

## HALL OF FAME TEAM AWARD



Bishop Guilfoyle won the 1966-67 Pennsylvania Catholic Interscholastic Athletic Association championship. Team members include, (from left): First row — Joe Landolfi, Bill Adams, Pat Shute, John Sonefeld, Tim Sigrist, Tom Turchetta. Middle row — Assistant coach Tony Labriola, Mark Hoover, Tim Muri, Bob Eger, Don Runk, Jeff Muller. Back row — Dave Oliver, Dick Steinbeiser, Thom Geishauer, head coach Bill Gaffey, school principal Father Francis Plummer, Bill Shover, managers Jim Georgiana and Durbin Hoffman.

# Bishop Guilfoyle trailblazers

## 1966-67 Marauders rallied school, city in winning PCIAA title

By Jim Lane

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State champions. Only a handful of area high school boys basketball teams can make that statement.

The 1966-67 Bishop Guilfoyle squad, which won the Pennsylvania Catholic Interscholastic Athletic Association Class A title, is being recognized for its achievement and will be inducted into the Blair County Sports Hall of Fame.

"It's really nice and a deserving thing," Bill Gaffey, the team's coach, said from his home in suburban Harrisburg.

After leaving Guilfoyle, Gaffey embarked on a coaching odyssey that spanned 39 years with stops in Auburn,

N.Y., Johnstown (Bishop McCort), his hometown of St. Marys and finally to Susquehanna Township in Harrisburg, which he led to the 1980 PIAA title and where he spent 27 years.

But in his storied career, his first job — BG — remains the most meaningful to Gaffey.

"Of all the teams I've coached," he said, "this was the most special."

That team included such names as Pat Shute and Billy Adams, Tim Sigrist and Tom Turchetta, John Sonefeld, Bob Eger and Joe Landolfi.

"They were special players and special people," Gaffey said.

Shute, now deceased, played basketball at St. Francis, Adams went

to Crowder Junior College and then Division I Southwest Missouri State. Landolfi later became a teammate of Julius Erving's at UMass while Sigrist and Turchetta played Division I football, Sigrist at Notre Dame and Turchetta at Miami.

The Marauders' signature moment came via a stunning upset over highly-favored Bishop Canevin in overtime in the state semifinals at the Pitt Fieldhouse after BG miraculously rallied from a four-point deficit (61-57) in the final 14 seconds to force overtime.

After Shute dribbled the length of the court and hit a jumper to pull Guilfoyle within two points with less than five seconds remaining, Sigrist stole the



**Bishop Guilfoyle's returning lettermen for the 1966-67 surround coach Bill Gaffey (tie, lower right) for a unique angle. Those pictured include, clockwise from Gaffey: Tim Sigrist, John Sonefelt, Bob Eger, Pat Shute, Bill Adams, Tom Turchetta and Joe Landolfi.**

ball at midcourt on an errant Canevin pass, took a couple of dribbles and made a 12-foot shot at the buzzer to send the game into overtime.

"It was a team of players who were underdogs and fighters, never giving up in the face of adversity and always believing we could make it happen," Sonefelt said. "That was evidenced by one of the most dramatic comebacks in the state championship semifinal game to launch the team into the state finals."

With Canevin leading in OT, 66-65, Guilfoyle was faced with going the length of the court in five seconds. Adams inbounded the ball to Sigrist, and the football quarterback threw a

35-foot pass to Shute, who was coming off a Landolfi pick underneath the basket.

Shute took two dribbles before hitting the game-winner, a seven-foot jumper, for a 67-66 win.

"Gaffey was as smooth as anybody I ever saw on the bench," assistant coach Tony Labriola said. "He never lost his cool. When we had to have a play, he'd make one up, and the kids believed it would work."

The Marauders defeated Shamokin Lourdes 61-57 in the state final game played at the Cambria County War Memorial Arena.

"The state championship game was almost anti-climatic," Gaffey said

after how BG beat Canevin, which was 23-1, in the semis.

The state championship was the first for an Altoona basketball team — BG or Altoona, boys or girls. It came in the highest of the three classifications of diocesan competition.

The 1970 Marauders, coached by Tom Lane, followed with another PCIAA title, and the BG and Altoona girls have combined to win 10 PIAA crowns — six by the Lady Marauders, four by the Lady Lions.

"The '67 championship was the beginning of something very special and great for the school and the city," Sonefelt said. "I contend these were the younger athletes who had a role-model team that demonstrated to them that, 'Yes, you can do it.'"

Tim Lambour, a standout on the '70 team who went on to play at Georgetown, said of the '66-67 Marauders, "They set the standard of what can be achieved. They showed the members of the 1970 team that being the best in the state was achievable."

Following the inaugural title, the Marauders were feted with several tributes, including a parade outside the Jaffa Mosque (now the Jaffa Shrine Center).

"It was overwhelming," Landolfi said. "It was such an emotionally draining experience that it took a little time for things to settle in of what we had done."

Though nearly 50 years have passed, the memory remains just as sweet, and the Hall of Fame provides icing on the cake.

"I look at the (Hall of Fame) selection as validation of all the things we forfeited as youths," Landolfi said. "To win a state championship and have it recognized is truly an honor because of what the Blair County Hall of Fame has done as a group over the years."

"It means a lot to me," Eger said. "It's thrilling to go into the Hall as the first boys team from Altoona. It's a lot of years later and, after awhile, you think it's never going to happen."

Gaffey became Guilfoyle's coach somewhat by accident.

"I was a bartender in State College at the time," he said. "The cook, at the same place, was supposed to get the BG job, but he took a job at

Beaver Falls instead. When he told me he wasn't taking the BG job, I called Father Plummer, who was principal at the time. He hired me, and the rest, as they say, is history."

Gaffey credited the late Big John Riley for forming a pep band at BG, which Gaffey said added a lot of interest and excitement at Marauder games and increased attendance.

During his time here, Gaffey also was instrumental in starting the BG-Altoona basketball series, which remains a local staple today.

The Marauders were noted for playing a tough schedule that included the likes of St. John's of Washington, D.C., Rice of New York City, Bishop Walsh of Cumberland and PIAA power Mercer, then coached by John Swogger.

"Playing teams like that made us better," Gaffey said.

Labriola said the state title was the culmination of a goal the team had set on the first day of practice that year.

"Gaffey used to use gloves and ankle weights and make the kids wear sweats," Labriola recalled. "At the

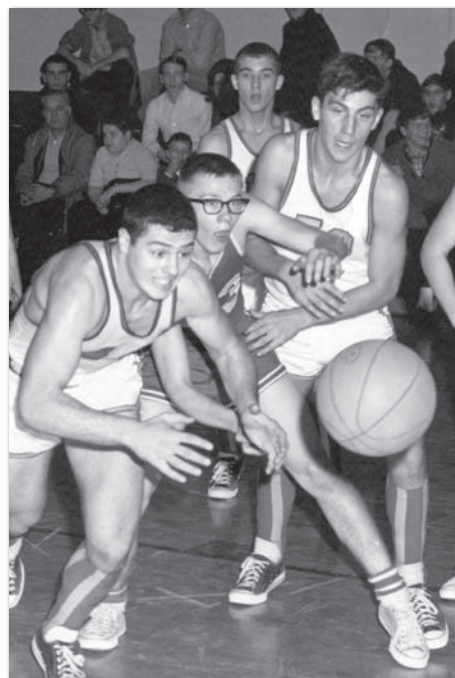


**BG's coaching staff included front row (from left): Len Zandy, head coach Bill Gaffey and Tony Labriola and (back row): Al Pacifico and John Riley.**

end of practice each day, we'd do defensive slides, and the kids started from opening day by chanting 'P-C-I ... Double A ... Bishop Guilfoyle all the

way,' while they were doing the slides.

"We (coaches) didn't tell them to do it. They just did in on their own, and it became the goal for the year."



**Tom Turchetta (top) scrambles for a loose ball. Left and right, respectively, are Joe Landolfi and Tim Sigrist. All three earned Division I scholarships — Turchetta (Miami) and Sigrist (Notre Dame) in football and Landolfi (Massachusetts) in basketball.**

