



The First Game

February 5, 1904

"An athletic association was formed at the Vincennes University Thursday with Prof. T.J. Davis as manager and Prof. O.M. Duncan as organizer. Candidates will be selected for two basketball teams who will practice three times a week at Watson's Palace Hall, which has been secured for the games. It is expected that by the time the basketball uniforms arrive one of the teams will show mastery over the other and the strongest team will be selected in the proposed battles with out of town teams. "

The Vincennes Commercial January 22, 1904

Following several weeks of practice the gauntlet was thrown in early February 1904 when the Edwardsport High School team of northern Knox County challenged the VU men. By this time the VU team consisted of Thomas Hoke (captain), and Henry Campbell, forwards; Roscoe Cauble, center; Clarence Simonson and Frank Pickle, guards. The team substitute was Clyde Cleveland. The Edwardsport team had played together for several years and, according to newspaper reports, had for three years "held the blue ribbon in this section of the State, never meeting defeat."

On Friday February 5, 1904 the VU team boarded the train for Edwardsport followed by 35 fans headed by Dr. James E. Manchester, president of the university. The game was to be played in the Edwardsport High School hall and it was reported that the Edwardsport team "seemed like perfect pieces of machinery, as they took the floor for the pre-game practice session." It was agreed to play a 45 minute game consisting of two halves of 15 minutes each with 15 minutes rest in between. The referee selected was one Robert Jones, of Vincennes, so it appears the Vincennes team took their own referee to the contest.

Vincennes took the opening tip and after making only three passes Roscoe Cauble, the VU center, scored the first field goal by use of what was called a trick play. No reference has been found that describes the type of "trick" employed. Accounts of the game simply say that the ball rested "snugly in our goal," which meant someone had to get a ladder and retrieve it from the basket. At the end of the first half the score stood 5-4 in favor of the Edwardsport five. Following the 15 minute half time rest, the game resumed and reports state that the second half was played even harder than the first with both sides doing some rather poor playing. When time was called the final score was 10 to 9 in favor of Vincennes University. It was reported that toward the end of the game most of the enthusiasm had "waned from the natives" and the Vincennes crowd gave their college yell.

James "Roscoe" Cauble, son of a preacher and future lawyer, was the first VU player to score a field goal. A few weeks later the VU team hosted Bicknell High School in a home game played at Watson's Hall. VU won 20 to 4, but it was reported that the Bicknell team lacked practice and were not used to the peculiar texture of the host team's floor. Following the Bicknell game, the VU team broke up and turned their attention to baseball.

- Gus Stevens -

The Birth of a Dynasty



Isaac K. Beckes, Wyant Baker,
and Allen Bradfield

When Dr. Isaac K. Beckes was inaugurated president of Vincennes University in 1950, there had been no intercollegiate athletics since 1931. High on his priority list for change was the development of an athletic program and he chose to start with resurrecting varsity basketball. There was little money that first September, but he was able to organize a team from the available student body and they were accepted into the Vincennes Industrial league at the local YMCA. VU Professor George Ray volunteered to coach the team. In addition Dr. Beckes, as the self appointed athletic director, was able to schedule six intercollegiate games and later a spot in the Indiana YMCA tournament. Their only win, outside of the Industrial league, was a one point edge over the Terre Haute YMCA. The next season he asked his good friend Wyant Baker, a teacher at Vincennes Lincoln High School, to coach the Blazers. The results were the same, a good record in the local league, but winless in five games at the college level.

In the spring of 1952, Allen Bradfield, a young teacher of mathematics, approached Dr. Beckes with an offer to coach the Trailblazers. Bradfield wanted to get out of the Industrial league and develop a full schedule of college games. He emphasized to Beckes that, while he admittedly had no experience, he had a great personal interest in the sport, and felt he could do a good job. Oh yes, he had kept score during the past season. Beckes agreed to appoint him as the coach and support the program further if the team could win half its games. A college athletic dynasty was launched with that simple statement, and its effects would reverberate nationally throughout junior college basketball.

The team, under Bradfield, immediately established a winning program and soon a reputation throughout the state and nation as a competitor to be reckoned with. Great teams were developed in the 1950's and by 1965 VU became the first junior college east of the Mississippi River to win the National Basketball Championship. The "win half your games" pact between the two men would continue for 27 years, during which time VU count 607 wins and only 177 losses. The request and promise between a young teacher and a college president had been fulfilled many times.

Isaac Beckes died in 1988 and Allen Bradfield in 1999.

- Gus Stevens -