel involved for most of the teams."

A problem developed on determining sites in 1961 when Ottawa SPPS and Ottawa Public were scheduled on the same night. A coin flip put Ottawa SPPS at home against Vaughnsville. Ottawa Public and Kalida needed to play either at the Glandorf or Pandora-Gilboa site. Ottawa Public wanted to play in Glandorf which was just a mile away. However, the game was placed in Pandora-Gilboa's gym because Kalida, an overwhelming favorite, wanted to get a "practice game" in for their next opponent. This would be Pandora-Gilboa at Pandora-Gilboa's gym. The Sentinel reported that "Ottawa Public Coach Dave Kuhlman was very unhappy with the choice of gymnasiums for tonight's game between Ottawa Public and Kalida. Why should we be sent away over to Pandora when there is an open gym only two miles away right between Ottawa and Kalida"? Kuhlman asked. "I thought the idea of the entire setup this year was to avoid travel," he argued.

The tournament committee, of which Kalida Superintendent John Phillips was a member, admitted anticipating a Kalida victory and stated that this would give the team a chance to practice on the Pandora floor since they would have to play Pandora-Gilboa there again on Saturday.

Another controversy arose in 1962 when Ottawa defeated Ottoville at Ottoville on a Friday evening. The next night, Ottawa lost to Pandora-Gilboa, a bye team, on Pandora-Gilboa's floor. Continental's plight was similar. On Friday, it defeated Columbus Grove on Columbus Grove's floor. On Saturday, Continental lost to Glandorf, a bye team, on Glandorf's floor. Both teams played back-to-back on their opponent's home floor.

The 1963 and 1964 tournaments were changed again in regards to neutrality. Teams would not be permitted to play on their home court and a site

# The Classic Event of the Year, the Putnam County Tournament

would not be used if that school was playing somewhere else. The site superintendents stated that it was impossible to get workers if their team was playing away.

## P.C. TOURNAMENT DRAWINGS

When the superintendents knew which schools were participating in the PCT, a bracket was drawn up with dates and times. The schools drew a "number out of a hat" which corresponded with a number on the bracket. There was no particular order and records meant nothing. It was the luck of the draw.

For example, in 1931, Vaughnsville, with a record of 17-2, drew into the bottom bracket and defeated in order Ottoville, Ottawa SPPS and Leipsic whose records were 16-5, 10-5 and 10-8 respectively. Palmer, which was in the upper bracket with a record of 18-5 defeated Crawfis College, Columbus Grove and Pandora whose records were 1-11, 4-7 and 5-7 respectively. In the PCT finals, Vaughnsville defeated Palmer 37-17.

On Friday, February 22, 1924 at 6:00 p.m. the first drawing for the boys' and girls' basketball Putnam County Tournament, sponsored by the Ohio High School Athletic Association, took place with the County Superintendent in charge. Since all eight boys' teams were going to start play that evening, all were present at the Ottawa Armory. The girls' teams drew that night also, but they didn't play until Saturday with the first game starting at 7:00 p.m. Only the girls' representatives were at the drawing.

Since teams did not know when they were going to play until the drawings were completed, all the teams would be at the site prepared to play within the hour. Transportation and communication in the early 1920's was such that it would have been impossible to wait at home for the drawing information. The 1925 drawing was even more complicated because sixteen boys' and girls' teams were at the drawing.

In 1926, the drawing was moved to one week prior to the tournament. This solved three major problems. It allowed each school to send only the necessary representatives to the drawing and not the entire team. Secondly, the fans would know when their team was playing and could wait accordingly. Finally, the tournament site was able to handle the

teams gradually coming to the site rather than twenty teams showing up at the same time.

From 1927-1940, the drawings were held ten to fourteen days before the tournament with girls' basketball ending following the 1940 season. An indication to the importance and fanfare that the schools placed on the drawing was a quote from the Putnam County Gazette on February 4, 1932. It stated that on "Wednesday afternoon in the office of the County Superintendent the Coaches and Captains of the Putnam County high school teams met and held the drawings for the drawings for the final basketball classic of the year".

A team's record was first considered in the drawing of 1941 when seeding took place. The schools also decided to go to a double elimination tournament since the girls no longer would be participating in the PCT. Since there were always ten to twelve teams in the tournament, the four-bracket set up was perfect for seeding four teams. The coaches voted to determine which four schools would be seeded based on which schools had the best records. In 1941, Vaughnsville 18-3, Continental 19-5, Ottoville 13-5 and Columbus Grove 15-9 were seeded one through four respectively. They must have done it right because the PCT ended in the same order, Vaughnsville first, Continental second, Ottoville third and Columbus Grove fourth.

In 1952, Columbus Grove, 16-2 and Miller City, 18-1, were tied in the league with an 11-1 record. Before the drawing took place, Collins Stackhouse, Coach of Columbus Grove, appealed to the 'powers to be' to change the seeding format. He wanted the first and second seed to be put into opposite brackets so that they could not meet until the finals. Since this procedure had not been followed previously, his recommendation was not followed. Miller City and Columbus Grove drew into the bottom bracket and played each other in the semi-finals. Miller City won 32-30. Columbus Grove did advance out of the PCT by winning the consolation game. The two teams met again in the District Finals and CG won 26-25.

From 1953-1964, the seeds were predetermined by their position in the Putnam County League. Coaches would vote only to break league standing ties. If the coaches' vote was still tied, a coin flip would break the tie.

## The Classic Event of the Year, the Putnam County Tournament

Once the seeds were determined, they would draw into one of the brackets. They couldn't choose their placement in the brackets; the luck of the draw would take care of that. There seemed to be a pattern that the seeds would usually get the byes and that the first and second seeds were opposite of each other, but this did not happen every year. The remaining teams drew into the tournament according to their final standings in the league.

In 1955, two new rules for the seeding procedure were put in place. The four seeds would automatically get the four byes and the first and second seeds would be in opposite brackets. These rules were in effect for only one year. In 1956, the seeding procedure went back to its original format and stayed the same until the end of the PCT.

Here are a few pieces of trivia about the PCT. In the twenty-four years of seeding, 1941-1964, all four seeds moved to the final four spots four times, 1941, 1942, 1950 and 1964. In 1941, the top three teams advanced out of the PCT. This was the only time that the "seeders" were so accurate. The #1 seeded team won the PCT twelve times. Columbus Grove in 1944 was the only unseeded team to ever win the tournament.

### SINGLE vs DOUBLE ELIMINATION

The PCT had eight to thirteen teams involved from 1924-1964. If there were less than twelve teams, only two would advance and a single elimination tournament was run at the county level.

If there were twelve or more teams, three would advance and a partial, double elimination tournament was used. The two teams playing for the championship would automatically qualify and the two losers of the semi-finals would play a consolation game for the third spot.

In 1922, 1941 and 1942 a more involved double elimination format was used. The teams in the winner's bracket would keep playing until only two were left. The championship game would determine first and second place. When a team would lose in the tournament, it would be moved to the loser's bracket and continue play until only two were left. These two teams then would play for the third spot.

A session in the PCT included one or more games for the price of one ticket. Sessions were conducted in the mornings, afternoons and evenings of any day of the week except Sunday.

In 1922, the six-team tournament was played in two days and was considered one session. In 1924, the boys' and girls' tournament were played together and the games were alternately played on two days in three sessions, Friday evening and Saturday afternoon and evening. The 1925 tourney was also a two-day, three session affair.

In 1926 and 1927, the tournament was expanded to four sessions over two days. The games were scheduled in the afternoon and evening. Some teams were still playing two games in one day. Another session was added on Friday mornings in the years 1928-1931. This made a total of five sessions for twenty games in 1931.

In 1932, the Ohio High School Athletic Association declared that it was "illegal for girls' teams to play more than one game in any one week and those in charge of arrangements in Putnam County did not want to eliminate the girls from the tournament, so they arranged to spread the classic out over a period of time long enough to allow the girls to compete". As a result, the 1932 tournament was played over five days and six sessions with games scheduled one hour apart. It was spread out over two weekends, going from Friday, February 19 to Tuesday, March 1. The boy teams were still playing back-to-back days, but the two and three games in one day were history. The one negative result of spreading out the tournament in this fashion was that the championship game for the boys and girls was no longer played on the same night.

In 1934 the afternoon sessions were eliminated and all games were played in the evening. Thus, from 1934-1940, the tournaments consisted of six evening sessions over six days. This decision was based on fewer people attending the games in 1932 and 1933 due to the 'stretching out' of the tournament format. It was thought that more people would attend in the evening versus the afternoon.

Girls' basketball ended in Putnam County in 1940. This had a direct effect on the boys' tournament of 1941 and 1942. To absorb the loss of the girls' tournament, the boys went to a double elimination

## **The Classic Event of the Year, the Putnam County Tournament**

event over seven days and seven sessions. Another change with the sessions was that the games were now scheduled an hour and fifteen minutes apart versus the normal hour.

The tournament went back to a single elimination tournament in 1943. It was a five-day, five session tournament. This format stayed the same from 1943-1947. In 1948, the tournament was expanded to six days and six sessions.

In 1949, another good change took place. No longer would a team play on back-to-back days. The sessions were not increased, just spread out over the week instead of concentrating on the weekend. There would be seven evening sessions. This format was used from 1949-1954.

The 1955 tournament expanded to eight sessions so that the championship and consolation games could be played on separate evenings. This was also the last year that the PCT would be held at one site.

The PCT was dramatically changed in 1956 when multiple sites were used. With this change, the sessions were cut to four or five and only one session was held at any one site each evening. However, the practice of playing back-to-back days was started again and the championship and consolation games were at different sessions and sites. This format was used from 1956-1959.

The championship and consolation games were put back on the same day when these two games were moved to Delphos St. Johns from 1960-1964.

### **ADVANCEMENT AFTER THE PUTNAM COUNTY TOURNEY**

Whenever a team entered the PCT, it had two goals. It wanted to win the PCT or at least place second or third in order to qualify for the next level of tournament play. Thus, Vaughnsville, which placed first ten times, only advanced twelve times beyond the PCT. Leipsic, which placed first seven times, advanced seventeen times.

From 1924 to 1935, two or three teams advanced to the next level of tournament play. This was referred to as a Sectional or a District Tournament and all qualifiers would go to the same site. These different

sites were at Defiance, Lima, Bowling Green and Leipsic.

From 1936 to 1953, three teams advanced each year to Leipsic, Defiance, Napoleon or Anthony Wayne. All three qualifiers went to the same site.

In 1954, Putnam County would send three teams to two different District Tournament sites. Two teams went to the Anthony Wayne District, but the third team went to the Tiffin District. The qualifying team that was closest to the Tiffin District would go there and the other two teams would go to the Anthony Wayne District. This same procedure was used in 1955.

In 1956, each qualifier would go to one of three Sectional sites in Bluffton, Findlay and Ayersville. The teams would go to the Sectional site closest to their school. The two winners from the Sectionals would then advance to the District Tournament. This same procedure was used in 1957 and 1958. In 1958 however, the Sectional sites were Bluffton, Cory Rawson and Defiance.

In 1959, Putnam County was back to sending its three representatives to two sectional sites at Cory Rawson and Bluffton. One team would go to Cory Rawson and two to Bluffton. The Putnam County champion could choose which site it wanted to play in. If it chose Cory Rawson, the other two teams were forced into the Bluffton Sectional. If the champion chose the Bluffton Sectional, the second-place team had a choice. The third-place team took what was left. In 1959, Ottawa SPPS, the PCT champion, chose the Cory Rawson Sectional, forcing Miller City and Kalida into the Bluffton Sectional. This same procedure was used for four years, from 1959-1962.

In 1963 and 1964, the tournament winner did not have a choice of which sectional to go to. The teams would be assigned to the Bluffton or Findlay Sectional based on closeness by the Northwest District Athletic Board. This procedure of assigning teams to a sectional site is still done today.

# The Classic Event of the Year, the Putnam County Tournament

## OFFICIALS OF THE PUTNAM COUNTY TOURNEY

Officiating for basketball in the 1920's was quite different than in the 2000's. Only one official, Bert Mull worked the first eight games, four on Thursday and four on Friday, in the 1922 PCT. Mr. Mull had been the boys' basketball coach at Continental in 1921. Mr. Foulkes worked the final game of that year's tourney. And officials today think they have it rough!

From 1924-1954, the same two officials would work each game throughout any particular tourney. In 1929, H. I. Slocum and C. R. Lehman worked a twenty game, two-day tourney. It began on Friday at 9:30 a.m. and ended at 11:00 p.m. There were three games in the morning, five in the afternoon and five in the evening. On Saturday, there were seven games. These two-day tournaments went on for ten years from 1922-1931.

Relief to the officials came in 1932 when the seventeen-game tournament was stretched out over a ten-day period. This tournament never had more than four games on any day. This tournament format stayed the same from 1932-1954.

It is amazing how few different officials worked the PCT from 1922-1954. It was common to use the same officials for a two and three-year period. However, two officials, H. I. Slocum and Welby Widner, stand out. H. I. Slocum worked eight tournaments, 147 games, from 1925-1935 and Welby Widner did six tournaments, 75 games, from 1944-1952. They must have been highly respected by the coaches, fans and administrators of Putnam County to be rehired so many times.

One quotation from the Leipsic Free Press concerning the officials Mr. Walter C. Smith and Mr. Henry Davis of the 1947 tournament is as follows: "The officiating of this years' meet is regarded by many as superior to any in the 24 years of the tournament. Davis and Smith working the tourney have kept the games moving and well in hand all the way. The indication of their fine work can be heard on every side as there has been little booing and catcalls on decisions rendered."

From 1955-1964, the PCT had many changes. In 1955, the tournament went to an eight-day format. It

was decided that it was too much to ask just two officials to travel that much even though it was still at one site. Thus, four officials were hired for the twelve-game tourney. It was stipulated that they would not work more than one game a night and would switch partners each night. This change addressed two major problems for the officials. It limited the official's work load and the official's familiarization with the teams.

In 1956 another dramatic change to the tournament took place. The one site tournament format was ending. With multiple sites being used on the same evening, four more officials were hired for a total of eight. In 1957, ten officials were hired. In 1958 and 1959, more than 20 officials were hired each year. The lists of officials for 1960-1964 were not available.

It is ironic, that Mack Schaffer, one of the most recognized and well renowned officials in Ohio, who worked more than a half-dozen state tournaments and numerous Sectional and District games, worked only one game in the PCT. In 1932, he did the championship game for the girls with H. I. Slocum.

## TOURNAMENT WORKERS

It takes many people to run a tournament. The PCT was blessed to have several men help make this true. The tournament manager, timer, scorer and tournament committee members were the main jobs mentioned over and over in the county newspapers. The tournament manager of a tourney was usually the superintendent of the host school until multiple sites came into play in 1956. This job was then rotated from 1956-1964. Mr. T. I. Curtis, of Ottawa and A. E. Shively of Leipsic fulfilled this job nearly every year for the first twenty years of the tournament.

Another important job was keeping score and time. Mr. Earl J. Shaffer was an official timer from 1932-1946 at Leipsic. He also stepped in and filled the tournament manager's position in 1947 and 1948. In 1948, Mr. Shaffer unexpectedly died the first weekend of the tournament and Mr. Ken Bowersox stepped in and completed the job. Mr. Bob Kress and Mr. Earnest D. Radenbaugh, both from Leipsic, were timers for nine years also.

# The Classic Event of the Year, the Putnam County Tournament

Keeping score at the tourney was manned by basically three men, Mr. John R. White, Mr. John R. Laudick and Mr. Chester Haughn, all from Leipsic. These men scored the PCT from 1931-1955. What a model of consistency!

An interesting story concerning the scorekeepers of the 1929 PCT was in the Putnam County Sentinel. It seems that a point scored by Leipsic was marked on the scoreboard, but the scorebook didn't record it. Thus, a 12-12 tie game was changed to a 12-11 win by Vaughnsville. A quote from the Sentinel stated that "We do not think the men handling the scorebook made the mistake intentionally; it was simply on account of their lack of knowledge of the game and the ability to follow such fast and furious contests as were staged during the entire contest." Ironically, the scorers for that game were Reverend March and Superintendent B. I. Perry.

## TICKET PRICES

Tickets were sold to fans of basketball for the PCT in various ways. In 1922, a \$.50 ticket was good for the entire two-day, nine game tournament. An adult and child ticket cost the same. Tickets were usually provided in two different ways, individual session tickets or season tickets. A session ticket was good for all the games at a session. This could be from one to five games. A season ticket was good for all the sessions. The prices varied from year to year. A session ticket for children in 1924 was \$.35 and was still \$.35 in 1964. A session ticket for adults in 1924 was \$.50 and \$.75 in 1964. A season ticket for children in 1924 was \$.75 and an adult was \$1.00. Season tickets were no longer offered to the fans after 1937. When the PCT finals were moved to Delphos St. John's in 1960, the session prices were raised as follows: a child's ticket \$.50, an adult's ticket \$1.00 and a reserved seat \$1.25. It is amazing how little the cost of a ticket went up from 1922-1964.

Admitting people into the tournament site was an enormous problem as the crowds kept getting bigger and bigger. In the earlier years, there was not a large fan base for each school, but there were so many schools participating. Twenty to twenty-five passes were provided to each team for the tournament each year. When this number is multiplied by the number of teams (15-20) involved, there were possibly 300

to 500 passes available at each game plus the paid tickets.

A quote from the Leipsic Free Press in 1928 stated: "When the afternoon games were over, it was a rush to get a sandwich and to get back into line as near the Armory door as possible and to stand for two hours or more just to get a seat. There was more standing room than seats so many people stood during the three games."

In 1931, the Leipsic Free Press reported: "The season tickets for this year will be different from those issued in years past in that they will be in coupon form, with a coupon for each and every session. There will be no delay in entering the gym, as tickets will not be punched. All that is necessary is to present the coupon for the session named thereon. Another feature of this year's tournament will be that the gym will not be closed at any time and persons who wish to enter immediately after the finish of a session may do so and choose the seats they prefer, and there will be almost two thousand of them."

In the early 1950's, each school would receive more presale tickets than they were allowed to sell. For example, for a two-game session, a school would receive 250 adult and 150 student tickets, for a total of 400 tickets. From this number, a total of 300 tickets could be sold in any combination. If it were a one game session, a school would receive 450 adult and 250 student tickets, for a total of 700. From this number, a total of 600 tickets could be sold in any combination. This practice is still used today. Tickets that were unsold would be returned to the site and sold at the door.

Two entrances alleviated some of the congestion at the site. One entrance was for those purchasing tickets at the site. Today this is described as "purchasing at the door". Another entrance was for those who had a pass or a ticket which was purchased at each participating school. Today this is called a "presale ticket". Until 1959, the prices for door or presale tickets were the same, but the gates were opened earlier for the presale tickets and passes. After 1959, a child's ticket cost the same as an adult's ticket at the door. Increasing the price and early admittance helped encourage people to buy presale tickets and thus, alleviate the congestion.

# The Classic Event of the Year, the Putnam County Tournament

## RECEIPTS and ATTENDANCE

The number of people that attended the PCT over the years was difficult to determine. In 1922, \$385.25 was reported as the receipts of the first tournament. Since tickets were \$.50, the paid attendance was less than 800 plus the passes.

From 1924-1930, there were no published financial reports while the tourney was held at the Armory. The various county newspapers would make general comments about the crowds being very large, but no specific numbers. In 1925, the Putnam County Sentinel stated that "The series drew the largest crowds in Armory history. Every available bit of floor space was taken and hundreds stood during each session. Scores were refused admission to the final game because of lack of room to accommodate them." In 1929, the Putnam County Gazette stated that "The crowd was so large that the playing floor had to be narrowed down to give standing room for the audience."

The first recorded attendance for the PCT was in 1931 when 4,047 fans paid \$1,416.70. This figure did not include the hundreds of passes.

From 1938 to 1964, the paid attendance ranged from a low of 4,044 in 1943 to a high of 9,650 in 1954. The receipts ranged from a low of \$1,521.60 in 1940 to a high of \$5,843 in 1961. The passes at a session were never accurately counted so it is possible that 300 to 400 passes could have been at some sessions. From 1950-1955, an extra day or session was added to the tournament and this helped to increase the attendance. The actual number of people at a session was much higher than the paid attendance.

The most detailed report of a tournament was in 1946. The five-day, thirteen game event's paid attendance figures were as follows: (1) 1,460, (2) 1,571, (3) 1,760, (4) 1,755 and (5) 1,627. These 8,173 people, 3,284 students and 4,889 adults, paid \$4,082.80 to see the 1946 tournament.

## SPECIAL EVENTS

Special events were held at some of the PCT games to build up more interest and bring in more fans. In 1935, a 110 piece all county band played during the final session. Starting in 1929, foul shooting

contests were held for several years. For three years, from 1956-1958, a junior hi tournament was run as a preliminary game to the high school tournament. The junior high brackets were set up just like the high schools for the first round. In 1956, Leipsic's junior high and high school team made it to the finals. The junior high team lost to Columbus Grove 40-30 and the high school team won 73-69 over Continental. The most unusual special event, however, was in 1928 and 1930 when the coaches played a game amongst themselves. Newspaper articles do not state which coaches participated, but can you imagine that happening today.

## COACHES

It was very common for one man to coach the boys' and girls' team during the same year before 1941. The following men did both jobs: Melvin Harman at Crawfis College, Paul Stoodt at Palmer, Ralph Blauvelt at Leipsic, Earnest D. Radenbaugh at Leipsic, Merwin Hilty at Ottawa Public and Glen Hilty at Pandora. A coach would have his two teams playing back-to-back very often.

This situation had inherent problems such as running practices, preparing for games, getting the teams to and from the site, supervising the teams, etc.

In 1932, Vaughnsville's two teams and its coach Homer G. Jones, made it to the PCT finals. In this situation, however, Vaughnsville only played back-to-back games one time and that was early in the tournament. The boys' and girls' finals were played on separate nights that year.

In 1939, Leipsic's two teams and its coach Earnest D. Radenbaugh, made it to the PCT finals. Its situation was similar to Vaughnsville.

However, Palmer High School and Coach Paul Stoodt had a unique situation in the 1931 PCT. Palmer's two teams played back-to-back games three times. On Friday, February 27, the boys played at 8:00 p.m. and the girls at 9:00 pm. On Saturday, February 28, the boys played at 2:00 p.m. and the girls at 3:00 p.m. Later that same evening, the girls played for the championship at 8:30 p.m. and lost to Crawfis College 22-20. The boys played at 9:30 p.m. for the championship and lost to Vaughnsville 37-17. Can you imagine this happening today?



# **The Classic Event of the Year, the Putnam County Tournament**

## **GREAT MEMORIES!**

The PCT was a significant part of the storied history of Putnam County boys' and girls' basketball. It is difficult to grasp how it worked so smoothly or even survived for forty-one years, but remember, "times were so much simpler then". It is fun to imagine today's teams, fans, coaches and administrators going seventy-five years back in history and dealing with day-to-day occurrences of the 1940's. We are so spoiled today in comparison in such matters as neutrality, officials, ticket prices, coaching, transportation, etc.

Kalida's Dick Kortokrax, who has 890 boys' basketball wins in Ohio, played and coached in the PCT. He played for Ottoville when they won the PCT in 1951. He coached in the PCT at Fort Jennings in 1960 and 1961 and Ottoville from 1962-1964. He also played for the late Coach Louis Heckman, who coached at Ottoville from 1919-1951. These two men are a direct link to the beginning of basketball to the present date.