

TOP STORY

Into the Hall: Robin Guerriere

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Kelly Tunney | Herald Standard

Robin Guerriere (second from left) poses with members of the 1993-96 Geibel Catholic girls' basketball teams which won four consecutive WPIAL championships and was inducted into the Fayette County Sports Hall of Fame in 2015. Guerriere is part of this year's Fayette County Sports Hall of Fame Class of 2022 as an individual.

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Robin Guerriere Amend is the true definition of a champion when it comes to Fayette County sports.

A 5-foot-5 tenacious guard, Guerriere was part of an amazing run of championship teams during her career as a basketball player.

Starting in eighth grade at St. John's and through her four-year careers at both Geibel Catholic and St. Francis University of Loretto, Guerriere was part of an astounding nine consecutive championship teams.

Guerriere scored over 1,400 points at Geibel as a four-year starter whose team won a WPIAL title each season. At St. Francis she was a four-year letterman on a team that claimed four straight Northeast Conference crowns to earn an automatic bid into the NCAA basketball tournament each season.

That resume resulted in Guerriere being voted in as part of the 2022 class of the Fayette County Sports Hall of Fame.

Inductees and representatives will be recognized at the Hall of Fame Golf Outing/Luncheon/Social starting at 9 a.m. on June 17 at Pleasant Valley Golf Club in Connellsville.

"It's a great honor. Never in a million years did I expect to be here. I'm thankful for all those that voted for me," said Guerriere when she spoke of her induction on George Von Benko's Sports Line Talk Show on WMBS Radio.

"When we have these dominant teams that I was lucky enough to be a part of it's something special that your individual contribution to that was noticed by others. A lot of hard work, a lot of blood, sweat and tears, a lot of surgeries ... it kind of puts it in a package where it was all worth it.

"And it really makes me miss what we had."

Guerriere is actually already in the Fayette Hall of Fame as her Geibel squads from 1993 to 1996 were inducted as a team entry in 2015.

She gave credit to her Lady Gators teammates for helping her succeed.

“Those girls helped form us,” Guerriere said. “They pushed us harder every day. It was just an absolute joy to play with those girls and that caliber of talent. We just naturally all came together. It was a fun time. It was an exiting time. Memories that I absolutely miss.”

Guerriere pointed out that her run of championship victories could have been 10.

“Honestly, if you go back to seventh grade we made a state appearance,” Guerriere said. “Just unfortunate we didn’t win that year. Erin Rupp was on that team, Alison Watt, Tara Cochrane. We just grew up together, we practiced hard together.

“When we all went to Geibel, got to join up with Meggan Seighman that played at St. John Byzantine. Then Jen Surlas comes in from Conn Area.”

With so many talented players on the same team, one might think there would be problems sharing the basketball but that was far from the case with the Lady Gators.

“We played against each other a lot, we played with each other a lot and kind of cultivated this team of unselfishness, really,” Guerriere said. “Whoever was hot that day, that’s who we fed. We just really had a lot of fun playing.”

The man running the show was George Bortz and Guerriere recalled him fondly.

“It was a great experience,” said Guerriere, adding that playing for Bortz was “tough, very tough, demanding, but in a way that he knew what you were capable of and wouldn’t accept less. And that’s what made us the team that we were.

“There were no shortcuts. No days off. It didn’t matter if there was a blizzard, you figured out how to get to practice. If you couldn’t, he’d meet you and drive you there himself. And he let us shave his head.”

Guerriere recalled one season when Bortz made that deal with his players if they could win a game at Greensburg Central Catholic, another girls basketball power at that time.

“The motivation was if you beat Greensburg Central at Greensburg Central you can shave my head,” Guerriere said.

The Lady Gators did win, and ... “He absolutely let us do that.”

Guerriere spoke of the popularity of not only the girls team at Geibel but the boys team under coach Ken Misiak during her time there.

“Geibel is a smaller venue but our fans traveled,” Guerrier explained. “We would pack the stands at Frazier, pack the stands at Monessen. Boy-girl doubleheaders. It was a lot of fun. We both supported each other.

“It was a really great time to be at Geibel.”

Guerriere recalled going up against one the WPIAL’s all-time greatest girls basketball players in Monessen’s Gina Naccarato in a feisty battle.

“We did, all in good fun,” Guerriere said. “She was a competitor, fantastic player, fantastic scorer. I challenged myself to be more of a defensively player. I took a lot of pride with my smaller size in trying to make a difference on the court.

“She was a challenge and I accepted the challenge and the fans at Geibel that day got to experience that. I think it was actually in the paper listed as a ‘wrestling match at halfcourt’ but we never actually were on the ground.”

After graduating from Geibel, which compiled a 106-9 record in her time there, Guerriere moved on to St. Francis.

“I visited the school, it was just the perfect setting,” Guerriere recalled. “A lot like Geibel, smaller school, the atmosphere was pretty much like where I grew up in the mountains.

“I just fell in love with the campus and walked in at a time where the point guard that was on the team previously was graduating. They were in a rebuilding year. They actually brought in six freshmen. It was a place where I thought I had a chance to make a difference.”

She did just that.

“We were in a 12-team conference at that time. We were predicted to finish in the middle of the pack” Guerriere recalled. “We didn’t accept that. We really fought hard and the style of play was extremely similar to Geibel. So we just took off running and had a great four years.”

Guerriere went on to become an assistant coach at West Liberty State College for two years. Today she is part of the Fayette County Sports Hall of Fame Board of Directors.

(George Von Benko contributed to this story.)