
Honoring and Preserving the Sports History of Chautauqua County



Chautauqua Sports Hall of Fame

15 West Third Street - Jamestown, NY 14701

August 2020

CHANGE OF DATE
CSHOF MEMBERS' PICNIC
(IF PERMITTED)



Monday, September 21
Lakewood Rod & Gun Club
social hour @5:00, dinner @ 6:00

FREE to CSHOF members and one guest

reservations required to Randy Anderson by September 15
randy28b@netsync.net or 716-640-6219

CSHOF GOLF TOURNAMENT CANCELED FOR 2020

The following story contains excerpts from an article written by Frank Hyde in the Jamestown Post-Journal of September 4, 1982.

Basketball in the 20s Was a Wild and Wooly Game

Back in the 1920s, the Jamestown American Legion basketball team was playing at Sharon, Pa. Yngve Adamson was a real speed-boy and a deadly shot for the Legion, presenting a problem for the Sharon team. Late in the game and with Yngve in possession and dribbling down the sideline, two Sharon players grabbed him and tossed him into the third row of the bleachers.

“Did the ref throw them out of the game,” this reporter asked Adamson.

“Heck no,” Yngve grinned. “He didn’t even call a foul!”

That was independent basketball in those days, rough and ready, the wild and wooly west of the cage game, no place for the timid of heart. Thankfully rules have changed, eliminating the “demolition derby” aspects of the game.



Reliving The Old Days

Yngve Adamson, left, Chet Carlson and Fred Smith discuss the days of strong independent basketball action in Jamestown and Southwestern New York.

Three old-timers, graduates of roundball’s “school of hard knocks” were chatting about those years recently. Chet Carlson, an official for many years; Adamson, shooting star of the American Legion team; and Fred Smith, who played for the local Crescents, relived some of those highlights.

They agreed the Legion and the Spirals were the top teams locally. They,

especially the Legion, traveled extensively, playing such semi-pro clubs as the Buffalo Germans, New York Knicks, New York Giants, Washington Senators, Buffalo Lincolns, Cleveland Rosenblooms, German Orioles and Rochester Centrals. Some of the foregoing teams were good enough to become members of the Eastern Basketball League when the professional circuit was formed.

The Legion played at the State Armory and the spirals at Jamestown High.

Lou Brown, who came along a little later, remarked, "They were good teams," and added, "but that's all they did, play ball."



Asked if those pioneering players had jobs, he replied, "Sure, but if they got a chance to play away from home and took a day off, they would only lose a couple of dollars of pay and they'd earn more than that by playing. And gasoline was only 13 cents a gallon."

Brown relates a story passed on to him by Yoskit Johnson, a player and official. Yoskit was in a game at an area high school when one player blew his top and kicked the ball through a window. Several volunteers rushed outside to retrieve it. They couldn't find it so the game had to be called off because it was the only ball they had. It illustrates the shoestring conditions that some of those players faced.



Brown (left), better known to later generations as an outstanding official, pointed out some of the many rule changes that have occurred. In the early days, a team's foul shooter was named before the game started. He shot all fouls for his team. After each score, the ball was returned for a center jump instead of being inbounded from under the basket. There was no time limit on bringing the ball up the court (now ten seconds), nor a restriction on time in the keyhole (now three seconds). There have been many other rule changes too numerous to outline here.

Chet Carlson pointed out that there were no numbers back then so a player who committed a foul was tapped on the shoulder for the benefit of the scorer. Carlson, who previously played for a few independent teams, became a well-used basketball official. He unveiled his "little black book" listing many of the games he worked. Some of the scores will get a snicker out of basketball moderns. In one high school game, Westfield defeated Mayville 16-6 in a match with just seven total fouls called. There were other scores listed: 10-8, 12-10, and 15-2 that illustrates the pace of those games long ago. One game that made headlines was Chautauqua's 46-5 victory over Ripley.

Carlson remembers that "most of the time I got \$5 for a game."

Fred Smith recalls playing with the Crescents at Frewsburg where a huge pot-bellied heating stove adorned the middle of the court. “There was a protective barrier around it and once the players got used to it being there, it wasn’t so bad.” The stove even figured into some of the plays that were formed – bounce the ball off the barrier, cut behind the stove, etc.

Smith, who saw them all, agreed the Spirals and Legion were the best teams around Jamestown. Adamson, he added, was the fastest man he ever saw. “No wonder he was called ‘Flash.’”

Adamson one time was running so fast he rammed his arm through a window at the Armory and was cut so badly he was rushed to the hospital for stitches.



Sports, like life, has its share of laughs, especially among athletes as they look back at their days in retrospect.

Lou Brown is a 2000 CSHOF inductee.

<https://www.chautauquasportshalloffame.org/loubrown.php>

Frank Hyde is a 1983 CSHOF inductee.

<https://www.chautauquasportshalloffame.org/frankhyde.php>