

# Marian Catholic ALUMNI ASSOCIATION



**MARCH 2021**



## **CELEBRATING THE GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY OF WINNING OUR FIRST-EVER GOLD**

### **MARIAN CATHOLIC WINS PCIAA STATE CHAMPIONSHIP**

**Balanced attack and defense play key to history-making victory for Fulton's forces**

*Note: The following is a partial account of Marian Catholic's championship win on March 20, 1971, as reported by Dennis McLaughlin, Sports Editor of the Times News & Record, Lehighton.*

Marian Catholic's crack basketball team won the greatest victory in the history of the school on Saturday night and turned all of Pennsylvania into "Colt Country" when the Colts whipped St. Basil's of Pittsburgh, 67-48, for the PCIAA Class B state championship.

As in previous victories en route to a fantastic 25-4 record, the Colts did it with a team effort complimented by a sharp

and well-drilled defense and an explosive offense. For the miracle worker, coach Bob Fulton, it was his greatest victory as a coach leading Marian Catholic from the losing side of the ledger three years ago to a winner in just two short years as head coach.

The history-making triumph occurred in St. Vincent College's Kennedy Gym before 2,700 fans – over 70 percent of them,

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or better, from Marian Catholic. It was fitting cap on a season never to be forgotten for Marian Catholic supporters as the team won, in addition to the big prize of a state championship, the first Allentown Diocese crown ever, the most wins by a Colt team ever and the most wins (five) ever in playoff competition.

Unbelievable was the most used word but the best to describe the feelings of hundreds of faithful Colt followers who journey in the sometimes hectic weather to Latrobe.

Latrobe, where Arnold Palmer's golfing army captured the hearts of the area residents, was captured by a new army called Fulton's miracle men.

The victory was not as easy coming as the final tally indicates. The first half was a hectic, emotion-filled battle waged by the Colts and the western title-holding Sabres.

What started out to be a thrilling finish to a fantastic campaign was turned out to be a rout by the Fulton men in the second half. The Colts broke the tight contest wide open in the final four minutes of the third period and coasted to the win in the fourth period, much to the delight of the fired-up Marian Catholic followers.



**Marian Catholic:** J. Prekopa 4-3-5-11, Balascik 5-2-2-12, Teprovich 6-10-12-22, Yusella 4-5-7-13, Yext 2-3-4-7, M. Prekopa 1-0-2-2, Schlosser 0-0-2-0, McElmoyle 0-0-1-0, Segilia, Knox, Kosciolek, Senglar, Makara, Crampsie, all 0-0-0-0. **TOTALS: 22-23-35-67.**

**St. Basil's:** Miller 4-5-7-13, Joyce 3-2-2-8, McCool 3-1-1-7, Rogers 3-3-7-5, Banaszak 3-1-1-7, Holser 1-0-0-2, Krayzo 1-1-2-3, Ruscitto 0-0-0-0, McDermott 1-1-2-3. **TOTALS: 17-14-22-48**

**Marian Catholic:** 20 10 16 21 – 67

**St. Basil's:** 16 10 8 14 – 48

**Officials:** Tony Klin and Dick Burke

## COLTS SHOW THEIR CLASS IN STATE TITLE GAME

**Yusella and Teprovich lead Marian Catholic's champs over St. Basil's, 67-48**

*Note: The following is a partial account of Marian Catholic's championship win on March 20, 1971, as reported by Doyle Dietz in the Tamaqua Courier.*

For the 42<sup>nd</sup> time in two years, Frank Yusella and John Teprovich dusted off their secret formula for winning basketball games, mixed the ingredients just right and when the clock ticked off the last of its 1,920 seconds the Marian Catholic Colts hadn't won just another basketball game, they won the entire state of Pennsylvania. Well, maybe not the entire state, but at least the PCIAA Class B portion of it as Marian Catholic completely outplayed Pittsburgh's St. Basil's in the second half of their state title confrontation Saturday night before 3,000 fans at St. Vincent's College, Latrobe, and became state champions with an easy 67-48 victory.

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Marian Catholic was clearly the better team and at least 80 percent of the credit must go to Coach Bob Fulton, but he would be the first to admit if you don't have the horses you can't win games. Fulton does have the horses, however, and Yusella and Teprovich are real thoroughbreds. The floor play and keen sense Yusella shows on the floor is the same no matter who the opponent is and "The General" was never better than he was on Saturday night. Yusella had four of Marian's eight assists (the Sabres had only one), handled the ball for what seemed like 75 percent of the time the Colts had it, displayed outside shooting college coaches want from a 5-10 guard as he scored 12 points and, last, but not least, did his thing on defense as he limited the high scoring Don Joyce to a mere eight points.

As for the ever-silent Teprovich, all he did was become the school's all-time career scorer in the biggest game of his life by hitting for a game high 22 points and finished his playing days at Colt Country with 1,112 points. Teppy was hot from the start as he clicked for seven points in the first



quarter and did more than his share on the boards, pulling down 10 missed shots. Like all of the Colts, Teppy also plays 'D' and Carmen Rogers will vouch for that as the 6-2 forward was held to five point by Teppy.

St. Basil's, coached by John "Red" Ryan, brought a 22-1 record into the game and a reputation of being a tough man-to-man team, but somebody forgot to tell the Colts who after crossing 260 miles of wind-blown, snowy Pennsylvania Turnpike, weren't about to be denied.

## ROAD TO STATE TITLE

The road to Marian Catholic's PCIAA Class B state championship came in a series of six straight wins after the Colts dropped the Anthracite League championship game to West Hazleton, 63-46, before 3,000 fans at St. Joe's Gym, Hazleton.

In the opening round of Allentown Diocese play, Coach Bob Fulton's contingent overwhelmed Pius X of Roseto, winning 81-42 in displaying tremendous balanced scoring.

John Teprovich, who would eventually end his career as Marian's all-time leading scorer with 1,112 career points, tallied 25 points, followed by Joe Balascik with 18, Frank Yusella, 14, and Joe Prekopa, 12

Three nights later, the top-seeded Colts blasted away any aspirations defending state champion Holy Name of Reading may have entertained of emulation of 1970's PCIAA Class B state championship, defeating the Blue Jays 66-46.

Yusella, considered by most quarters the class player of the Anthracite League, embellished his bid for a spot on the all state team with an outstanding performance.

He sparked the Colts offensively, but his overall play is what caught the fancy of the crowd. Yusella controlled the action

and led the Colts in scoring with 16 points. Mike Prekopa came off the bench to tally 13 points while Teprovich added 10. The win sent the Colts into the diocesan championship game where they would face another Reading squad, Central Catholic.

With three players scoring in double digits – Yusella, Teprovich and Balascik – the Blue and Gold prevailed, winning its first-ever Class B diocesan crown, 66-48, and earning the squad a ticket to the PCIAA intradiocese playoffs.

Its first encounter was a date with Philadelphia Diocese titan Holy Ghost Prep of Cornwall Height. The Firebirds' 22-3 record matched almost evenly with Marian's 22-4.

The Colts prevailed, edging the Firebirds 67-64 in the Eastern Regional encounter before an emotionally-spent standing room only crowd at the Bethlehem Catholic gymnasium

Wally Yext, described by home announcer Frank Keip as "Mr. Excitement," rallied the Colts in the third period and, along with Teprovich, provided the game-winning heroics in the final period, Yext's driving basket late in the fourth stanza gave the Colts a 65-61 lead that was never headed.

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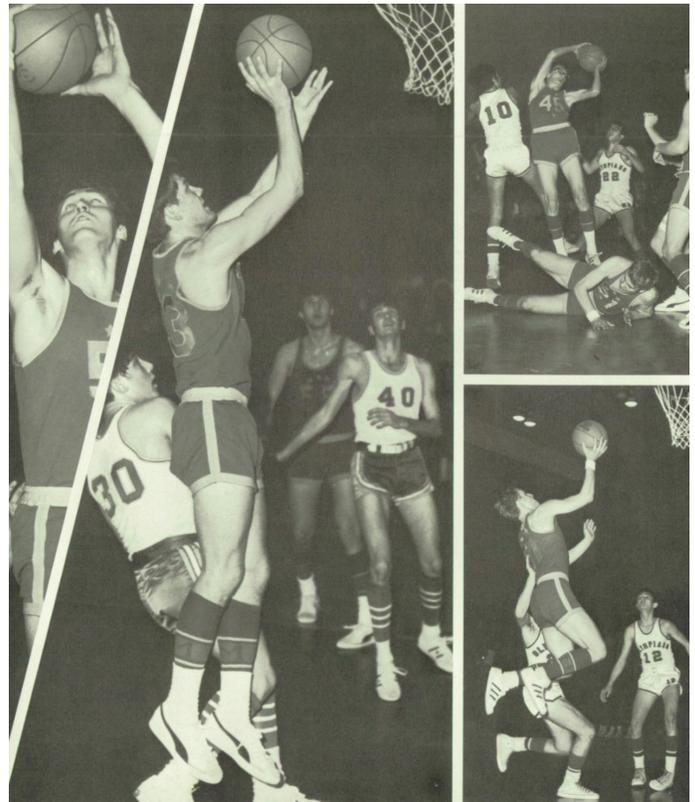
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Five Colts ended up in double digits in the scoring column, led by Teprovich's 18, 15 by Joe Prekopa, 12 by Yusella, 11 by Yext and 10 by Balascik, as the Colts advanced to the Eastern Final.

Bishop Hannan of Scranton was next, and big Joe Balascik left many with the impression he was bigger than his already massive 6-4 frame. After picking up three quick fouls in the first quarter, he came off the bench at the start of the second half and scored 22 points to lead the Colts to the Eastern championship, a 70-65 win.

Reported by the Times News, "Balascik's second half performance, a word, tremendous. Not only was he the spark plug that the Colts needed but his work on the boards was another of the key factors which provided the streaking Marian club to its most important victory to date in the history of the school."

In addition to Balascik's 22 points, the Colts got 17 from Teprovich, 12 from Joe Prekopa and 11 from Yext as they earned a trip to western Pennsylvania where they would play St. Basil's Pittsburgh in the state final to be played at St. Vincent's College in Latrobe.



## **RECIPE FOR SUCCESS:**

### **Fulton: everything fell in place**

It takes the finest ingredients to make a recipe special. Fifty years ago, during a banner 25-4 court campaign, the Marian Colts put them together, the result of which was Marian's finest season ever on the hardwood and its first state championship in athletics.

On the eve of the golden anniversary of that title game, played on March 20, 1971, we dedicate the March edition of the Marian Alumni Association to that team, piloted by the legendary Bob Fulton, who arrived at Marian in time to take over the reins of the Colts with the 1969-70 campaign, and, two years later, delivered what many consider to be the greatest team in Marian basketball history.

Fulton, then 32, returned to the Coal Regions (he is a native of Luzerne County) from Westfield, N.J., bringing with him a new style of play that focused on man-to-man defense, in which he taught his players the art of taking offensive charges, while also having a talented group of former CYO players who brought speed, finesse and the ability to score points with them from parochial schools throughout the Schuylkill-Carbon region.

"We brought a man-to-man, in-your-face style of defense to Colt Country, where every player on the floor had their own responsibilities." Fifty years later, Fulton said the result of the tenacity his players showed on the floor collectively made a huge difference in winning games. He said, "If you're going to make a difference ... the kids learned, if they were willing to do their part, the entire team benefited."

The coach recalled, "As I knew and talked to people, I quickly learned most everybody in the area played the game offensive-minded. And, defensively, more teams played zone, and when they pressed they zone pressed."

And with a new brand of basketball stressing defense, the program rebuild was underway.

Fulton pointed out his first team, the 1969-70 Colts, "were so instrumental in helping to build the program," saying, "Whatever I asked them to do, they were willing to do."

Under his watch, the Colts went 17-6 in their first season, dropping their diocesan playoff opener to eventual state champion Holy Name of Reading. But the best was yet to come.

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Fearing nobody, the Colts bought in to their coach's philosophy, and the state title was a mere one year away.

"I remember Ray Saul (Hazleton Standard Speaker sports editor) wrote an article in '69 about Moses (Fulton) returning to the Promised Land," said Dan McGinley, Class of '70 and the founder and president of the Carbon County Chapter of the Pennsylvania Sports Hall of Fame. He said, "It was the beginning of basketball greatness at Marian. That article talked about the Harlem Globetrotters' routine we put on before games and how in our senior season, we had several accomplishments in Marian basketball history - best record, most wins, first wins against Mahanoy Area, St. Gabe's and Panther Valley, the first time we shut out a team (no baskets, only made foul shots) twice, and for the first time, we made the Reading Eagle Top Five.

Fulton's players will tell you their young mentor was "ahead of his time." Most importantly, they loved his intensity, positivity and demand for greatness, all of which promoted an "all-in" approach from not only his players, but the Marian administration, fans and, most especially, Men of Marian, the school's unique fundraising organization.

On the eve of that championship, Fulton, now a resident of Eagle Rock in Luzerne County, recalled that recipe for a gold medal winner had all the ingredients. Liking the year to a puzzle in which all of its pieces came together, he recalled, "Looking back 50 years, it was special. It was kind of a perfect time when all that could go right, all came together at one time. The players were extremely special. They were open to working as hard as any kids or team that I ever had.

When you combine that kind of willingness with the

support we had from everyone in the school, and even those on the outside, it was just great."

With his arrival came requests that those around Marian hadn't ever seen before – like a ball for every player he had in practice, a special Blue Room locker room for varsity players, new uniforms, and things like placemats and coasters that were distributed around the region reading "Welcome to the Exciting World of Basketball at Marian."

He began a practice of "Meet the Colts," a pre-season gathering now shared by all sports, both at Marian and in area schools, and, all of a sudden, a frenzy existed in Hometown. The gymnasium was sold out game-after-game, seats also being set up on the stage at the one end of the court.

Fulton, admittedly, borrowed that phrase from one of the collegiate schools – Michigan State, he believes – and the Colts began an era that brought basketball prominence at the school that was never before heard of.

"The kids never hesitated to 'buy in' to our philosophy, and, best of all, combined with the support of the Men of Marian (they might have thought I was crazy, but they never hesitated to honor our requests), we set out to sell the school, to sell Marian and to sell the basketball program."

Fulton recalled when he returned here from New Jersey, his knowledge of the area was limited. He said, "I had little knowledge of what Marian was like. People would say, 'you don't know what you're getting yourself into,' but, when I arrived, the kids were excellent and I was blessed to have such great young men, and they weren't just good basketball players, they were good people."

As for the Men of Marian, he said, they helped the young coach establish a first class program. "I can't think of anything I asked of the Men of Marian that they weren't willing to do.

He added, "And the faculty was so supportive. The Marian community was tremendously supportive...Father (Edward) Sacks (principal), Mr. Malarkey (vice principal) and Father (Bill) Handges were fantastic. And all of a sudden, the parts of the puzzle came together."

He closed, "But I can't say enough about what a special time it was. Everything fell into place – Fr. Sacks, the Men of Marian, the kids, their parents, the Marian community and the tremendous fans – everyone played a role in making the season a memorable one."

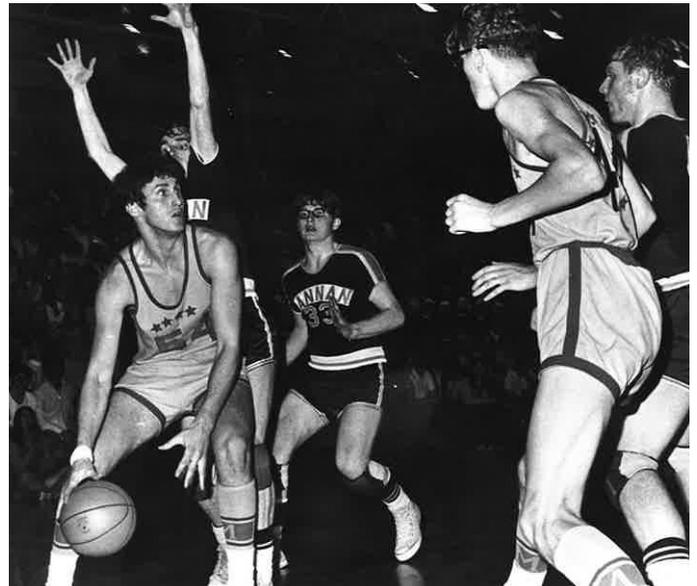
## NEWS ACCOUNTS OF OUR MEMORABLE TRIP OUT WEST

Everywhere you looked in the crowd of some 3,000-plus, there seemed to be a familiar face, from the Panther Valley or surrounding area peering back at you.

Marian sold more than 1,500 tickets in advance for the twinbill, which was more than all the three other schools combined disposed of.

St. Nicholas, Wilkes-Barre, and St. Fidelis, Herman, which opposed each other in the Class C opener, got rid of less than 300 tickets apiece, while Marian's opponent, St. Basil's, sold 400.

*Best quote of the trip west:* **Frank Keip**, president of the Men of Marian and one of the Colts' most fervent boosters, when queried by a western basketball fan, "Where did that coach (Fulton) come from?" Frank, whose affable wit is well-known, quickly retorted, in one word, "Heaven."



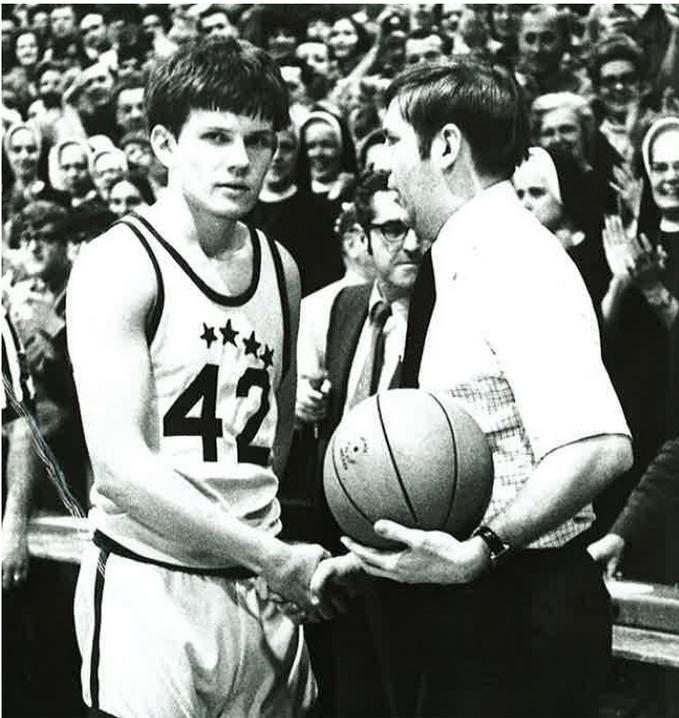
**John Teprovich**, the quiet man of Colt Country, who at one time thought he wasn't good enough to play CYO basketball, reigns as the all-time scoring king at Marian. Teprovich, a foul line marksman unmatched on the local scene and points beyond in the high school citadels of the state, scored 22 points in the Colts' dramatic 67-48 victory over St. Basil's of Pittsburgh for the Pennsylvania State PCIAA Championship, Class B vintage, to dethrone Dave Lewis as the scoring monarch at Marian.

Teprovich's record is impressive. Two hundred and sixty in his sophomore season, 350 as a junior and 502 this season, to register 1,112 points in the athletic archives of the Hometown school. This season's output is the highest single year total and gives Teppy a clean sweep of the school scoring records.

Teprovich's modest assumption about his basketball talents were met with much opposition until he finally relented, and St. Kunegunda's of McAdoo and Marian benefited. Teprovich was named MVP in eighth grade, scoring 539 points in his two years of play with the McAdoo parochials. He scored 196 points for the Marian freshmen team that finished 10-4.

Hugh "Wink" Gallagher, athletic director, coached Teprovich in his sophomore season. Teppy played on the JVs initially before Wink brought him up to the varsity.

Lewis scored 1,099 points from 1959-61 Jim Menconi had 899, Ed Stulginsky, 757, Joe Holubek, 741, John Halenar, 726.



**Father Edward Sacks**, Marian principal, probably summed up it most aptly when he said in a post game discussion: "It was more than a big basketball victory, it was a fitting reward for all the hard work, self sacrifices, determination and personal discipline that each player emoted throughout the season. Bob (Fulton) did a lot more than mold a winning basketball team, he inspired his proteges into sportsmen, scholars and gentlemen and more than that, he fused them into a well-oiled basketball team without peer."

Following Saturday night's spectacular triumph, the Marian High locker room, located beneath the gym where the Colts had just carved out the biggest basketball victory in the school's 16-year history, resembled a New Year's Eve celebration seconds after the clock had struck midnight.

There was the usual back-slapping, hand-pumping and congratulatory shouts that are synonymous with a win of such caliber and in the midst of the din, calmly answering questions being fired at him by inquiring reporters from several regional newspapers, stood the man largely responsible for it all, Coach Bob Fulton.

Fulton, who is always reluctant to take any credit himself, said he wanted to thank everyone who helped make the season such a wonderful success. He heaped praise on members of the Men of Marian, who, he said, were an integral part of the big victory.

Discussing the game itself, the modest young coach said, as our defense that came through for us again. We had to make some adjustments when Joe (Balascik) got in foul trouble early, he added, but Mike (Prekopa) did the job when Joe was out."

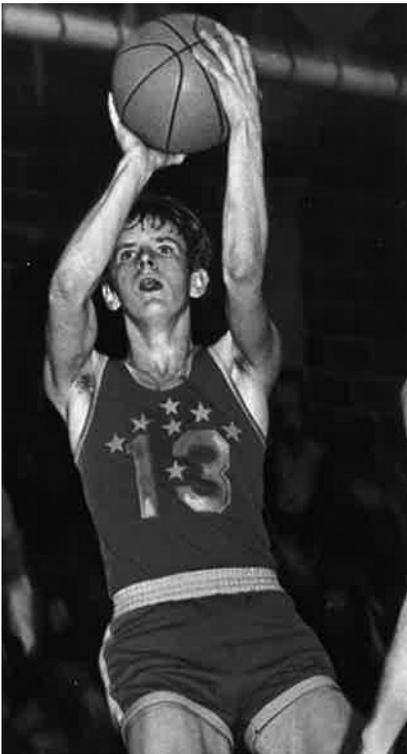
When queried as if it was the biggest win of his high school coaching career, Fulton proffered, "Every time you win, it's big, but when you culminate a successful season with a state title to your credit, it has to be considered your greatest victory."

Coach Fulton and his assistants, John Tominosky, Joe Arieta and Ron Gerlach, were all tossed fully-clothed into the showers by the cheering Marian players after the cherished victory. The Colts' team managers, squirming and squealing, also were given the traditional dunking that usually follows a big victory.

Many former area residents now residing in and around the vicinity of Pittsburgh were on hand to view the contest. All seemed to echo the same sentiment, "Marian, you've come a long way, baby."



## RECOLLECTIONS: FORMER COLTS OFFER THEIR THOUGHTS



### Wally Yext: 'Kindred spirit of teammates'

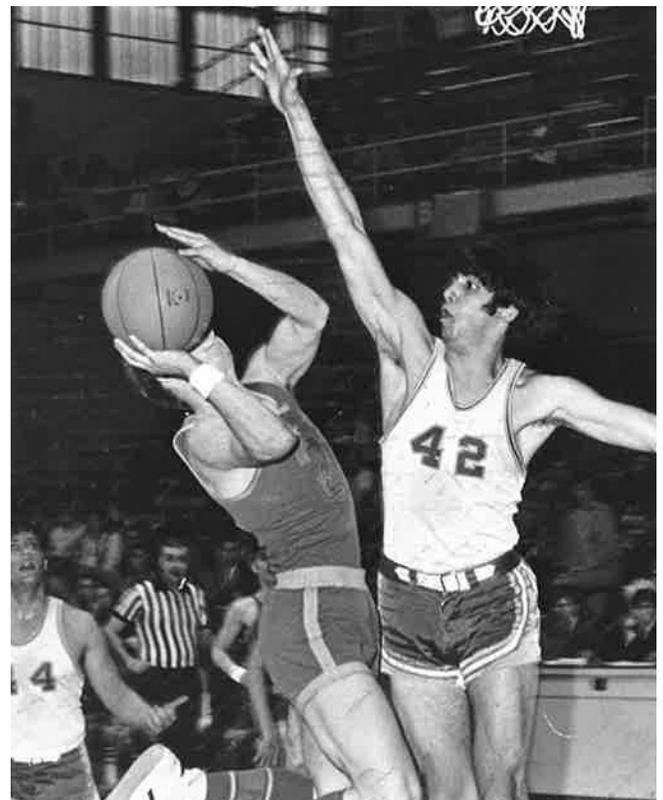
*Note: Marian's "Mr. Excitement," Wally Yext, who became known for his proclivity for drawing offensive fouls in the Colts' highly-competitive man-to-man defense, graduated in 1972 and attended DeSales University, where, he says, he didn't play basketball because "they only played zone defense." Wally is a successful businessman in the Lehigh Valley, owning Auto Collision Specialists, Emmaus.*

“The things I remember about this new young coach were his self-confidence, knowledge of basketball, youthful exuberance and his positive attitude/outlook. Coach Fulton is one of the most influential people I have ever known. I say this because through his actions, he set examples that significantly affected my life in a positive way. His actions of leadership, professionalism, self confidence and ethical behavior became benchmarks I use as I face decisions and challenges throughout life. At the time, what I remember most was the disappointing fact that we did not get to play another game. In retrospect, I look at it as a very positive experience that demonstrated to me what teamwork, focus, and a common shared goal can achieve under great leadership. I also believe that common shared goal among my teammates created a kindred spirit 'til this day. I know that without the Men of Marian our championship would not have occurred. It was the Men of Marian that recruited, hired and totally supported this new young coach so he could bring a new winning culture that changed the trajectory of sports at Marian High School.”

### Frank Yusella: 'Basketball experience shaped our futures'

*Note: Frank Yusella, known on the MHS cage team as "The General," graduated in 1971 and played basketball for four years at Kutztown University, where he was named to the university's First Century All Star Team. He went on to teach English and coach basketball at Northwestern and Wilson high schools, turning the former program around in the 1970s, including its first winning season in 15 years, then having a successful four-year stint at Wilson (71-33 record), where in 1979-80 he was named the Berks-Reading Time "Coach of the Year."*

“In 1971, 50 years ago, the Marian community experienced a special year in basketball when the boys' team won a state championship. As a member of that special team, many positive memories remain with me. First, the high school was filled with many talented players. These players were groomed for many years in the CYO programs throughout the county. The championship team was a blend of height, speed and quickness. With their hard work and motivation from a newly-hired coach the year before, they became a formidable adversary. Second, Marian had hired a new, charismatic, innovative coach named Bob Fulton, who brought a style of play



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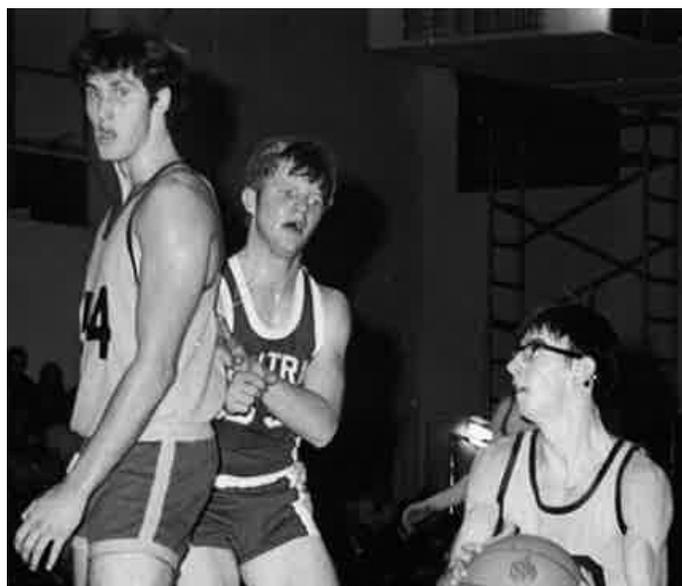
from New Jersey that was new to the region. Part of this style included a Globetrotter-style warm-up routine that was intimidating to the opposition; weighted practice sneakers, followed by lighter sneakers for games; drills to practice drawing charges; large pictures of varsity players on the gym wall; game pamphlets with pictures and biographies of each player; a carpeted Blue and Gold locker room, just to name a few. Bob Fulton was a coach ahead of his time. With his leadership, discipline and creativity, the Colts won a state championship. Last, the Colt community was ready for a state title. Marian's basketball program had been successful but had never won a state title. With enthusiasm for this excellent

team, they waited in lines to watch the Colts basketball team play. The Men of Marian were instrumental in providing the means for the team to receive the pictures, the pamphlets, the sneakers, the championship watches, the trophies, and many other items. With the support of the community and the Men of Marian, the 1971 boys' basketball team made the ultimate goal of winning a championship come to fruition. I have been blessed to have been a small part of winning this championship. Because of this experience, I have been able to develop a great work ethic, to develop pride in shaping my profession, and to develop confidence in pursuing my goals. It is difficult to believe that 50 years have passed and that many people still remember "The Marian Boys' 1971 Basketball State Championship Team. ”

**Bob Schlosser: 'Not just basketball, lessons in life'**

*Note: After his 1972 graduation, Bob Schlosser played four years of basketball at East Stroudsburg University, where he set the Warriors' record for assists in a single game (18). He later coached our Colts to a 50-15 record in the 1979-81 seasons before taking over at Allentown Central Catholic, where he coached the Vikings to a 204-73 record over nine seasons, including PIAA AAA state championships in 1984 and 1986, and a runnerup finish in 1989. He moved on to Elizabethtown College where he coached for 27 years before retiring with a record of 364-322. His teams there won three conference championships and in 2002 played in the NCAA Division 3 national championship game.*

Coach Fulton changed the culture of the boys' basketball program at Marian in so many ways. He was truly 'ahead of his time' as a coach. He taught us things about how to play the game that were never seen in our area before. He impacted us not just as basketball players but as young men in so many positive ways that have remained with us even now. Teaching us that God, Family and School were our top priorities was a key life lesson for Coach Fulton. I feel that we were not really aware of what we accomplished at the time. Looking back, we appreciate and realize more now how special that season was. From my experience as a coach for



40 years, I know how difficult it is to win a state championship at any level. The support we received from the Marian community was really awesome. I remember every game being sold out and the excitement for our games was so special. The Men of Marian organization did a fantastic job of providing us and Coach Fulton with whatever we needed to help us be successful. Our program was unlike any other at that time and the Men of Marian made it so. ”

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**Coach Fulton's grandson, Tyler Fritz, graduated in 2020 from Marian, but not before he broke the school's scoring record after a career as a four-year starter, tallying 1,959 points, during which time the Colts won a District 11 and two Schuylkill League division championships. He is the son of Damian and Kristin (Fulton) Fritz of Eagle Rock.**

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

(as listed in 1971  
Colts' basketball program)

**Head Coach:** Bob Fulton

**Assistants:**

Joseph Tominosky  
and Joseph Arieta

**Players:** Joseph Balascik,  
Robert Crampsie, John Knox,  
Thad Kosciolek, Michael  
Makara, Terry McElmoyle,  
Joseph Prekopa, Michael  
Prekopa, Robert Schlosser,  
Richard Segilia, Jerry Sengler,  
John Teprovich, Walter Yext,  
and Frank Yusella

**Principal:** Rev. Edward Sacks  
**Vice principal:** John P. Malarkey

**Athletic director:**  
Hugh "Wink" Gallagher

**Senior managers:** Stan Krutsick,  
John Rodgers, George Evancho

**Head Statistician:**  
Bruce Herman

**Junior Managers:**  
Robert O'Gurek  
and Gary Porambo

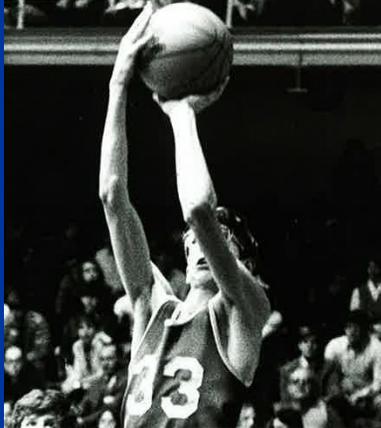
**Trainer:** Ron Gerlach

**Student trainer:** Barry Gray

**Senior student coach:**  
Joseph Tinninis

**COACH FULTON'S  
SEVEN-YEAR RECORD**

- 1969-70 - 17-6
- 1970-71 - 25-4
- 1971-72 - 24-5
- 1972-73 - 13-11
- 1973-74 - 18-8
- 1974-75 - 20-8
- 1975-76 - 10-12
- TOTALS - 127-54**



***We know our alumni are proud about the education they received at Marian Catholic!***

Join our Alumni Association today for a nominal membership fee of \$10 per year. In an era when Catholic schools are facing continuous challenges that have prompted many to close their doors, our alumni strive to be there for the next generation and for years to come. If each of us can do just a little, together we can do great things for our Alma Mater!

Go [www.mariancatholics.org](http://www.mariancatholics.org) and click on "Alumni" and "Join" to become a member today!



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