

City Rolls Out Red Carpet For Victors

*1961 Wampus Cat Players
Receive Royal Welcome Upon Return*

Last Cambridge Sectional Champion Commemorated

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In 1951, Cambridge City captured its first sectional crown. Ten years would elapse before the town celebrated another such achievement. Since then, several Wampus Cat and then Lincoln Golden Eagle teams came within a finger's grasp of a sectional title, only to have it slip away.

Such disappointments make what 12 young men accomplished 34 years ago all the more special. This being sectional week, that '61 team is heralded in a retrospective found on pages one through four. Relive the magic that was . . . 1961 in Cambridge City.

By Mike Moffett

Fire trucks lumbered noisily through town, its Main Street lined with people drunk with euphoria.

A few blocks north, a boisterous crowd jammed the gymnasium, anxiously awaiting the celebrated arrival that would send them over the edge.

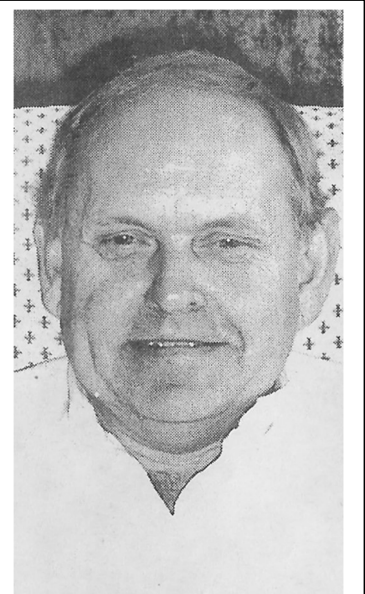
Would President John F. Kennedy have kept people up past their bedtimes to greet him? Would Marilyn Monroe have elicited such hysteria?

Probably not, for they weren't a Wampus Cat. And deep into the night of Feb. 27, 1961, in Cambridge City, no one was more loved than a Wampus Cat.

These Wampus Cats had just won the Richmond basketball sectional, only the second in school history. That made them special. That made them heroes. That placed them above all others.

All because of this headline, bold, brave, and blissful. Cambridge City 60 Centerville 56.

"It's a once in a lifetime thing for a small school," said Phil Newhouse, one of three seniors on the squad and a starting guard. "Our fans ran out onto the floor after it was over. Everybody knows you after you win a sectional. It's different. It's something you never forget."



Community Press/Mike Moffett

At his home north of Dublin, Phil Newhouse reflects on the 1961 sectional title won by him and his Wampus Cat teammates. Newhouse's son, Chad, a 1994 graduate, was a starting forward for the Cambridge City Lincoln Golden Eagles.



An ecstatic den of Wampus Cat. rejoice over their 1961 sectional championship moments after disposing of Centerville 60 to 56. In front (L-R) are Jack Jarvis, student manager, Warren Fields, Phil Newhouse, Jerry Thompson, Bill Swigart, and DeWayne Montgomery. Second row (L-R) Includes Ron Ellsbury, Ray Mohler, and Eddie Hauk. In the third row (L-R) are Terry Jarvis, student manager, Larry Hughes, Coach Dwight Tallman, Lester Bryant, Larry Stanley, team statistician, Ron Erickson, assistant coach, Ron Stott, student manager, and Frank Schwegman, student manager.

Backup junior center Lester Bryant said pulling off the unlikely sugared the championship even more.

"It was something we figured would never happen to us," said Bryant, father of three and grandfather of one. "For a small school like Milton, Economy, or Cambridge City, to go over to Richmond and win really meant something."

Of the 12 players on that now-fabled '61 roster, only Bryant and Newhouse still live in the area that bubbled with elation 34 years ago.

"It doesn't seem that long ago," Bryant said from the K & J Restaurant that he and his wife, Vona, own and operate. "I remember I tried to talk the principal (Lloyd Frazer) into letting us have a day off school because we won. He wouldn't have any of it."

An employee of Dana and president of the Fuel Injectors, an area classic car club, Newhouse resides north of Dublin with his wife of 27 years, Sharon. Father of four, Newhouse said the team took inspiration for the championship game from an unlikely source – pregame boos.

"It was strange for a little school like us to get booed," Newhouse said, "but that helped us as much as anything. It motivated us."

In an odd turn of events, in each of its three sectional games, Cambridge City put its offense into gear on a bucket by senior center Bill Swigart. A teacher at the middle school in Rushville, in whose system he has taught since 1965, Swigart relished the underdog role when the '61 sectional swung into action.

"It was kind of nice," he recalled. "We had beaten some teams during the year we probably shouldn't have, and we lost to some teams we probably shouldn't have. No one was looking for us to be consistent enough to win the sectional."

Swigart, an alumnus of High Point College in N.C., where he played three years of baseball, lives with his wife and four-year-old son near New Salem in Rush County. A seventh grade physical education teacher, Swigart coached seventh grade basketball for 13 years at Rushville and served as a scout for the high school team. He learned some of the finer points of coaching from his Wampus Cat coach, Dwight Tallman.

"He did a good job," said Swigart, whose views are backed solidly by Bryant.

"I think the main reason we won was because of Coach

Centerville (56)	Fg	Fga	Ft	Fta	Pf	Tp
Renschler, forward	11	19	2	3	3	24
Good, forward	1	5	0	2	5	2
Kinder, forward	1	6	0	1	5	2
Hamilton, center	1	6	0	0	0	2
Cox, guard	7	14	2	2	3	16
Wetzel, guard	3	7	4	7	5	10
Mabe, guard	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	24	57	8	15	21	56

Score by quarters:

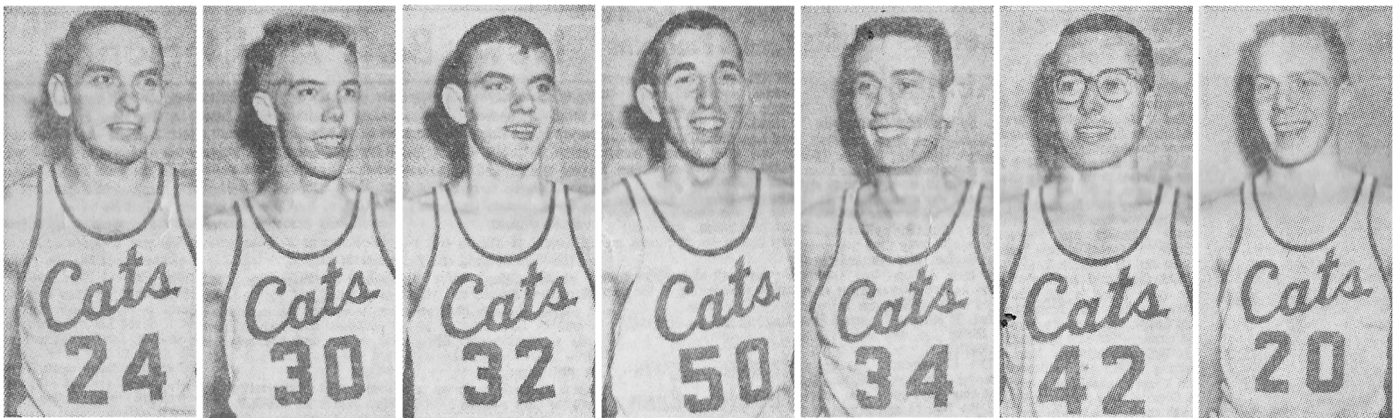
Cambridge City	12	30	44	60
Centerville	15	30	38	56

Officials: Dwain Laird and Gerald Imel

Regular Season Records For '61 Sectional Teams

Cambridge City	11 - 8
Milton	10 - 8
Fountain City	18 - 3
Hagerstown	9 - 11
Greens Fork	11 - 9
Williamsburg	10 - 8
Webster	2 - 16
Centerville	13 - 6
Whitewater	12 - 9
Economy	0 - 19
Richmond	5 - 15
Boston	9 - 11

Cambridge City (60)	Fg	Fga	Ft	Fta	Pf	Tp
Thompson, forward	8	16	11	19	3	27
Montgomery, forward	6	9	1	2	0	13
Mohler, forward	0	1	0	0	0	0
Swigart, center	2	5	4	5	3	8
Newhouse, guard	1	3	1	4	3	3
Ellsbury, guard	4	8	1	1	3	9
Totals	21	42	18	31	12	60



Phil Newhouse
5'10" Guard

Bill Swigart
6'3" Center

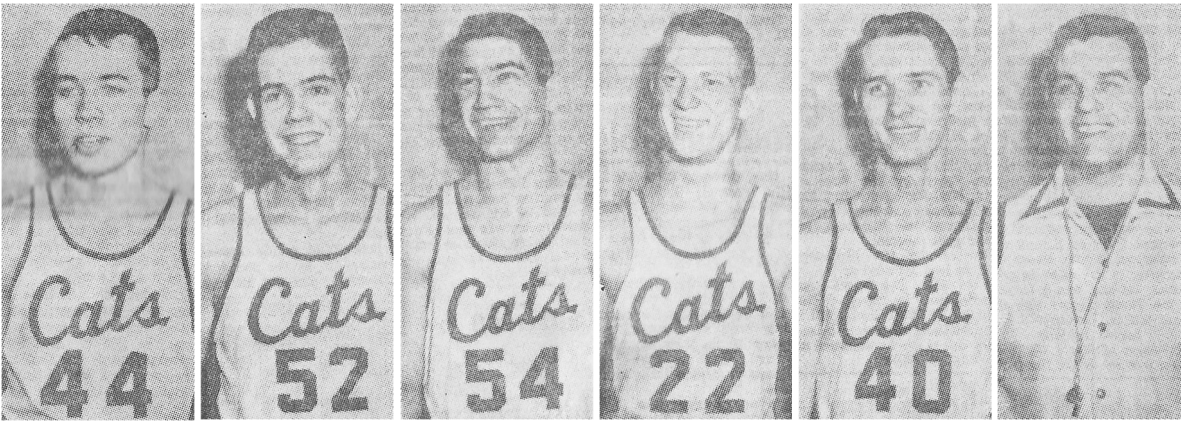
Ray Mohler
5'11" Forward

Eddie Hauk
6'3" Forward

Jerry Thompson
6'3" Forward

DeWayne
Montgomery
5'11" Forward

Warren Fields
5'7" Guard



Ron Ellsbury
5'10" Guard

Larry Hughes
6'5" Center

Dennis Keihn
5'9" Guard

David Dunavent
5'9" Guard

Lester Bryant
6'4" Forward

Dwight Tallman
Cambridge
Coach

'61 Sectional Springboard To State Title For Tallman

By Mike Moffett

Championships had a habit of tagging along wherever Dwight Tallman took his coach's whistle. But when the 6-feet-5, 260-pound DePauw University alumnus came to Cambridge City in the fall of 1960 with little fanfare, nothing foretold the golden glory that would frame his next three years.

A 1955 graduate of New Castle High School, Tallman had come from a high school coaching position at Kansas, Ill. He inherited a Wampus Cat team that included only two returning regulars, Jerry Thompson and Bill Swigart.

The catchword in the Wampus Cat camp was rebuilding.

Inexperienced players plus novice coach equaled bruises, black eyes, and bleak prospects, so blew the preseason winds.

Heart, hustle, and hell-bent determination changed the ill-fated course. As it turned out, this pride of Wampus Cats and their rookie coach caught the county by surprise and emerged as its ruling team. Together, young Tallman and his youthful club etched a 14-9 season and a Richmond

sectional championship into the storied wall of Cambridge City history.

"I'd love to see those guys again. They were a great group of boys."

-- Dwight Tallman, assistant superintendent of LaPorte Community Schools and coach of the 1961 sectional champion Wampus Cats

"The players had a great attitude and a lot of competitive spirit," said Tallman in a telephone interview last week. "They were eager young men with a lot of confidence. They loved to play basketball and they were

attentive and coachable. We had good depth and the kids played good defense. It was a great year and a lot of fun."

Now the assistant superintendent of LaPorte Community Schools in northern Indiana, Tallman coached Cambridge City Lincoln two years before taking a varsity assistant job, ironically, at Muncie Central, the team that vanquished Cambridge City from the tourney in the first game of the 1961 New Castle regional.

In his first campaign in '62-63, Tallman assumed command of the Bearcats when head coach John Longfellow had to abdicate the position because of ill health. Tallman, just four years out of college, piloted the Bearcats all the way to the state championship.

Another rookie season for Tallman, another improbable championship. Not bad for a reluctant move.

"Leaving Cambridge City was one of the toughest decisions I've ever had to make," Tallman recollected. "John had called me three times asking me to become his assistant. Finally, my wife and I agreed to move. It turned out to be the right move, but we really agonized over it. We had three starters and a good B-team coming back at Cambridge City. They were a nice bunch of boys and were like my sons."

In some respects, Muncie Central owes an assist to Cambridge City for its '63 state title. If not

for that '61 sectional triumph, Tallman might not have received the pivotal call from Longfellow. As it was, the '61 sectional championship abides as one of Tallman's treasured monuments in sports.

"It ranks as the top two or three situations I've ever been in," he said.

Tallman mentioned the help he gleaned from Steve Lemley, the successful and former Straughn High School coach who was teaching math at Cambridge City Lincoln and serving as a junior high coach. Lemley later became principal at Lincoln.

"Steve did a lot of scouting for us," Tallman said. "He was great. That entire year . . . those are some wonderful memories."

The following is from the [Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame](#).

High School: New Castle 1955

College: DEPAUW UNIVERSITY 1959



Inducted 1996

Lettered three years, all sectional for hall of famer Marvin Wood, lettered three years at DePauw and was MVP his senior year for Hall of Famer Elmer McCall . . . coached at Cambridge City, Muncie Central, North Putnam, Warsaw and Penn . . . won eight sectionals, two regionals, one semi-state, and led Muncie Central to the 1963 state championship . . . won 229 games and lost only 162, a .586 winning percentage.