

Sizing up the top players in Iowa prep history

Written by Mark Dukes

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Even if you check it twice, making a list is risky business. But it's something I love to do.

An interesting discussion ensued last week on the Balbinot & Brommelkamp radio show (KGYM 1600 AM / 106.3 FM). It started with opinions as to how Linn-Mar's Marcus Paige fits into an all-time Iowa high school team and developed into people making lists of their starting five in state boys' basketball history.

I took that as an invitation to participate, and perhaps you will too.

Lists must always have criteria. In this case, I took into consideration the player's high school, college and professional career. I looked at averages, longevity, honors and other circumstances.

For these reasons, neither Paige nor Harrison Barnes, second-year North Carolina player from Ames, made my first or second team. They might someday land squarely on an all-time team of former Iowa high schoolers because they are two remarkably gifted players. But Paige hasn't played a minute of college ball and Barnes' college and pro careers are yet to be determined.

There have been 19 Iowa school products to play in the NBA or CBA, from Murray Wier of Muscatine in 1950 to present-day pros Nick Collison, Kirk Hinrich and Kyle Korver. There have been seven forwards, seven guards and five centers (although a couple were swing players).

FIRST TEAM ALL-IOWA HIGH SCHOOL

Forward – Bob Netolicky (6-9, Cedar Rapids Washington). Netolicky, who played at Drake, is the only former Metro player to play in the NBA or ABA. In his case, he starred in the ABA with the Indiana Pacers, averaging 16.0 points in nine seasons. He played in four all-star games and

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was a member of two ABA championship teams.

Forward – Kyle Korver (6-7, Pella). The second forward slot was a tough one. The difference between Korver and others was the fact he has led the NBA in free throw percentage, 3-point field goals and 3-point field goal percentage at least one season in his career. He has over 1,000 3-point goals in the NBA.

Center – Raef LaFrentz (MFL Mar-Mac) – The highest drafted Iowa player in NBA history (third pick, 1998), LaFrentz averaged 10.1 points and 6.1 rebounds in a pro career that ended in 2008. A McDonald's All-America out of high school and two-time first-team all-America pick at Kansas, LaFrentz also blocked nearly 1,000 shots in the pros.

Guard – Ricky Davis (6-6, Davenport North) – Davis averaged 13.5 points in a 12-year NBA career. He has the most games played and most points of any Iowa product in NBA history. Davis left Iowa after the 1997-98 season and was the 21st overall pick by Charlotte.

Guard – Kirk Hinrich (6-3, Sioux City West) – A former 7th overall NBA pick out of Kansas, Hinrich is in his 9th NBA season now with Atlanta. He has averaged 12.9 points per game in his career and has made the NBA all-rookie and all-defensive teams.

SECOND TEAM ALL-IOWA HIGH SCHOOL

Forward – Nick Collison (6-9, Iowa Falls) – A college teammate of Hinrich's, Collison was the 12th overall pick in the 2003 NBA draft. He has averaged 7.2 points and 6.2 rebounds with Seattle and Oklahoma City over the past eight seasons.

Forward – Matt Bullard (6-10, West Des Moines Valley) – Perhaps one of the best stories among Iowa high school players. Bullard was productive in his college days at Colorado and Iowa but went undrafted. He latched on with Houston as a free agent in 1990 and went on to an 11-year career. Bullard won an NBA championship ring in 1994 with Houston.

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Center – Kevin Kunnert (7-0, Dubuque Wahlert) – A first-round draft pick of Chicago in 1973, Kunnert enjoyed a 555-game NBA career in which he averaged 8.3 points and 7.3 rebounds. A strong rebounder, he played with four teams, mostly with Houston and Portland.

Guard – Bob Hansen (6-6, West Des Moines Dowling) – A third-round NBA pick out of Iowa, Hansen flourished with the Chicago Bulls. Hansen spent most of his career with the Utah Jazz, but found gold in his last NBA season. He was part of the great 1992 Bulls championship team with Michael Jordan, Scottie Pippen and B.J. Armstrong.

Guard – Fred Hoiberg (6-4, Ames) – The Mayor of Ames went from Iowa State to a 10-year NBA career with Indiana, Chicago and Minnesota. Hoiberg led the NBA in 3-point field goal percentage in 2005, his last pro season. Hoiberg now coaches an Iowa State men's team that is third in the Big 12 and on the cusp of an NCAA tournament bid.

(Mark Dukes is former sports editor of the Cedar Rapids Gazette. He is co-host of The Gym Class radio show weekdays from 3-4 p.m. on KGYM-AM 1600 and FM-106.3.)