

ST. JOHN ARENA MEMORIES: TOP 25 GAMES

Classic Games Plentiful In Arena's Annals

By JEFF RAPP

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Any building that has been around as long as St. John Arena — and has staged major college basketball — is likely to have a classic or two played in it. In fact, depending on your definition of great, it could be argued that dozens of games staged in the 41-year-old arena can forever be bound in the memorable file.

How to stack them up is anyone's guess, as the prospect of comparing compelling contests from different eras always seems to incite barroom-like debate.

Most people seem to agree that the OSU men's 1991 double-overtime affair with Indiana was one for the ages, but are we upgrading it as the greatest game ever played in St. John because of its more recent setting?

BSB isn't sure how to define great any better than anyone else, but when it comes to college basketball things like historical significance, high-level play, drama, frenzied crowds, momentum swings, big shots and close scores usually bring high marks. Controversy, rivalry, great individual performances and national interest aren't necessarily prerequisites, but they don't hurt.

The '91 IU game certainly qualified in all acceptable categories. But several others are burned in the memories of those who participated and watched.

Therefore, BSB has compiled an arbitrary top-20 list of the greatest men's games played at home since St. John Arena opened in 1956, followed by the top five women's games played during their 23-year residency.

With just one game remaining — Feb. 28 with Penn State — before history closes its doors, it's safe to say these games will remain priceless to all associated with Ohio State.

The list, in chronological order, is as follows.

Ohio State Men

• **Butler, Dec. 1, 1956** — In the first game ever played in their mighty new arena, the Buckeyes dusted off Butler University 98-82 in front of 9,600 fans, an attendance figure that may have been fudged considering university officials weren't used to counting heads in their new digs. Now without All-American guard Robin Freeman, the tall Buckeyes

pounded the ball inside to burly Frank Howard and 6-5 Ken Sidle. Both responded with a game-high 23 points and Howard ripped down 17 rebounds.

Fellow starters Jim Laughlin (16), Gene Millard (15) and Larry Huston (12) also scored in double figures.

• **Indiana, Jan. 9, 1960** — As it turned out, this was by far the tensest game in St. John during the wondrous Jerry Lucas/John Havlicek/Mel Nowell era, and what a beauty it was. Walt Bellamy and the Hoosiers were in control until an OSU rally — and IU turnover in the final seconds — set up the game-winning shot by Larry Siegfried. The junior was held to a career-low five points but took an inbounds pass from Dick Furry and flipped in an eight-foot runner from the right lane for OSU's 96-95 victory.

IU tried a long downcourt pass with two seconds left, but the buzzer sounded while the ball was in the air, sending 13,497 into a frenzy. Nowell scored 26, Havlicek 21 and Lucas 20.

• **Wisconsin, Feb. 27, 1960** — The Buckeyes clinched their first Big Ten title in 10 years and first for budding young coach Fred Taylor with a 93-68 dusting of the Badgers. With road games still lingering with Indiana and Minnesota, the Buckeyes did not want to fool around.

In typical fashion for such moments, Lucas came through by hitting all eight field goal attempts. OSU wrapped up a perfect season at home and went on to win the only basketball national championship in school history.

• **Indiana, March 10, 1962** — The winning just kept on building in St. John as the senior class of Lucas (who ripped down a career-high 30 rebounds), Havlicek, Nowell, Bobby Knight and Gary Gearhart went out in style. By blowing out the Hoosiers, the Buckeyes enabled Taylor to pull the seniors one by one to wild cheers. The 90-65 win also wrapped up a third straight Big Ten title and locked down an undefeated home mark for the class.

Longtime *Columbus Dispatch* sportswriter Dick Otte penned, "In three years and 34 games Ohio State's magnificent basketball squads have provided countless thrills for St. John Arena spectators. But never in those three years, and perhaps never in Ohio State history, has a basketball victory been more appreciated and thoroughly celebrated."

• **Michigan, Feb. 3, 1964** — OSU entered play just 8-7 and had the daunt-

ing task of slowing down No. 2 Michigan and sophomore All-American Cazzie Russell. When the buzzer sounded, OSU center Gary Bradds had ripped the Wolverines for 42 points and OSU had a thrilling 86-85 win. Russell drilled a 30-foot two-pointer with three seconds left for the final points and finished with 30.

The win propelled OSU to an eight-game win streak and eventual share of the league title with the rival Wolverines.

• **Illinois, Feb. 10, 1964** — Seven days later, Bradds was at it again, this time canning 17 of 28 shots and 15 of 16 at the line for a school-record 49 points as OSU blitzed the Illini 110-92. The 6-8 senior broke the record of 48 he shared with Lucas with a pair of free throws with 3:36 to play. He put together a string of six games with 40 or more points and went on to win national player-of-the-year honors.

• **Michigan, March 8, 1965** — One year after upsetting UM, the Buckeyes dumped the top-ranked Wolverines 93-85 in the season finale. The win salvaged a 12-12 season and put a pleasant cap on the career of senior captain Dick Ricketts, who led the way with 32 points.

Russell sat this one out with a sore throat and fever, but it didn't matter to the crazed fans, who swarmed the court and hoisted the weary Ricketts onto their shoulders.

• **Purdue, Jan. 6, 1968** — The Bucks returned from Hawaii Dec. 30 with a stinging loss to the Rainbows and were in for a battle with the Boilermakers and sharpshooter Rick Mount. But OSU's Bill Hosket took the game into his hands with 35 points and 17 rebounds and OSU rolled 108-80. With the popular Mount in town, the first sell-out crowd since 1963 packed the gym.

Who knew the football team would deliver a similarly convincing and exciting win over PU in the fall?

• **Indiana, March 9, 1971** — Anyone who wasn't sure if OSU-IU was a classic rivalry would have been convinced on this day. Imposing Indiana forward George McGinnis went after OSU football star Stan White in the west-end bleachers, causing delay and controversy since OSU was scoring a basket at the time that didn't count and no technicals were called.

McGinnis, Steve Downing and Joby Wright powered IU, but OSU's backcourt was too much in the Buckeyes' 91-75 win. Allan Hornyak scored 24 and captain Jim Clemons directed his team to the outright Big Ten championship with 30 points and 10 rebounds from his point



LUCAS AND HAVLICEK — OSU's Jerry Lucas (11) lays the ball in against Purdue as teammate John Havlicek (5) looks on. That duo helped the Buckeyes win a number of classic games, including the 1960 NCAA title.

guard position.

"I threw the ball in the air — I figured that was the cool thing to do — and I never knew where it went," center Luke Witte recently recalled. "I wish I had it now."

• **Indiana, Jan. 3, 1976** — Indiana came and left undefeated — in fact the Hoosiers never lost all season en route to the national championship — but the smell of upset was in the air. Knight matched wits with his old coach on the sideline while the OSU players tried to slow down Kent Benson, Scott May and company.

A pair of Craig Taylor free throws and consecutive jumpers by Mike Daugherty trimmed the deficit to 62-60, but Benson hit over Larry Bolden and OSU later missed a pair of chances to tie the game in the final seconds as the ball dangled on the rim. IU hung on, 66-64.

• **Indiana, Jan. 3, 1980** — Exactly four years later, this one had a better ending. Standing at the charity stripe with just two ticks on the clock, freshman Clark Kellogg faced a one-and-one. With the game on the line, his first attempt hit the back rim, hung in the air and fell through. He then nailed the second and Ted Kitchel missed (but drew iron) on a buzzer heave from the corner, giving OSU a 59-58 win.

"The first one wasn't the cleanest, but the second one was true," Kellogg recently told BSB.

• **Virginia, Jan. 27, 1980** — The ranked Cavaliers were led by 7-4 freshman sensation Ralph Sampson, Jeff Jones and Jeff Lamp. The Buckeyes were



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coming off a heartbreaking one-point loss to Wisconsin the day before and had to tune it up again for the made-for-national-television event. They did, winning 70-65 behind guards Carter Scott (21 points) and Kelvin Ramsey (18).

"The crowd was like they weren't at the game the night before because they were all jacked up," Kellogg told *BSB*. "At that point, being on national TV was a much bigger thing than it is now with ESPN and all the different stations that broadcast games."

Herb Williams and Sampson canceled each other out with 13 and 14 points, respectively. Sampson, however, had 10 rebounds and six blocks and was whistled for four goaltends.

• **Indiana, Jan. 19, 1985** — Reserve guard Dave Jones hit 8 of 10 shots and all three free throws to log a season-high 19 points and lead OSU to an 86-84 upset of IU. He also cooled Indiana's Steve Alford while seniors Ronnie Stokes and Troy Taylor were saddled with foul trouble.

Joe Concheck (16 points) and Dennis Hopson (15) helped Jones on the offensive end and center Brad Sellers added nine points and 10 rebounds. IU 7-2 center Uwe Blab scored 33 points but missed a game-tying hook shot at the buzzer.

"He's one strong redhead," Concheck said.

• **Michigan, Jan. 18, 1988** — Simply one of the best crowds ever to watch a game in grand old St. John. They had reason to freak — as did an arm-flailing Grady Mateen — after Mateen got ahead of the field, caught a lead pass from Curtis Wilson and threw down a game-winning dunk. UM, which lost for the first time in 14 games, quickly got the ball upcourt, but Terry Mills' long jumper rattled out as the buzzer sounded. OSU won 70-68 in an ESPN "Big Monday" contest that tipped off a little after 9:30 p.m. The partying stretched into midnight and beyond.

OSU forced star guard Gary Grant into nine turnovers and got good complementary performances from Wilson (12 points, six assists), Jay Burson (18 points) and Tony White, who scored eight of his team's last 12 points and grabbed eight rebounds.

• **Michigan State, Feb. 27, 1988** — Sometimes you just have to recognize greatness on the other side, and on this evening the NCAA-hopeful Buckeyes were forced to bow to MSU's Steve Smith, who logged a then-career-high 22 points and hit the game-winning free throws with one second left in OT as the Spartans hung on 78-77.

"Steve was a freshman that year and he had one of those games where you could say he was destined for greatness," former MSU coach Jud Heathcote told *BSB* recently.

But OSU coach Gary Williams charged and blamed the referees afterward since Burson was knocked to the ground on a shot in front of the Ohio State bench at



WIDE RIGHT — OSU's Jimmy Jackson goes up over Indiana's Matt Nover for the tying basket at the end of regulation in OSU's epic 1991 double-overtime win over the Hoosiers. Also pictured are IU's Damon Bailey and OSU's Treg Lee.

the end of regulation and no call was made.

• **Louisville, Feb. 4, 1990** — Sitting at 9-9 and facing Denny Crum's 10th-ranked Cardinals, the Buckeyes rallied from a 17-point hole and downed UL for the second straight year, 91-88 in overtime in front of a sellout crowd and an ABC-TV audience.

OSU fell behind 57-40 but ripped off a 35-13 run to take a 75-70 lead, then nearly lost grip. Jim Jackson stopped the seasaw by tipping in a Chris Jent missed free throw and later cleaned up an Alex Davis miss for the final points with 16 seconds left. He finished with 21 points. Perry Carter, who broke an 87-87 tie with a hook shot over Felton Spencer, added 20 points and 13 rebounds.

• **Indiana, Feb. 17, 1991** — St. John has had game winners, clashes of titans, and plenty of nail-biting overtimes. But never in its 35 years had anyone ever seen something like this. Jackson sent the game into its first overtime on a play called "Wide Right" by storming down the paint and scoring over the outstretched arm of Matt Nover. He

later fed Treg Lee for the winning baseline jumper in the second extra period as OSU prevailed 97-95.

This was a natural for ABC with the second-ranked Buckeyes hosting No. 4 IU in search of a season sweep. It didn't hurt that IU freshman Damon Bailey had his coming-out party with 32 points and Calbert Cheaney scored 26 before fouling out. Jackson had 30 points, 11 rebounds and six assists and created several plays down the stretch with point guard Mark Baker nursing a sore ankle.

• **Michigan State, March 3, 1991** — The Indiana game was fun and excitement; this was serious business. It seemed almost too much was at stake — the school's first league title in 20 years and the chance to avenge the only loss of the season included. It came down to a trip to the foul line with one second left and junior guard Jamaal Brown made the second toss to provide the Buckeyes with a 65-64 win. Brown won a bet with Spartans forward Dwayne Stephens, who offered his shoes if Brown could win the game.

OSU, getting double-doubles from Jackson and Carter, won its 14th conference championship and completed a perfect season at home. Steve Smith, now an All-American senior, led MSU with 23 points.

• **Michigan, March 3, 1992** — To stay in line for a second straight title, the Buckeyes knew they would have to beat rival Michigan, which was now featuring the upstart Fab Five playing a majority of minutes. The freshmen were taught a lesson to the tune of 77-66 as OSU turned around a three-point deficit in 31 seconds with consecutive breakaway baskets by Baker, Jackson and Lawrence Funderburke and later pulled away.

Jackson stepped to the plate once again with 25 points, 13 rebounds and six assists. Chris Webber led UM with 17 points, but Juwan Howard and Jalen Rose were a combined 6 of 26 from the field. OSU swept the two league games from Steve Fisher's team, but the two

would stage an epic battle in the regional final later in the month.

• **Indiana, Feb. 23, 1993** — Jamie Skelton hit key three-pointers at the end of regulation and overtime and fans stormed the court twice as the Buckeyes knocked off top-ranked IU 81-77. Unranked OSU improved to 13-10, 6-8 and dropped Knight's team to 24-3, 13-1.

Skelton hit an 18-footer with 22 seconds left in regulation to cut the score to 69-68, Bailey hit one of two from the line, and Skelton drilled a long three for a 71-70 lead with two seconds left.

After fans prematurely rushed onto the court, Derek Anderson was whistled for a blocking foul on IU's Chris Reynolds on the inbounds play. Reynolds hit just one of two free throws, forcing the extra session. Davis hit a trey ball and Funderburke turned in a three-point play to tie the count, then Skelton, who led everybody with 22 points, struck again with a bomb.

"Skelton gets my vote for all-time All-American against us," Knight said afterward. "He always seems to play well against us. If he played Indiana 10 times a year, he'd break (Jerry) Lucas' scoring record against us."

Anderson scored a season-high 20 points and Greg Simpson added 12 points and nine assists.

• **Other Notable Games at St. John:** Lucas has 30 points and 22 rebounds as OSU beats No. 6 Detroit and Dave DeBusschere 84-73 (Dec. 22, 1960); Davidson, coached by Lefty Driesell and led by Terry Holland, stops OSU's 50-game win streak, 95-73 (Dec. 11, 1963); Lew Alcindor leads UCLA to an 84-73 win (Dec. 6, 1968); OSU overcomes Mount's 35 points and dumps Purdue 88-85, the only conference loss of the season for the Boilers (Feb. 11, 1969); Ohio State knocks off Indiana 66-63 in overtime to give coach Eldon Miller his first win over IU in five tries (Jan. 27, 1979); OSU needs three overtimes to clip Purdue and first-year coach Gene Keady, 93-92 (March 5, 1981); Hopson pours in 36 points and breaks the all-time school scoring record in an otherwise meaningless 106-70 win over non-conference foe Florida International (March 4, 1987).

Ohio State Women

• **Texas, Nov. 29, 1985** — Ohio State lost seven games during the 1985-86 season, six by four points or less. The eventual national champion Longhorns came into St. John before a vocal gathering of 4,281 and knew they were in a war before pulling it out 78-76.

Tracey Hall led the Buckeyes with 22 points and Toni Roesch ran the show effectively, handing out six assists to go with her 17 points.

Texas, which went 34-0 on the way to the national crown, was led by Fran Harris' 15 points, Andrea Lloyd's 14

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ST. JOHN ARENA MEMORIES: BOBBY KNIGHT

Knight Discusses Taylor, St. John Arena Memories

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

On the eve of his final appearance in St. John Arena, Indiana basketball coach and former Ohio State player Bob Knight met with the Columbus media to recount some of his memories of OSU's venerable basketball hall.

But instead of remembering key plays, big wins or crushing defeats, Knight centered on the one man he credits for bringing OSU basketball into prominence — his coach, Fred Taylor.

"The thing I always really associate with St. John Arena is Fred Taylor," Knight said. "I think that every time we've played there in the last 20 years, I've thought of him coaching there and what he did for basketball at Ohio State and in the Big Ten."

"The Big Ten has always been a really good football conference. You could go through the people who have coached football — (Bernie) Bierman or (Fritz) Crisler or Woody (Hayes) or whoever — but I think Coach Taylor really got basketball going in the Big Ten to the point where we enjoy it today."

As part of his annual trek to Columbus, Knight made sure to spend some time with Taylor. His former coach, now 73, is convalescing in a Columbus-area nursing home after suffering a brain aneurysm.

"I'd give anything if he were well now," Knight said. "I wouldn't care if he came to our game. Like tonight, as long as I've come over here to play, we've gone out to eat the night before."

"Not doing that with him bothers me a whole lot more than not playing at St. John Arena. In fact, the two are worlds apart."

Knight is bothered over Taylor's legacy. Taylor was the coach who led the Buckeyes to the 1960 national championship then was all but discarded by the school when hard times hit in the mid-1970s.

"I'm not sure they have ever really appreciated here what he did for basketball, not just here, but also in the Big Ten," Knight said.

"I always felt, as well as the guys I played with and some of the guys who came after me — those of us who really knew him would have had a much

greater appreciation that when it came time for him not to coach anymore that he had been immediately made an associate athletic director.

"That always kind of bothered me about what happened over here."

Now, with OSU set to christen the Schottenstein Center later this year, Knight was hoping for some type of tribute to his former coach. The school has named the four-lane road that will run adjacent to the building as Fred Taylor Drive.

"I think it's really a shame that the arena isn't named after him, Fred Taylor," Knight said. "I understand the economics of college athletics today, but I wish there had been a way around that through advertising or whatever and they named it the Fred Taylor Arena."

His Playing Days

Knight recalled his first forays to Columbus, watching the Buckeyes in person at St. John as a recruit out of Orrville, Ohio.

"When I was a high school kid, I came down and saw Ohio State play Princeton, Michigan State and Indiana," he said. "It was a long trip down here from Orrville. You had to take Route 30 to Wooster and catch Route 3 and come down through all the towns like Mount Vernon. When I was about a junior, the state built I-71 and it became a lot easier."

"The only place I had been in when I was a kid that was nearly as big as this was the Cleveland Arena, where they held some of the state tournaments. But it wasn't nearly as nice as this."

Knight arrived in the same class as Jerry Lucas, John Havlicek, Mel Nowell and Gary Gearhart. They joined veterans Larry Siegfried, Joe Roberts and Dick Furry in forming the nucleus of OSU's 1960 title team. That team began an unprecedented three-year run during which OSU claimed three Big Ten titles and reached the NCAA championship game all three years.

"One year, that first year when our starting lineup was Nowell, Siegfried, Roberts, Lucas and Havlicek, we might have been the leading scoring team in the country," Knight said. "That was the best team of the three."

In three seasons, Knight, Lucas, Havlicek and the rest were a spotless 34-



KEVIN DYE

LISTEN UP — Indiana coach Bob Knight argues with officials Randy Drury (left) and Rick Hartzell during his team's 74-72 win at St. John Arena Feb. 19. Knight, a former OSU player, recently shared some of his St. John Arena memories.

0 in games played inside St. John Arena.

The string began with a 77-69 win over Wake Forest. The toughest game came later that season as OSU needed a late rally to defeat a tough Indiana team 96-95. After that point, no one played the team within eight points on its home floor.

"I remember as a player, I think the only time we came close to losing there was when Siegfried made a basket to beat Indiana in 1960," Knight said. "I thought I had a hell of a lot to do with it — I scored one point and we won by a point."

"I really think that's the only time anybody had a chance to beat us. I really enjoyed playing here and enjoyed playing on that team back in the '60s. Obviously I have some real good feelings about the arena from that standpoint."

This group's incredible SJA run ended on March 10, 1962, with a 90-65 win over Indiana. Under Taylor's guidance, the string would stretch over two more seasons before ending at 50 games.

"That was the last game we played here," Knight said. "If I'm not mistaken, I think that was the only time we played Indiana. I think Jimmy Rayl was playing for Indiana. Lucas sent (Purdue's Terry) Dischinger a telegram that we would play Rayl in such a way that Dischinger would win the scoring championship — Lucas and Dischinger were pretty good buddies. They played on the 1960 Olympic team together."

As a testament to how lukewarm Columbus was with its newfound success in basketball, only in 1961-62 did the Buckeyes begin to average over 13,000 fans a game.

"We beat everybody pretty handily, but if you check the 1959-60 season, I'm not sure there were any sellouts," Knight said.

"The next two years, there weren't always sellouts. Now it's most every game that's played. When an arena in the Big Ten isn't full, the tickets are usually sold. It wasn't that way then."

Still, St. John was like a palace compared to some of the dingy field houses and tiny gyms the Buckeyes ventured to in his playing days.

"When we played, there were old field houses at Michigan, Michigan State, Iowa and Indiana," he said. "All of these had dirt on the ground with the floor on top of it. Illinois had Huff Gym, Wisconsin had the old field house and Minnesota still has the same place, Williams Arena."

"This is the last of the old buildings to be replaced, with the exception of Williams Arena, which I imagine will still be standing when the Statue of Liberty falls."

His Coaching Days

Knight guided Indiana to a narrow 74-72 win over the Buckeyes in his final SJA appearance Feb. 19. That evened his mark to 14-14 lifetime in the building, including one loss in 1967 when he toiled at Army. Knight's point guard that day was named Mike Krzyzewski.

"The irony of that was I was an assistant coach there at West Point," Knight said. "They wanted to play a couple games against the Big Ten, so I called Coach Taylor and scheduled the game. I ended up having to come here and coach because two years or three years later, I was the head coach."

"We lost 61-59 and we had a kid make a tip-in get undercut. We have the foul called on him and the bucket taken away. I'll never forget that one."

Knight, who has three NCAA titles and parts of 11 Big Ten titles to his credit, has twice had No. 1-ranked Indiana teams taste defeat on the grounds of his alma mater, those losses happening in 1983 and '93. Plus, many focus on the 1991 double-overtime thriller where Jim Jackson and OSU sidestepped IU 97-95.

But one that still sticks in Knight's craw is the 1979 game, which the Hoosiers lost 66-63 in overtime.

"That game was really a tough game for us," he said. "We had a nine-point lead with two minutes to go. We're going in for a layup and Herb Williams blocked the shot. We go on and lose it in overtime."

One of Knight's best triumphs was coming back to Columbus a year after the 1991 defeat and handing the Buckeyes their only home defeat of the season in an 86-80 decision.

"I don't think much about the games we won," he said. "I could tell you most of the games we've lost, wherever it would be. The games we've won, I'd have a hard time remembering a lot of those."

Final Thoughts

In some ways, Knight prefers SJA to Indiana's own Assembly Hall, opened the year he arrived in Bloomington in 1971.

"I think St. John is a great place to play basketball," he said. "It's compact, the people are right there. At Assembly Hall, we don't have the kind of seating St. John Arena has behind the baskets. That's what I wished we had with seating all the way around the floor."

"I've always thought this was a great setting for a basketball game."

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ST. JOHN ARENA MEMORIES: OTHER EVENTS

St. John Has Hosted Wide Range Of Events

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

For about two hours on Feb. 18, the world stopped and noticed St. John Arena. Although Ohio State's 41-year-old building is winding down as a basketball arena, the venerable hall served as the venue for a National Town Meeting where several of President Clinton's top foreign policy advisers — including Secretary of State Madeleine Albright — discussed the nation's ongoing crisis with Iraq.

CNN televised the forum to a worldwide audience. And while the meeting, attended by about 6,000 people, was noted for raucous opposition to U.S. military action, it still put Ohio State and St. John Arena on the front page.

"We are able to host a lot of events here like the town meeting," said Alex Shumate, chairman of the OSU board of trustees. "That was an international event that impacted world public policy. This is truly a multiuse facility."

The CNN National Town Meeting was the latest example of the wide range of events St. John Arena has hosted through the years.

Staying in the realm of politics, SJA has hosted appearances by Presidents Gerald Ford, Ronald Reagan and Clinton and then vice-president George Bush. And, as tensions heightened on campus with student riots during the Vietnam War, the National Guard housed troops in St. John.

The arena also hosted concerts with the likes of Elvis Presley — the King played SJA on June 25, 1974 — as well as Elton John, Olivia Newton-John, Chicago and Queen. In fact, a 1972 concert by Grand Funk resulted in broken windows and small fires, which damaged the wooden basketball floor.

Concerts were banned from the arena in the mid-'70s because of "vibration issues with the balcony when it became too loud," according to OSU senior associate athletic director Paul Krebs.

The arena has also served as the home for the university's summer, autumn and winter quarter commencement exercises — most notably a 1986 session at which legendary coach Woody Hayes exhorted the new graduates to "pay forward."

A crowd estimated at more than 10,000 greeted OSU's football team at the arena after its 1997 Rose Bowl win and crowds nearing that number crowd in on football game days for the marching band's renowned skull sessions.

OSU's men's and women's basketball teams have shared their stage at various times with Olympic-caliber wrestling and gymnastics meets, World Team Tennis matches (featuring the likes of Arthur Ashe and Vitas Gerulaitis) and NBA exhibitions where Larry Bird and Michael Jordan have thrilled the crowd.

Ohio State's basketball teams have also played exhibitions against the best from the Soviet Union and the women hosted Dream Team Tbo, the U.S. Olympic team, for an exhibition in December 1995. That team, led by Lisa Leslie, Jennifer Azzi, Sheryl Swoopes, Nikki McCray and Rebecca Lobo and coached by former OSU coach Tara VanDerveer, whacked OSU 118-49.

"We've had a lot of events here, and I think it will continue to have a lot of events," Krebs said. "I think we're just going to have the luxury of having two facilities and, depending on the size of the



COURTESY: OSU PHOTO ARCHIVES

HAIL TO THE CHIEF — President Bill Clinton is pictured shaking hands and greeting well-wishers outside St. John Arena after an appearance there.

event, we can be running at either the Schottenstein Center or here."

The NCAA conducted a regional tournament at Ohio State in 1970 with Notre Dame, Jacksonville, Kentucky and Iowa vying for a Final Four berth. Jacksonville prevailed over Kentucky 106-100 in the regional final.

"Some great players like Artis Gilmore and Austin Carr played here in that tournament," said OSU sports information director Steve Snapp.

Prep Tournament Memories

Through the years, though, one non-Ohio State event has become synonymous with St. John Arena — the state high school basketball tournament.

This year will mark the 76th state boys tournament and the 40th in 42 years at SJA.

"I can remember my father taking me to the first state tournament they had at St. John Arena in 1957," said Larry Larson, WTVN Radio's "Mr. High School Sports." "Middletown had never been beaten, but they were down two in the semifinal game. Jerry Lucas hit a 40-footer to send the game to overtime. They won that game and came back to beat Kent Roosevelt in the championship game."

"The following year they came in with a 77-game winning streak and, in the greatest high school game ever played, Columbus North beat them 63-62 in the semifinals. Jerry Lucas was 6-8 in high school and he had guys who were 6-7 and 6-6 on either side of him. North's biggest guy was 6-2."

Larson and many others — coaches, officials and fans — have become fixtures at the annual tournament.

"Over the years there have been so many big thrills following the central Ohio teams like Columbus East, which won three titles in the '60s; the Linden McKinley teams of Jene Davis, which won championships in 1975 and '77; and the Wehrle teams of the '80s, who won four titles and played for another one," Larson said. Wehrle's final title came in 1990.

"But at the same time it was just as exciting to see the schools from the small towns all over the state like Marion Pleasant, who won in 1973. That year they had also won a football championship, and in the finals they defeated Charlie

Huggins' team from Indian Valley South."

The girls tournament, marked in recent years by the dominance of Pickerington, will remain at St. John Arena in the years to come.

But the boys tournament will move down Lane Avenue to the Schottenstein Center (see Ohio State Insider, pages 4-5).

"The goal is still the same — the



STEVE HELWAGEN

THE BIG HOUSE — It has been the dream of many Ohio schoolboys and girls to play in the state tournament at St. John Arena. Here, Jason Collier of Springfield Catholic Central goes up for a shot in the 1996 tournament.

site will be different," Larson said. "They will be trying to get to the new arena. That will represent Emerald City, the ultimate, the capital of Oz."

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ST. JOHN ARENA MEMORIES: WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Women's Program Enjoys 23 Years At St. John

By MIKE WACHSMAN

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The growth of women's basketball nationwide has reached a fever pitch, but it was a big deal at Ohio State 10 years ago.

And St. John Arena was a prime reason.

Oh sure, the fact Ohio State was always at or near the top of the Big Ten didn't hurt, but there was something about the Lane Avenue mecca that brought out the best in all competitors.

And now, with OSU's regular-season-ending games against Iowa and Michigan, that's all over. Ohio State is set to move into the posh Schottenstein Center next season, a move that is alternately good and bad.

It's good because the facility will be second to none in America. But it's bad because the atmosphere could be ... well, let's just say it won't be as cozy or intimidating as St. John Arena.

"The way the place is built and the way the fans are right down there on the court, that's something you never forget. Especially when they're cheering for you," former Buckeye and current Detroit Mercy coach Nikita Lowry said. "You get everyone ranting and raving, and that's a great atmosphere to be a part of. I know the Schottenstein arena will be a big deal, but it's sort of hard for me to imagine Ohio State playing basketball any-



MIKE GREER

A LADY NAMED KATIE — All-American Katie Smith left OSU as the Big Ten's all-time leading scorer, netting 2,578 points from 1993 to '96.

where else."

That seems to be the prevailing sentiment of many who have played or coached in the grand edifice.



FILE PHOTO

THE COACH — During her stint from 1981 to '85, Tara VanDerveer enjoyed a stellar run as the OSU women's basketball coach, winning four Big Ten titles.

1985, for nearly five years, until Iowa ended the amazing conference winning streak with a 71-48 pasting of the Buckeyes in 1990. That spanned 66 games, a streak likely never to be seen again in the Big Ten.

FILE PHOTO

THE HALL OF FAME — Before Katie Smith came along, OSU's Tracey Hall established the career mark in scoring with 1,912 points from 1985 to '88.

Building A Reputation

Ohio State began fielding a women's basketball team in 1965, but that group played at Pomerene Hall through the 1975 season.

The first foray into St. John came in the 1975-76 season under coach Debbie Wilson, who posted a career record of 157-58. It wasn't quite the formidable home it's become today, but it was something most women's programs didn't have.

The building, and the women's game at Ohio State, truly flourished under Tara VanDerveer, a brilliant mind who had seen the arena on many occasions while playing at Indiana. She took over the Buckeye coaching reins in 1980 and began an incredible streak of not losing a Big Ten game at St. John once the league went to a full conference schedule in 1982-83. VanDerveer compiled a 110-37 record before jetting off to Stanford, where she's won a pair of national titles and put the Cardinal among the nation's elite.

When told of her old home's demise, VanDerveer went quiet for a moment.

"That's really sad that you told me that," she said by phone. "All the state tournaments (high school) I watched there and the coaching I did there, that has all stayed with me even today. There definitely was that atmosphere, one you don't see very often even now. At some of the places where they draw crowds you feel it, but in general it was unlike anything else."

The success and growth continued under Nancy Darsch, who took over in

likely never to be seen again in the Big Ten.

Darsch, fired at the end of last season, turned in a 222-109 record, including that magical 1992-93 year when the Buckeyes, against all predictions, made the national title game, losing to Sheryl Swoopes and Texas Tech by a basket.

The true high-water mark for Ohio State came Feb. 26, 1988, when 13,320 fans — nearly 60 more than St. John was designed to hold — jammed into the house to see the Buckeyes knock off top-ranked Iowa 58-54.

At the time, Iowa coach Vivian Stringer remarked what an incredible venue St. John was, and Darsch echoed those sentiments.

"It was a really classic game," she told BSB. "We had the new scoreboard and they used a fan meter to determine how loud the place was. I've been told that's when they figured out the balcony was a little unsteady. I don't know if that's true, but that's the way I heard it. You really could not hear. That's probably the biggest thing I remember in my time there."

There were other memorable moments as well, too numerous to mention. Suffice to say St. John is a shrine to basketball, both genders.

Great players have passed through the portals, including USC's Cheryl Miller, Texas' Clarissa Davis and Andrea Lloyd, Virginia's Dawn Staley and Rutgers' Sue Wicks, not to mention a host of Big Ten stars.

Opposing players always marveled at St. John, often complimenting the build-

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ST. JOHN ARENA MEMORIES: WOMEN'S BASKETBALL



FILE PHOTO

LA FEMME NIKITA — Nikita Lowry, now the head coach at Detroit Mercy, was a standout for the Buckeyes from 1986 to '89. Lowry ranks sixth on the school's career scoring list with 1,746 points.

ing and the cordial Ohio State fans. They were often psyched out before they ever entered the venue.

"Teams would walk in here and say let's just try to play well and keep it close," Lowry said. "They were intimidated big time. It wasn't just the team but the building. I really believe that. You had to go up against the mystique of Ohio State and St. John Arena. Teams were scared when they came in. That's the way a home floor should be."

Though St. John may seem a little antiquated now, it did its part in securing the services of many top-notch players.

Tracey Hall, Lisa Cline, Mary Sivak, Yvette Angel and Katie Smith are just a few of the hallowed names to wear the scarlet and gray. Smith, atop Buckeye record books in most offensive categories, knew a lot about St. John and said it was definitely one reason she picked Ohio State over Stanford.

"I remember playing there in the state tournament as a senior," said Smith, who prepped at Logan High School. "There was an atmosphere, even for a high school game, that I had never really seen before. I figured it would be great once I got to college, and it was."

There were things besides the fans that stuck with Smith.

"It's a great place to shoot in," she said. "The lighting is good, it's not too open, you don't have all this space behind the baskets. Sometimes at bigger gyms, you have trouble shooting because everything is so wide open. That's not the case at St. John. The fans are close to the floor and you feed off their energy. It's a better atmosphere than some of the places we go now (in the ABL)."

Current coach Beth Burns, an assistant under VanDerveer in 1980-81, remembers her first impressions of the arena that has served as her home this

season. She played in the brand-spanking-new Branch Rickey Arena at Ohio Wesleyan, a top-notch Division III venue, but nothing like St. John.

"I love St. John," she said. "I don't care if I'm watching the high school state tournament, our game, a men's game, a volleyball game. When they built St. John, they did it right when it comes to facilities. They didn't when it comes to office space."

"The sight lines, the grade of the seats ... You feel like the farthest guy away is right in your corner. That's what makes it great."

Memories Are Made Of This

Whether reminiscing about the run at the national title, wins over ranked teams or a simple practice, everyone involved in St. John Arena seems to speak of the structure as more than a building — it's a friend.

"It's definitely my home," Lowry said. "To this day I still look at it that way. So much happens there that you can't help but be affected by it. I spent so much time in there, with good times and bad times. But if you didn't have the bad, you wouldn't know just how good the good was."

Darsch, who also had her share of ups and downs, remembers some of the aesthetics — or lack thereof — of the hallowed hall.

"It's a very special facility," she said. "They don't build them like that anymore. I'm not sure they could, actually. There were always problems with the temperature — it was either too hot or too cold, never just right. Air conditioning didn't exist, but you got around that. I happen to like old buildings, and St. John is probably my favorite."

"Too many schools are making change just for the sake of changing, it seems. Penn State's place is very nice, but not nearly as ominous as Rec Hall. Same with Michigan State — I loved walking into Jenison (Field House). I guess the good thing is they're not physically tearing the building down. That would be a tragedy."

Smith, who sees plenty of big-time facilities on her trips during the ABL season, says even now nothing compares to her home away from home during college.

"Even if it was just a practice, you always loved the time you were in there," Smith said. "Everyone who we played against told us they liked playing there, even if they lost. It's just a great place."

"I'm sure the Schottenstein Center will be a nice place, too, but it will take time to get adjusted to it. Ohio State is losing a big part of their tradition, but that's what happens when you're trying to build things up. I'm excited to see new things, but I'll always remember everything about St. John — the practices, the friends, the games, the fans. It's a big part of anyone who played here."



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ST. JOHN ARENA MEMORIES: THE FANS

Longtime Fans Discuss The End

By JEFF RAPP and
STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Members

Depending on the angle, St. John Arena can look more like a blimp hangar than a basketball arena at a major university. The 13,276-seat structure, long since shiny and new looking, resembles a huge tin-covered shed upon entry and fans quickly get cramped in the concourse area when the mad dash to the restroom and concession lines is under way.

After a walk up or down an old concrete ramp to wooden seats, die-hard OSU fans can witness a men's basketball team that has not won since Christmas week and a women's team also still struggling for an identity under its new coach. Each team suffered a heartbreaking, last-second defeat on consecutive days (Feb. 19, 20) recently.

So everybody just can't wait to get into the luxurious \$105 million Schottenstein Center being built just down the street, right?

Not so fast. Believe it or not, as many as 30 different season ticket holders have had seats at St. John Arena since its inception in 1956, according to Ohio State athletic ticket director Richelle Simonson. Much of that loyalty is a credit to 41-year-old St. John itself.

"My father had season tickets when they were still at the Fairgrounds Coliseum," said 33-year-old William Herr of Columbus, seated in the family's normal Section 5A seats for the men's game with Indiana Feb. 19. "Then, when they built the new arena, he purchased four seats. We've been in this spot all my life."

"I guess he was behind the basket for

a while, but they had to move him because the governor wanted his seats."

"As I got older, I started to realize how spoiled I was to have tickets like these to every game."

Most longtime season ticket holders BSB talked to agree with Herr. Why get overly excited about change when you've already got a good thing going?

But university officials are hoping these same people will find they can't go on without seats for Buckeye basketball.

"I would characterize those people as longtime supporters of the program," Simonson said. "They don't seem to be tied to a particular coach or a particular team or whether we're successful or not."

"Their longevity speaks about their commitment to this university."

The question is if the university is as committed to those fans. No special plans have been made to reward longtime season ticket holders when the action swings to Schottenstein in October. Short of buying a personal seat license, longtime season ticket holders — even lifetime ticket holders — will likely be with the rest of the general public in the balcony.

"It is a delicate situation because loyalty is a very important thing," Simonson said. "We have not put the finishing touches on our ticket policies for next year, so we don't know exactly what will happen to the non-seat license members of the general public who have had seats."

"It's been pretty clear-cut that the seat license program was used to fund the building. Then we have to take care of our students, faculty and staff. That doesn't leave much extra seating if any in the lower bowl."

"I would imagine there will be a point system and years of purchase will be significantly weighted. Hopefully those peo-



KEVIN DYE

FAN-FRIENDLY BUILDING — The OSU faithful explode after a three-point basket gives the Buckeyes a late lead against Indiana. The Feb. 19 game was their next-to-last one at St. John Arena.

ple will percolate to the top and have the chance to buy the best remaining seats."

Some fans asked not to be quoted but said they were concerned about being limited to second-rate seats at the Schottenstein Center.

Herr is going to continue to attend games but with expectations that he'll dearly miss St. John.

"I have mixed feelings about it," he said. "We are in for two seat licenses at the Schottenstein Center. I always thought for the last 15 years that St. John Arena had a bad rap as a small, outdated arena. I don't think that was fair."

The Schottenstein Center is expected to seat right around 19,500 for basketball with students, faculty, staff and gift-givers dominating the lower bowl and arena circle and corporate donors filling the hospitality suites just above the

arena circle. The upper bowl will consist almost entirely of season ticket holders and other single-game or package ticket buyers.

Simonson said seating in the balcony at the Schottenstein Center should not be viewed as a stigma.

"At St. John Arena, for instance, I think the first four or five rows of the balcony are still pretty good seats," she said. "There will be a lot of good seats at the new building. I think the first 10 rows or so of that upper level are going to be exceptional."

Deb Gatton, a Purdue grad who moved to central Ohio within the past several years, liked what she saw in two games at St. John Arena this year. She hopes the Schottenstein Center can bottle up a similar atmosphere.

"I love it," she said. "I think they're going to miss the lower section with the noise level, the enthusiasm and the good view."

"This shouldn't be obsolete. They are turning things into mini pro games with the box seats for the donors. This is still amateur sports."

"I really like the old photos and the exhibits in the hallway here. You can't replace that with a modern arena."

So even as the hoop teams wave goodbye to St. John and the bells and whistles continue to be hung on the massive new arena, faithfulness — and stubbornness — is alive and well in Columbus.

"I think they're spending an awful lot of money for 5,000 seats," added one unnamed Columbus man who has had season tickets since the early 1960s. "I guess they're going to have ice hockey and all that other stuff, but I wish they had just kept it here."

"This is the best place in the Big Ten to watch a basketball game."

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ST. JOHN ARENA MEMORIES: OLYMPIC SPORTS

New Tenants Can't Wait To Take Over Arena

By MIKE WACHSMAN

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

While basketball is being ushered out of hallowed St. John Arena and being moved into the spacious Schottenstein Center, a few new tenants will take up residency in the old friend.

Women's volleyball, long a tenant but seldom a resident, will get to practice full time in the arena in addition to staging games there, and gymnastics and wrestling will see their events moved into St. John on a full-time basis.

"It opens up a lot of possibilities for our volleyball programs, our gymnastics programs and our wrestling program," said OSU senior associate athletic director Paul Krebs. "When they compete here, it will really help them."

"Our principal tenants will be those five programs. There may be other events we will want to have here."

For those five lucky programs there will be no more shuttling around from venue to venue, wondering what the fan turnout is going to be.

"We've been getting good crowds this season basically on word of mouth," wrestling coach Russ Hellickson said. "By moving into St. John and doing the proper marketing of our sport, we can get 4,000-5,000 in there. We've got Iowa on the schedule next year and it will be nice to have one home to wrestle in. But we have to promote the sport as well."

Long treated as a second-class citizen, wrestling meets have been held at French Field House and Larkins Hall. The last time the Hawkeyes came in, the Buckeyes had the indignity of grappling at French Field House, certainly not the atmosphere a big-time program wants to create.

Those headaches should go out the window with the move to St. John. The move could help Hellickson bring his program on par with Iowa's. The Hawkeyes regularly wrestle in front of crowds exceeding 10,000 at Carver-Hawkeye Arena.

"I was never one to be hung up on how fancy an arena was or the practice room or anything like that," Hellickson said. "But kids today compare. They'll look at a place and if it looks fancy they'll pick it. It's a perception thing. If the perception is that you have a small-time facility, it's sometimes immaterial what your wrestlers think. They know performance is important, but sometimes you can't shake the perception."

Hellickson will see his office space, currently in the Ohio Stadium towers, moved over to St. John, a very desirable thing. The last order of business would seem to be getting a better practice facility because there seems to be a push, albeit a slow one, to get the team out of outdated Larkins Hall.

Jumping For Joy

Gymnastics has a huge following in the Midwest, but like the Buckeye wrestlers, the Ohio State gymnastics teams currently have infrequent trips to St. John. That will change next year.

St. John has hosted Big Ten championship events in the past, so gymnastics plays well in the arena. It's just too often that the teams are relegated to their cramped quarters in Larkins Hall.

"It's really a great place," women's coach Larry Cox said of St. John Arena.



TERRY GILLIAM

GETTING A NEW HOME — All-American gymnast Blaine Wilson is pictured during a 1996 meet at St. John Arena. With the basketball programs moving out, OSU's volleyball, gymnastics and wrestling programs will have the arena to themselves.

"There's a lot of floor space and not really a bad seat in the place. It's a very fan-friendly facility and we look forward to being there full time."

Cox has big plans to take his fast-improving team to the next level, including developing plans to cater to avid fol-

lowers of the sport.

"We've been wanting for years to put together something that would allow people to buy a season ticket for gymnastics," Cox said. "There are certain meets, rivalries or ranked teams that we would promote a little more heavily. But if people knew they could go to home meets at St. John and do it at an affordable price, I think we'd see the crowds grow tremendously."

Though the gymnasts will still practice at Larkins, there will be some relief and excitement about moving into a bigger home.

"We're very excited about it," men's coach Miles Avery said. "We've had one event this season that was at Larkins Hall and then we had a home meet the next weekend. We know some people went to Larkins instead of St. John, which is where the second meet was. That confusion should be gone next year as people learn all our meets are in St. John Arena."

Cox thinks bigger crowds will have a positive impact on the Ohio State gymnastics programs.

"More people means more excitement," he said. "We've found that the team performs better when there's a bigger crowd. They feed off the energy. It helps to round out the program and we're really looking forward to it."

Bumping Their Way In

Though women's volleyball plays all

of its contests at St. John, it seldom sees the inside of the arena except on game day.

"Our kids feel like Larkins is their home," coach Jim Stone said. "They're over there 90 percent of the time. The only real window we have to practice in St. John is late August and early September. Once school starts up, we're over in Larkins."

It should be a welcome sight for Stone to simply walk out of his office near the arena's west entrance and down to the floor to conduct a practice. As it is now, inclement weather often makes the trek to Larkins a headache.

Stone, a huge fan of St. John, believes the move to the arena will benefit his team.

"There's just so much less of a hassle this way," Stone said. "It's a great place to play. Visiting teams like it here, there's good ceiling clearance, and it's very clean. You can't say that about a lot of arenas."

"It's just visually appealing. The wooden chairs are neat and high school athletes seem to find a certain charm in the place. It's just a traditional, old-fashioned building and I love it."

In addition to the aforementioned teams, men's volleyball will also get to practice full time in St. John and many coaches will have their offices moved into the arena.

The women's and men's basketball coaching staffs will shift their base of operations to the Schottenstein Center, but sports information will stay at St. John, possibly enlarging its current territory.

No matter what teams are playing in St. John, though, one thing's certain: The atmosphere will still be exciting.

"There's something to be said for St. John," Hellickson said. "It can get very loud with a good crowd, and athletes enjoy that. But again, some of it has to come down to promotion and marketing. They need to find ways to get people into the building. Then we have to keep them with the product."

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ST. JOHN ARENA MEMORIES: THE RECORDS —

For The Record: Arena's Name Remains St. John

By JEFF RAPP

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

First of all, let's get something straight — it's St. John Arena, not St. John's.

The name for the 41-year-old building that sits due north of Ohio Stadium and between Lane Avenue and Woody Hayes Drive came from OSU officials who wanted to memorialize longtime athletic director Lynn W. St. John. A man who clearly was ahead of his time, St. John brought just about all OSU programs into prominence and was the gumption behind the building of Ohio Stadium, which opened for business in 1922.

St. John coached basketball at Ohio State and headed up the basketball program from 1912-1919, posting a mark of 79-69 (.534) in that time. Another athletic pioneer at Ohio State, George Trautman, took over for St. John for three years. Harold Olsen and Tippy Dye followed until Floyd Stahl took over in 1950. It would be Stahl who would see the team's changeover from the Fairgrounds Coliseum to its new home, St. John Arena.

Completed in November 1956 at a cost of roughly \$4 million, St. John soon became a standard for college basketball arenas. Capacity has changed slightly over the years with differing availability in the lower bleacher sections, but it is currently listed at 13,276. The chair-back wooden seats, corner scoreboards and steep balcony are all trademarks as even today coaches and players can't get over the tight-knit feel of the place.

Amazingly, the distance from the top row of the upper deck to the playing floor is only 68 feet and the longest distance from a seat to center court is 155 feet. You'd need a much longer tape measure at Indiana's Assembly Hall or Iowa's Carver-Hawkeye Arena.

Just short of 6.5 million fans had come through the doors coming into this, the 42nd season of men's basketball in the building. That's an average of 11,522 per game. Sure, the new Schottenstein Center figures to hold 19,500 for basketball, but the OSU program gained its national prominence in St. John and the crowds there rank with some of the best in the country.

Even with this season's shortcomings, OSU will finish with an impressive record in St. John. The tally stands at 426-150 (.740) with just one more game — a Feb. 28 date with Penn State — looming.

OSU has won 10 or more games in St. John 28 times and has unblemished marks in six seasons, the latest coming in 1990-91.

Under coach Fred Taylor, OSU won an incredible 50 straight home games from 1959-63, and the 1962 senior class of Jerry Lucas, John Havlicek, Mel Nowell, Bobby Knight and Gary Gearhart went 34-0 in the building.

Likewise, the OSU women have been dominant at home. Their building-closing win over Michigan on Feb. 22 gives the women a 230-

62 mark (.788) in 23 years.

The arena opened on Dec. 1, 1956, as a crowd of 9,600 watched OSU down Butler 98-82. The arena was dedicated on Feb. 25, 1957, as a sellout throng of 13,300 was on hand to usher in St. John in style. But like Michigan did in Ohio Stadium in 1922, Illinois ruined the party. Using a relentless full-court press, the Illini won a 79-72 affair and ended OSU's notion of winning the league crown.

Arena Records

There have been a number of records established at St. John Arena worth noting.

Although Clark Kellogg reached great fame as a member of the Buckeyes between 1980 and '82, he is believed to have scored the arena record for points while a high school senior at Cleveland St. Joseph. Kellogg poured in 51 points, but St. Joe's fell to Columbus East 74-65 in the Class AAA state title game.

As far as college basketball goes, OSU's Gary Bradds logged the school's highest-scoring game with 49 points against Illinois in 1964. OSU players eclipsed the 40-point mark at the arena seven times, five of them by Bradds. Kellogg (42 vs. Northwestern in 1981) and Dennis Hopson (42 vs. Cleveland State in 1985) also did it.

Central Michigan sharpshooter Tommie Johnson buried eight three-point field goals and made 18 of 28 from the floor on his way to an arena-opponent-record 45 points in his team's 85-83 loss on Jan. 2, 1988. Purdue All-American Glenn Robinson gets honorable mention for his 40-point effort on Feb. 23, 1994.

Longtime rival Indiana scored an arena record in a 122-92 win on Feb. 2, 1959. The OSU record for points scored in a game came in the 121-96 win over George Mason on Jan. 8, 1995. Doug Etzler hit an OSU arena-high eight three-pointers in that game.

Other records of note include Bradds' 20 field goals in a 1964 game against Purdue; Lucas' 30 rebounds against Indiana on March 10, 1962 (not to mention his 28 boards in his college debut against Wake Forest on Dec. 1, 1959); Damon Stringer's 11 assists in his college debut against Central Connecticut State on Nov. 26, 1995; and Herb Williams' nine blocked shots against Iowa on Feb. 23, 1980.

On the women's side, Lisa Cline scored a Buckeye arena record of 35 points against Marshall on Dec. 20, 1988. Katie Smith tied that mark against Virginia on Jan. 2, 1993.

In terms of career achievement, Smith set the school's career mark as well as the Big Ten mark (for men or women) with 2,578 points from 1993 to '96. She broke the Big Ten women's mark in one of her final home appearances, Feb. 11, 1996, against Minnesota.

Hopson holds the OSU men's mark with 2,096 points. He broke the previous mark (set by Williams) in his final home game, against Florida International on March 4, 1987.

Steven Morris

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St. John Arena By The Numbers

OSU Men Year-By-Year In St. John

Year	Home Games	Att.	Avg.	Home W-L	Overall W-L	Big Ten W-L	Big Ten Finish
The Floyd Stahl Era (8 years, 1951-58, 84-92, .477)							
1956-57	12	122,850	10,237	10-2	14-8	9-5	T3rd
1957-58	11	105,106	9,555	7-4	9-13	8-6	T4th
The Fred Taylor Era (18 years, 1959-76, 297-158, .653)							
1958-59	11	100,291	9,117	8-3	11-11	7-7	T5th
1959-60*	12	139,034	11,586	12-0	25-3	13-1	1st
1960-61*	11	138,898	12,627	11-0	27-1	14-0	1st
1961-62*	11	147,711	13,428	11-0	26-2	13-1	1st
1962-63	14	175,739	12,553	14-0	20-4	11-3	T1st
1963-64	13	151,221	11,632	10-3	16-8	11-3	T1st
1964-65	13	116,336	8,949	8-5	12-12	6-8	6th
1965-66	13	112,090	8,622	8-5	11-13	5-9	8th
1966-67	12	101,852	8,488	8-4	13-11	6-8	T7th
1967-68*	13	141,993	10,923	12-1	21-8	10-4	T1st
1968-69	13	147,460	11,343	11-2	17-7	9-5	T2nd
1969-70	12	119,954	9,996	8-4	17-8	8-6	T2nd
1970-71*	12	126,702	10,558	10-2	20-6	13-1	1st
1971-72	12	157,758	13,146	12-0	18-6	10-4	2nd
1972-73	13	174,423	13,417	9-4	14-10	8-6	T3rd
1973-74	11	121,539	11,049	5-6	9-15	4-10	8th
1974-75	15	126,814	8,454	10-5	14-14	8-10	6th
1975-76	13	98,250	7,558	6-7	6-20	2-16	10th
The Eldon Miller Era (10 years, 1977-86, 176-118, .599)							
1976-77	13	97,940	7,534	4-9	11-16	4-14	10th
1977-78	14	187,306	13,379	11-3	16-11	9-6	6th
1978-79	13	173,144	13,319	10-3	19-12	12-6	4th
1979-80*	14	190,274	13,591	13-1	21-8	12-6	2nd
1980-81	15	199,483	13,299	11-4	14-13	9-9	T5th
1981-82*	15	190,880	12,725	12-3	21-10	12-6	T2nd
1982-83*	16	184,689	11,543	13-3	20-10	11-7	T2nd
1983-84*	14	174,276	12,448	9-5	15-14	8-10	T5th
1984-85*	14	173,997	12,428	12-2	20-10	11-7	T3rd
1985-86*	17	210,413	12,377	14-3	19-14	8-10	7th
The Gary Williams Era (3 years, 1987-89, 59-41, .590)							
1986-87*	16	193,744	12,109	12-4	20-13	9-9	6th
1987-88*	16	209,286	13,080	13-3	20-13	9-9	6th
1988-89*	16	208,417	13,026	11-5	19-15	6-12	T8th
The Randy Ayers Era (8 years, 1990-97, 124-108, .534)							
1989-90*	14	182,125	13,009	12-2	17-13	10-8	6th
1990-91*	15	198,836	13,256	15-0	27-4	15-3	T1st
1991-92*	16	212,416	13,276	15-1	26-6	15-3	1st
1992-93*	16	211,245	13,203	10-6	15-13	8-10	7th
1993-94	15	199,140	13,276	10-5	13-16	6-12	T8th
1994-95	16	177,081	11,068	6-10	6-22	2-16	10th
1995-96	14	163,980	11,713	8-6	10-17	3-15	10th
1996-97	14	147,881	10,563	9-5	10-17	5-13	9th
The Jim O'Brien Era (1 year, 1998, 7-20, .259)							
1997-98*	17	169,490	9,970	7-9	7-20	0-14	11th
Totals							
(42 Years)	577	6,622,064	11,477	426-150	686-470	359-321	

Legend: *NCAA champions; # NCAA Final Four; @NCAA participant; %NIT participant; &Season still in progress (attendance reflects full season with 13,276 included for Feb. 28 season finale; records through games of Feb. 22).

OSU Women Year-By-Year In St. John

Year	Home Games	Att.	Avg.	Home W-L	Overall W-L	Big Ten W-L	Big Ten Finish
The Debbie Wilson Era (8 years, 1973-80, 157-58, .739)							
1975-76	9	N/A*	—	9-0	26-6	—	—
1976-77	5	N/A*	—	3-2	21-7	—	—
1977-78	7	N/A*	—	7-0	23-8	3-0	1st
1978-79	9	N/A*	—	7-2	19-11	2-1	3rd
1979-80	11	N/A*	—	8-3	16-18	0-1	T6th
The Tara VanDerveer Era (5 years, 1981-85, 110-37, .748)							
1980-81	9	N/A*	—	4-5	17-15	2-1	3rd
1981-82	12	5,964	497	10-2	20-7	3-0	1st
1982-83	14	15,618	1,116	14-0	23-5	15-3	T1st
1983-84*	15	20,327	1,355	12-3	22-7	17-1	1st
1984-85*	16	30,129	1,883	15-1	28-3	18-0	1st
The Nancy Darsch Era (12 years, 1986-1997, 176-118, .599)							
1985-86*	17	51,108	3,006	14-3	23-7	16-2	1st
1986-87*	12	45,172	3,764	11-1	26-5	17-1	T1st
1987-88*	15	69,727	4,648	15-0	25-5	16-2	2nd
1988-89*	14	58,138	4,153	13-1	24-6	16-2	T1st
1989-90*	15	56,239	3,749	12-3	18-12	11-7	T4th
1990-91	14	44,752	3,197	8-6	11-17	8-10	T5th
1991-92	15	41,920	2,795	10-5	15-13	9-9	5th
1992-93*	16	98,328	6,146	16-0	28-4	16-2	T1st
1993-94	12	100,936	8,411	6-6	14-14	7-11	T7th
1994-95	13	82,192	6,322	8-5	17-13	7-9	T7th
1995-96*	15	78,150	5,210	12-3	21-13	8-8	T6th
1996-97	14	62,716	4,480	7-7	12-16	3-13	10th
The Beth Burns Era (1 year, 1998, 14-11, .560)							
1997-98*	12	44,589	3,716	8-4	14-11	7-9	8th
Totals							
(23 Years)	291	N/A*	N/A*	229-62	463-223	201-92	
(17 Years*)	241	906,005	3,759				

Legend: *NCAA Final Four; @NCAA participant; %No attendance figures available for first six seasons at St. John Arena (totals reflect last 17 years); %Season still in progress.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

EDITOR'S NOTE — This week we are devoting the Letters To The Editor section entirely to St. John Arena memories. The usual discourse on OSU football and other topics will return next week.

Enjoyed Women's Action

Even though the first basketball game I attended at St. John Arena — in 1963, when I was a freshman — was a men's game (starring Gary Bradds), my first love is the women's team.

St. John Arena has been the perfect venue for the women's teams and the many great players I remember over the years: Carla Chapman, Yvette Angel, Amy Tucker, Tracey Hall, Lisa Cline, Theresa Busch, Toni Roesch, Katie Smith and Audrey Burcy and the rest of the Final Four team, and many more. And let's also remember the great coach Tara VanDerveer.

Of all the games I attended, probably the most influential was the 1986 OSU vs. USC, Tracey Hall vs. Cheryl Miller match-up. It was to this game that I took my reluctant son, BSB non-revenue sports editor Mike Wachsmann, and saw him fall in love with women's basketball. I am sure that one game made a believer out of many.

My favorite memory of St. John, however, was on March 1, 1985, OSU vs. Iowa. Up to that time, attendance at home games was probably in the 300-400 range, at best. You could always get a good seat in the floor bleachers.

Iowa fans had been packing their gym with thousands in attendance for the clash with their archrival Buckeyes, so VanDerveer challenged Buckeye fans to do the same. On that night, 9,729 showed up for the game.

I was so overwhelmed by the turnout. When I finally got to my seat in the mid-mezzanine, I looked around at the thousands still streaming in and I was overcome. My friends must have thought I was unusually silent that evening, but the truth of the matter was I was too close to tears to say much.

And Ohio State won, 64-41. What a fabulous night.

Thanks, St. John Arena, for these and all the other good times you have shown me. And good luck to the Schottenstein Center. You have a very high standard to try to live up to.

Karen Wachsmann
Boulder City, Nev.

OSU-Indiana '91 Was Great

My years at Ohio State coincided with the sometimes dull games of the Eldon Miller years, to the rejuvenation of the Gary Williams era, and finally to the golden years of the Jimmy Jackson squads.

By far the most exhilarating game I have ever seen at St. John was the victory against Indiana in double overtime in 1991. I sat in the last row of the upper balcony and nearly passed out from the heat, adrenaline and excitement.

While St. John has its memories, I for one am looking forward to a new era of Buckeye basketball in the Schott.

George Knoske
Cincinnati

Beating Michigan In '64

Of the many memories of St. John Arena in my years as an undergraduate student, one jumps to the surface very quickly. In my recollections, nothing matched a particular basketball game against that team from up north for suspense, tension and drama as that Buckeye victory.

A highly ranked team, led by Cazzie Russell, Bill Buntin and Oliver Darden, came into St. John Arena and was beaten by the Bucks. Gary "Tex" Bradds was bumped, bruised and bashed by the big uglies but scored from all over the court in excess of 40 points.

Final victory was sealed as Tommy Bowman sank the free throws that provided

the two-point win. Fred Taylor and our Bucks were on their way to another Big Ten title.

Bill Kjerrumgaard
Wooster, Ohio

Staying For Last Game

Spring training baseball in Florida is an annual ritual for me. This year, however, the trek south cannot begin until I see the final OSU men's basketball game in St. John Arena. I have several memories of the arena that stand out among many.

First was my initial visit in January 1966 when the Buckeyes almost upset Cazzie Russell and Michigan. As a 12-year-old, I was thrilled to see the place where Jerry Lucas, John Havlicek and Gary Bradds had played.

In February 1991, I attended the incredible 97-95 double-overtime win over Indiana and emerged exhausted from the greatest game I've ever seen.

State high school basketball championships have also been an integral part of the St. John years. They have been extra special for the participants due to both the tradition of the facility and the fact that no other high school games are played on the fabled floor, aside from all-star contests.

I've had the pleasure of following five teams from my home county (Shelby) to state titles on the banks of the Olentangy.

Every time I drive down Lane Avenue, the reflections continue.

Dave Ross
Fort Laramie, Ohio

Loved Skull Session

On a frantic and impetuous mawkishness, I traveled about 3,000 miles during the autumn of 1978 to have a feel for Ohio State football two years before I became an official Buckeye.

My tour of the campus the day before the game left me in a state of elation I did not snap out of until that year's Christmas. I am probably tendentious, but I thought that if there was a college in heaven, the campus would resemble the one I had just seen.

On a brisk and drizzly morning, I sailed early to the stadium to purchase a ticket. As soon as I was ensconced from the punitive and protracted quest, I directed my attention to the St. John Arena, which appears to be awash with oodles of Buckeyes about to receive their emotional manna.

I was immovably attracted to the pictures and the trophies that contour a girdle around the heart of the venerable amphitheater like a parent embracing his offspring. A pathos permeated my essence as if by a symbiotic occurrence, all of the tradition contrived by the old warriors was running through my veins and my feeble body was not worthy of such greatness.

I had to clamber all the way to the balcony to find an empty seat in the olden but lustrous gem as a throng of Buckeyes had packed the house. I had not quite caught my breath yet when a group of toy soldiers was wafting a sonorous fanfare as they entered the distinguished coliseum.

The faithful stood up and started clapping their hands to the forceful cadence exuded from the drums of the red berets while a queer but majestically donned character was performing spectacular pirouettes with an elongated baton creating an electricity that even writing about it gives me goose bumps.

Suddenly, there was a standing ovation which prompted me to scour the area as I thought that Archie Griffin had just entered the staunch arena. A nice gentleman who obviously knew that I was as baffled as a freshman in his first chemistry course said, "The standing ovation is for Dwight Hudson, our drum major, who is outstanding."

The fervent gig continued with the singing of solemn Carmen Ohio and the fiery Buckeye Battle Cry. I was so agog after the program was over that I would have played in the game had Woody asked me.

I have been at St. John Arena many times to enjoy good basketball or volleyball games and for other activities, but nothing compares to the first pregame show I had the opportunity to attend about 20 years ago. I have always bled scarlet and gray after that rendezvous.

Alfredo Ramos
San Juan, Puerto Rico

Band Never Has Off Day

St. John is a place where you cannot find greater playing, more noise or more enthusiasm in any arena in the world and it has nothing to do with basketball.

I'm speaking about TBDBITL and the Saturday skull sessions.

It doesn't matter which football Saturday session you go to. There are no slumps or losing performances.

Steve Gerard
Mason, Ohio

More Memories

Here are some of my memories of the basketball teams playing in St. John Arena.

In 1950, our Springfield High School boys won the state title.

In 1957-58, Middletown High School, with star Jerry Lucas, going undefeated was upset by Columbus East in the semifinals. Lucas put Middletown in two overtimes before they were defeated. The fans and I were stunned and frozen in our seats. Lucas went on to play for Ohio State, helping OSU to a national title.

In January 1963, OSU stuns No. 1 Indiana 70-67 in its conference opener with players Tony Campbell, Ron Stokes, Troy Taylor, Dave Jones, Granville Waiters and Larry Huggins.

Clark Kellogg will remember the game with Minnesota, leading by eight points and only little over a minute to play. He blocked the inbound pass twice and scored. Again he got the ball, was fouled, made both shots. This happened so fast I really cannot remember the last seconds, but OSU won the game. What an ending.

More memories of players in St. John Arena:

- Kelvin Ransey's scoring points for OSU.
- Indiana's Keith Smart's 20 points from long distance defeating OSU.
- Troy Taylor and Ron Stokes combining for 30 points, winning a game in the '80s. I thought St. John Arena was going to lose the roof when Ron Stokes made his first dunk shot.
- Jay Burson hardly missed a free throw, helping OSU win many games.
- The women's team, winning with Katie Smith.

I wish coach Jim O'Brien the best this year and from now on.

Dale Ellsworth
Springfield, Ohio

Great Memories

It's hard to put into words the sights, the sounds and the magic that I have been privileged enough to experience in St. John Arena.

As a Columbus native for all 19-plus years of my life, I have seen many games in St. John. I can recall as a grade-school student not being able to concentrate on many of my tasks at hand on game days because I knew I had tickets for the game that evening.

I can remember sitting in the stands as a young Buckeye fan, the crowd cheering, the band playing, and the team fighting, just dreaming and hoping that one day I would be the next Hopson, Jent, Jackson or Brown to play out on that floor in front of all this.

It's tough to understand that feeling that you get when you walk into St. John Arena, but those who get it know exactly what I'm talking about. From the pictures to the trophies to the banners and even the smell, it just brings something to me. When I entered high school I began to realize that my chances of playing in St. John were next to nothing. But I did see a little light in the subject.

The thought of going to a small Division III school to play basketball and probably end up riding the bench for two or three years was not very appealing to me, so I decided to chase after that dream I had and make it come true — in a way. Being hired as an Ohio State men's basketball manager has allowed me to come as close to my dream as possible.

It's not all about having a great seat for the game but a lot more. I get to work with 30 of the best guys around in one of the best college arenas every day. Many times as I trudge through campus on the way to classes I catch myself smiling because I know that later that day I get to work in St. John Arena. I get chills every time I walk out on that floor and think about all the great players who have made the arena so wonderful.

Though I never got to see the true glory days with Coach Taylor, Gary Bradds, Jerry Lucas, John Havlicek and the rest of the great ones, I can feel the magic they must have created in St. John Arena every time I enter it. I am sad to see such a great place go, but I will never forget the games I have witnessed and the time that I have spent in such a magnificent place.

David Egelhoff
Columbus

Liked '60 Indiana Game

My favorite memory of St. John Arena took place in the 1960 national championship season.

The game that made the top of the memory list was against Indiana, led by Walt Bellamy and the legendary coach Branch McCracken.

As I recall, the game was nip-and-tuck throughout and with less than 15 seconds to play Indiana had a one-point lead and possession of the ball.

A guard for Indiana was dribbling the ball up court and, as I recall, Ohio State was not pressuring the dribbler. As he dribbled over midcourt, he turned and threw the ball behind a teammate and out of bounds into the arms of Coach McCracken.

Ohio State inbounded with seven seconds left and Larry Siegfried dribbled down and made a shot in the key to give Ohio State a one-point win.

Two things stood out in that game. First, the look on Coach McCracken's face when the ball ended up in his arms. Second, the lack of pressure by Ohio State. It was like they had given up and then an unforced error led to a chance to win the game.

Also, the ticket for the game cost a quarter. I was able to go to a few games as I went to Heidelberg College and came down to visit a cousin at OSU.

Jim Martin
Uniontown, Ohio

A Youngster's View

I dream of playing for Ohio State. I've been to four games at St. John Arena. I have lots of respect for OSU sports.

George Mason was one of the games I went to where we won.

I dreamed of playing in St. John Arena, but I guess I will have to play in the Schottenstein Center.

Cory Michaud
Willshire, Ohio

(Cory, thanks for the letter and the neat drawing of Michael Redd, whom you call the "next Michael Jordan" and "the best freshman in the nation." Ed.)

If you would like to express an opinion concerning Ohio State University sports, please send your letter to BSB Letters, P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio 43212, or e-mail it to bsb@buckeyesports.com for use in BSB. Letters must be signed and include the writer's hometown and a daytime telephone number for verification. Publication priority will be given to those letters that are brief, and we reserve the right to edit letters for publication.

ST. JOHN ARENA MEMORIES: TOP 25 GAMES

Continued From Page 23

and seven boards and Beverly Williams' 13 points.

• **Southern California, Jan. 8, 1986** — This is the one that really put Ohio State basketball on the map. The Buckeyes fought tooth and nail with Cheryl Miller and the second-ranked Women of Troy, never wavering until the horn sounded and the scoreboard read 83-81 in favor of the visitors.

Miller came in with the hype and did well, scoring 27 points, but Hall was every bit her equal, tallying 28 points and pulling down 12 boards.

The crowd of 10,184 saw a frenzied game, with USC gaining a lead, then losing it, then regaining it, before the Buckeyes tied it at 73 on a Hall jumper. Cynthia Cooper, tough to stop on the perimeter with 25 points, hit the eventual game winner with under 20 seconds left to play, receiving a pass from Miller.

USC went on to play Texas in the national championship game, so OSU tasted what it was like to hang with two of the nation's best in the span of a month and a half.

• **Iowa, Feb. 26, 1988** — Imagine the surprise when people strolled into St. John Arena on a Friday night and couldn't find an empty seat — at a women's game. That was the case here, with the top-ranked Hawkeyes in town, just a month after more than 15,500 fans jammed into Carver-Hawkeye Arena to see Iowa upend the Buckeyes 75-64.

Payback would be sweet for OSU, knocking off the Hawks 58-54 in front of 13,320 diehards. Nikita Lowry came up huge, scoring a game-high 28 points and pulling down 12 cars, and Hall added 10 points and six boards.

The biggest lead for either team was five points, but OSU managed to convert late and take the game. Hall scored the game winner



CHANCE BROCKWAY

WELCOME, LEW OR KAREEM — UCLA's Lew Alcindor, who later became known as the NBA's Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, defends OSU's Dave Sorenson (15) during a Dec. 6, 1968, game at St. John Arena. The Bruins prevailed 84-73.

with 34 seconds left on a turnaround J from the left edge of the lane after she missed her first attempt.

"On the game-winning basket, I just said what the heck and made a move," Hall said later.

The crowd was deafening at times, and this game was the measuring stick for all subsequent contests.

• **Virginia, Jan. 2, 1993** — The true coming-out party for Katie Smith and the national runner-up team came against the powerful Cavaliers in Columbus as part of the made-for-TV Big Ten/ACC Challenge before 9,177. The Buckeyes, behind 35 from Smith, dusted off the fifth-ranked Cavs 91-84, causing everyone to take notice. Two months

later, OSU played for the national championship.

Virginia got out fast, leading 15-5, but OSU used a 26-10 burst over the next six minutes to lead 31-25. Leading 51-46 at half-time of the track meet, OSU put the game away by scoring nine of the first 12 points of the second half.

Averill Roberts proved a worthy complement to Smith, racking up 19 points, while Virginia was led by the Burge twins, Heather and Heidi, with 24 and 23 points, respectively.

• **Iowa, March 7, 1993** — Ohio State was looking to avenge one of two conference defeats and did just that, taking a physical 72-60 decision from the second-ranked Hawkeyes in front of another sellout throng.

OSU canned 23 of 29 foul shots while Iowa strolled to the line just 10 times, making six. That was in sharp contrast to the 79-62 Iowa win a month earlier when the Hawkeyes hit 17 of 22 and OSU was 6 of 6.

The Buckeyes led 43-33 at intermission and the game turned into a free-throw battle down the stretch as OSU failed to can a shot from the field in the game's final 5:28 and Iowa hit just one.

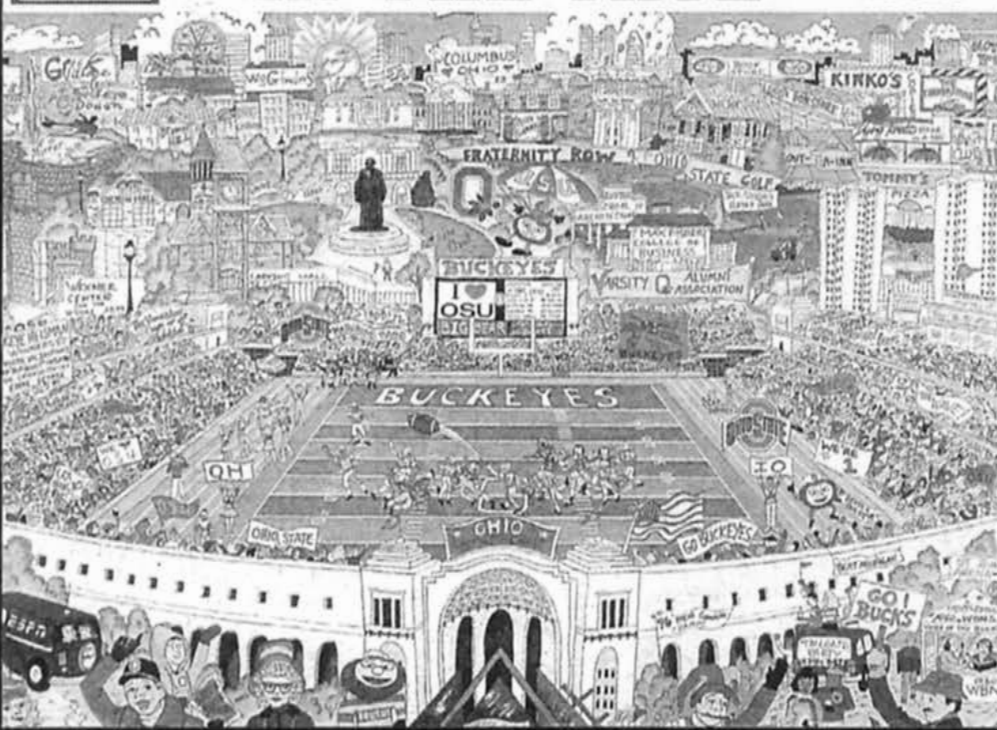
The Buckeyes were led by Smith's 25 points and eight rebounds, while Roberts and Nikki Keyton chipped in 15 points apiece.

These two teams would hook up a little more than two weeks later in the national semifinals, with the Buckeyes taking a 73-72 overtime win.

BSB extends special thanks to Lee Cayer, author of "The Golden Age of Buckeye Basketball" for his help in pinpointing and researching many of these games.

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OPINION

Memories Flood Back About Time At Arena

How can you sit down and write a tribute to an inanimate object? That's a good question. It's definitely not an easy task, but when said object is St. John Arena — something that holds different memories for all of us — it becomes a little easier.

Growing up, I never really understood why they called it St. John Arena. Sure, there were pictures of Lynn W. St. John everywhere, but when you're 9 years old, you don't know that. I only knew it as "the spaceship building." I always thought it might gain flight someday, what with those skinny poles rising up on every side. But it never did.

The old barn may not be the most aesthetically pleasing home in the world, but it was our home for so many years. I still remember my trip inside the hallowed facility in January of 1974 when a middling bunch of Buckeyes spanked Georgia Tech by 17 points. The winning was infrequent that season — just nine for the good guys — but that evening I thought the Buckeyes were the best team in the world. Not only was I thrilled to even be in the house (though in the nosebleed seats), but the pageantry and pomp surrounding the game was something to behold.

That team had Bill Andreas, Larry Bolden, Craig Taylor and captain Wardell Jackson and it was my first real indoctrination to Buckeye basketball. Football had long been my sport of choice, but that first time in St. John Arena told me I'd be hooked on hoops for life.

There were other experiences in the grand old lady that have stayed with me to this day — watching John McEnroe and Guillermo Vilas go at it in a lame (but entertaining) exhibition in the mid-1980s; His Airness rising above the crowd in another lame (but entertaining) NBA exhibition game, with Brad Sellers as a teammate; and Katie Smith's coming-out party on national TV against Virginia in 1992, when she hit for 35. Not at all lame.

As the primary women's basketball maven in this burg, I've seen many, many ordinary games. But I've also seen some extraordinary ones, too.

I remember being dragged — kicking and screaming if recollections are correct — to my first women's game, a titanic tussle between Ohio State and USC, a showdown between two of the nation's best players — Buckeye Tracey Hall and Trojan Cheryl Miller.

Though it took awhile to come around — somewhere near the end of regulation during the 83-81 USC win — I thought, this isn't such a bad game after all. Being somewhere around 5-7 and never

THE FACTS MAN Mike Wachsman

being able to play above the rim (I camp out along the three-point line and launch 'em with precision), I understood the teamwork and discipline involved in the women's game. And I liked it.

Other memorable contests, listed chronologically, include:

- A 30-point blowout of Texas (1987), which was without Clarissa Davis but still ranked in the top five;

- The first-ever women's sellout against Iowa, a 58-54 win in an arena so loud Hawkeye coach Vivian Stringer said she couldn't hear her team during timeouts (1988);

- An NCAA Tournament-record 116 points put up against Syracuse in a second-round game (1988);

- A triple-overtime thriller with Kentucky, an 89-86 OSU win (1989);

- An overtime comeback win against winny Lin Dunn and Purdue (1990);

- Controlling Georgia in the Buckeye Classic with an 89-72 win (1992);

- Late-season home wins over Iowa and Penn State during the Final Four season (1993); and

- Katie hitting a J from 20 feet at the buzzer to beat top-10 Vanderbilt (1993).

There are probably some others I'm forgetting, but time takes its toll on a memory, you know.

Basketball isn't the only big deal about St. John, though.

Big Ten championship events have been held there, as have concerts, though I never got to experience the singular thrill of sitting in the swaying balcony as a loud cacophony of sound enveloped the place.

While I'm definitely looking forward to the Schottenstein Center's big opening, a small part of me wants to stay young forever, remembering the space-ship. Listen to me — you'd think they were tearing the building down. That would be a criminal offense. No, it will now be the home for some of the more popular Olympic sports, which is well-deserved.

Though basketball will never quite be the same — I'm not a big backer of true fans being pushed up away from the court — we can all look back and remember singular thrills. Whether it was a huge game, an OSU marching band skull session or, simply, a stroll into the arena to experience the ambience, St. John Arena will remain — like

Ohio Stadium — a part of our lives.

One that can keep us young eternally.

What Else Would You Expect?

Whenever anyone asks me what I think about the latest stumble by some star athlete, I feign shock. It's become old hat by now — and not just at Ohio State. Too many big-timers run afoul of the law or team rules. But we all knew it was coming.

Two shining examples of what we all want our kids to be are UCLA's Jelani McCoy and Portland Trail Blazer J.R. Rider. I know he likes to be called Isaiah, but J.R. sort of means junior, and in his case it's called for because he's infantile.

McCoy was suspended from the team in the preseason because, rumors were, he tested positive for marijuana. When he finally returned to the Bruins, he spoke of how much he missed basketball and how the setback had affected him. So what does he do? He quits the team, citing "intense media scrutiny and pressure."

Hold on, Jelani, while I get my hanky. The kitchen got too hot, so he bolted. If you don't want the scrutiny, don't join the team in the first place.

As for the virtuous Mr. Rider, well, I'm at as much of a loss as he is. How could we ever have guessed that someone who repeatedly skips practice, misses team flights and tries to pirate cellular phones would leave the bench during a game?

He was reportedly upset that he was booed by the home fans. Never mind that he was missing yet kept shooting.

His on-court conscience, a term used loosely here, matches the one he has off the court. Which means he's somewhere between thug and cretin. Again I say, if you're too thin-skinned to take some criticism, get out. By the way, J.R., how do you think folks respond when they see you at the bank cashing your way-too-high paycheck?

Let's hope the Grant Hills, Tim Duncans and Shareef Abdur-Rahims of the world do indeed triumph so the youngsters will have someone positive to look up to.

Let's leave the McCoy's, Riders and Allen Iversons in the trash — where they've taken themselves anyway.

Crème De La Crème

This year's All-Big Ten team should not be too difficult to figure out. Take some of the best players from the best teams and you've got it.

The player of the year is Iowa's Tangelia Smith, whom no one had an answer for all season. She is the Hawkeyes' heart. Joining Smith is Illinois' Tajuja Catchings, Ohio State's Marrita Porter, Northwestern's Kristina Divjak and Purdue's backcourt wiz Stephanie White will run the show.

Indiana's Jim Izard is coach of the year since he took a team with little depth to an upper division finish, but Iowa's Angie Lee did a fine job with a lot of injuries to her team.

Ohio State's Jamie Lewis wins freshman of the year, over Penn State's Lisa Shepherd and Purdue's Katie Douglas.

There you have it.

From The Pages Of BSB

TEN YEARS AGO — 1988

Tracey Hall, simply one of the greatest players in women's Big Ten basketball history, played in her final home game Feb. 28, but not before she was honored by Ohio Gov. Richard F. Celeste. The politician proclaimed the day as "Tracey Hall Day" throughout the state and said Hall "sets a tremendous example of genuine sportsmanship and championship."

After being presented roses and wiping away tears at midcourt, the 6-0 senior recorded 20 points, 12 rebounds and nine steals in an 88-48 trouncing of Minnesota.

Two days earlier, the women pounced on top-ranked Iowa 58-54 in St. John Arena before the first sellout in OSU women's history, 13,320. The win moved OSU's home-court winning streak to 23. Hall scored the go-ahead points on a turnaround with 34 seconds left. Niki Lowry led the way with 28 points and 12 rebounds.

FIVE YEARS AGO — 1993

The previous year's outgoing six-man class of Mark Baker, Jamaal Brown, Steve Hall, Jim Jackson, Chris Jent and Bill Robinson could be seen back in Columbus either attending school or working on their games. Baker and Brown re-enrolled after being cut by the Columbus Horizon of the CBA. Jent had been traded from Rapid City to the Horizon. Hall and Robinson were nearing a March 19 graduation, and Jackson was firing jumpers in St. John during a contract holdout with the

NBA's Dallas Mavericks.

Meanwhile, the current team suffered a two-point loss at home to 5th-rated Michigan to fall to 13-11, 6-9 in the Big Ten. That left Randy Ayers' squad in a tough spot for the NCAA Tournament even with a win over No. 1 Indiana days earlier.

"We almost have to win out now," he said.

ONE YEAR AGO — 1997

OSU gymnastics made a rare but well-deserved appearance on the BSB cover as Blaine Wilson and Susan Eckman were highlighted. Wilson was leading the top-ranked men's team after shining at the 1996 Olympics. Eckman, just a sophomore, had posted her fifth perfect score of 10.0 on the vault.

Jackson's tumultuous NBA career took another turn as he was traded from the Mavericks to the New Jersey Nets as part of a nine-player deal between the two franchises.

"Now I can catch up on my sleep," Jackson said. "I don't have to worry about the phone ringing wondering if I'm going to be traded or anything else."

The ice hockey team put together its best unbeaten string in more than 10 years — six games — by tying Bowling Green Feb. 22 and posting an improbable 8-3 blowout of Michigan State at the Fairgrounds Coliseum the following day, locking up a seventh-place finish in the CCHA standings.

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Jim Strausbaugh

THE VIEW FROM 15TH AND HIGH

Yes, There Was Festival Seating At St. John

It's been quite a time of nostalgia around the BSB offices the past few days as we put together this salute to St. John Arena that you are holding now.

You start to think about the building and all sorts of memories come back. You talk about it with your office mates and more memories come back. You do a little research for this issue and you remember even more games, players, plays and ancillary incidents that give St. John Arena its rich history — a rich history both from a basketball standpoint and from the personal standpoint of those of us who have viewed games there through the years.

My history at St. John Arena only stretches back to 1979, though as I think about it now, that's almost half the lifetime of the building. My first game was the Buckeyes' NIT contest with St. Joseph's on March 7, 1979.

It's funny the things I remember about the game. One of the things I recall most vividly is that the game had what was known in the days of the infamous Who concert as "festival seating." That is to say there were no reserved seats and I remember the mad scramble to find a place to sit and I remember the relief we felt when we ended up with two pretty good seats in the balcony.

As for the game itself, I couldn't even tell you who won without looking it up (OSU won 80-66). What I remember is that Herbie Williams played for the Buckeyes and the excitement that the presence of a highly regarded big man created.

In fact, that whole run on unreserved seats was created by the excitement that Eldon Miller had created since arriving from Western Michigan a couple of years earlier, especially after he brought in his version of the Fab Five — Williams, Jim Smith, Carter Scott, Todd Penn and Marquis Miller.

As people remember the notoriously dull Miller, they sometimes forget the excitement that he brought to St. John Arena in those early years. In fact, that game with St. Joe's was the Buckeyes' first postseason appearance in eight seasons.

I guess the thing I remember most about that NIT game, though, is that I went with my father, who was in town visiting. It makes me think of all the fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, or other combinations thereof, who have shared experiences in St. John Arena.

The basketball teams can move, but those shared memories will stay with those who watched games together in the venerable building. Read the letter in this issue from Karen Wachsman or the column by Mike Wachsman. Notice how both of them recall going to the OSU-USC women's basketball game together. It's an experience they will always share, an experience forever linked to St. John Arena.

Like many, my most vivid memory of St. John Arena is the famous Ohio State-Indiana game of 1991. For stellar play, drama, outstanding coaching — yes, Randy Ayers going move-for-move with Bobby Knight — and excitement, it's hard to beat that game. I always loved the match-up between IU's Calbert Cheaney and Jim Jackson. Some have Chamberlain and Russell, others Bird and Magic. I always thrilled at the play between Jackson and his Hoosier foe.

THE VIEW FROM 15TH AND HIGH
Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

It's funny, but I remember particular plays from that game such as the winning bucket more from pictures and news accounts than I recall the game itself. What I remember — and will always remember — is the tremendous electricity in St. John Arena that day. Anyone who was there knows what I am talking about and will never forget it.

I also recall some of the famous Iowa-Ohio State women's games from the late '80s and early '90s. Again, what I remember is the charged atmosphere of St. John Arena as huge crowds thronged to see these games. Though only a few years back, it's easy to forget how big women's basketball was at Ohio State and how intense the rivalry between the Hawkeyes and Buckeyes was at that time.

While I am confident that the Schottenstein Center will be a beautiful new home for the Ohio State basketball teams, only time will tell if its structure will be conducive to that type of electrifying atmosphere which made St. John Arena the special place that it is.

Another dynamic setting at St. John Arena that jumps to mind is the state high school championships. In the early days of BSB I was a regular observer of the great event. I particularly recall a boys match-up in 1983 between future Purdue Boilermaker Todd Mitchell of Toledo St. Francis and future Georgetown and Ohio State player Grady Mateen for Akron Central-Hower. Mitchell won hands down, scoring 17 points and pulling down 14 rebounds to Mateen's 11 points and 10 boards in a 58-49 St. Francis championship win.

From 1985, I recall future Buckeye Jerry Francis of Columbus Wehrle going in for a monster jam late in the game and having the ball fly off the back of the rim as if it had been shot from a cannon. To add insult to injury, Francis was called for an offensive foul and the Wolverines lost to Jackson Center in the semifinals.

I had to chuckle when researching that tournament because in my account of that game in BSB I said that of Buckeyes of that era, Francis most resembled Clark Kellogg. Francis had a solid career for Ohio State but was hardly a Clark Kellogg.

On the girls side, I probably most remember when future Buckeye Lisa Cline brought her undefeated Millersburg West Holmes squad to St. John Arena for a championship run in 1985. Talk about electric atmosphere. It would have been a great time to break and enter in Millersburg, as it appeared that the whole town was in St. John Arena chanting, "Lisal! Lisal!"

Cline had 32 points and 10 rebounds in the semifinal game and 30 points, 17 rebounds, five assists, four steals and three blocks in a 54-29 championship win over New Lexington.

There's more to St. John than just the basketball court, however.

I remember Kellogg's press conference to announce he was passing up his senior year to jump to the NBA, held in a classroom that I believe is now the women's basketball office. Leaving early was not as common back in 1982 as it is now and

it was really a big deal when Kellogg, who had seen Herb Williams' pro value plummet after a 14-13 Buckeye campaign the year before, announced he was departing.

I will also always have a vivid vision of then-OSU women's basketball coach Tara VanDerveer walking down the hall of St. John Arena after an early but pivotal meeting with representatives of the Big Bear grocery chain. VanDerveer's coaching record, both at Ohio State and Stanford, speaks for itself. But dress, at least at the time, was not her strong suit. I'll never forget how awkward she looked, walking in a dress and heels.

Yet that meeting, which helped cement the relationship between Big Bear and the Lady Buckeyes, was really crucial in the growth of women's basketball at Ohio State and helped lead to those huge, animated crowds mentioned previously.

I think all of us here at BSB understand progress and appreciate the need for a new building like the Schottenstein Center. However, I think to a man and woman in this office, we view St. John Arena with a tremendous affection and

will miss watching games there.

Here's hoping that The Schott is home not just to the Buckeye basketball and hockey teams but also eventually home to as many memories as the grand old building between Lane Avenue and Woody Hayes Drive.

Souvenir From That First Game

While looking for something else a couple of days ago, I came across the program from that first game I went to at St. John Arena, the NIT game with St. Joseph's. It was a program I didn't even realize I had.

The starting lineup for the 17-10 Buckeyes that night included Kelvin Ransey and Mike Cline (Lisa's brother) at the guards, Carter Scott and Jim Smith at the forwards, and Williams in the middle. Ransey came into the game as the Buckeyes' leading scorer, averaging 21.2 points, with Williams right behind at 20.3 points and a strong 10.6 off the boards.

Also on the roster were Jim Ellinghausen, fan favorite Rick Smith, and a freshman from the football team, Art Schlichter. Joining Miller on the bench was an aspiring young coach named Bob Huggins.

St. Joseph's was coached by Jim Lynam, who ended up in the NBA, rising to general manager of the Philadelphia 76ers and head coach at Washington.

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