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Hometown basketball star joins others in Hall of Fame

BY DEREK BRIGHTWELL THE NEWS-ENTERPRISE

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Former Elizabethtown High School star Steffphon Pettigrew had no shortage of guests wanting to shake his hand Saturday after he joined the Kentucky High School Basketball Hall of Fame in a ceremony at the State Theater in Elizabethtown.

DEREK BRIGHTWELL/The News-Enterprise

Elizabethtown was the site for stars Saturday as the the Kentucky High School Basketball Hall of Fame welcomed its 10th class.

It was a class made up of legendary coaches and players, trailblazers, a pair of rivals and one hometown star; Mr. and Miss Basketball winners, state champs, Division-I players, professionals and a Globetrotter.

It was a celebration of the Bluegrass's most beloved sport.

For Elizabethtown High School's Steffphon Pettigrew, the ceremony, held at the State Theater, was extra special as it was the location of his prom night 15 years ago. He laughed and said it was a little bit sweeter Saturday night as a member of the 2022 class than it was when he was a senior in high school.

But Pettigrew, who averaged 32.7 points per game en route to winning the 2007 Mr. Basketball award and still is EHS' all-time leading scorer, knows that entering the Hall of Fame is more than just about him.

"For the guys looking up to the people who play basketball at EHS; it's just something that they can keep working hard to strive and get to," he said. "For me, it was (EHS class of 2000) Antwain Barbour and I hope I can be a role model for the younger generation as well."

As a sophomore, Pettigrew helped lead the Panthers to the Sweet 16, won the King of the Bluegrass Tournament MVP as a junior before winning the highest individual honor in the state to close out his E'town career before heading to Western Kentucky University.

Despite all of his personal and team success he experienced as a player, the enduring memory of his time at EHS was on the practice floor.

“Honestly, just all the times coach (James) Haire used to kill us in practice,” he said with a laugh. “That really was the first thing I thought about, all the sprints and the grind he put us through to make us better. I started reminiscing on all the work I’d put in before and after practice.

“I started thinking about my WKU days and my professional career, just taking it all in, and I couldn’t believe I’m able to sit here and put my stamp on history,” he added.

Pettigrew said the moment didn’t really set in for him until he was sitting at lunch with the rest of the class and “couldn’t believe I was a part of something so special.”

He said when he’d talk about his prep success with his teammates overseas, they’d respond “Man, you didn’t do all that in high school,” and when he got the call about the induction, it was a chance for him to truly sit down and look back on his high school career.

Two players who were apart of this class whose high school careers are forever linked are Pleasure Ridge Park High School’s Andy Penick and Louisville Central High School’s Dwayne Morton — big regional rivals in their high school days who ended up forging a bond in the summer as members of the Kentucky All-Star Teams.

“(We) fought Indiana together, fought German teams together,” Penick said. “Dwayne and I became friends over the summer and he’s a great guy, a great player and to be going in with him in the same year, with our past relationship that we grew over the years, is pretty special.”

It’s a sentiment that Morton echoed.

“It’s big and it feels good. It was a rivalry in those days, and we’d met in the summer of our high school years, meeting those goals,” he said. “Now, as older men coming together and being inducted, it means a lot.”

Different eras, different regions and different paths to success were represented in the KHSBHF Class of 2022.

There was the impressive career of Sydney Moss of Boone County High School. Moss scored 2,997 points, has 315 assists, 326 steals and 136 blocks, winning Miss Basketball and Gatorade Player of the Year in 2012.

That career carried on the legacy set in 1975 by Buckhorn High School’s Peggy Gay Moore. The KHSAA sanctioned girls’ basketball in Moore’s senior year and she took full advantage of it, scoring 74 points in one game and averaging 35 points per game for the year as well as 16 rebounds. She’d go on to become Eastern Kentucky University’s first 1,000 point scorer.

There was Carl Helem, who led Horse Cave High School to consecutive Kentucky High School Athletic League state championships in 1944 and ’45, being named the tournament MVP in ’45. He formed what was known as the “Terrific Twosome” with teammate Clarence Wilson and would go on to play for Tennessee State University before joining the world famous Harlem Globetrotters, being presented with a Harlem Globetrotters Legends Ring in 1999.

The Hall of Fame class will join others as they are enshrined in the Dr. Mark and Cindy Lynn Kentucky High School Basketball Hall of Fame at 212 W. Dixie Ave. in Elizabethtown.

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