

### Excitement is the word

**By Larry Pritchett**

*Past PCHS activities director*

The NCAA tournament is off and running and some teams have already been sent home, since this is being written even before the “Play-In” games have been completed. Good chance that I will cover a little bit of the tournament in the next week, but this time since I was reading some history on the tournament, I thought maybe some time should be given to stars of college basketball through the years.

In a week or so more, there will be new heroes found as buzzer beater shots are made, controversy in games will pop up and before long the 2013 National Champions will be crowned.

As I look over the last few decades of NCAA basketball there are lots of names that could be entered in the slots reserved for the top 10, 15 or 50 players that have been outstanding. At the present time though with the rules as they are, there is more one and done players and it is hard to put them in a list of “best ever” players when they only play one season.

So most of the players that I remember are older players and a lot of them played four years at their school with their first year being a non-varsity year because freshmen were not eligible to play.

Guys that I remember are players like Elgin Baylor of Seattle University. Baylor went on to a Hall of Fame career in the pros, but he was special long before people like Michael Jordan.

Baylor, who is in his early 70s, invented hang time. He was an outstanding scorer. Being a player in his era meant that Baylor also suffered from segregation practices that were in effect at the time.

He grew up in the Washington D.C. area in a segregated school and universities never really heard of him. He ended up in a NAIA school in Idaho but transferred to Seattle University after his freshman year and then had to sit out a year because of transferring.

At Seattle, he led his teams to post season play in the NIT and the NCAA. In his first varsity game he scored 40 points. He led the nation in rebounding in his first season getting 20.3 per game.

In his second season, he was second in the nation in scoring hitting 32.5 per game. He had consecutive games of 60, 43, 42, 46, and 47 points. In 27 of the 54 games he played in college he hit for 30 points or more. With all this, I wasn't sure he would be in my top 10 players.

The list of players that came to mind for me was Lew Alcindor (Kareem), Bill Walton, Bill Russell, Christian Laettner, Oscar Robertson, Magic Johnson, Bill Bradley, Larry Bird, Jerry West, Austin Carr, Wilt Chamberlin, and Baylor. I know there are others, but this group had pretty good credentials.

Even with this group and when they played, not all of them stayed in school for four years.

Chamberlin only went two years to KU, Baylor left after his junior year, and Magic left early.

One of the advantages of being a seasoned vet is that I got to see some of the above play in person and all of them on TV.

My father got me to Manhattan to watch Chamberlin play. Don't know how he did it, but he did. I got to watch Oscar Robertson play in Wichita.

Bill Bradley I watched on TV when the NCAA had a consolation game and he had 58 points in the game against Wichita State and 16 points in a row at one time. All of the players mentioned had great careers, great seasons, outstanding moments.

Who can forget Christian Laettner's turn-around jumper to defeat Kentucky, no Kentucky fan has forgotten. Lewis Alcindor as he was known then won three National Championships and they changed the rules during his time to counteract some of his skills. They put into the rules a 'NO DUNK' rule. His Coach John Wooden always said that that rule made Alcindor a better player because he had to develop something else and with that came the "skyhook."

Austin Carr was another outstanding shooter. This guy went for 61, 52, and 45 during the 1970 NAAs.

I guess if I had to list them, it would go something like this and it would be something open to change, because I haven't listed guys like Gail Goodrich, Walt Hazzard, Joakim Noah, who all played on two National Championships, Goodrich and Hazzard at UCLA and Noah at Florida. There also is no Michael Jordan on this list, but here goes: Alcindor, Russell, Walton, Magic, Laettner, Robertson, West, Bird, Bradley, Carr.

Open to debate, you bet. I might change them the first chance I get but I know that if I started a team now and I had to pick one player, even though he isn't on this list, Wilt Chamberlin wouldn't be a bad pick.

The NCAA tournament is a really exciting time for basketball fans. There is excitement in almost every game. The big upsets, the Cinderella teams, all the things that go into making the word exciting mean, well, exciting.