

May 2024 Newsletter

Third Annual Awards Night Celebrates Tradition and Seniors

The energy of the recent Final Four games with the mascots, the bands, the banners, and the rabid fan bases who travel long distances at great expense to support their teams is built upon a single common foundation: tradition. And this pride in tradition, in being part of something meaningful and enduring, is also what brought together current and former players for the third annual awards banquet on March 27. Sponsored by the MBAC, the event honored the achievements of the current team in categories ranging from performance benchmarks to scholastic excellence to work ethic and character.

Emcee and MBAC President Andy Garsteck '74 opened the evening with The Nose to the Grindstone/Gym Rat Award and this year there was a three-way tie. Alumnus Doug Wilson '16 presented the first award to Mike Bigley.

"The honor means a lot to me," Mike explained, "because it shows that my teammates think highly of me in regard to the time and dedication I put into improving my game."

Alumnus Gene Brisbane '74 EDUC/ '79 MEd presented to Matt Marinchak.

"I think the award is one that everyone on the team should want. It shows that you really love the game and will work out every day for countless hours trying to get better," said Matt echoing Mike's sentiments about winning the award.

The third award was presented by alumnus Jim Murphy '76 to three-time winner Micah Jones '24. In making the presentation, Jim emphasized Micah's consistency and mental toughness, evidenced by his receiving an award three years in succession.

"Winning these awards has actually allowed me to understand that all the work I have put in for these last years and improving over time was the most significant accomplishment overall," Micah said, "The ups and downs of the journey, shooting on the gun for hours, breaking my hand senior year, having great games, or bad...receiving these awards are reminders that I persevered through everything and have been prepared for whatever comes next. God's grace is evident and hopefully, He allowed me to leave a lasting impact on the younger guys."

Performance awards for Most Improved Player, Best Offensive Player, and Best Defensive Player were next in line, presented by alumni Dom Domasky '00, Joe Mancini '18, and Cam Seigfried '21 respectively.



Above: Ben Thomas (second from right) with Andy Garsteck (left) and the Charles family.



Left: Will Butler with Coach Chris Klimchock



Above: Jim Murphy with Micah Jones



Left: Coach Chris Klimchock with Mike Gaffney

THIRD ANNUAL AWARDS NIGHT CELEBRATES TRADITION CONTINUED

In presenting the Most Improved Player award to Josh Mentzer, Dom credited Josh with helping the team fight through adversity and for being an inspiration to his teammates. Joe followed up with the Defensive Player of the Year Award, which he presented to Jackson Byer. Joe observed that Jackson used his super power to be in the right place at the right time, leading the team with 56 steals, and leading the AMCC in steals per game with 2.5 steals a game, and finishing 21st in steals in all of D-3 country wide. Cam recognized Trent Rozich as Offensive Player of the Year. In six offensive categories on this team, Trent finished first or second, while leading the team in field goal percentage, rebounds, and assists. Trent also was second in points scored, in points per game, and in free throw percentage. In these same six categories, conference-wise, Trent finished in the top ten.



Above: Dom Domasky and Josh Mentzer
Right: Joe Mancini and Jackson Byer
Below: Cam Seigfreid and Trent Rozich



The evening's penultimate awards were the Fred E. Charles Scholar Award and Thomas M. Jollie Character Award.

"Attending the University of Pittsburgh was a big part of Freddy's education and career. He was a very kind and charitable man. Thank you for honoring his memory by extending an award in his name that leaves an impact on future students at Pitt," offered Denise Charles, Fred's widow, on what the Scholar Award would have meant to him.

Fred's sister-in-law Dr. Rana Ziadeh and 2023 recipient Connor Vehec '23 presented the scholar award to Ben Thomas, who said in receiving the honor that he appreciated the recognition for his hard



work off the court.

Before co-presenting the Jollie award with Tom's granddaughter Samantha Visnek, Harry Bowser spoke about his teammate.

"Tom was special. He was compassionate and kind, and he cared about people. He was generous and giving. He was humble and quiet about his accomplishments. I want to tell you that I know Tom is smiling because he knows if he would have been here to choose the winner of this award, he would have chosen the same person."

Adding a little levity and suspense to the final presentation, Harry apologized to Mike saying that he had been so busy in preparing for the evening that he forgot to bring Mike's plaque, but that he had phoned a friend and the plaque was being delivered as they spoke. Then, Mike's father Mike along with his sister Kelsey and brother Kris walked in and presented the award.

Andy closed the evening by presenting a commemorative plaque to Coach Chris Klimchok in honor of his first playoff win and a small gift to trainer Erin Finley '22 SHRS in appreciation for her dedication to the team. Coach took the opportunity to express his gratitude to the MBAC and to his two senior award winners, Will Butler and Mike Gaffney, and to his entire team for making his time at Pitt-Greensburg a dream come true. He praised the players' desire to improve, their positive attitude, and their resilience in the face of many unexpected setbacks. Working with this group, most of whom will be returning next year, gave him immense satisfaction. The evening concluded with a team picture and many fond reminiscences and conversations.



Above Right: Doug Wilson with Mike Bigley
Middle: Gene Brisbane and Matt Marinchak
Right: Denise Charles and Sharon Jollie



FORMER PLAYER REFLECTS ON THREE-PEAT MBAC AWARDEES



**Above: Micah Jones (l) and Mikey Gaffney (r).
Right: The Gaffney family, Harry Bowser and Mikey.
Below: Micah with two of his awards.**

Micah Jones '24 and Mikey Gaffney '24 capped off their senior years as the first players to be selected as MBAC award recipients for three consecutive seasons. They are the first to accomplish this feat. As a fellow MBAC award recipient, I understand just how impressive it is to win three years in a row. It is truly something to admire.

Micah was the winner of the Most Improved Player ('21-'22) and the Gym Rat ('22-'23, '23-'24) awards. From being the most improved player to being labeled a gym rat, it goes to show how much time Micah spent in the gym. He was always striving to become a better player regardless if it was between class, before or after practice, or on an off day. He always went out of his way to make time for the gym. I was lucky enough to play the same position as Micah having to go against him pretty much every day in practice for three years straight. Watching him grow has been exciting. He has developed very maturely not just as a player, but as a person too.



Mikey may be one of the most unique players to pass through Pitt-Greensburg. It's very rare that you come across a player like him. Not only is he one of the first to receive an MBAC award for consecutive seasons, but he is also the first to win the Thomas M. Jollie Character Award ('21-'22, '22-'23, '23-'24) three times. From the first game I played with Mikey, I knew he was special. He always put the team above himself 100% of the time. So, it comes as no surprise that he has accomplished something like this. You will never meet another player that is as selfless as Mikey. I'm sure all his teammates and coaches would agree. He is just a genuine guy on and off the court. Anyone would be lucky to experience a chance to play with him. — Jaylen Williams '23



WILL BUTLER '24 GOES FROM PLAYER TO COACH

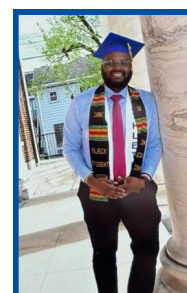
Will Butler '24 came to Pitt-Greensburg with high hopes, but his career was plagued with injuries and health problems that hindered his success on the court. But, his teammates and coaches will tell you he was an important ingredient to any success. His leadership ability made him the go-to-guy for other players. He was able to translate his knowledge of the game in a way that helped his teammates.

He has many memories of his time on the court. He recalls his first year under Coach Jackson when he was healthy and played in just about every game. This past year gave him some memories too including his first game back after an injury against Hilbert in which the few very important minutes he contributed helped secure a victory. He also remembers his teammates' successes such as Trent Rozich scoring 39 points and getting 20 rebounds against Carlow, and Josh Mentzer's efforts in the win over Pitt-Bradford during the AMCC playoff game.

Will learned things on campus that he will carry with him into the real world. The first lesson is to never give up. Secondly, he doesn't need to go through tough times alone when there are good friends and trusted people on which to rely. He is also grateful for Dr. Anne M. Czerwinski, his communication professor, who always pushed him to be the best version of himself.

After graduation, he will return to Cleveland to coach basketball at Cornerstone Christian Academy and teach health and physical education at Saint Robert and William Middle School. He'll be doing what he loves best — coaching young people.

He is very proud to be the first person in his family to graduate from college and hopes his example will motivate, inspire, and encourage his nieces and nephews to do the same and dream big.



**Top: Will poses in with his stoles.
Middle (l-r): Micah Jones, Will, and Mikey Gaffney at graduation
Bottom: Will in regalia with his jerseys.**

ALUMNI CAN TAKE TO THE COURT THIS FALL

The MBAC is excited to announce that an alumni basketball game is in development to be played during the 2024-2025 season. The alumni game will include past players from several different teams and will be an exciting event to reconnect with old teammates and fellow alumni. We invite and encourage all Pitt-Greensburg men's basketball alumni to come and play or spectate. Specific details of the game will be announced as the new school year begins this fall. The event will take place on a men's basketball Saturday home gameday, and alumni are encouraged to stay to watch next year's Bobcats play.



Ready to slam dunk them like you used to?

Should you be interested in playing or would like additional details, please reach out to Joe Mancini '18 at 412-770-6812 or email JLM360@pitt.edu. The MBAC plans to order shirts for alumni in attendance so please let us know your shirt size when you reach out. Hope to see everyone there! Go Bobcats!

MBAC SCORES WIN ON PITT DAY OF GIVING

The MBAC thanks everyone who made a gift on Tuesday, February 27 as part of the 8th annual Pitt Day of Giving. This year was MBAC's most successful Day of Giving to date. MBAC donors were part of more than 250 donors that helped Pitt-Greensburg raise nearly \$15,000. Your participation allowed Pitt-Greensburg to claim the Power Hour bonus an additional \$2,000. In all, 38 Pitt-Greensburg funds benefited from Pitt Day of Giving when gifts were designated to them. These funds support real people and real programs on our campus. Our students benefit from your generosity. Among those funds receiving the most support were the Student Emergency Fund, Athletics/Teams, Student Life & Success, the unrestricted Alumni Fund, and the President's Discretionary Fund. Your enthusiasm in supporting Pitt-Greensburg and the MBAC is truly appreciated.



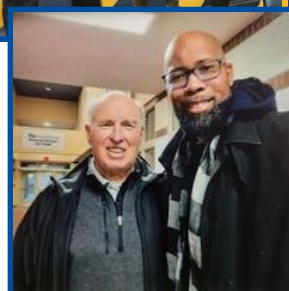
Your participation was a win for the MBAC and campus.

MBAC HOSTED JANUARY ALUMNI GAME

At a Zoom meeting, alumnus Doug Wilson '16 suggested that the MBAC host a game where the alumni are invited back to watch a game, socialize with their old teammates, and check out the current team. That idea came to life on January 13.

The MBAC hosted a reception in the Fireside Lounge where light refreshments were served. The alumni in attendance enjoyed the grub, had a great time reliving some memories, and enjoyed a great game as the Bobcats defeated the Pitt-Bradford Panthers in a hotly contested game (71 – 70). Josh Mentzer, the team's super sub, scored 20 points and kept "Mentzer Mania" alive. The alumni encompassed players and staff from the very earliest teams in the 1970s through to later teams from the 2010s.

Attendees included the following: Gene Brisbane '74 EDUC, '79 MEd, Rob Domenick '75, Andy Garsteck '74, Harry Bowser '72, Coach Matt Furjanic, Myron Jones '98, Kevin Conlon '05, Adam Bowser '03, Matt Russell '18, Doug Wilson '16, Joe Mancini '18, Cam Seigfreid '23, Nick Kotecki '23, David Knox '20, and Brady Kingston '20. In total, twenty guests came back to visit the team and campus. Based on the success of this game, the MBAC is working with Coach Klimchok to plan an alumni game for the 2024-2025 season.



Top: Alumni players took to the court with "OG" Harry Bowser. Middle: Matt Russell stopped by the locker room. Bottom: Former Coach Matt Furjanic and Myron Jones II stopped for a photo.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW: GENE BRISBANE '74 EDUC, '79 MED AND ERIC KOCIAN '00

Gene '74 EDUC, '79 MEd was a member of the early '70s basketball team. From the time he graduated with his master's in education, Gene has been a constant presence in the academic and sports venues in Westmoreland County.

For 35 years, he was a teacher in the Hempfield Area School District and was recognized four times in Who's Who Among America's Teachers. He also has served as adjunct professor at Seton Hill University. He found his way into coaching as a 9th grade girls' basketball coach in 1974. He has served as either an assistant or varsity head coach for both boys' and girls' track and basketball at Hempfield, Jeannette, Greensburg Salem, and Derry. Gene is presently Head Varsity Girls' Basketball Coach and Assistant Varsity Track Coach at Derry Area High School. Gene's experience at the collegiate level includes being the Westmoreland County Community College head womens' basketball coach and Seton Hill University Assistant Track Coach in charge of men's and women's jumping events.



Gene Brisbane

Gene also serves as the treasurer for the Board of Directors of the Westmoreland County Coaches Association and the MBAC Executive Board. He is the public address announcer for the Seton Hill University football games as well as the men's and women's basketball games. Gene is also a color commentator on the Westmoreland Sports Network.

Gene and his wife Carol have three children — Kelly, Mindy, and Shawn; they are also blessed with eight grandchildren — Halle, Jace, Luke, Camden, Roman, Vienna, Malia, and Lucia.



Eric Kocian

One of Eric Kocian's former Pitt-Greensburg students and MBAC member Jaylen Williams '23 describes him as an excellent example of the athlete, scholar, and professional that campus produces. From his time as a student to life after graduation, Eric has excelled and inspired.

Eric attended Pitt-Greensburg from '95-'00 and graduated with a BS in psychology, a BA in administration of justice, and a minor in Spanish. During his time on campus Eric played basketball for Coach Matt Furjanic and served as a co-captain of the first team to win an AMCC championship ('98-'99). Having served with the Marines, he brought a hard work attitude with a no-nonsense approach to the team.

After graduation, he earned his master's degree and PhD in criminology. After completing those degrees, Eric accepted an assignment as a special agent with the FBI. However, he wanted to be near home and returned to the Greensburg area where he has been happily employed at Saint Vincent College for over a decade. He recently was awarded tenure and named his department's chairperson. He also served as an adjunct professor for both Pitt-Greensburg and IUP.

Family has always been important to Eric. His parents Jim and Sandi live in Derry. His brother Zach '08 was inducted into the Pitt-Greensburg Athletics Hall of Fame Class of 2024. Another brother Jason and his wife Lacey moved back from Oregon with their two sons. He has shared his love of the game with his nephews Nico and Luca teaching them how to play. His family extends to his former teammates. Dom Domasky '00 has given him the honor of being the godfather to his two children.

MYRON C. JONES II '98 LEADS ALUMNI AT GRADUATION

As the 2023 Pitt-Greensburg Alumni Association (PGAA) Alumnus of Distinction, Myron C. Jones II also had the distinct honor to be the alumni marshal at Commencement on April 27. He not only led alumni and members of the President's Advisory Board in the procession at both ceremonies, but he distributed diploma covers during the 1 p.m. ceremony. He follows in the footsteps of Harry Bowser, who was the alumni marshal in 2017.



*Top: Myron and Harry Bowser in the Bobcat
Left: Myron led alumni
at Commencement*

THIRD CLASS INDUCTED INTO PITT-GREENSBURG ATHLETICS HALL OF FAME

On February 9, Athletic Director Jeromy Yetter welcomed the new inductees to the third class of the Pitt-Greensburg Athletics Hall of Fame. Jeromy was followed by Pitt-Greensburg President Dr. Robert Gregerson who welcomed the inductees and their guests to the event. After dinner, the inductees were presented with their awards.

Former Pitt-Greensburg President Dr. Frank Cassell spoke first. He was president when the campus' Athletics Department transitioned into the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), and he worked with fellow Hall of Famers Dan Swalga and Rick Fogle to achieve the department's NCAA status. Dr. Cassell spoke of how important athletics and academics were to the growth of Pitt-Greensburg, and reminisced about how he and his wife enjoyed being fans of the early four-year teams.

Then, Zach Kocian '08, brother of MBAC member Eric Kocian '00, was inducted for his cross country achievements. Zach was named to the AMCC All-Conference Team all four years he ran for Pitt-Greensburg. The record time he set in the 8k held until this past fall. He finished 8th twice in the AMCC Championship meet, which is still the best finish in program history. He had the audience laughing when he noted that since the University was honoring him, he felt it was time to finally return his uniform as handed it to his former coach.

The soccer program added another inductee when Adam DiCarlo '06 accepted his award. His resume included 63 goals scored in three years ('02-'05). He still leads that category in the records and maintains a 20-goal lead over the next closest player in the record book. He was named 2002 AMCC Newcomer and Player of the Year. He was also named first team All-AMCC ('02-'04) and AMCC 25th Anniversary Team. He emotionally recalled his college career and shared his gratitude for the opportunity to play at Pitt-Greensburg. Like Zach, he brought a memento with him. Setting them on the podium, he shared a pair of cleats he wore when he set his records.

Finally, the 2002-2003 Women's Basketball Team was inducted. Coached by Carol Gelet, Andy Jeter, and Mark Katarski, they won the program's first AMCC title with a 10-2 season in the conference and finished the season at 23-7 overall. That team defeated Mount Saint Mary in the first round of the D3 NCAA Tournament 62-54. That win has stood as the only win by an AMCC team in the NCAA Tournament. Coach Gelet spoke first and with a great deal of pride she felt for this team. She was followed by players Annie Sral '05 and Erin Arnold '04. Annie entertained the crowd with a few of the team's off-court antics, but she also spoke of the camaraderie that bonded the players. Then, Erin spoke about how any member of the team could rise to the occasion and be a hero. Joining Erin and Annie at the event were, Jen Smith '06, Amy Bandszuch '06, Torey Auld '04, Jess Phillipi '21, Jess Porter '20, Lindsay Rodgers '05, Tish Hines '06, and Amy Ploskunak '05.

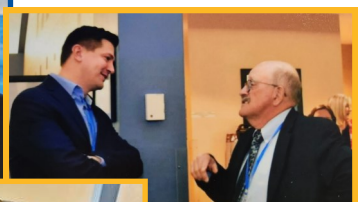


Top: Jeromy Yetter, Dr. Frank Cassell, and Dr. Robert Gregerson

Top Middle: Jeromy Yetter, Zach Kocian, Dr. Robert Gregerson

Bottom Middle: Men's Soccer Coach Mark Bucci, Adam DiCarlo, Ted Wawrzyniak

Bottom: 2002-2003 Women's Team players and coaches, Jeromy Yetter and Dr. Robert Gregerson (back row) The late Amy Bandszuch's son represented her (front row second from left).



Top (l-r), Andy Garsteck, Olivia Petry, Dr. Robert Gregerson; Women's team alumni; Harry and Torey Auld; Kevin Conlon '96 and Dan Swalga Bottom (l-r): Program with '70-'71 Men's Basketball Team; Dr. Leigh Hoffman and Bill McGrew; Harry with women's alumni at Saturday's home game games



COACH'S CORNER



I can't say enough about how proud I was of our team this past year. We battled through countless injuries and adversity en route to an overall record of 13-14 and a conference record of 11-7. We qualified for the AMCC tournament and were rewarded with a home playoff game. We ended up taking advantage of the home court by defeating Pitt-Bradford in a packed Chambers Hall gym. Our team has made progress every single year since I started, and we look for that to continue into next year. After our win over Pitt-Bradford, we lost in the AMCC semifinals to La Roche by five points, but we gave them all they could handle. We were down 23 points at one time and cut the lead all the way down to two with a couple minutes left. Although we did not come out of that game with a win, we learned a lot about who we are as a program.

Matthew Marinchak and Trent Rozich both made AMCC 2nd Team All-Conference. Trent was also named the AMCC Newcomer of the year as well as the ECAC Rookie of the year. We had multiple players step up when their names were called this year and they played with full confidence. I appreciate every single guy on our roster for giving all they had throughout the year. I want to thank our three seniors — Mikey Gaffney '24, Micah Jones '24, and Will Butler '24 for all that they have given this program. We will miss their leadership on the court and in the locker room. I have no doubt that each of them will be extremely successful in their careers after Pitt-Greensburg.

Our team will continue to make progress on the court, in the classroom, and in our community. I am so lucky to be a part of the Pitt-Greensburg family and work with our coaches, players and staff every day. Go Bobcats!

2023-2024 MEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM SCHEDULE

Date	Location	Opponent	W or L	Overall	Conference
Sat., Nov. 11	A	Grove City College	Lost, 70-60	0-1	
Wed., Nov. 15	H	Hiram College	Lost, 89-92	0-2	
Sat., Nov. 18	A	Mount Union	Lost, 113-79	0-3	
Mon., Nov. 20	A	St. Francis University	Lost, 77-63	Exhibition	
Sat., Nov. 25	A	Geneva	Won, 87-85	1-3	
Wed., Nov. 29	H	*PS Altoona	Lost, 89-94	1-4	0-1
Sat., Dec. 2	H	*PS Behrend	Won, 72-68	2-4	1-1
Wed., Dec. 6	A	*Carlow University	Won, 72-65	3-4	2-1
Sat., Dec. 9	A	*Alfred State College	Lost, 93-68	3-5	2-2
Sat., Dec. 16	A	Hood College	Lost, 89-66	3-6	
Wed., Dec. 20	A	Waynesburg University	Lost, 55-50	3-7	
Sun., Dec. 31	H	Lancaster Bible College	Lost, 95-75	3-8	
Wed., Jan. 3	A	*Hilbert College	Won, 75-67	4-8	3-2
Sat., Jan. 6	H	*Wells College	Won, 71-60	5-8	4-2
Wed., Jan. 10	A	*LaRoche University	Lost, 74-63	5-9	4-3
Sat., Jan. 13	H	*Pitt Bradford	Won, 71-70	6-9	5-3
Wed., Jan. 17	H	*Mt. Aloysius College	Won, 93-86	7-9	6-3
Sat., Jan. 20	A	*PS Behrend	Lost, 76-51	7-10	6-4
Wed., Jan. 24	A	*PS Altoona	Lost, 92-84	7-11	6-5
Sat., Jan. 27	H	*Alfred State College	Won, 67-52	8-11	7-5
Wed., Jan. 31	H	*Carlow University	Won, 81-63	9-11	8-5
Sat., Feb. 3	A	* Wells College	Won, 65-57	10-11	9-5
Wed., Feb. 7	H	*LaRoche University	Lost 71-65	10-12	9-6
Sat., Feb. 10	H	* Hilbert College	Won 75-70	11-12	10-6
Wed., Feb. 14	A	* Mt. Aloysius College	Won 95-91	12-12	11-6
Sat., Feb. 17	A	*Pitt Bradford	Lost 76-62	12-13	11-7
Tues., Feb. 20	H	AMCC First Round—Pitt-Bradford	Won 86-75	13-13	12-7
Fri., Feb. 23	A	AMCC Second Round—LaRoche	Lost 81-76	13-14	12-8

*- Denotes conference game.