

Women's Basketball – 1968

Carolyn Marcus Jacobs, CW'68



Row one: K. Merritt, E. Morrow, Co-captain. Barbara Linnehan (Ellis), Co-captain, N. Ball Row two: F. Bardman, Coach, J. Miller, P. Whatley, P. Gardner, J. Sanders, B. Stocking, Carolyn Marcus (Jacobs), CW'68. Row three: A. Garvine, A. Williams, F. Martin, T. McMullin, E. Sommerfeld.

Over the winter of 1967-1968, the women's basketball team completed an undefeated season.

Before we get all excited about that, let me describe the climate of women's sports at Penn.

Remember, it was the late '60s and Title IX which mandated that equal money be spent on sports for men and women was still several years away.

We often had to drag a bag of practice balls from campus to 30th Street Station to take the train to Swarthmore or Bryn Mawr. This was, of course, the cheapest way to get us to the Main Line and back. We had no training staff and when one of us was injured (and I had notoriously weak ankles), our coach, Faye Bardman, went to the men's trainer to ask how she should be taping ankles. Women, as you know, could not be expected to run the full length of the court, so we played a game with six team members ... two permanent forwards, two permanent guards and two rovers, the only ones permitted to cross the center line. Defense was almost always a zone ... a box, a diamond or a triangle with a one-on-one if we needed to stop the other team's star player. Oh, and we had to wear little dresses with bloomers underneath. (Let me not disparage the basketball uniforms. They at least existed, unlike the softball team whose members wore

whatever we had with a Penn logo. Check out the team picture in our yearbook and note that one of our players was even wearing a Yale sweatshirt)

We played an 8-game schedule and, if we played a team from a school with a top-flight phys ed program like Temple or West Chester, we likely played their third string team since the varsity or JV would have run roughshod over us.

Nevertheless, we persisted.



In our freshman year, we also had an unblemished record, one unblemished by a win. Our indomitable coach, Faye Bardman, stuck by us, worked us hard, taught us to dribble without looking at the ball, to play relentless defense, to shoot and shoot and shoot. She never gave up on us. In successive years, thanks to an influx of both height and talent, we won two games, then four games and finally, all eight.

Our '67 – '68 team was led by co-captains Barbara Linnehan, and Ellen Morrow, both dead-eye shooters and hard-nosed defenders who played the rover positions. Our offense was ably supported by underclassmen Barbara Stocking and Joan Sanders. For me, Kate Merritt and Jan Miller who “stuck it out” for four years, that season was the reward for all of the hours and hours of practice in Weightman Hall, all the late nights getting home from away games and missed meals in the dorm cafeterias.

The personal highlight for me was the final game of the season against Immaculata which, if you recall, went on to win the first national championship in 1972. Math tells me that not a single one of the national championship players in 1972 would have been playing in 1968. Whew! I recall being the high scorer in that game and sinking some crucial foul shots which (in my maybe-

distorted memory) were instrumental in our final victory. It was the game that gave us an 8-0 record and was the capstone to four years of devotion to this team.

Next time you are in the Palestra, look (hard) for the display cabinet dedicated to women's sports at Penn and you will see a picture of a women's basketball team from that era in our navy blue jumpers. Erroneously (and sadly), that picture is of the '66-'67 team, but nonetheless it honors a very special time for those of us who proudly wore the Red and Blue.