

Quaid definitely one to remember



Historic Seadogs gather

Members of the historic Beaufort Seadogs teams gather together to reminisce about the old days. Those in the photo are, left to right, Chuck Lewis, Ray Hassell, Johnny Hassell, Pud Hassell, Butch Hassell and Alton Hill. (J.J. Smith photo)

Posted: Saturday, July 13, 2013 11:45 pm

McQuaid definitely one to remember J.J. SMITH | 1 comment

BEAUFORT — On Dec. 4, 1958, the Beaufort Seadogs boys basketball team won its opening game of the season, 67-40 over Pamlico in front of an enthusiastic home crowd.

The squad wouldn't lose again until Feb. 16, 1962.

A 91-game win streak and three 1A state championships later and Tom McQuaid cemented himself as one of the top coaches in the state.

His legacy lives on.

As part of the centennial celebration of the N.C. High School Athletic Association, the NCHSAA recently released the second list of its "100 To Remember" series.

The list of "100 To Remember: Coaches" highlights 100 of the top coaches in NCHSAA history, going back to the founding of the organization in 1913. A special committee, including school administrators and coaches from across the state, as well as sports media, compiled the list in a series of meetings.

A five-sport high school star from Vienna, Ohio, McQuaid played football and basketball at Newberry College (S.C.) and graduated in 1935. He coached at Beaufort from 1936 to 1942, served in the U.S. Army during World War II and then returned to Beaufort for another 20 years.

During that 20-year stretch from 1945 to 1965, his teams posted a 368-75 cumulative record, including the 91-game win streak that still stands as a state record. Only six boys high school teams in the country hold a longer winning streak.

For those accomplishments, McQuaid, who died in 1988, was deemed "100 To Remember."

For his former players, he's one to never forget.

"I used to have nightmares until my early 40s, where I would wake up and I could hear the crowd roar and I was late for the game," Alton Hill, a member of the 1960 and 1961 title teams, said. "That is the kind of fear coach McQuaid instilled in us. You walked in the gym and took a deep breath and hoped he wasn't going to be on you that day. To tell you the truth, I think most of us were scared to death of him."

Hill, a relied-upon post player, continued his worries of arriving late to a game as a result of the many life skills McQuaid taught his players, the first being, if you're on time, you're late. Arriving early was a must for McQuaid's players.

Those who arrived on time to practice or disappointed the coach in some other way, were quickly and adamantly told to "take it in," an expression the coach used to tell his players to get their stuff and leave the gym.

Butch Hassell, a standout quarterback on the football state championship team and starter beginning his freshman year on the basketball team, proved a scoring machine during his time at Beaufort. He averaged over 20 points a game during his last three seasons, including 26 per outing during a senior campaign that saw him earn all-state honors.

And though it was rare, even he was no stranger to McQuaid's wrath, which made quite an impression on his teammates.

"I passed Butch (Hassell) one time in the lobby, and he walked by me with the worst look on his face I had ever seen," said Chuck Lewis, who was also a former team member.

"I had already took it in," Butch Hassell added.

Lewis, always one of the team's top rebounders, and Ray Hassell stand as the two Beaufort athletes to have played on all three state championship teams and the Seadogs' 1959 state title football team.

"I knew if he would do that to an all-American, what kind of chance did I have?" Lewis said.

Hassell still holds the county record with 50 points in a game versus Newport during the 1959-1960 season. His big night placed him ninth at the time on the state's single-game scoring list with a performance that could have been even more special.

Hassell, who played on the 1959 and 1960 title teams, hit for 50 points without playing in the second and fourth quarters and without the advent of the three-point shot.

"Coach McQuaid was very serious and a very serious student of the game," he said. "Every week, he would implement some kind of new wrinkle in our offensive scheme, because coaches would scout you. He would mix it up. And he implemented all kinds of things in our practice that are now common but were unheard of then."

McQuaid had his players wear special glasses that didn't allow them to look down and see the ball, instituted medicine balls during passing drills, put a cap on the basket to teach his players to block out during rebounding drills and implemented weighted belts for the players during running drills.

"It was so different," Hassell added. "To have a coach who was so far ahead of other coaches of the time, it was special."

McQuaid hungered for basketball knowledge, scouring the country for clinics to attend. He frequently visited offseason camps run by legendary college coaches Clair Bee and Hank Iba.

Both Hall of Fame coaches, the two earned multiple national championships and were known as innovators with Bee (Long Island) developing the 1-3-1 zone defense and Iba (Oklahoma A&M/Oklahoma State), the swinging gate defense (a man-to-man with team flow).

"He was always learning," said Pud Hassell, Butch Hassell's cousin and a former team member. "He was ahead of the curve. In terms of defenses, we had multiple full-court and half-court presses, zone traps, we played deny defense before anyone was even talking

about that. He wanted us to fight through and over the top of screens. You came into college and quickly learned a lot of guys didn't have that kind of coaching."

Pud Hassell joined Ray Hassell and Lewis as the three Seadogs to have played on all three state championship teams. He was the team's second-leading scorer as a sophomore and junior and led the team with 22 points a game as a senior.

McQuaid often purchased the training innovations and traveled to clinics on his own dime, thanks to a shoestring budget the athletic department operated on.

"We didn't have any money," Pud Hassell said. "We had no facilities to speak of. We had two baskets in the gym, there were no folding goals on the sides. No lockers. The uniforms were probably 10-12 years old."

"You would probably catch hepatitis, or something, if you tried to take a shower there," Butch Hassell joked.

The Beaufort gym, which has since been abandoned for years, was hardly known for its aesthetic beauty or fancy amenities.

"We could go in there right now, and it probably wouldn't be much different than when we played there," Hill joked.

The basketballs left a lot to be desired, as well.

"We played at Cherry Point once, and they had real orange basketballs, with dimples on them, real dimples," Johnny Hassell, a role player on the 1961 title team, said.

Those in Beaufort could tell who was on the basketball team, thanks to a gym floor that was notoriously filthy.

"Our hands were black after practice, the balls and floor were always so dirty," Pud Hassell said.

Gehrmann Holland starred at Beaufort in the mid-1950s and went on to earn a scholarship to North Carolina. He found the conditions the very different.

"Gehrmann Holland came home once strutting around with his Carolina stuff on. He was at the gym, and someone asked him what the biggest difference was playing at Carolina and playing here. He said, 'My hands never get dirty, I keep clean hands.'"

Holland and Monk Pittman helped give McQuaid his first 1A state title in 1955 with an undefeated campaign.

Ray Hassell joined his cousins, Pud, Butch and Johnny – Butch and Johnny are brothers – on those glorious teams.

He was a lineup mainstay throughout his four-year career and always among the team's leading scorers. He placed himself in the annals of Beaufort history as a freshman when he calmly sank two free throws in overtime to give his team a 48-47 win over Jonesville in the state semifinals.

The Hassell boys and the rest of the 1959-1961 state championship teams were inspired by the 1955 state title team.

"We were in middle school then, and they were our heroes," Pud Hassell said. "That motivated us. We thought if they could do it, we could do it."

And while McQuaid can be credited for much of Beaufort's success during its heyday, it could be said he was playing with a full deck. The Seadogs were stacked with talent during the 1955-1962 seasons.

Holland went on to play at North Carolina while Pittman played freshman ball at Wake Forest. Butch Hassell earned All-ACC honors at Wake Forest, while Ray and Pud Hassell played at North Carolina. Pud Hassell earned a Morehead Scholarship to attend the Chapel Hill school. Hill played at Atlantic Christian College (now Barton).

Other standouts included Sammy Merrill, Allen Autry, Paris Croom, brothers David and Calvin Jones and Lewis, among others.

"I think one of the things that set us apart was our team speed," Pud Hassell said. "We were so fast. Ray and David Jones, they were two of the fastest kids I've ever seen."

According to Pud Hassell, the Jones brothers were instrumental to the Seadogs' historic run.

"They deserve a lot more credit than they get," he said. "A lot of our success was because of them. They were superior athletes. Calvin wasn't big, but he was strong. David, he was just a blur. They were dogged defenders. They were exceptional on the defensive end. They took lesser scoring roles, but they had their moments."

McQuaid was also able to take advantage of a foundation set by Ray Hassell's father, Ray. He organized a midget team that had the boys playing as a unit beginning in middle school.

"That is really what started us playing together," Ray Hassell said. "We had skills when we got to high school. My father taught us the basics, the fundamentals. Coach McQuaid didn't have to spend a lot of time teaching us how to pivot, set screens, weave, etc., when we got to high school."

The former players all agree that assistant coach Jimmy Fodrie was also a key to the state title teams.

"Jimmy Fodrie taught us about fronting the post, and he was 5-9," Hill said. "But he was a bull. He was so tough, and he could play basketball. He is the one who taught us how to play tough defense down low."

Taking advantage of oftentimes superior talent that was ready-made for high school ball and a top assistant coach, McQuaid added to those ingredients with his innovative teaching methods and schemes and threw in a healthy dose of discipline and fear to create one of the best boys basketball programs the state has ever seen.

Hill said he went home in tears after practice on more than one occasion during his freshman and sophomore seasons, while Lewis reports he couldn't even talk to McQuaid until he was a junior.

"I don't ever remember laughing or smiling in practice," Lewis said. "He used to tell us, if you're a forward, you don't dribble but three times, that's it. I came back to the ball in a game, about half court, and got the ball, and then I started thinking about that, and I picked up the ball and walked. That is the kind of fear he instilled in you."

Above all, McQuaid taught his players to be men and preprepared them for the world outside of basketball.'

"He taught us our jobs," Hill said. "I had uncles who would get on me for not shooting the ball more. I told them, 'That's not my job, my job is to get rebounds, then I can score off those.'"

"I think that is amazing," Butch Hassell responded to Hill. "Here is a young kid in high school, and he understands what his job is. He realizes it's for the betterment of the team and puts them before himself. That speaks to the influence of our coach."