

Loyola University remembers basketball pioneer Lacy

By Paul McMullen

pmcmullen@CatholicReview.org

Twitter @ ReviewMcMullen

Jim Lacy, who put what is now Loyola University Maryland on the college basketball map after World War II, died Feb. 15 at age 87.

Lacy was the first player in NCAA history to score 2,000 points in a career, in an era when the Greyhounds stepped outside the old Mason-Dixon Conference to challenge, and occasionally beat, the likes of La Salle, Seton Hall and Villanova.

A funeral Mass will be offered at St. Ignatius Church in Baltimore Feb. 19, at 10 a.m. It will be a homecoming of sorts, as Lacy's basketball career began in earnest at what is now Loyola Blakefield, when it was housed alongside the parish on Calvert Street.



Jim Lacy, who attended what is now Loyola University Maryland, was the first player in NCAA history to score 2,000 points in a career. (Courtesy Loyola University)

Vince Bagli, the dean emeritus of Baltimore sports broadcasters, was a year behind Lacy at Loyola Blakefield, and followed him to what was then Loyola College. He remembers Lacy blossoming as a prep player under the prodding of Dons' coach Ed Hargaden.

"He was toughened up by Ed Hargaden," Bagli said. "Ed had been a great player at Georgetown, and he'd play against Jim in practices. That turned him from a good high school player into a great one."

As a high school senior, Lacy led the Dons to a Maryland Scholastic Association A Conference championship in 1943, and the following season led the state's college freshmen in scoring.

Lacy served in the U.S. Navy during World War II, missing two college basketball seasons, but returned to Loyola and led the entire nation in scoring in 1946-47, averaging 20.8 points per game.

After the War, Loyola won three straight Mason-Dixon titles for coach Emil "Lefty" Reitz, and Lacy's senior campaign included three victories in the National Catholic Intercollegiate Tournament in Denver.

Lacy ended his college career with 2,199 points, what is the still the school record.

In 1978, he was a member of the inaugural Loyola Athletics Hall of Fame. A booster of Loyola athletics, he reveled in the Greyhounds' surprising run to an NCAA tournament berth in 1994, and continued to follow the program as it returned to the NCAAs in 2012.

"Jim was always very supportive," said Joe Boylan, the former athletic director at the college. "He would ask, 'what can I do to help?' That said, he would ask to stay in the background. He didn't want the spotlight on him."

Jim was a dominant figure on the basketball court at Loyola, "but he was an even more beloved person for his gentle and caring demeanor," Jim Paquette, Loyola's current athletic director, said in a news release from the university. "He was called 'Gentleman Jim,' and we are forever grateful that he is a part of Loyola history."

After graduation, Lacy passed on opportunities to play basketball professionally. He went to work in the insurance industry, then served as the Baltimore City Fire Commissioner.

To read more obituary articles, click here.

Also see:

Trailblazer: Notre Dame Prep alumna paved way for women bankers