

## “March Madness” – Although Underdogs, Raiders Were Decisive Winners!

The term, “March Madness,” was originally coined in 1939 by Henry V. Porter, a teacher and coach in Manito, Illinois, to capture the spirit of high school basketball state tournaments. “March Madness” is actually a registered trademark held jointly by the NCAA and the Illinois High School Association.<sup>1</sup> Minnesota’s high school version of “March Madness,” is the Minnesota High School Basketball State Tournament. The tournament celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2012.<sup>2</sup>

Forty-Three years ago the 1970 Sherburn Raiders, undoubtedly characterized by many as the quintessential “underdog,” led by Coach Dennis Christofferson crafted a perfect 18-0 record in the regular season followed by an astonishing 8-0 record in the district, region, and state tournaments. Their state championship is remarkable in that it occurred during a time when it was a single class tournament, only one Minnesota state basketball champion emerged from the state tournament whether it was a big school or a small school. Consequently, it could be said that the boys from the small outstate community of Sherburn were undoubtedly the classic “underdog” during much of the tournament, and undisputedly so in the final game against South St. Paul.

The Raiders starting five included seniors Tom Mulso, Jeff McCarron, and John Tirevold accompanied by sophomores Pete Eiden and Paul Krohn. They started the season by literally annihilating Jackson by a score of 74-38. They continued by beating Butterfield, Mapleton, Truman, Trimont, and Mankato Loyola. They entered the holiday break with a 6-0 record.

Following the Christmas break, the Raiders defeated Madelia 98-65 with Jeff McCarron scoring forty-five points, a new school record that was previously held by Joe Eiden. They continued their winning ways throughout the regular season; however, they were challenged by Lakefield having to come back from being ten points behind in the second quarter to finally win by thirteen.

The Raiders entered the District V tournament as a number one seed facing Fairmont in their first game. Fairmont, an arch rival, had defeated them in district play each of the preceding three years. However, that was not to be this time as they won handily by a score of 73-57. They went on to win the district by defeating Delavan and Wells and in Region II; they defeated Luverne 76-63 and Jackson 48-38, thus earning them a spot in the state tournament in Williams Arena.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.basketball.org/march-madness-history/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://minnesota.publicradio.org/display/web/2012/03/21/sherburn-high-school-basketball>

In the first game of the state tournament, the Raiders defeated Melrose 65-54 and then defeated Marshall 71-60 to qualify for the championship game against heavily favored South St. Paul.

Although decidedly underdogs, the Raiders had three players in the 6 feet, 5 inch range, they were agile, and they could run. South St. Paul was heavily favored, undoubtedly as a result of their supposed tougher schedule in the metro conferences. In addition, they were rated number one in the state for much of the year.

More than 18,000 fans, including most of Sherburn, packed Williams Arena for the tip off of the championship game. As the game progressed, Sherburn opened up a thirteen point lead in the first half. South St. Paul staged a comeback in the second half, only to be quelled by the Raiders before finally savoring a decisive sixteen point victory, 78-62. In addition, the Raiders also featured the tournament's leading scorer in Tom Mulso averaging 27.7 points per game totaling 83 points for the 3 games and, ironically, the championship trophy was presented to them by a South St. Paul resident, Governor Harold Levander.

Although the Raiders were undeniably a talented and well coached team, they also had an intangible of sorts that to some extent may have helped them achieve their championship status. That intangible was the character of George Packard, an ardent fan dedicated to the hometown team who also fit the role of the town outcast. "Packard liked to play up Sherburn's underdog status by calling them 'the hicks from the sticks.' By the time the team reached the championship game, a tight bond had formed: the small-town basketball team, underdogs in the state tournament. And George Packard, underdog for life."<sup>3</sup> His analysis of opposing teams and their players seemed to have somewhat of a grounding effect on the team in keeping them focused. Packard, 67 at that time, passed away in 1983.

Consequently, the Sherburn Raiders, although being the definitive "underdog" from rural outstate Minnesota, proved their skills by prevailing forty-three years ago in that March of 1970, the final year of the single class era dating from 1913-1970. Their victorious season exemplifies the role of the "underdog," not only in sports, but also in life. Their accomplishment gives hope and meaning to anyone feeling like an "underdog" aspiring to be successful in whatever endeavor in life they might contemplate. Congratulations to those "underdog" Raiders of forty-three years ago! Their success is the embodiment of what the "underdog" can achieve while putting the Sherburn Raiders forever in the annals of Minnesota State High School basketball history.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://minnesota.publicradio.org/display/web/2012/03/21/sherburn-high-school-basketball>

For more information on this topic, or to become a member of the Martin County Historical Society, visit the Pioneer Museum in Fairmont.



FRONT, LEFT TO RIGHT: L. Swanson (manager), D. Christofferson, B. Etter (coaches), J. Burmeister, (manager), BACK: J. Tirevold, T. McDied, D. Karsten, K. Meyer, P. Eiden, J. McCarron, T. Mulso, K. Anderson, P. Krohn, D. Ufkin, J. Theobald, R. Studer.

# Conference ————— 1969-70 Schedule

## Champs

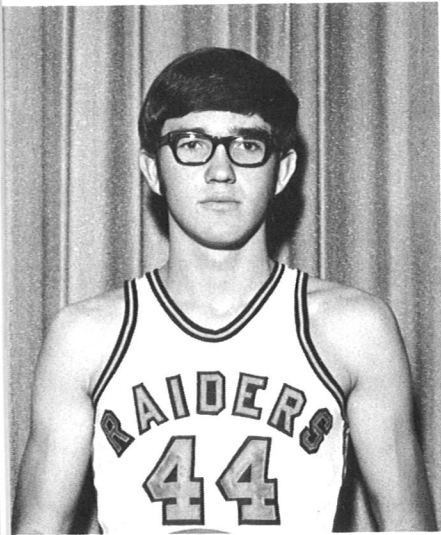


Sherburn	74	Jackson	38
Sherburn	74	Butterfield	54
Sherburn	98	Mapleton	61
Sherburn	87	Truman	46
Sherburn	75	Trimont	26
Sherburn	71	Mankato Loyola	59
Sherburn	98	Madelia	65
Sherburn	81	Winnebago	37
Sherburn	72	Lake Crystal	41
Sherburn	63	Butterfield	54
Sherburn	80	Mapleton	62
Sherburn	95	Truman	41
Sherburn	69	Trimont	40
Sherburn	76	Wells	57
Sherburn	97	Madelia	65
Sherburn	76	Winnebago	39
Sherburn	79	Lakefield	66
Sherburn	94	Lake Crystal	47

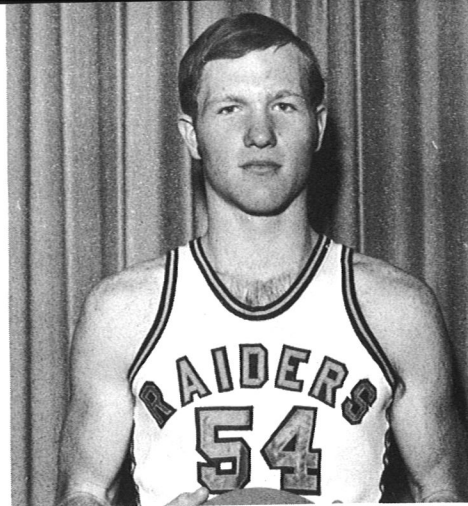
### TOURNAMENTS

Sherburn	73	Fairmont	57
Sherburn	82	Delavan	60
Sherburn	71	Wells	48
Sherburn	76	Luverne	63
Sherburn	48	Jackson	38
Sherburn	65	Melrose	54
Sherburn	71	Marshall	60
Sherburn	78	South St. Paul	62

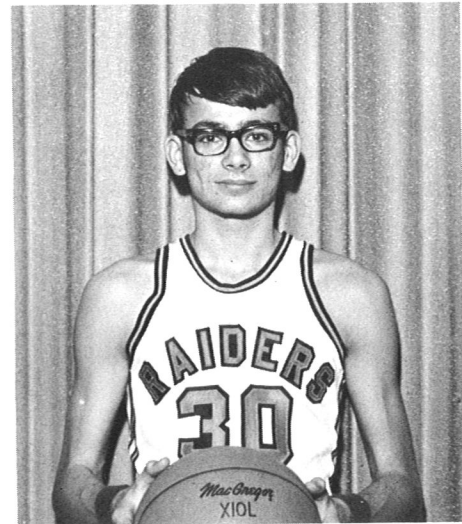




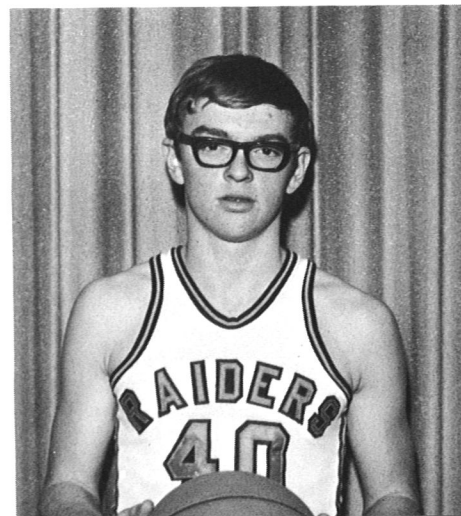
"Tom"



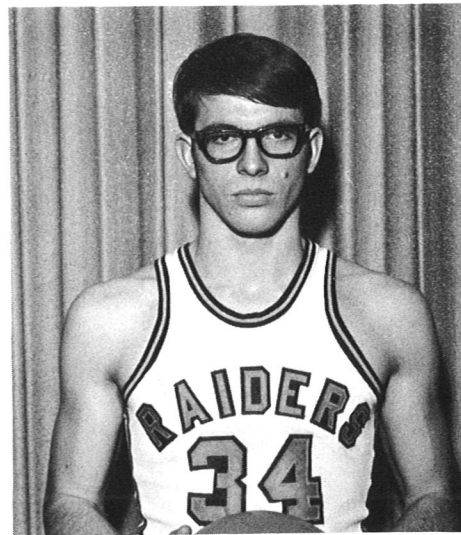
"Jeff"



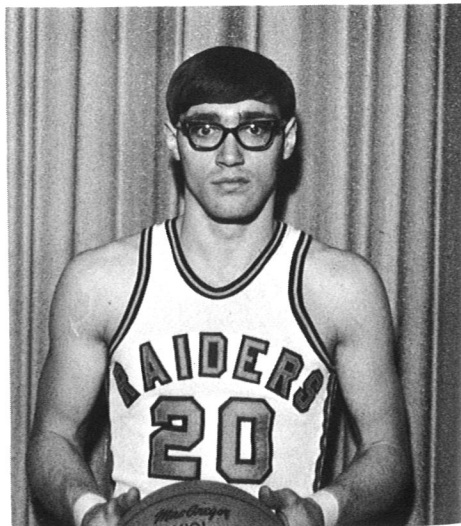
"Kim"



"John"



"John"



"Rod"

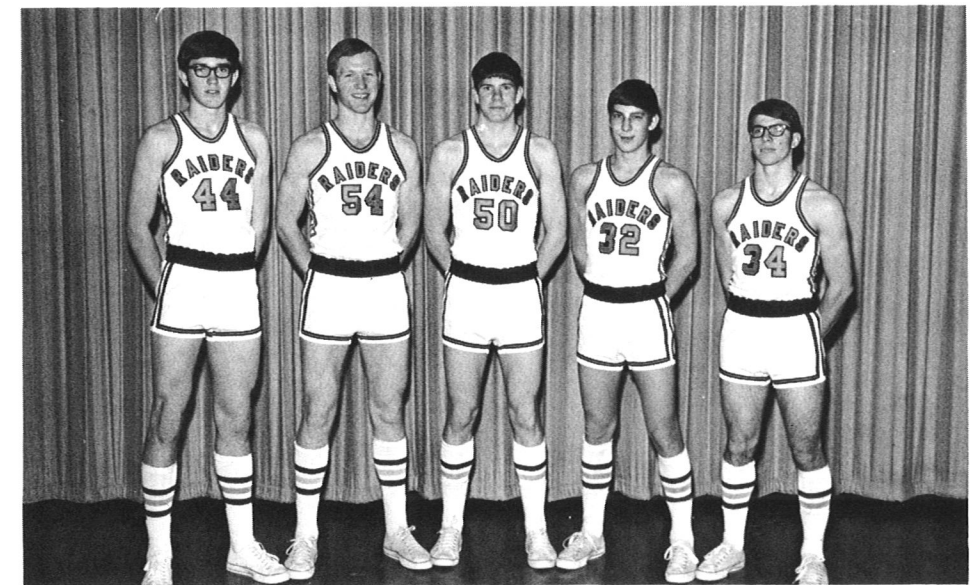
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Sherburn displayed a brand of basketball that had tournament possibilities as they opened up the season against Jackson. The final score was 74-38. The Raiders, starting three seniors (Tom Mulso, Jeff McCarron, and John Tirevold) and two sophomores (Pete Eiden and Paul Krohn), blew Jackson off the court in the first quarter and then steadily piled up the score. Leading scorers for Sherburn were Tom Mulso and Jeff McCarron with 36 and 21 respectively.

The Raiders met Butterfield in their first conference game. Butterfield, probably the second strongest team in the conference, was out to break the string of 44 straight conference victories but fell short 74-54. Leading scorers for Sherburn were Tom Mulso with 26 and Jeff McCarron with 24. McCarron had 20 rebounds.

Sherburn swept to three more conference victories as they defeated Mapleton 98-61, Truman 87-47, and Trimont 72-26. This led up to the next big game of the season, Mankato Loyola. The Raiders defeated Loyola 71-59 behind the scoring of Tom Mulso and John Tirevold. Mulso had 25 rebounds as Jeff McCarron sat out much of the game with foul trouble. With his victory the Raiders went into the holiday vacation with a perfect 6-0 mark.

### "Starting Five"



Tom Mulso

Jeff McCarron

Pete Eiden

Paul Krohn

John Tirevold

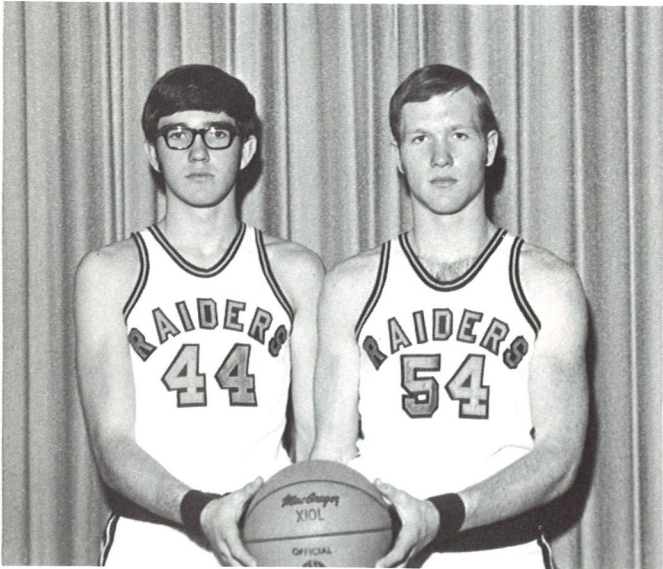
After the Christmas vacation the Raiders again began their usual routine as they defeated conference rival, Madelia by the score of 98-65. One important highlight to the game was the performance of Jeff McCarron. He set a new school record as he scored 45 points, breaking the record set by Joe Eiden. The following Friday the Raiders traveled to Winnebago, they looked sharp and returned with a 81-37 victory. In the game Jeff broke the 1000 point mark for career scoring. Moving on to the next game the Raiders dealt the Lake Crystal team a 72-41 loss. This brought Sherburn to its toughest conference battle as they hosted Butterfield. The game was close all the way as Sherburn won by a nine point margin 63-54. The victory probably insured the Raiders the 1970 conference championship in basketball. The Raiders suffered a letdown as they traveled to Mapleton the following Tuesday. The final score was 80-62 but the game was much closer than the score indicates. Sherburn then played Truman and handled them easily 95-41. At this time the Raiders held a 12-0 season mark and have won 54 games.





COACHES:  
D. Christofferson  
B. Etter

CAPTAINS:  
Tom & Jeff



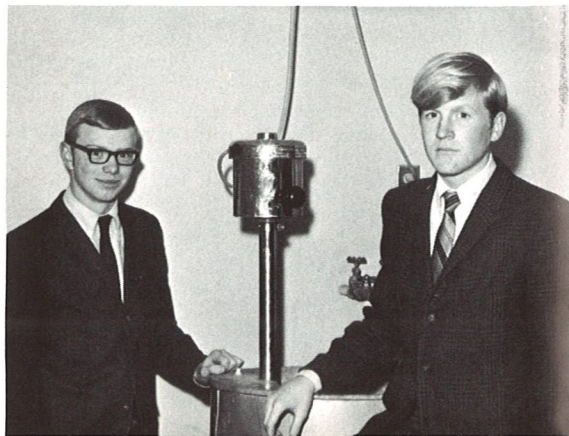
ALL-CONFERENCE



Pete  
John  
Jeff  
Tom

The Raiders began their tournament drive as they defeated Trimont 69-40. The Raiders used this game as a warm up for the contest with Wells the following night. The game was hailed as the preview of the district title match. Sherburn won the game, after a tough battle, 76-57. At the start both teams were obviously tense from the big build-up and the large crowd of fans the game attracted. Finally the Raiders loosened up and walked away with their fourteenth straight victory of the season. Jeff McCarron and Tom Mulso led the scoring with 30 and 27 points respectively. Another Raider came into the light when Sherburn played Madelia the following Tuesday. Pete Eiden, sophomore center, scored 25 points as the team ripped Madelia 97-65. When Sherburn played Winnebago they ran into a slow down offense designed to stop the Sherburn fast break. It did help hold the scoring down but the important thing fell through as the Raiders won 76-39. The Raiders faced their last tough test before tournaments when they traveled to Lakefield. The Raiders won by a margin of 13, 79-66; but they had to come back from being ten points behind during the second quarter. Jeff McCarron had a good game and scored 34 points. The Raiders finished their regular season with a victory over Lake Crystal, the 18th. Tom Mulso set his career mark with 1000 points.

MANAGERS:  
Joel Lee



## "B" Team



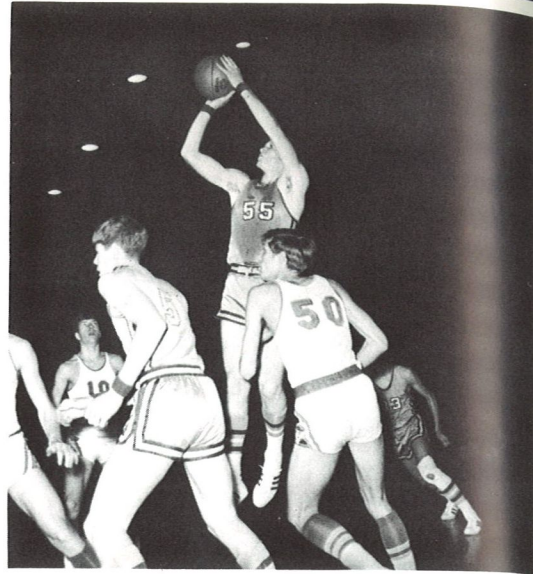
FRONT ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT: G. Martin, P. Poppee, W. Theobald, M. Schwager, N. Barber, D. Meyer, D. Neppel, D. Musser, SECOND ROW: J. Burmeister, T. McDied, D. Steffen, A. Ambrose, K. Anderson, L. Luterman, J. McCarron, K. Scheff, D. Ufkin, B. Etter (coach).

The Raiders entered the District V Basketball Tournament seeded first, and with the determination to prove they deserved their position. The first game was against Fairmont, the team which had beaten Sherburn in District play for three preceeding years. The Raiders proved their superiority by winning 73-57. This put Sherburn against Delavan and they won this game 82-60. The final game was with Wells and after the defeat they had received earlier, everyone knew Wells was out for a battle; however, the Raiders succeeded again 71-48. Now being District Five Champs the Raiders entered Region II tournament play against Luverne at Mankota. They beat Luverne 76-63 and then faced the team they had played first in the season, Jackson. The Raiders fought a hard battle and with the support of their fans earned a trip to Minneapolis by winning 48-38.

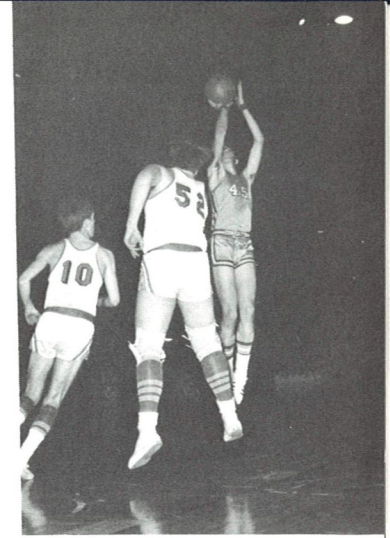
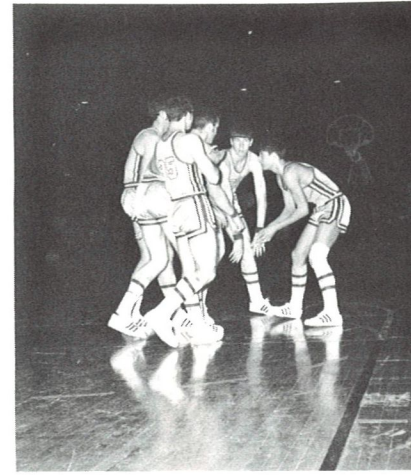
The entire town was involved with THEIR team's trip to Williams Arena and they all made plans concerning the games. When the team left there were shouts of good luck and determination, and also tears.



The first game at State was with Melrose and the Raiders won 65-54 to the delight of the students who were faced with a long bus ride back home. When Sherburn won their second game against Marshall 71-60 there was unbelief among the fans for now their team was going to play South St. Paul in the finals. Everyone agreed as they watched that the Raiders played their best game ever and came up with the 78-62 victory which made them the "1970 STATE BASKETBALL CHAMPS".



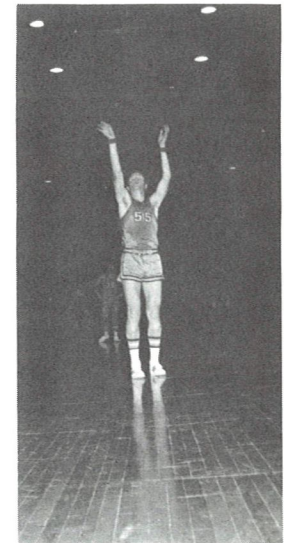
"George"--The Raiders No. 1 Fan.



"District  
Five  
Champs"



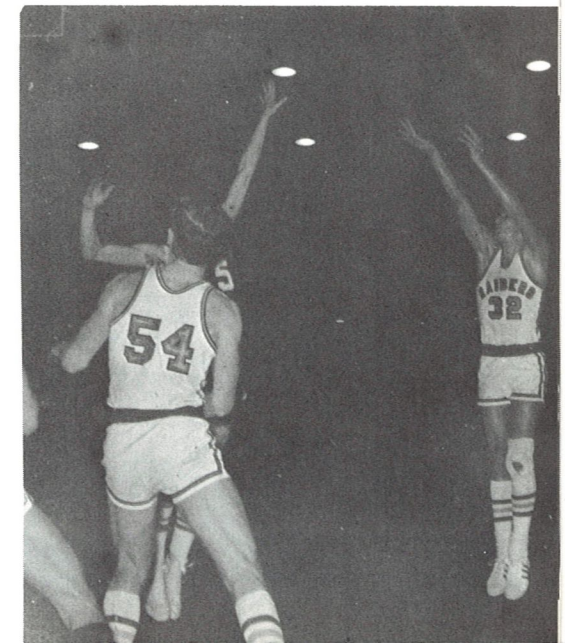
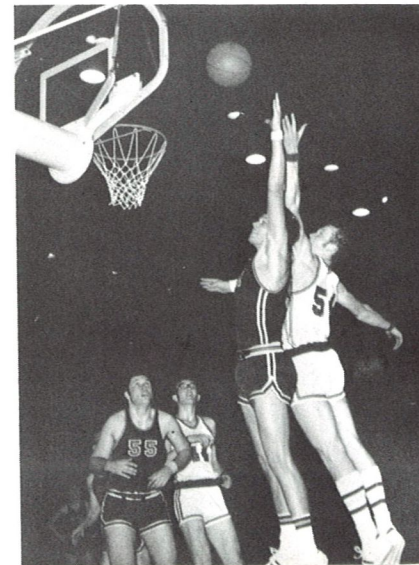
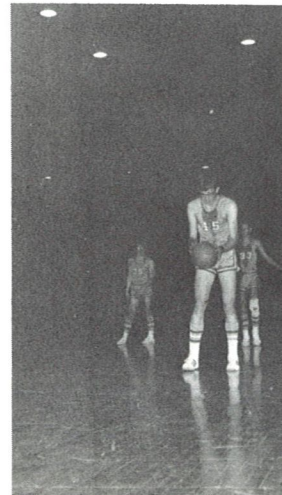
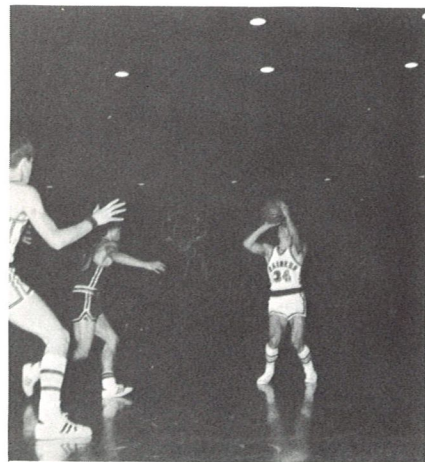
"Region  
II  
Champs"



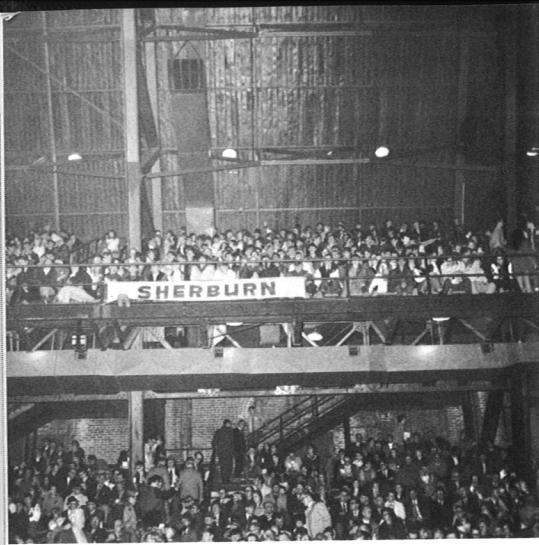
1970 SHS TROPHEYS



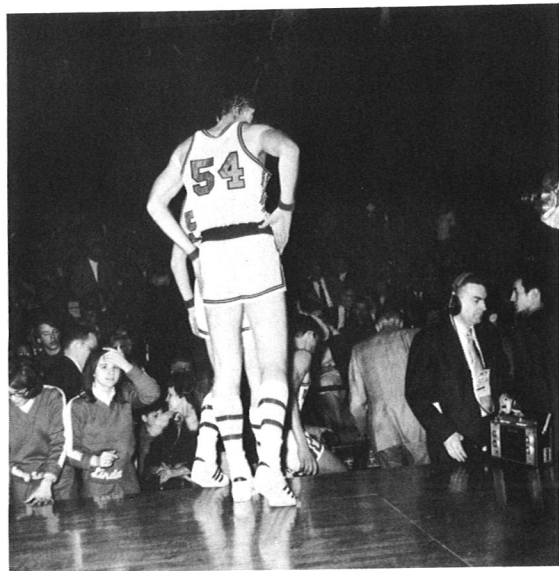
Wrestling, Basketball & Track







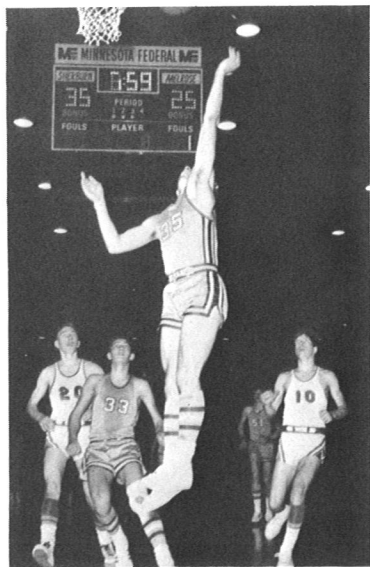
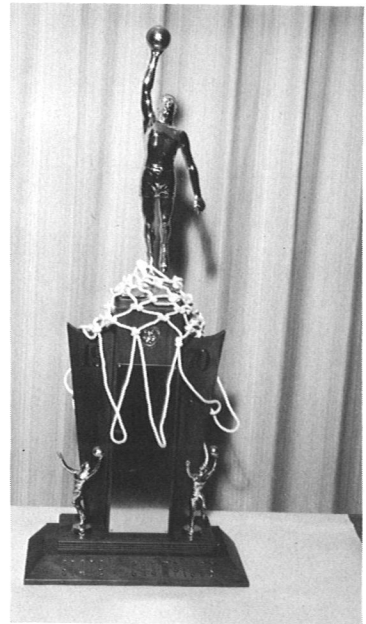
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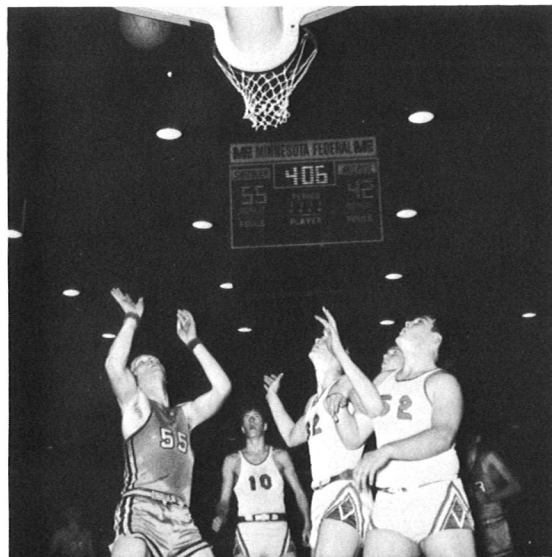
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Champs"



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# "Starting Five"



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Mulso

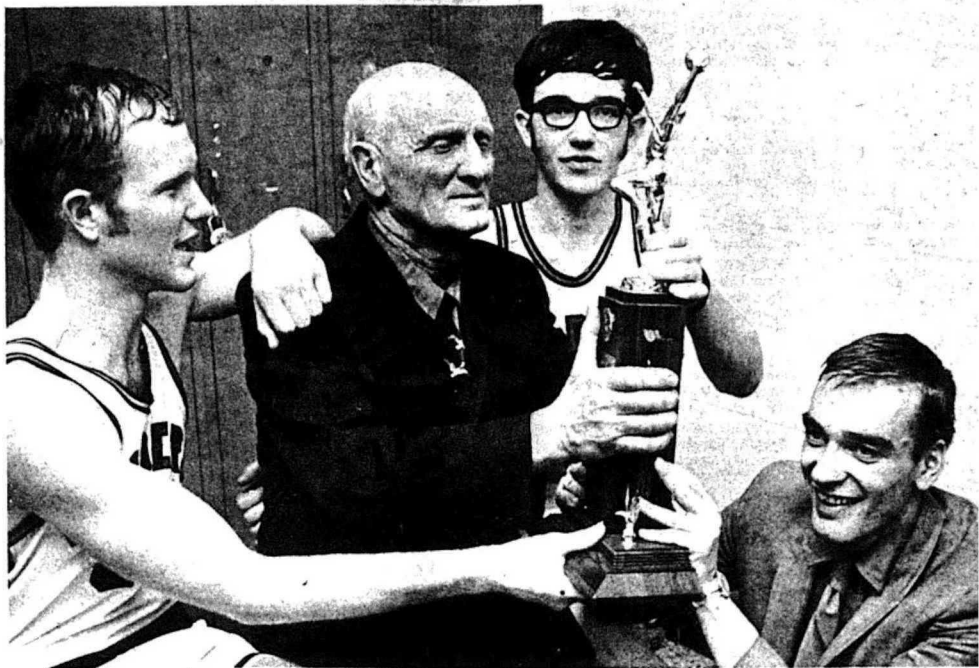
Jeff  
McCarron

Pete  
Eiden

Paul  
Krohn

John  
Tirevold





Jeff McCarron

George Packard

Tom Mulso

Dennis Christofferson



