

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH AT GREENSBURG CONFERENCE HISTORY

Following a four-game experimental exhibition season in 1968-1969, the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg basketball program began a long involvement as members of collegiate organizations and conferences. The teams from 1969-1970 through 1973-1974 were participating members of the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA). These teams played at the two-year level and were coached by John Hunter. The 1972 team had a season record of 17-5. After 1974, the program had disbanded.

In 1995-1996 the school brought back an experimental team and with its success a four-year program began. Coach Matt Furjanic led the program to 61 wins through the 1999-2000 season competing in the NCAA Division III, the Eastern College Athletic Association (ECAC), and in the Allegheny Mountain Collegiate Conference (AMCC).

A member of the AMCC through the 2016-2017 season, the Pitt-Greensburg Bobcats competed against colleges such as LaRoche, Waynesburg, Thiel, Hilbert, Frostburg State, and the Pitt and Penn State branch campuses.

The 2015-2016 team under Coach Sean Strickland won the AMCC Conference and was the first Pitt-Greensburg team to advance to the NCAA Division III National Tournament.



Best of luck to all future Bobcat teams in conference and tournament competition.

YEAR ONE

This brings us to the end of our first year in existence. Just a little more than a year ago there were those who doubted we could get the Men's Basketball Alumni Club formed, but here we are today. And, it's just the beginning of what we hope to develop! This will be our last newsletter until the fall. We hope you have enjoyed the articles we have brought to you, and we hope you will be looking forward to next year.

Here is a brief preview ... For the longest time when you thought of Pitt-Greensburg basketball, you thought of Coach David Washburn. Coach Washburn is no longer on the sidelines, but you do see him from time to time in the stands. We want to update you on just what he is up to in the next edition.

Also, how many of you remember Captain Donald Ficco? Let me give you a little hint. If you practiced at the National Guard Armory in Greensburg that name should be familiar to you.

MBAC will once again be a part of Pitt-Greensburg's Blue and Gold Week: Homecoming celebration. We'll give you a preview of what the Alumni Association has planned. Mark your calendars for October 20-21. If you're a golfer, the festivities will kick off on October 13.

What we would really like to know are some things that YOU, the basketball alumnus, would like to have included in our next edition. If you have anything you would like to see, get in touch with us on our Facebook page or send us an email at harryb@zoominternet.net.



441 LINDEN STREET, ALLENTOWN, PA 18102

SPRING 2017 NEWSLETTER

Where Are You?

We have been looking for you for quite a while now. We have tried to call, text, email, and message you. It seems like ages since we've seen you. We were just talking about you the other day, remembering back in the day when you used to play, how good you were. We remember that shot you had, it was money, mark it up, nothin' but net. That's why we called you "Swish". Do you still play at all? I know it's been a while but the way you used to run and jump. Jump? That's not the word. You seemed to defy gravity, I never saw anyone float through the air like that, as if you were not attached to the earth. Wow, I miss those days.

I found a team picture while I was going through the attic the other day. I can't believe all the hair we all had then. I wear mine shorter now. Well, what I have is shorter anyhow. Oh boy, I also found my old jersey. It's funny how all that time in the attic shrunk my jersey, it is not even close to fitting. Must be the heat.

By the way, have you seen any of the other guys from the team lately, I haven't. It's hard to believe we all lost track, we used to be as close as brothers back then. How about you, are you married, have kids? There is so much to get caught up on. You know we really should get together again, relive the good old days as they say. It would be great to see every one again, maybe we should look into it. What do you say?

.....Guess what guys? We already did, we are just waiting for you. Join us, players and friends of the Pitt Greensburg Men's Basketball Alumni Club.

You are invited and it's free. Come join us!!

Contact:

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We are looking forward to hearing from you today.



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT COACH MATT FURJANIC

One of the goals of the Pitt-Greensburg Men's Alumni Club is to find and preserve the history of the Men's Basketball program at our campus. That being said we would like to re-introduce to you Mr. Matt Furjanic. Matt was the first coach of a four-year basketball program at Pitt-Greensburg. He coached here for five years (1995 – 2000). Before leaving, Coach Furjanic was able to lead the team to two conference titles (in 1999 and 2000).

The coach brought an impressive resume with him when he arrived at Pitt-Greensburg. The campus's first full-time athletic director, Dan Swalga, had worked with Coach Furjanic at Robert Morris University. Coach Furjanic was the men's basketball coach, and Dan coached the women's team. That relationship laid the groundwork to bring a qualified, established, and successful coach here to bring our program to life back in 1995. And, in four short years, the Men's Basketball team would win its first conference title. The next year they would follow that with a second title.



1999-2000 Men's Basketball Team

Coach Furjanic had a wealth of experience and success from everywhere he had been. During two stints in high school, General Braddock and Woodland Hills, he produced four conference titles. In Division 1 college teams, he took Robert Morris University to the tournament twice. And, although only at Marist College for two years, he guided the Red Foxes to their conference tournament.

All along the way, it was the game and the challenge posed that drove Coach Furjanic. But, as you age with the game, it's the people you meet along the way that are the real reason the game means so much to you. Coach Furjanic has always been a people person. Wherever he has coached, Coach Furjanic has excelled as a recruiter. He has that ability to identify the intangible in a person—that which makes an individual successful. All throughout his career, Coach Furjanic has not only developed a person's athletic ability but touched their lives.



Coach Matt Furjanic

But, the real question is what did Coach Furjanic take with him when he left Pitt-Greensburg? In a 2014 article written by Dave Mackall for the Trib Total Media, Coach Furjanic had these words, "I enjoyed my time at Pitt-Greensburg. It got me back in the college game." Another thing that went with him were two conference titles. You have to realize that in a period of five years, he not only re-launched a program on a campus that hadn't had a basketball program for over 20 years, but he made the program one that was of championship caliber. He also took with him the memories of the fine young men that played for him.

In a recent interview, Coach Furjanic was asked if he could tell us any of the players he remembered. As he answered it was evident that he probably remembered most of the players he had coached here. The question was rephrased, which players do you remember as the foundation you built the program on? Without a pause, the first name mentioned was Myron Jones. Myron had played his high

school ball at Greensburg Salem then went on to play in college at Westminster. "Myron's transfer here gave Pitt Greensburg legitimacy in the basketball circles and made us attractive to other recruits," said Coach Furjanic.

It didn't take long for the other athletes to come and Coach Furjanic's accolades to continue. Next was Clyde Manns from Brashear. Clyde had been recruited to play football and had been named the MVP of the City League his senior year. Clyde had a tough decision to make, and he chose Coach Furjanic and Pitt-Greensburg. "Clyde was a high-profile recruit. But, maybe most importantly was the work ethic he brought here. He pushed himself every day, game, or practice—it didn't matter. He would not let those around him work any less hard than the way he pushed himself."

The next athlete was Jason Trout, also from Greensburg Salem. Division 1 schools were interested but due to personal circumstances and the urging of Coach Furjanic, Jason found a home at Pitt-Greensburg. All Jason did was score 2,160 to become the all-time leading scorer at Pitt-Greensburg, a position that he still holds to this day. Other players put their mark on the program as well: Chris Horne, Bob Boord, Jeff Karacia, Josh Sappotichne, and Brian Cureton to name a few. There were others, and, if given the opportunity, Coach would have gone on. You see if you played for Coach Furjanic you became one of his own.

In the year 2000, the call of warm weather and the opportunity to work in a recruiting hotbed was too much for Coach Furjanic to resist. Our loss was the gain of Polk Community College. It has since become a four-year institution and is known as Polk State College, located in Winter Haven, Florida. "One of the reasons I came down here was that it gave me the chance to coach Division I players again," Coach shared. It has become the new home to the Furjanic family—the whole family. He along with his wife Rita have three children (Tracy and her husband Ryan Boyle, Lori, and Matthew III and wife Lauren) and four grandchildren. For a man who loves and is extremely proud of his hometown in Rankin, Pennsylvania—where he once served as mayor—leaving was bittersweet. His first year at Polk he was 22-10, and he was wearing shorts on December 26, so that probably eased his pain a bit.

This year will be his 16th season at Polk. He has continued his winning ways there also. He has amassed an overall record at Polk of 309-192, which includes six Suncoast Conference titles, six Coach of the Year Awards, and last year on January 23, 2016, his team won the 600th game of his career. When asked about the milestone he humbly replied, "It means I have been coaching a long time."

Retirement is on the horizon, and Coach Furjanic will be spending quality time with his children and grandchildren in the warm climate that they have all become accustomed to, "Disney World is only 30 minutes away, and we all have passes." It looks like Coach Furjanic has not only found the "Magic Kingdom" at Disney World but in his coaching career and with his family.

We hope you appreciate what we have said here Coach and know that the members of the Men's Basketball Alumni Club wish you well no matter where life might take you. Thank you for what you have done for us here at Pitt-Greensburg. Your years here have set the standard that your predecessors have strived to meet. Thank you from your players and whose lives were forever changed because of your influence. We know this about you also, "Once a coach always a coach!" Who knows where the path may lead you during retirement?

After the writing of this article, it was learned that Coach Matt Furjanic was inducted into the Florida College System Activities Association Hall of Fame on March 9, 2017. Congratulations, Coach!



Head Coach Matt Furjanic received recognition for 17 years at Polk State and 600 career wins. From left: Assistant Coach Ramone Shepard, Athletic Director Bing Tyus, Furjanic, Assistant Coach Dr. Terrance Hays. (Photo by Tom Hagerty, Polk State)