

Amherst County High School 1979-80 Boys Basketball Team

By the start of the 1979-80 season the ACHS basketball team had built a winning tradition. The past two seasons, the team had compiled a 36-4 record. The JV teams were also enjoying winning seasons and providing the varsity team with excellent players who brought experience and a desire to win with them as they moved to the next level of competition.

December 1, 1979 a new season begins. First game of the season, ACHS opens with Heritage High School at Heritage, then Altavista High School at Altavista, and finally Jefferson Forest on the ACHS home court. After three games, the players believed in the coaches, and the coaches believed in the players. Everyone including the fans knew this was going to be a season to remember.

Under the guidance of head coach, Ernie Guill and assistant coaches, Eddie Carter and Bill Chavis the team continue the winning tradition that was enjoyed the previous two seasons. The starting team consisting of Seniors Marvin Davis and Ken Dixon, and joined by three Juniors, Mike Herndon, David Smith and Gary Anderson lead the team to an undefeated 20-0 Regular Season Championship. The balance of the team was compiled of four Seniors, three Juniors and two Sophomores. Coach Guill remembers the rivalry of the entire team. He recalls the competitiveness at every practice. Every player on the team was bidding for a starting position. He enjoyed the luxury of being able to go to his bench players and never wavering about entering any one of them into the game. It was a team effort, there were no individual players on the team.

After winning the regular season, play continued in the Seminole District Tournament. The team rose to the occasion and continued their winning streak to 24-0, with a District win over Gretna in the Championship game. ACHS 1979-80 Basketball team finished the regular season and district tournament, "Undefeated" The team opened with a win in the Regional tournament against Lord Botetourt. Finally losing to Martinsville in the Regional Semi-Final Game. Martinsville went on to win the State Championship.

As players reflect back, there were many fond memories. Jeff Thomas remembers his first varsity game. The team played Heritage at home. He scored 14 points in that game, (the first points he scored on the Lancer varsity team. The neat thing was, the team raffled the game ball at the end of the game and his mom won the ball. It is a trophy he will cherish forever. Mike Herndon remembers the phrase "Five O'clock". It was the team motto when they broke the huddle. He states, that phrase equated to the time of the daily practice schedule when the team scrimmaged against each other. The phrase, depending on the game situation, would remind them, they had been in similar situations in practice and challenged them to go after their opponents as hard as they competed against each other in everyday practice. One thing everyone seemed to remember was going to Pierre Thomas' house and enjoying the home cooked meals his mom "Helen" would prepare for them.

To sum it all up, a Championship team that consisted in players and coaches who believed in each other and vowed to be friends and teammates forever.