

Greatest Players in Putnam County

Who was the best boys' basketball player ever in Putnam County? Could the best players of the 1940's compete with the players of the 1990's? How would Kalida's Joe Verhoff have been defended with the six-foot lane? Would Greg Verhoff from Columbus Grove have scored another 100 points with the 3-point line? How could Miller City's Tyler Niese in 2004 be defended if the no contact rules of the 1970's would have been in effect? Would Ottawa-Glandorf's Tom Heckman in the 1960's been as effective with the all the body contact and hand checking of today?

There are four reasons why it is very difficult to compare players in different eras.

The first reason is that the facilities and equipment are quite different. The playing floors are longer, wider, firmer and uniform in size. The ceilings are higher and the lighting is much better. The three-second lane is twice as wide and the backboards are all glass and the same size. The ball is more uniform in size and texture. However, three items haven't changed. The rim is the same size, it is ten feet from the floor and the foul line is 15 feet from the backboard.

A second reason is the player himself. The high school athlete today is bigger, stronger and quicker than his predecessors. Genetics has something to do with this fact, but so does weight training and eating habits. It is a slow and gradual process, but irrefutable. For example, Bill Russell of the 1960's and Shaquille O'Neal are often compared. These were two of the best players at their position in their respective eras, but look at the differences in their bodies in terms of bulk and height. It is difficult to believe that Russell would be able to dominate O'Neal.

A third reason is how games are now officiated. The physical contact allowed today has made the scores of the game comparable to the 1950's. It is very difficult to drive to the basket or for post people to position themselves. Thus, the three-point line has encouraged many longer shots to be taken. The game of basketball from the late 1960's to the early 1990's is hardly recognizable today with all the contact.

The fourth reason are the many rule changes. The elimination of the jump ball after made field goals in 1937 changed the game dramatically. The game became faster without the interruption.

The widening of the three second lane in 1957 made it more difficult for the bigger players to 'hang around' the basket.

The tinkering with the rules pertaining to when foul shots are taken has had an effect. The rules have ranged from shooting after every foul to only shooting after so many have been committed. Miller City was involved in two extreme examples. In a Miller City/Continental game in 1951, Miller City shot 63 foul shots and Continental 37 for a total of 100 foul shots. In a Pandora-Gilboa/Miller City game in 2005, a total of 10 foul shots were taken.

I have selected the legendary players from the schools of Putnam County based on the following.

Any player who was named as the WBL Player of the Year, the PCL Player of the Year or scored at least 1,000 points was automatically picked.

Another important factor was if a player was honored by such groups as the PCL, WBL, BVC, NWC, District 8 Coach's Association, Newspapers of Northwestern Ohio and the All-Ohio selections.

Some players were good high school players, but really developed at the college level and a few at the professional level. These athletes were recognized also.

From 1925-1957, the county newspapers would list the all-county players at the end of the season for most of the years. Sometimes these would be called All-PCL players and sometimes All-PCT players. These would be selected by the coaches, the newspaper sport's editors and in earlier years, by "knowledgeable basketball fans".

Since the PCT ended in 1964, the PCL selection process took place shortly after the regular season and during the OHSAA tournament trail.

From 1958 to the present, the selection process for All-League Players, Player of the Year and Coach of the Year has been the same – coaches do the voting.

If you feel any players have been omitted from this list, please contact me and I will take a look at their qualifications.