PROFILE: BUZZ LUTTRELL

ALLEGAN H.S. SPORTS HALL OF FAME CONSIDERATION (July 31, 2012)

Walter G. (Buzz) Luttrell, AHS ’62 is, perhaps, the only Allegan student ever to “letter” in six different sports: football (12), basketball (11/12), baseball (10/11/12), track (10/11/12), cross-country (11), and golf (12); eleven letters in total. After 50 years he still holds the broad jump record in track at

 22’ 5 ½ .“

A scholar-athlete, he also sang in the Men’s Glee Club, played three instruments (coronet, trumpet, and e-flat baritone) in the band and dance band, was inducted into the National Honor Society, and served as president of the Student Government.

FOOTBALL: played 10th grade, but ran cross-country in 11th to get into top shape for basketball season. Returned to the grid-iron in 12th grade as quarterback and defensive safety to help the Tigers end a (?) 20 game losing streak by upsetting 8th ranked University High School in a 19-16 thriller in the next to last game of that season.

BASKETBALL: played guard/forward and jumped center on conference-winning team that went to the regional finals before losing to highly-ranked East Grand Rapids. Luttrell, 6’2”, could dunk the basketball with both hands, was named first-team “All Conference” and was offered “all expenses paid” basketball scholarships to a number of colleges, but chose to attend Michigan State University on a combination academic and athletic aid package. He was awarded an “Updegraf Scholarship for Academic Excellence” based on a competitive exam open to all MSU student applicants. He turned down a basketball “tender” offer (all expenses) after the first semester to concentrate on academics and track on advice of his academic counselor. But…

Buzz was seriously injured in a bicycle/car accident on campus during track season and transferred to Olivet College when doctors advised that he would likely be unable to continue with his sports career. However, after sitting out one semester, he enrolled at the MIAA’s Olivet College, scoring 30 points in his second game and starting at guard/forward until he graduated in 1967,

He was best known there for a pre-game warm-up routine used to intimidate opposing teams. Just before leaving the court, the team’s four tallest players successively “slam-dunked” the basketball, closely followed by the team’s shortest player… who jumped hard, as if to dunk also, but instead bounced the ball high off the backboard, whereupon Luttrell would catch the ball with either hand, hesitate… then deliver a “monster jam” that left the backboard apparatus shaking as the team exited the floor. The crowd always went wild… as the coach smiled toward the other team.

BASEBALL: lettered three straight seasons and was named MVP for the “North” team in the summer-league American Legion All-Star game, setting three records in center field – (1) all three outs in one inning; (2) initiated three “double-plays” from the outfield… all on sliding catches on a rain-slicked field then point-on throws to double runners off base; and, (3) most outs in one game by a centerfielder… 7 (or 8?).

Luttrell once hit a home run that landed in a sandy patch beyond the left field fence. Long-time super-fan, George Pullen, whose three sons also starred in baseball at AHS, measured the distance after the game and announced the ball landed 425 feet from home plate.

TRACK: competed in broad-jump, high-jump, and shot-put, setting the still-standing school record in the former and surprisingly adding points in close matches in the latter because the coach noticed Buzz (at about 165 lbs.) could be competitive in an event that normally featured “the big guys.” It might also be mentioned that Buzz had no real “training” in the events and found little time to practice, typically running over from a baseball game between innings, pulling off his baseball uniform to reveal track shorts, changing shoes… and doing his three track events. Then, it was back to the baseball field.

GOLF: Buzz, dare we say, “cut” baseball/track practice one day when invited by a buddy to play a round of golf. He had never even held a golf club before. But the golf coach observed as Luttrell hit the first drive of his life about 20 yards short of the 365-yard first hole at the Allegan Country Club. The coach smiled and invited Buzz to join the golf team… letter number six. Buzz DID score enough to letter… but admits, he never again hit a drive quite as straight as that first one. Also, because he had never played the game, he chipped OVER the first green, BACK over again, finally punched onto the green and two-putted… for a DOUBLE-bogie!

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