

Elvin Sweeten: His game was as sweet as his name

This is the first in a series of featured articles about the five people selected for the first class of the Coalgate Athletic Hall of Fame. The stories will run over the next few weeks in leading up to the Hall of Fame Banquet on May 24, 2014.

Elvin Sweeten was an outstanding basketball player for Coalgate High School, graduating in 1960. Elvin led the Wildcats to the state tournament his junior year. The team finished with a record of 30-2 after defeating Taft in the opener before losing to Waynoka in the semi-finals.

The following is an interview that Elvin gave after his selection to the first class of inductees in the Coalgate Athletic Hall of Fame.

“I was overwhelmed at being named to the first class and very appreciative of this honor. There are so many tremendous athletes that have come through Coalgate that I am truly honored. One of my fondest memories of playing at Coalgate was defeating Bokchito in the Regional Finals my junior year to advance to the state tournament.”

Elvin played for Dr. Joe Leone at Coalgate and for the legendary Bloomer Sullivan at Southeastern Oklahoma State University. Here are a couple of tidbits Elvin had to say about playing for each man.

“I remember my freshman year that Coach Leone told me on a Friday that if I couldn’t shoot a left hand layup that he wouldn’t put me on the varsity team. So I practiced all weekend, and by Monday’s practice I could do it and I made the team. Coach Leone was a great coach and his leadership was responsible for my development as a player.”

After high school, Elvin knew he wanted to play college ball and the opportunity came about at Southeastern.

“There were lots

of interesting stories about playing for Coach Sullivan. I will always remember that on road trips we didn’t eat at restaurants, but had sack lunches made up for us. The problem was that whenever we ate we had to get out of the

cars and eat outside no matter how cold it was.

“Another story was that in 1962 we got to play an exhibition game where they used the three point shot as an experiment. However, Coach Sullivan didn’t like the idea

so he told us that we couldn’t shoot the trey in the game. Well, I was open at the top of the circle and had forgotten about what he had said and let fly as he was yelling no, no, no. I am just glad that I made that shot because I would have definitely suffered some consequences for taking that shot.”

Here are some quotes from former Wildcat teammates about playing on the same teams with Elvin and from Coach Leone.

Dr. Joe Leone: “He was a prince of a guy to coach and was a tremendous player who led us to

the state tournament in 1959. I can remember taking Elvin home after practice many times and I was able to get to know him even better through those conversations and he was just such a humble young man.”

Lester Berryhill: “Everyone remembers what an outstanding player Elvin was; and he **was** a great player. However, what I recall about him is what a great leader he was. My freshman year he was always giving me advice and he did that for all the younger guys. I am thrilled for the honor that Elvin is going into the Hall of Fame.”

Floyd Campbell: “Elvin was a very unselfish player. He was not a ball hog in any way and still was our leading scorer.”

John Linton (teammate and former Coalgate Superintendent): “Just a very talented athlete and a very good student. He was probably the smartest player not just in basketball, but in the classroom as well. Elvin is very deserving of this honor.”

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Elvin Sweeten

Elvin Sweeten from front page

Coaching Career

Elvin Sweeten coached basketball a total of 30 years, producing 24 girls teams and five boys teams (plus many junior high girls and boys teams).

His high school girls record was 422 wins against only 143 losses, a 75 percent winning average. His girls teams made three state tournament appearances, the first one in 1979 at Dickson, followed by back-to-back trips at Healdton in 1982 and 1983. It was the first state tournament appearance for both schools.

Sweeten won 12 conference and 15 district championships and his teams made 15 regional and 12 area tournament appearances. His team made the finals of the ever-tough Carter County Tournament eight times and won it on four occasions. Sweeten ended his career with eight successful campaigns at Plainview. His 20 trips to the Carter County Tournament were more than any other coach in the 40-year history of the tournament.

He was honored by his coaching peers by being named conference coach of the year 12 times. He also received the Coaches Achievement Award from Northwestern Mutual Insurance and the Ramada Inn’s 400th Victory Club.

Further coaching honors came when he was selected to coach the West in the Oklahoma All-State games in 1983 and in the Oklahoma-Iowa series in 1988.

Along the way, he coached one All-American high school girls player, four All-Staters and six alternates in girls basketball.

A veteran of the Oklahoma Girls Basketball Coaches Association, Sweeten served 16 years as a director for the organization.

At one time known as the “Scribe of Oklahoma Girls Basketball” for his writing, Sweeten had articles published in the Athletic Journal in ’72 and ’74.

Sweeten wasn’t just a basketball coach.

Before retiring, he coached three state champion cross country teams (two in Oklahoma, one in New Mexico) and was coach of seven consecutive girls state champion track and field teams at Plainview (1988-1994), producing numerous All-Staters. He was named Coach of the Year in Class 2A in 1988 and 1989 and Coach of the Year in Class 3A in 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993 and 1994.

Elvin was inducted into the Oklahoma Athletic Hall of Fame in 1997.

College Career

1960-1964–Played collegiate basketball at Southeastern Oklahoma State College in Durant. Southeastern placed third in the NAIA National Tournament in 1962.

1963-1964 – Made the Oklahoma Collegiate All Conference Team.

1964 –Made the All Tournament Team at Pan American College, Edinburg, Texas.

1964 – Made the All Tournament Team at Lake Charles College Christmas Tournament, Lake Charles, Louisiana.

Plaintiffs,
vs.
The known and unknown heirs, beneficiaries, administrators, executors, devisees, trustees, legatees, successors and assigns, immediate and remote of EUGENE MIDDLETON, et. al.,
Defendants.

NOTICE BY PUBLICATION
THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA TO: The known and unknown heirs, beneficiaries, administrators, executors, devisees, trustees, legatees, successors and assigns, immediate and remote of EUGENE MIDDLETON, LINNIE HAMER, R. P. RASMUSSEN and ANTIONETTE RASMUSSEN, all deceased, GREETINGS:
You are hereby notified that on the 25th day of February, 2014, Plaintiffs, SIMONE VAUGHAN and DUSTIN HAMER filed suit against you in the District Court of Coal County, Oklahoma, being Suit No. CV-2014-6 to quiet title to the following described property in Coal County, Oklahoma, to-wit:
Minerals in and under Lot Seven (7) of Townsite Addition Number Six (6), Coal County, Oklahoma and Lot 9 of Block 119 in the City of Coalgate, Oklahoma, and to obtain judgment establishing that Plaintiffs are the owners of said mineral interest, all as more particularly set out in Plaintiffs' petition.
NOW, THEREFORE, you and each of you are further notified that you must answer the petition filed herein on or before the 10th day of April, 2014, or said petition will be taken as true and judgment rendered accordingly in favor of Plaintiffs and against you, and establishing that Plaintiffs are the owners of the mineral interest all as more particularly set out in their petition.

Rachel Nix, Court Clerk
Cheryl Hobgood
Deputy

Trae Gray, OBA #21196
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EDWIN NEAL BURRIS,
Plaintiff,
vs.
The known and unknown heirs, beneficiaries, administrators, executors, devisees, trustees, legatees, successors and assigns, immediate and remote of SEBENA C. BURRIS, deceased,
Defendants.

NOTICE BY PUBLICATION
THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA TO: The known and unknown heirs, beneficiaries, administrators, executors, devisees, legatees, successors and assigns, immediate and remote of SEBENA C. BURRIS, deceased, GREETINGS:
You are hereby notified that on the 25th day of February, 2014, Plaintiff EDWIN NEAL BURRIS filed suit against you in the District Court of Coal County, Oklahoma, being Suit No. CV-2014-5 to quiet title to the following described property in Coal County, Oklahoma, to-wit:
A tract of land in Section 32, Township 3 North, Range 9 East, Coal County, Oklahoma, more particularly described as follows: Beginning at a point 1771.3 feet North of the approximate Southwest corner of said Section 32, thence East a distance of 208.71 feet; thence North a distance of 208.71 feet; thence West a distance of 208.71 feet; thence South a distance of 208.71 feet to the point of beginning, and to obtain judgment establishing that Plaintiff is the owner of said property, all as more particularly set out in Plaintiff's petition.