Among 15 inductees into the MN prep hoops Hall of Fame was a humble 1920’s superstar

By Bruce Strand

All 15 new members had compelling careers, including the one who turned down pro basketball to study Home Ec, as the Minnesota High School Basketball Hall of Fame inducted its second class March 26.

Aileen (Just) Luther, probably the most renowned girl cager in the pre World War II era before their participation was abolished for 40 years, was represented by her daughter Janelle Thill in the ceremony at the Mariott City Center Ballroom.

“My mother was a person who liked to do things but not to bring attention herself at all, so maybe this would have been hard for her to deal with,” said Thill. “But, all of us kids (two sons and two daughters) were so stoked about it! I think she would have come around and been excited because of us. I know we have had so much fun talking about our mother since we found out about this.”

A barnstorming women’s pro team called the Redheads, Thill said, wanted to sign Aileen — “And she WAS a redhead, so she would have fit right in!” — but she wanted to study Home Economics instead, and be helpful to others in that way. Aileen took Home Ec at the University of Minnesota, leading to a job with University extension services in Luverne that lasted until she met the farmer she would marry. They raised their family near St. James. Aileen, who died in 2003, was devoted to the 4-H the rest of her life, using her Home Ec and gardening skills to help dozens of kids with their projects at county and state fairs, Thill said.

Coaches inducted were Ken Novak, who notched his eighth state boys championship at Hopkins last month; Mike Dreier, the state girls record-holder with 932 wins and 17 state trips at New London-Spicer; Ed Prohofsky, who had a great run at Marshall University in the 1970’s and is still active as an assistant with the Minnesota Lynx; and Bob Brink, whose 936 wins for ROCORI (including the 1988 state champs) ranks second all-time.

Male players inducted were Bob Bruggers, one of the greatest of all state tournament stars with Danube in 1961 and 1962; Kris Humphries, who led Hopkins to a state title, led the Big Ten in scoring and rebounding with the Gophers and had a 13-year NBA career; Ronnie Henderson, the 5-foot-6 epitome of point guard performance for Marshall-University’s 1976 state champs; Norm Grow, 1950’s scoring machine at Foley who’s career and single-game records stood for de-
Hall of Fame

cades; Hal Haskins, the state’s first 1,000-pointer with Alexandria (class of 1943) and a college star at Hamline; and Bob Zender, 6-foot-8 pillar of Edina’s three straight state championships the 1960’s.

Other female players inducted were Kelly and Coco Miller, leaders of two state championships at Rochester Mayo, and Sullivan Award winners as the nation’s top amateur athletes at Georgia; Tracy Henderson, one of the most coveted recruits the state ever produced at Minneapolis Henry, who played in two Final Fours with Georgia and was a Naismith Award finalist; and Kelly Skalicky, who had a 102-point state tournament leading Albany to the 1980 title and 2,704 career points.

“It was pretty neat,” Mike Dreier reflected. “This whole nexus of people, from so many different ages, all of them making such a positive impact on Minnesota high school basketball.”

All inductees or their representatives were introduced an interviewed by WCCO Radio sportscaster Dave Lee.

Aileen Just rolled up massive point totals in the old six-girl (three offense, three defense) system and led tiny Rapidan (near Mankato) to a 40-3 record from 1926-30. She was quite revered in her day, especially after scoring 453 points in 416 minutes her sophomore year.

Janelle Thill told Lee that her mother never spoke about her basketball exploits, except to remember fondly that her own mother was her biggest fan. “My grandmother would sit in the balcony above the rim and she would call out, ‘Come on, make it Aileen!’ at every game,” said Thill. “That was my mother’s favorite part of it.”

Thill learned about Aileen’s career mostly from her uncle (also a player) and from scrapbooks. Another thing Thill heard was that “Point-a-Minute Aileen” was frequently interviewed by reporters from around the country, and that she didn’t much care for that.

Lee asked Thill about uniforms. Thill, relating what she had heard, described the bulky wool uniforms and long bloomers and socks that “covered everything,” although during Aileen’s senior year a much lighter broadcloth was introduced, much to the girls relief.

### MN Region Playoff Schedule

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<td>18</td>
<td>Bemidji</td>
<td>April 14</td>
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Teams may register for more than one region. See website for tournament details.
Hall of Fame: 15 added in 2nd year

But all along there were people opposed to girls basketball as unladylike and unsafe, and the program was scrapped the year after Aileen graduated. As for Aileen, she never played basketball again. One of her sons played for St. James and another was a wrestler.

Bob Bruggers, 74, now using a cane, was known for an incredible physique at a time nobody lifted weights. Asked by Lee how he got all those muscles, he shrugged, “Hauling hay bales.” Lee asked what it was like to go from small-town football to Big Ten football. “Bigger and faster guys,” he said. How about moving on to the pro’s then? “Even bigger guys,” he grinned.

Bruggers, who got a long standing ovation from 19,000 fans at Williams Arena when his name was called for the all-tournament team in 1962 (after Danube placed third), went on to play football for the Gophers, the Dolphins and Chargers. After football he had a pro wrestling career that ended when he hurt his back in the crash of a small plane. His high school coach Rod Black and several football buddies were among his gallery.

The crowd was greeted by Joel Maturi of the Hall committee; former Gopher John Thomas, representing the Timberwolves and Lynx; and Tom T. D. Dixon, representing Jack Links, another Hall of Fame partner.

All the living inductees were present. Each of the deceased was represented by family.

Hal Haskins’ son Paul commented on how frequently people around the state would approach him with their memories of his father, not only as a player but also as a referee — adding that Hal worked some Edina state tourney games during Zender’s era. Zender’s wife Patty and sons Andrew and Bob III made the trip from Kansas, where Bob stayed after playing for Kansas State. “He talked about how LOUD it was,” said Bob III about his dad’s state tournament memories. Norm Grow’s son Chris said, “We know how many people were aware of his high school records over the years as they would ask us if we were related to Norm Grow. Dad would have loved this event, meeting the other inductees and talking basketball and sharing this honor with his family and friends.”
Matthew Hurt of Rochester John Marshall received the McDonald Award, presented by the Minnesota Boys Basketball Coaches Association, at the group’s all-star games on Saturday at Macalester.

The 6-10 Hurt, who got the Mr. Basketball Award a week earlier, from another committee, averaged 37 points and 12.4 rebounds and finished as the state’s large-school record-holder with 3,819 points. He is expected to announce his college choice after the Final Four this weekend.

The award, named after Bob McDonald, the state’s all-time leader in wins (1,012) is patterned after the Wooden Award in college basketball. The finalists are named in the photo caption at right.

McDonald award finalists -- from left, Noah Christensen of Breck- enridge, Robert Jones of Prior Lake, Jack Middleton of Edina, Matthew Hurt of Rochester John Marshall, Bob McDonald, Antwon Kimmons of Tartan, David Roddy of Breck, Jaeden King of Cretin- Derham Hall and Isaac Fink of Springfield. Not present were Tyrell Terry of DeLaSalle, Tyler Wahl of Lakeville North, Zeke Nnaji of Hopkins and Courtney Brown Jr. of East Ridge.

McDonald Award to RJM’s Hurt
Senior stars fire away

Forty senior basketball stars took part in the annual Minnesota Boys Basketball Coaches Association All-Star Games last Friday and Saturday. As usual, defense was optional and the games were offensive free-for-all’s with scores well past 100.

The Gold team won the tournament. Gold beat Maroon 151-132 on Friday evening at St. Cloud State, led by Connor Bich of Hermantown with 34 points and Maleeck Harden-Hayes of Moorhead with 32 points. They edged Blue 134-131 on Saturday at Macalester, led by Tommy Chatman of Park Center with 26 points and Mason Tapp of Hayfield with 20.

See all the box scores, next page.

GOLD TEAM

Coaches
Neil Steffes and Jeff Gullickson, Fertile-Beltrami

Players
Eli Campbell, Minneapolis North
Connor Bich, Hermantown
Tommy Chatman, Park Center
James Flicek, Princeton
Jason Kaul, Blaine
Maleeck Harden-Hayes, Moorhead
Baden Noening, Minnesota Valley Lutheran
Sam Fisher, Henning
Sam Schwartz, White Bear Lake
Mason Trapp, Hayfield

MAROON TEAM

Coaches
Terry Techan and Jamie Longstreet, Delano

Players
Jeremy Beckler, White Bear Lake
Matthew Johnson, Fergus Falls
Jalen Dearring, Hopkins
Mitch Hoisted, Maple Lake
Logan Nagorski, Big Lake
Bennett Otto, Champlin Park
David Roddy, Breck
Derek Techam, Delano
Malik Willingham, Waseca
Hunter Nielsen, New Prague

GREEN TEAM

Coaches
Ryan Dusha and Daryl Oja, Melrose

Players
Owen Boerema, Litchfield
Khari Broadway, Park Center
Daveontae Davis, Park Center
Isaac Fink, Springfield
Preston Keaveny, Melrose
Jackson Jangula, St. Cloud Cathedral
Robert Jones, Prior Lake
Jack Middleton, Edina
Noah Christensen, Breckenridge
Drew Gustafson, Kimball

BLUE TEAM

Coaches
Omar McMillan and Matt Mullenback, Richfield

Players
Brandon Adelman, New London-Spicer
Jared Rainey, Maple Grove
Charlie Gorres, Park-Cottage Grove
Jake Kettner, Minnesota Valley Lutheran
Michael Hurt, Rochester John Marshall
Antwon Kimmons, Tartan
Jaeden King, Cretin-Derham Hall
Jon Stimmler, Princeton
Jack Thompson, St. Thomas Academy
Mason Zick, Northfield
Boys all-star game box scores

Friday at St. Cloud State

GOLD 151, MAROON 132

Gold — Eli Campbell 4, Connor Bich 34, Tommy Chatman 20, James Flicek 5, Jason Kaul 17, Maleeck Harden-Hayes 32, Baden Noenning 8, Sam Fisher 5, Sam Schwartz 16, Mason Tapp 10

Maroon — Jeremy Beckler 12, Matthew Johnson 22, Jalen Dearring 21, Mitch Hoistad 4, Logan Nagorski 13, Bennett Otto 11, Derek Techam 9, Malik Willingham 22, Hunter Nielsen 18

BLUE 131, GREEN 106

Green — Owen Boerema 9, Khari Broadway 8, Daveonte Davis 23, Isaac Fink 7, Preston Keaveny 11, Drew Gustafson 8, Jackson Jangula 7, Robert Jones 13, Jack Middleton 9, Noah Christensen 11

Blue — Brandon Adelman 4, Jared Rainey 11, Charlie Gores 17, Jake Kettner 12, Antwon Kimmons 15, Jaeden King 19, Jon Stimmler 18, Thompson 18, Mason Zick 17

Saturday at Macalester

GOLD 134, BLUE 131

Gold — Tommy Chatman 26, Maleeck Harden-Hayes 19, Sam Fisher 13, Sam Schwartz 10, Mason Tapp 20, Connor Bich 9, James Flicek 15, Jason Kaul 11, Baden Noenning 11

Blue — Jared Rainey 4, Matthew Hurt 29, Antwon Kimmons 20, Jaeden King 21, Jack Thompson 3, Brandon Adelman 20, Jake Kettner 4, Jon Stimmler 12, Mason Zick 18

MAROON 117
GREEN 107

Maroon — Matthew Johnson 11, Jalen Dearring 13, Logan Nagorski 7, Derek Techam 14, Hunter Nielsen 25, Jeremy Beckler 12, Mitch Hoistad 16, Bennett Otto 8, Malik Willingham 12

Green — Owen Boerema 8, Isaac Fink 19, Preston Keaveny 5, Robert Jones 19, Khari Broadway 14, Daveonte Favis 10, Drew Gustafson 9, Jack Middleton 12, Noah Christensen 2

At left, White Bear Lake’s Jeremy Beckler stuffs one through the cords. At right, Jason Kauls of Blaine goes up for two.

Photos by Bruce Strand, MN Basketball News
Bueckers chooses UConn

By Bruce Strand

The rich get richer, and the Gophers miss out, once again. Paige Bueckers, the most prized girls basketball prospect the state ever produced, announced Monday that she will play for the nation’s preeminent women’s program, Connecticut. This on the heels of two of the state’s top boys prospects ever, Tyus and Tre Jones of Apple Valley, both choosing perennial power Duke in 2014 and 2018 respectively.

“I always dreamed of playing basketball at the Division I level under coach Geno Auriemma at the University of Connecticut,” tweeted Bueckers, who’ll be the first Minnesotan to play for the 11-time national champions.

The 5-11 junior who averaged 24.4 points, 5.5 assists and 4.7 steals this season, leading Hopkins to an 32-0 record, the state title, and the No. 6 spot in the USA Today Super 25.

Contacted by ESPN, which ranks Bueckers the No. 1 junior in the country at any position, she stated, “I think my talents will be maximized under Coach Geno ... He thinks he can do great things with me, and I think so, too. That’s why I chose UConn. I can’t wait.” ESPN said Bueckers’ other finalists were Notre Dame, Oregon State, Oregon, UCLA, Minnesota, South Carolina, Maryland, Texas and Duke.

Hopkins coach Brian Cosgriff told the Hartford Courant: “Geno did by far the best job of recruiting her. I’ve never seen a college coach do such due diligence in recruiting a player, and there’s a reason why UConn’s great every year.” Cosgriff said Auriemma and associate head coach started building this relationship over three years ago, and “it didn’t surprise me at all. I was in tears of joy that she was going to UConn.”

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Tom Vix, Rushford-Peterson     16 state tournaments
John Carlson, Litchfield       3-time state champions
Brian Cosgriff, Hopkins        6-time state champions
Dave Smart, Ada-Borup          3-time state champions
Dave Walker, Maple River       State champions
Reggie Perkins, Minneapolis    State champions
Barry Wohler, Orono            State champions

State champions as players – who also direct camps
Terry Kunze                    State champion, college coach, pro player
Paul McDonald                  2-time state champion, head college coach
Joel McDonald                  State champions, head HS coach
Sascha Hansen                  3-time state champion, administrator
Barry Wohler                   3-time state champion, head HS coach
Steve Lingenfelter             State champion, NBA player, HS coach
Cody Schilling                 3-time state champion, college head coach
Josh Ortmann                   State champion, head HS coach

CHOICE OF TWO FORMATS:
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Area Camps—Pacesetter Area Camps serve players in many regions of the 5-state area. Camp hosts design the time schedule of the sessions and the grades and genders to meet their needs. These camps range from 1-4 days and provide sessions ranging from 1-6 hours per day for players from K-12.

Championship Camps—Pacesetter “Champ Camps” are set for 3 days and provide players in grades 6-10 with 20-26 hours of basketball in three days. Coaches who have coached a championship team or played on a state championship team are selected as the lead camp directors. These camps are often divided by theme: Shooting Camp, All-Skills Camp, Combo Camp.

“Tour of Champions” Camp—To celebrate 40 years, Pacesetter is offering a special “Tour of Champions” series of camps in the 5-state area. These camps will be 1-2 days and feature the very best coaches in the Midwest—coaches who have won state championships or college coaches who have won conference championships or coaches who have reached other high levels of success—Hall of Fame, Coach of the Year, etc. Camps will be one 8-hour session for all players for 1-day camps and either 4-hour or 8-hour sessions for 2-day camps. Host coaches may also invite their coaching staff to attend these special camps as a free coaching clinic.

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