

John Hagelow “Jack” Burmaster Biography



John Hagelow “Jack” Burmaster, - Class of 1944 - b. December 23, 1926, d. September 27, 2005 From the EHS Yearbook, the Maroon: “*Jack*” Basketball, Hi-Y.

Mr. Burmaster was born in Elgin and went on to become an All-State basketball player at Elgin High School. Jack Burmaster had the unique experience of reaching the finals of the Illinois State basketball tournament as a player, a coach, and as a broadcaster. He played varsity basketball at Elgin High School 1942—43 and 1943—44. In his junior year the Maroons placed fourth at Champaign and the following year finished second, losing to Taylorville which closed its season with a 45—0 record. Burmaster was named to the Associated Press All—Tournament team in 1944 as he completed his prep career with 188 points and a single game high of 16.

He played collegiately for the University of Illinois. While at Illinois, Burmaster played the 1945 season with two notable future coaches, Johnny Orr and Vic Bubas.

He was selected by the St. Louis Bombers in the 1948 BBA Draft.

Burmater, at 6-foot-3 and 190 pounds, began his professional career with the Oshkosh All-Stars of the National Basketball League during the 1948-49 season. He scored 360 points, fifth best on the team, in playing all 64 games for the All-Stars, who won the Western Division championship with a 37-27 record, one game ahead of the Tri-Cities Blackhawks and two ahead of the Sheboygan Red Skins. The All-Stars were defeated by the Anderson Packers in the NBL finals.

When Oshkosh folded soon after the NBL merged with the Basketball Association of America in 1949, he joined Sheboygan of the newly minted NBA. Burmaster became one of Sheboygan’s best all-around players. Tenacious on defense, he was equally tough on offense, averaging 9.8 points per game (598 points in 61 games). He was the Red Skins’ fourth-leading scorer.

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In 1950-51, after Sheboygan was kicked out of the NBA, Burmaster continued to star for the Red Skins of the National Professional Basketball League, scoring 467 points in 42 games, an average of 11.1 points per game. He was named to the NPBL's second team and Sheboygan finished with the league's best record at 29-16.

Burmater was head basketball coach at duPont Manual High school in Louisville, Kentucky for one season, 1951-52, finishing runner-up in the state championship to Cuba High School.

From 1952-75, Burmaster was head basketball coach at Evanston Township, High School in Evanston, Illinois , where his record of 362-145 included the 1968 Illinois state high school championship. He served as athletic director at the school from 1975-85.

In 2006, Burmaster was voted as one of the 100 legends of the IHSA Boys Basketball Tournament, a group of former players and coaches in honor of the 100 anniversary of the IHSA Boys Basketball Tournament.

Jack Burmaster's passion for sports, and especially the Chicago White Sox, burned bright, right to the end.

Staring at the TV screen, clicker in hand and frustration growing by the inning, Burmaster's final memory of what he hoped would be a World Series season was the painful 3-2 loss to the Detroit Tigers on Tuesday night.

Sometime later that night, Mr. Burmaster, 78, died Sept. 27 in his sleep at his Glenview home.

“I like to say it was the Sox that killed him,” his wife, Emily, joked. “He was such a diehard fan.”

Mr. Burmaster was much more than a sports fan, however. He was responsible for getting widespread recognition for Evanston Township High School basketball, coaching the Wildkits to the school's only state championship in 1968 with a 70-58 victory over Galesburg. That team was led by forward Bob Lackey, nicknamed “The Black Swan,” who would go on to play at Marquette University.

“I always thought Jack should have been coaching in college,” former Evanston wrestling Coach Elias George said.

Mr. Burmaster arrived at Evanston in 1952 from Louisville. In 23 years, he compiled a 362-145 record, with four appearances in the state tournament's Elite Eight.

“We didn't always get along because he wanted the best athletes to only play basketball,” said Murney Lazier, the football coach who led the Wildkits to 13 conference titles and eight unbeaten seasons. “But he was a great coach. He was very good at game situations, moving players in and out, and he out-coached almost everyone.”

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In 1951, he went on a barnstorming tour of South America playing against the Harlem Globetrotters.

He came home with an autographed photo inscribed: “To Senor Burmaster, Juan & Eva Peron.”

Mr. Burmaster became Evanston Township High School’s athletic director in 1975 and remained in that position until his retirement in 1985. He was well-known statewide as an analyst on WGN-TV’s telecasts of the state basketball finals in the late 1960s and 1970s.

As a proud alumnus, Mr. Burmaster was in all his glory last year when the Fighting Illini made the that memorable run to the Final Four and finished second to North Carolina. Survivors also include a son, John; a daughter, Terry Clement; and nine grandchildren.