

RALPH JONES -- Early Basketball player/coach

I thought you all might be interested in something I just read in the Shortridge High School Alumni News Briefs. Persist -- Crawfordsville appears toward the end! This is even earlier than the teams we had mentioned, isn't it? Jeff would know! Kathy A. Lynch

CHECK INTO THE PAST...1901 ATHLETICS @ SHS. Mr. Papesh recently received a call from the Executive Director of the Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame seeking information on a Shortridge graduate named Ralph Jones, class of 1901.

We discovered that Mr. Jones attended SHS from 1897-1901. We also learned he was in the glee club and played basketball. Upon further examination of a 1900 Annual, it stated that "Ralph Jones was a coach of the basketball team. He was a player (student) and the coach." Additional research shows Jones was the first Indiana high school basketball coach - as a junior he organized the 1899-1900 Indianapolis Shortridge High School team, the first high school squad in Indiana. After the turn of the century, Jones coached the Indianapolis YMCA to a state title and then simultaneously coached the Crawfordsville YMCA, Crawfordsville H.S., and Wabash College each to prominence. The Crawfordsville YMCA won their state competition in 1904-05, Crawfordsville High School went 12-0 in 1906-07 (before the state tournament had been born), and his record at Wabash College over five seasons was an astounding 75-6, including an 8-0 record in 1904-05 and a 24-0 effort in his final season, 1907-08. The latter group is referred to as Wabash's "Wonderful Five - World Champions." He became coach at Purdue University, leading the Boilers to the program's first two conference championships and a 32-9 record over three years (including a 12-0 season in 1911-12), then coached at the University of Illinois where he went 85-34 in eight seasons, including a 16-0 Helms National Championship season in 1914-15. Between 1905 and 1920 his teams recorded four undefeated seasons at Wabash, Purdue, and Illinois. He coached nine All-American players in that timeframe, coached five Big Ten Conference scoring leaders, and his teams were a combined 195-50 (79.6%). Among his players in Crawfordsville were Ward "Piggy" Lambert, Pete Vaughn, and Dave Glascock (who coached the 1911 Crawfordsville team to the inaugural state championship), who are all Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame inductees. Among his players at Illinois were George Halas, who later hired Jones to coach the Chicago Bears, whom Jones promptly led to the 1932 NFL Championship, and Tug Wilson, who served as Big Ten Commissioner from 1945-61. Jones is also considered a strong mentor to another Hall of Fame coach, Everett Case. His successors at Wabash as well as Purdue were his former players (Ralph Wicks at Wabash, Pete Vaughn, then Piggy Lambert at Purdue). Jones also coached basketball and football at Lake Forest Academy and Lake Forest College in Illinois until 1949 before retiring to Colorado, where he died in 1951. The Indiana State Basketball Hall of Fame is considering inducting Ralph Jones into its elite group of Indiana high school players and coaches.

File Created: 30 June 2011 - thanks so much Kathy L., this is sooo cool !!