

Greenberg thought that it was all a smoke screen. “Let’s face it, Harpur didn’t want to be associated with the teachers’ colleges of SUNY,” he said. “Harpur had this attitude that it was a step better than the Cortlands, the Oneontas, etc. Further, I think this was a chance for the administrators, through Henderson, to again downplay the importance of athletics at the school.”⁵

1962-63: Greenberg’s Great Season

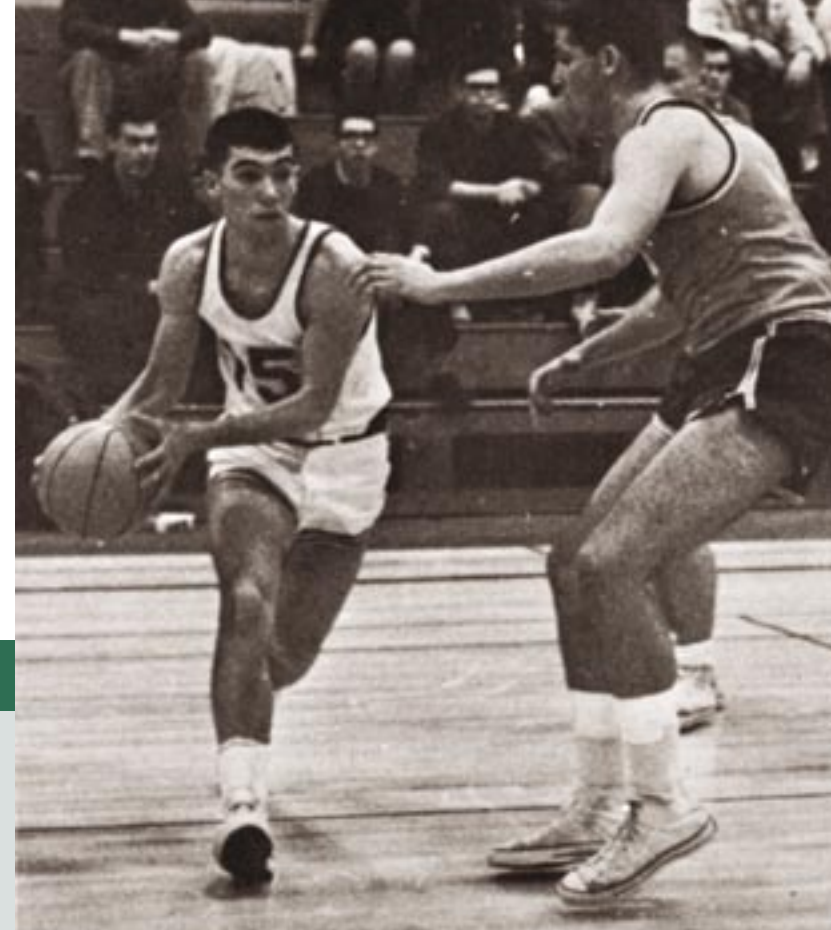
With Davis graduated, Mickey Greenberg turned the 1962-63 season into his personal highlight reel, the most thrilling

of which was a 93-62 victory over Utica College at the East Gymnasium. Greenberg broke five school scoring records as he put up 21 of the team’s last 23 points in the final seven minutes.

His 45-point total was a school record, as were his 17 total field goals and his second-half statistics: 35 points, 11 free throws and 12 field goals.⁶

Greenberg would later become the first Harpur player to score more than 400 points in a season (401) and the third to score over 1,000 points in his career (1,013).⁷

Barry Schneider, Mike Freedus, Larry Gainen, John Wojcio,



Mickey Greenberg (No. 15) was a member of the inaugural Binghamton Athletic Hall of Fame class in 1996. (Binghamton Press & Sun-Bulletin photo)

On his first game as a starter: “I got three fouls and scored just four points against Utica. But I stayed out of foul trouble and scored 23 in the second half. Following the game I studied all night for a bio exam for Professor Fischthal. Unfortunately I fell asleep and when I awoke I didn’t realize my feet were asleep. When I stood up, I sprained one of my ankles, and on the way to the exam, sprained the other! Some friends carried me into the exam. I was out for two games because of the ankles.”

On his 45-point outing against Utica: “I was in a zone. Everything I shot went in. It was like an out-of-body experience. Later I found out that Ron Jarmuth had filmed the game. When I called him to ask if I could view the film, he told me he was only shooting the cheerleaders!”

The vet school idea: “I went to Cornell vet school for two years and did an internship for a summer with a vet in Cortland. But while there I started smoking, my weight went up and, following the internship, I knew it wasn’t for me. So I came back to Harpur for my English degrees and got certified to teach. Dick Powell [the former Harpur basketball great] hired me to teach at Vestal.”

Later, one of his teaching colleagues was Binghamton Hall of Fame inductee Gene Kobylarz. He has taught both Koby’s son and grandson as well as Pollard’s daughter, Lucy, and John Affleck’s, daughter, Amy. His coaching career at Vestal included modified baseball, junior varsity basketball and girls’ basketball; in 1986 he succeeded Willie Lobb as boy’s varsity coach.

Neil (Wilensky) Williams and Frank Goodrich were the team leaders between the Greenberg-Davis era and that of Tom Gomulka and Marc Saperstein.

This latter group got off to an inauspicious start in 1967 when former Johnson City star Gomulka missed 16 of his first 17 collegiate shots, then scored in the other team’s basket in his first game. He bounced back with several high-scoring efforts, only to be sidelined due to academics for the second half of his first season.⁸

Saperstein, who’d been a star at Walton High, played well early in his career but became disgruntled and quit the

On his upbringing in the New York City area: “I took my son Jeremy to Manhattan Beach one time. But it was all run down. I also took all the kids to the park near Public School 254 where we played a lot of sports. I had all the sports equipment in the trunk of the car and I unloaded all of it and we were going to have a ‘sports day.’ As I slammed the trunk, my son Ben sheepishly informed me, ‘Dad, you locked the car keys in the trunk.’ Fortunately, Stacey [wife] rescued us.”

On choosing Harpur: “Our Madison [High in Brooklyn] guidance people were pushing Harpur. I never visited the college before enrolling and my mom drove me up to start school. Some classes were still being held in Endicott at the time. I had grown from 5’ 1” as a junior in high school to 5’ 9” when I arrived here. I met with Frank [Pollard] and told him I wanted to try out for the basketball team. I think he was a little dubious when I told him I hadn’t played at Madison [there were 1,000 students in the senior class alone!] but fortunately it all worked out.”

On honing his children’s sports skills: “We always played everything together. It wasn’t until Jeremy was in ninth grade that he could beat me one-on-one. That day he celebrated a little too much for my liking and I sent him to his room for acting in an unsportsman-like manner. After a time Stacey got me aside and posed the question: ‘Who’s acting like a bad sport?’”

Bess was a little better about beating her dad one-on-one: “For Father’s Day that year she got me a Father’s Day calendar with the date that she beat me circled with the words ‘Yippee! Yahoo! Yeah!’ penciled in.”

All four children graduated from Binghamton, with Jeremy starring for the men’s basketball team and Bess graduating both as an All-America basketball player and the school’s all-time leading scorer.

MICKEY GREENBERG

Mickey Greenberg ’63 graduated with a degree in biology and English. He was an inaugural inductee into Binghamton’s Athletic Hall of Fame in spring 1996.

Greenberg averaged more than 21 points per game in his final two seasons, including 25.1 in his senior year, making it the second-highest in Binghamton’s basketball history book. His 45 points that year against Utica College shares the school record in that statistical category.

He was Harpur College Athlete of the Year in both his junior and senior years and was also the recipient of the first Jake Pitler Award as a senior.

While he had an initial goal of becoming a veterinarian, he returned to Harpur to earn his master’s degree in English and taught the subject at Vestal High School for more than 30 years. He also served more than 15 years as Vestal’s varsity basketball coach.

He and wife Stacey (also a Harpur graduate) raised four children (Jeremy, Jed, Ben and Bess), with Jeremy and Bess following in Mickey’s footsteps and becoming Binghamton University basketball standouts.¹

In a 2003 interview, Greenberg shared some thoughts and memories of his career:²

About Jim Davis: “Every year he would threaten not to play because of his academics. He was like a yo-yo. I hounded him to play and he did. Let’s face it — without him we were screwed!”

About the academic climate and sports: “I recall that [President Glenn] Bartle came to every home game. There wasn’t that much to do on campus outside studying and the East Gym and basketball was important to the students. There was tons of [academic] work to do all the time. I seem to recall that one time Pollard asked Tom Clarisse to go into the game and Tom put down his physics book to do so. He was studying during the game!

“The crowds were funny. One cheer I recall them doing was a Boys’ High [a well known New York City basketball power at the time] cheer.”

On bench warming as a freshman: “I was just happy to be on the team though many felt I should be starting in place of Steve Kucera. I can’t say that I wasn’t a little disgruntled at times, especially when he shot those running hook shots! But later I utilized the fact that I sat on the bench when coaching my Vestal High players. I had been there!”

About Frank Pollard: “He wanted to win. Even in pickup games!

“One time he saw five of us eating at a steak place on the [Vestal] Parkway. We found out later that he went home for some more money and paid our bill. Another time when a friend’s girlfriend died, he paid his bus fare home for the funeral.

“He had spindly legs but his upper torso was huge. He liked to get down on all fours and challenge anyone to move him. No one ever did!” For the worldly kids of New York City he was a role model. The ‘Old-Yimer’ was someone they had never before come into contact with. He was a welcoming guy.

“Don O’Brien accompanied him as a driver of one of the station wagons on a trip to Plattsburgh. Don liked a brew and after a good win there we saw him and Frank in a bar. Tom Kirk, thinking the coach was celebrating with a beer, said to Frank, ‘Coach, you broke down!’ Actually Frank was having a coffee and he nervously kept drinking from an empty cup — the better to send home the message that his beverage of choice was not a beer!

“His dismissal just about destroyed him. I know for a fact that he co-signed for a black family’s mortgage and for him to be charged as a racist was just not true.

“Frank’s coaching style wasn’t quite ‘roll the ball out,’ but let’s face it — when he had some players the team did well. I know he and Willie Lobb [the Vestal High coach at the time] attended the NCAA tournament and its clinics so he tried to stay up with coaching trends.

“He never swore but I can’t say that he didn’t become frustrated with us at times. He would then utter his famous ‘sufra-muta-zie.’ The best we could make out was that it meant something like, ‘You are killing me (with your play).’”

¹ Binghamton Hall of Fame program, 5/3/96.

² Greenberg interview, 4/25/03.