An unlikely hero

Ed Nardi battled his way onto the roster, the record books, and back to the sidelines

By JOHN GORALSKI
SPORTS WRITER

A s a sophomore, Ed Nardi was cut from the basketball team. As a junior, he faced the axe again. The tiny guard was far from impressive as he struggled to keep up with his peers, but a well-placed call from his older brother Bill helped earn Nardi a second chance.

“I probably wasn’t that much to look at. I was a little wobbly with asthma, but that actually helped me in my second year,” he said. “I got sick during tryouts, so my brother made a phone call to Joe DePaulo, the captain, or Coach [Walt] Lastowka. He asked if they could give me a couple of extra days, and they did.”

Nardi made the most of the opportunity. He battled through the next few practices to claw his way onto the junior varsity roster.

I want to be remembered for giving all I had. When I coached, I did too.

I think we want to remember my all-around effort that I gave to basketball.

Ed Nardi
2011 Southington Sports Hall of Fame inductee

Ed Nardi makes an easy layup against Newtonville in 1955.

He battled his way through the early season to earn a spot at the far end of the varsity bench. By the end of the 1954 season, Nardi had worked his way into the lineup for the final minutes of a couple blowouts, but it was enough to catch the attention of the varsity coaches.

“Only scored 14 points, but they probably all came at the end of the season,” said Nardi. “Coach Lastowka told me to use me more and more, but the points all came at the end of the year.”

At the final practice, Lastowka pulled his junior guard aside. He thrust a worn basketball into Nardi’s hands and laid down the gauntlet with one word. “Practice,” he said before walking away.

Nardi accepted the challenge. “Anyone who played for him knew he puts a little fear into you, but it was a good thing. He disciplined you, and he was good,” said Nardi. “My brother was my guide, but it was a good thing. He disciplined me.”

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“I got into refereeing, and I just couldn’t give it up. I got into refereeing, and I became a varsity official for six years.”

Then, Nardi entered the next phase of his basketball career. The boy that struggled with his studies had become a teacher at Holcomb Junior High School. He transferred to Kennedy Junior High School for a year of English grammar before accepting a job at DePaulo Junior High School in 1969 where he taught until 1995.

He began coaching at the junior high and was promoted to the high school coaching position in the early 1970s. Nardi ushered eight Southington teams to the CIAC tournament over his 12-year career. In 1974-75, the Knights ral- lied to a 19-3 record and a quarter-

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Inside the Numbers

Central CT State Basketball
• Second Team All-State (1955).
• Scored 30 points in a single game (1955 school record).
• Scored 364 points as a senior (18.8 ppg).
• Co-captain (1958).
• Eastern Region All-Tournament team with 22 points per game (1957).
• Set single game school record (35 points vs. Salem in 1957).

Wen the New England Regional Tournament.
• Played in NAIA national tournament in Kansas City, MO.

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