

Norton man enjoys 50th reunion at Pittsburg State

By DICK BOYD

Many, many fond memories surfaced for Norton's Carl Neff and his former teammates during the 50th reunion of the best basketball team in Pittsburg State University history on the weekend of February 4-5 in Pittsburg.

Carl and all 10 teammates, the assistant coach and trainer were all present for the reunion and introduced at halftime of the Pittsburg State-Northwest Missouri State men's game in the John Lance Arena, named for the late coach of the Gorilla team which compiled an impressive 27-2 record en route to the third place finish in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics tournament in 1955-56.

The team members were introduced to a thundering applause by the fans. "We were introduced as the greatest Pittsburg State team ever," said Carl. "I guess we didn't realize we were that good when we were playing!"

Carl was a 6-foot-1-inch senior guard on the Gorilla team that year, after being a regular substitute the year before. He averaged 14.4 points per game for the season and 15.6 points per game in the five games played in the NAIA tournament in Kansas City. He was the second leading scorer on the team.

"It was really good to see everybody," said Carl. "I had only been back to Pittsburg once since graduation and that was for the dedication of the arena in our coach's name."

"It was good to know everyone was still alive and in pretty good condition, other than being a little heavier."

"We talked a lot about all the things that happened 50 years ago. We weren't a very big team but we didn't have any jealousy. We were

a bunch of gunners and went all out.

"Playing in the national tournament in Kansas City was a great experience. We had some hard games. Some of the teams had at least one night off but we played five straight games."

"Our coach was a good one; he knew a lot about basketball. In fact, he was on the committee that wrote some of the rules."

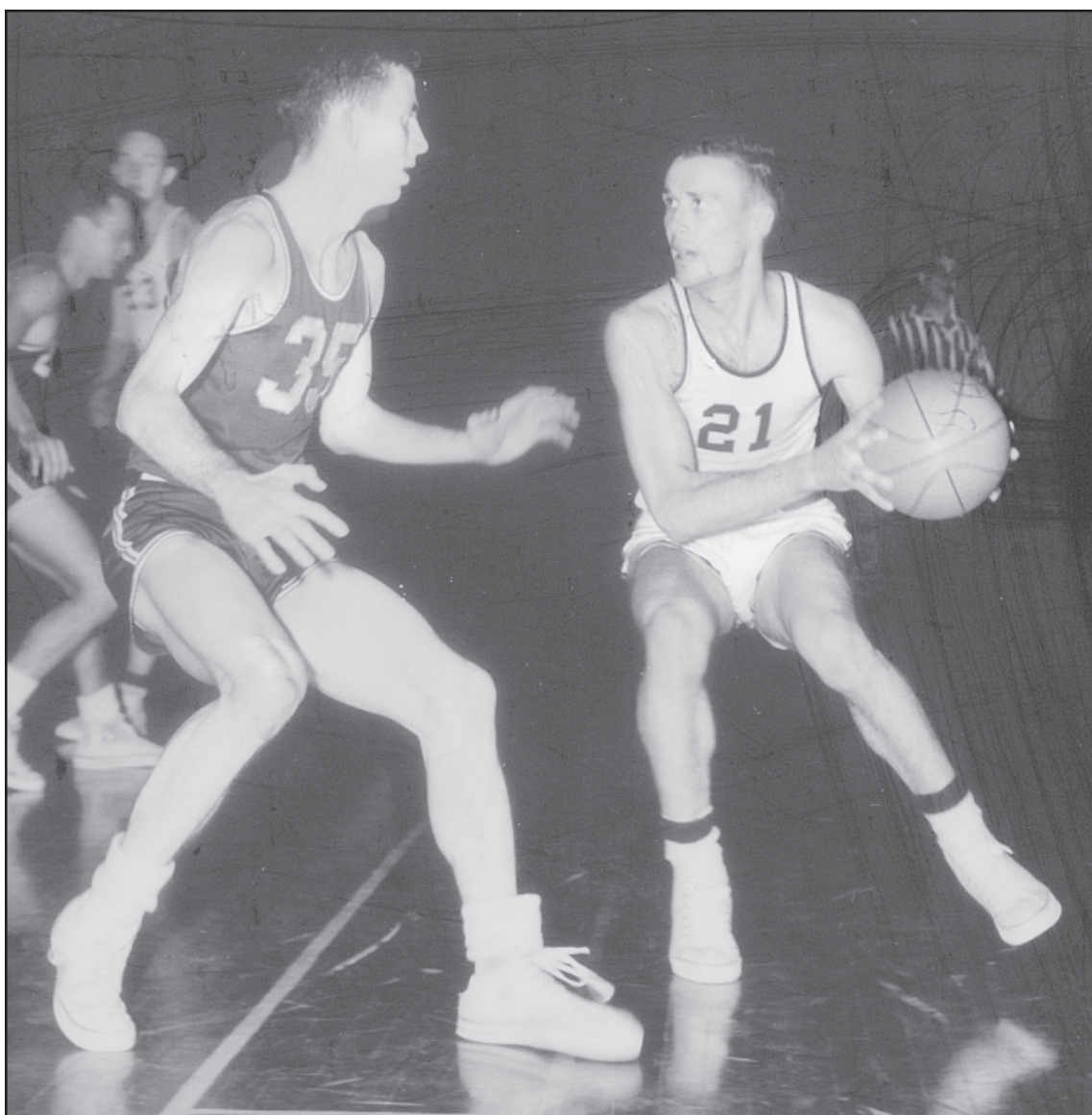
In the tenth game of the season, Carl hit a jump shot with 17 seconds left to defeat Southwest Missouri State 52-51 and win the Ottawa Invitational Tournament and preserve their undefeated record. Carl was named to the tournament first team and was also a first team All-Central Intercollegiate Conference selection at the end of the season.

After Carl scored 27 points in a 91-74 win over Washburn, the local newspaper said, "Neff gave the outstanding performance of the night and exhibited marvelous floorwork."

The Gorillas took a perfect 20-0 record into a game with Emporia State, a team they'd beaten by 16 points earlier in the season. Although Carl scored 19 points, they suffered their first loss of the season by an 87-83 score in a hard fought overtime game.

Pittsburg State got back on the winning trail in the Gorillas' next game. They traveled to Hays and defeated Fort Hays State 87-68. It was the first win at Fort Hays in nine years.

Next, the CIC champion Gorillas took their 21-1 record to Newton to play Bethel, the Kansas Conference champions, sporting a 22-2 mark. With Neff hitting 14 points, Pittsburg State won the first of a best-of-three playoff series by a 75-67 score.



Pittsburg State guard Carl Neff looks for an opening to pass or drive inside during one of the Gorillas' basketball games 50 years ago when they compiled a 27-2 record and placed third in the nation. Carl, now a businessman in Norton, was second high scorer on the team, the best in the school's history.

- Photo courtesy of Carl Neff

Neff was really on target in the second game versus Bethel as he hit 31 points and the Gorillas routed Bethel 103-79 to earn a berth in the NAIA Tournament in Kansas City.

Going into the tournament, the Gorillas were averaging 79.3

points per game and hitting 71.7 percent from the free throw line.

In the first round, they played Elon College, North Carolina. Neff hit 20 points and Pittsburg State rolled to a 77-55 victory. In the second round, they defeated Georgia Teachers College 99-72

and Neff tallied 15 points.

In the quarter-finals, they faced No. 1 seeded Western Illinois, who had set a tournament team scoring record with 118 points in the first round. It was another hard fought contest but Pittsburg State pulled an 83-76 upset. Despite playing most of the second half with four fouls, Neff was high scorer with 24 points.

Their semi-finals contest was against McNeese State, Louisiana, who had the top individual scorer in the nation. The Gorillas played a sub-par game and lost 78-72. Neff hit 17 points.

The Gorillas ended the season on a winning note by defeating Wheaton College 77-70 to place third in the 32-team national tournament and finish with a sterling 27-2 record, which has stood the

test of time as the best ever for a Pittsburg State basketball team in 96 years of intercollegiate competition.

GOOD BACKGROUND

Carl had a good athletic background prior to playing basketball for Pittsburg State. A native of Selden, he lived on a farm with his family and attended a one-room school house the first eight years of his education. He attended Oberlin High School, where he played basketball and track all four years and football two years before breaking a leg.

He became a starter in basketball late in his freshman season. The Red Devils qualified for the state tournament that year. Carl says they came close to making it to the state tournament his senior year but Norton defeated them.

After graduation, Carl played basketball for two years at Dodge City Community College, where he averaged 17.4 points per game.

Carl was also an outstanding javelin thrower in track. In addition to winning the state championship while in high school, he also won the national championship in the javelin throw while at Dodge City Community College.

After graduating from college, Carl was the head basketball and track coach at Fowler for two years and the head basketball, football and track coach at McDonald for two years. After that, he had a very successful four years as head basketball and track coach at Norton Community High School.

He then went into private business in 1964 when he became an agent for New York Life Insurance.

Carl and wife, Charolette, have three grown children, Sherry, Bonner Springs; Vicki Fisher and husband, Ron, and children Jessica and Christopher, Norton and Bob and wife, Julie, Norton and children Tyler, Norton and Nicki Ebert, Bonner Springs.

One of Carl's basketball teammates throughout his career was Edon Mrstik, a native of Jennings, who played with Carl in Oberlin, Dodge City and Pittsburg State. Following graduation, he became a teacher and later a school administrator and had not been back to Pittsburg State since receiving his master's degree in 1963. He lives in Fillmore, Calif.

Five Norton basketball players named Mid-Continent all-league

By DICK BOYD

Norton seniors Heath Vincent, Chelsea Cox, Karlie Jones and Whitney Newell and freshman Laura Lee Baird have been chosen for the Mid-Continent League All-League Basketball Team by vote of the league coaches.

BOYS TEAM

Vincent is a 6-feet-6-inch center who was named to the first team. He was leading scorer for the Blue Jays with a 13 points per game average. His shooting percentages were outstanding. Vincent hit 76.5 percent from the free throw line and 57.9 percent from the field.

He was also the leading shot blocker and second leading rebounder for the Norton quintet.

Vincent blocked a total of 46 opponent shots during the season and grabbed 140 rebounds for an average of 7 per contest.

GIRLS TEAM

Cox became a three-time all-league first team selection. The 6' center was leading scorer for Norton with 11.9 points per game. She hit an outstanding 53.7 percent of her field goal attempts. She was also leading rebounder for Norton with a 7.7 caroms per game average. She was also third high on the Lady Jay team with 38 steals.

Jones is a 5'5" guard who was also named all-league for the third year in a row. She was chosen for the third team as a sophomore, second team last year and first team this season.

Jones was second leading scorer for Norton with an 11 points per game average. She was the steals leader for the Lady Jays with 58 thefts and third high in rebounds with an average of 3.4 caroms per contest.

Newell received honorable mention. The 5'6" guard was the assists leader for Norton with a total of 106. She was also second high in steals with 53 thefts.

Baird also received honorable mention. She was third high scorer with an average of 7.8 points per contest. She was the most accurate free throw shooter for the Lady Jays with an average of 68.4 percent.

Also named to the boys first team along with Vincent were: Nathan Locke, 6'5" Trego senior; Curt Welter, 5'11" Hill City senior; Tyler Ummel, 6'3" Trego senior; Justin Casey, 6' Plainville senior and Taylor Dix, 5'8" Plainville senior.

It was the third year for Casey's first team selection. Locke was also a first team choice last season. Ummel received honorable mention last year.

On the second team were Willie Keesece, 6'2" Phillipsburg junior; Taylor Jones, 6' Smith Center senior; Braden Wilson, 6'3" Smith Center sophomore; Brock McDowell, 6' Plainville senior; Jarrett Abell, 5'8" Phillipsburg junior. Jones received honorable mention last season.

Receiving honorable mention were: Tane Brown, 6'3" Hill City junior; Daren Haas, 5'10" Ellis senior; Leneal Weiser, 6' Stockton junior; Joe Windscheffel, 6'2" Smith Center sophomore and Luke Kriley, 6'2" Stockton junior.

Named to the girls Mid-Continent League first team with Cox and Jones were Jannica Schultze, 5'5" Osborne junior; Kristin Waldschmidt, 5'5" Ellis junior



Heath Vincent



Chelsea Cox



Karlie Jones



Whitney Newell



Laura Baird

and Whitney Taylor, 5'8" Ellis freshman.

Schultze was chosen to the second team last year.

Chosen for the second team were: Melanie Bilby, 6' Phillipsburg sophomore; Danielle Pfeifer, 5'8" Ellis sophomore; Demi French, 5'3" Osborne sophomore; Jamie Alexander, 5'7" Hill City junior and Elizabeth Schoenberger, 5'7" Trego freshman.

Pfeifer was also selected on the second team last year.

Receiving honorable mention along with Newell and Baird were: REXANNE SCHILOWSKY, 5'10" Phillipsburg junior; Blake

Nichols, 5'9" Osborne freshman and Stacy Rachow, 5'10" Phillipsburg senior.

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Norton County Weather - March 14th - 18th

Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
55/26	60/24	53/26	58/28	50/35

Normal High: 55
Normal Low: 27
Sunrise: 6:48 to 6:55 A.M.
Sunset: 6:46 to 6:52 P.M.

It rained or snowed just about everywhere in the Country but here this weekend. Severe weather in eastern Kansas reminded us that spring is just around the corner. When will we finally get our fair share of moisture? Most likely not this week as conditions remain dry and no big weather makers approach the area. However, if current computer models are correct a long wave trough will shift from the west Coast over the High Plains significantly increasing chances for rain and/or snow Saturday, Sunday and Monday. Again let's keep our fingers crossed.

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