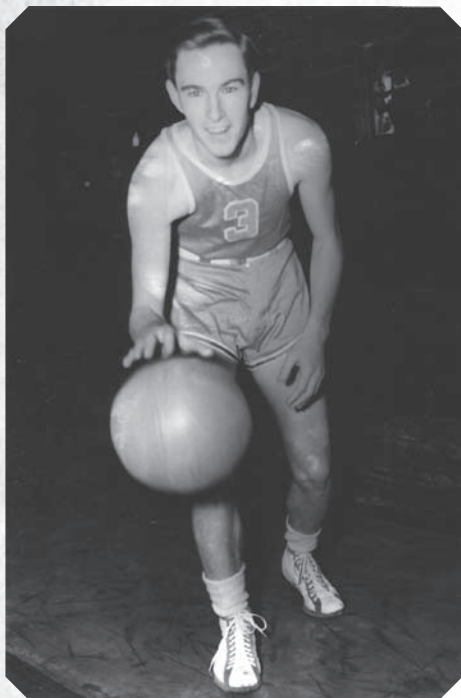


Legends of the Game

HONORING THE GREATS OF THE GAME

ERNIE CALVERLEY

University of Rhode Island
Player/Coach (1943-46/1958-68)



Ernie Calverley's name is synonymous with Rhode Island basketball. He is the greatest player in the school's long and heralded basketball history. One shot made him famous, but the short, skinny kid from Pawtucket, R.I., dazzled college basketball fans in the 1940s on a regular basis with his scoring, passing, and dribbling abilities.

As a freshman, he led the Rams to a 16-3 record as he poured in 346 points. Then in the spring of 1943, Uncle Sam called and Calverley left Kingston behind for World War II and the Army Air Corps. After five months in the service, a follow-up physical revealed a heart murmur that led to his discharge and put his athletic career in jeopardy.

Calverley went back to Kingston and was able to return to the court. He scored 534 points in his sophomore season and his 26.7 ppg average led the nation and remains the highest scoring average ever by a Rhode Island player. The next year he tallied 547 points to lead his team to a 19-3 record and a trip to the National Invitation Tournament at Madison Square Garden where the Rams upset Tennessee in the opening round.

The 1945-46 season saw the Rams earn another trip to the NIT. With ten seconds left and down two against Bowling Green in the quarterfinals, Bob Shea inbounded the ball to Calverley behind midcourt where he set his feet and let fly a high-arching shot that swished through the net to tie the score at 74-74 - the most famous shot in Rhode Island history. In overtime, URI outscored its favored opponent, 9-6, as Rhody advanced to the semifinals with an 89-86 win. The Rams went on to beat Muhlenberg in the semis before dropping a heartbreaking 46-45 decision to Adolph Rupp's Kentucky team. Despite the loss, Calverley was named the tournament's MVP.

When it was over, the three-time All-American had scored 1,868 career points, at the time the most points scored by an individual in college basketball history. In 1957, he was named head coach at his alma mater where he remained for 11 seasons, earned two trips to the NCAA Tournament and compiled a 154-125 record to become the second all-time winningest coach at URI behind his college coach, Frank Keaney.

M.K. TURK

University of West Alabama
Player (1962-64)

The year was 1962 in Livingston, Ala. - by any standards it was a trying time in that part of the country. At the height of civil rights battles across the South, the sleepy little town of Livingston needed something to keep its mind off of its surroundings - welcome to the stage, M.K. Turk.

"We did not have great teams back then, but I did have great teammates," said the loyal Turk.

After a couple of seasons playing at Copiah-Lincoln in Mississippi, Turk made his way west to play at Livingston State College, now known as the University of West Alabama. In his two-year career at LSC, Turk competed in the Alabama Collegiate Conference. According to Turk, competing in the ACC was not an easy task.

"We had some stiff competition during those days," said Turk. "You take a look at those schools and some of them are now competing in Division I - teams like Jacksonville State and Troy."

Competition is something that did not bother Turk. As a senior, the Tiger averaged 22.8 points per game and was named to the all-conference team in his junior and senior campaigns. It was an outstanding career, but it would only get better as Turk started his life after Livingston State College.

After several years in the coaching profession, Turk made his way to Memphis State as an assistant coach. It was his next stop at Southern Miss that would define his career.

In 20 years, Turk compiled a 300-267 record, with his teams making two appearances in the NCAA Tournament and eight NIT appearances, including a 1987 NIT championship - probably Turk's proudest moment as a coach.

"That was a special group of guys," said the national champion Turk. "They were gym rats and just represented what was great in basketball."

It was a defining moment in a career marked by success and competitive drive - a career that started at the University of West Alabama.

"I owe a lot to that place. I will never forget my time there, and most importantly will never forget my teammates that mean so much to me."

