History of Basketball at Bucknell

Basketball is a comparatively new game in the history of the University. It was introduced during the winter term of '95 through the efforts of Registrar Gretzinger and Mr. Charles Firth, primarily for the benefit of football, to keep the men in good trim during the winter when the weather would not permit out-door practice; but the need of a winter sport assured it a permanent place on our athletic calendar. The only team played during that term was Danville Y. M. C. A. The game was played in the Tustin Gymnasium and resulted with a score of 3 to 2 in favor of Danville.

In the following year the game assumed considerable prominence, Mr. Frank Hering from U. of C., coaching the team. Games were played with Bloomsburg State Normal School, and with Y. M. C. A. teams from Lock Haven, Wilkes-Barre and Williamsport. The only game won that season by the team was against Lock Haven, the score being 16 to 14. This was Bucknell’s initial victory in basketball. The team disbanded early that year owing to baseball practice. The uniforms worn by the players the first two seasons would look odd today. The first year they wore regular football togs except that tennis shoes took the place of the heavy football shoes, and in '96 full length trousers fastened at the bottom with straps were used.

In the season of 1897 college teams were met for the first time. The University of Pennsylvania was met and vanquished, and State was defeated here 24 to 4, but succeeded in winning at State College, 10 to 7. Danville and Williamsport were also defeated. The team that year was captained by R. B. Mulkie and was composed of Mulkie, Weymouth, Elliott, Catteral, Smith, Bevan, and Wassell.

In '98 the team did not have so good a record, partly due to the fact that harder teams were met. Four games were won and four lost, Cornell being one of the teams defeated. The following year was disastrous, two games won, five lost, and one tie being the record. In 1900 six games were won out of the nine played. Cornell again was beaten and for the fourth year State was vanquished at Lewisburg, but was successful at State College. Bucknell, however, generally did better at State than State did here, in the five years that games were played before severance of athletic relations, State scoring 73 points to Bucknell’s 100.
In 1901 only one defeat was suffered, that being to the Williamsport Y. M. C. A. team at Williamsport. This team, one of the stars of which was Turner who has since refereed many games here, was one of the best teams in this section and at that time was Bucknell's leading rival in basketball. Our team was always greatly handicapped at Williamsport on account of the small floor with pillars in the middle and closed goals. Coach Hoskins obviated this somewhat by constructing similar goals and confining the local floor for practice before going up to Williamsport. In all Bucknell has won nine games from Williamsport, lost six, and tied one. Another team defeated was the University of Pennsylvania. The team that year was composed of Elliot (Captain), Davis, Mathewson, Stanton, and Bevan.

In the following year, out of fourteen games, only twice was the team beaten, first by Princeton at Princeton by the close score of 19 to 18, later by Alleghany at Meadville. It is a notable fact that the Varsity was not again beaten until two years later, again by a team from Alleghany. In 1903 the team had a clear record. In one game against the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy they piled up a score of 159 to 5, which is still our record high score. In the Williamsport game here an extra five minutes was necessary to play off the tie, McCormick, who later played on the New York National baseball team, succeeding in locating the basket for the winning goal. Captain Anderson was the star goal shooter that season and Ralph F. Griffith, afterwards captain of the Harvard five, played on the team.

In 1904 Alleghany achieved the distinction of being the first college team to defeat Bucknell on her home floor. It was the tenth season that the game had been played here and up to that night the Orange and Blue had been able to defeat every college team that she played against. In fact, that was only the fourth defeat suffered by Bucknell at home since the game was introduced, and the first since March, 1899, when the Clover Wheelmen won by a score of 18 to 16. The Wheelmen made a trip through this part of the state and succeeded in winning from nearly every team they played.

From 1904 to 1907 the team was captained by such men as "Pat" Cheesman, George Cockill, "Gert" Lenhart, and "Jim" Lose. In 1904 five games were lost, in 1905 only one, in 1906 two, and in 1907 one. Swarthmore, Lehigh, Gettysburg, Dickinson, and Buffalo were among the teams defeated. The only game lost in 1907 was to the Harrisburg Collegians at Harrisburg, 25 to 24.
In 1908 for the second time a clear record of victories was made. Western University of Pennsylvania, Swarthmore, and State, were beaten. The team was composed that year of O'Brien (Captain), Lenhart, Lose, Harris, and Clausen. In 1909 Alleghany was among the vanquished, but State and Swarthmore succeeded in winning on the local floor. In 1910 Swarthmore was beaten, but State won two, Alleghany one, and Dickinson won at Carlisle 16 to 18, the first time a Red and White quintet ever won from Bucknell in basketball.

Bucknell can show a better record in basketball than in any other sport. The only two teams which have won more than they lost to the Orange and Blue are State who has won eight out of thirteen, and Alleghany which has won three out of four games played. Bucknell has won four out of six games from Swarthmore, eleven out of thirteen from Dickinson, and fifteen out of eighteen from Gettysburg. Among other teams defeated are Cornell thrice, University of Pennsylvania twice, Western University of Pennsylvania, Dartmouth, and Lehigh. Up to this year, Bucknell has been defeated on the home floor by a college team only four times.