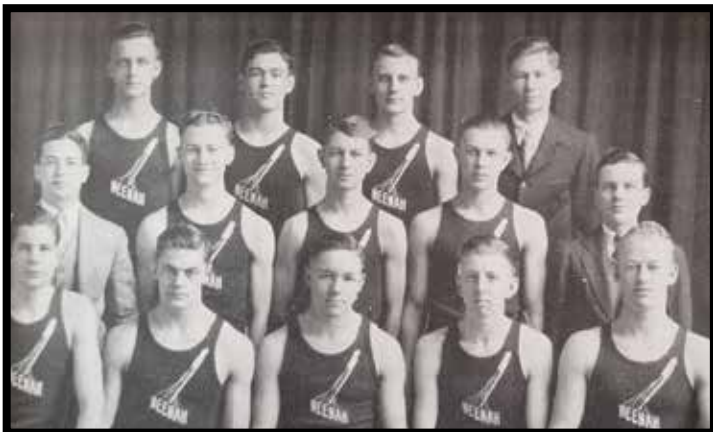


100 YEARS OF NEENAH ROCKETS BASKETBALL MEMORIES

1922 In the 1921-1922 Neenah basketball season, the team finished 10-3 under head coach Arthur Denny. The 1922 squad was led by senior Ole Jorgensen, who would return just four years later to start what would end up being a 39 year Neenah basketball coaching career.

1932 – Conference Champions / State Tournament Appearance



Continuing the Neenah programs dominance of the late 1920's and early 1930's, the Rockets had another strong year in 1932. They won their fourth conference title in the last five years and advanced to the WIAA state basketball tournament for the fifth consecutive season. Only twice in the celebrated history of Neenah basketball have the Rockets advanced to five consecutive WIAA state basketball tournaments (1928-1932 and 1974-1978). Neenah was a perfect 8-0 in conference action defeating Oconto, Menasha, and Kaukauna twice and West De Pere and Two Rivers once. In non-conference competition, the Rockets swept St. Mary Catholic, split with Appleton and lost to Wausau. In the WIAA tournament, Neenah defeated Port Washington (32-20), New London (33-12) and Kaukauna (18-10) to advance to their fifth consecutive WIAA state basketball tournament. At state, the Rockets lost their first game to Beloit (25-17) before winning their final three games in the consolation bracket over Antigo (21-14), Nekoosa (18-11) and Madison East (23-19) to finish their season with a 17-3 record. Earning all-conference honors in 1932 were Edward Neubauer (1st team), Byron Bell Jr. (1st team), Fred Block (1st team) and Monroe Haire (honorable mention). Both Bell and Neubauer also earned all-state honors.

1942 – State Tournament Appearance



With six returning letterman and some promising underclassmen prospects were bright and hopes were high for Coach Ole Jorgensen and the 1941-1942 season. The first game of the season was a non-conference clash with Oshkosh that resulted in a 37-21 win. Neenah lost their next non-conference game to Appleton (23-18). In the next week of practice, the confident Rockets became convinced the games were won on the court, and not in the newspaper. The Rockets only saw defeat two more times that season - once to a strong Shawano team in conference play (41-37), and not again until the state semi-finals. The Fox Valley team was a favorite of many to win the state title, but lost its shooting eye until the final minutes of the game and were defeated by Shorewood (24-20), who would win go on to win the state championship convincingly in the next game.

After the Oshkosh and Appleton games, the rest of the regular season saw the Rockets defeat New London, Menasha, Clintonville, St. Mary, and Kaukauna all twice, and West De Pere once. In the regional tournament, Neenah defeated Kaukauna and Menasha before one of the more thrilling encounters of the season. Neenah trounced a favored East De Pere team in the finals of the regional tournament (38-23). At state, Neenah defeated Altoona (42-22) and Prairie du Chien (38-23) before the loss to Shorewood.

This big and resourceful team was led by Vern Wollerman, James Gottfried, Eugene Johnson, James O'Neill, and team captain, Charles Kettering. Neenah finished the season 9-1 in conference and 17-3 overall.

1952 – State Tournament Appearance



The 1951-1952 Rockets enjoyed another successful basketball season as they tied for second in the NEW conference, won regional and sectional tournaments and took fourth at the state tournament in Madison.

Coach Ole Jorgensen returned five letterman from the 1951 conference championship team in Dick Jorgensen, Don Metz, Don Schultz, Frank Wiesner, and Dick Rine. The Rocket quintet set five records during the season: Number of field goals scored during one game (42); point difference between two teams (63); a conference scoring record; the largest losing score posted by a squad at the State tournament; and the greatest number of assists made by a cager in a single game.

In their season opener, Neenah was edged by Appleton (50-48), but two days later, they beat reigning WIAA state champion Wisconsin Rapids by the score of 56-48. Later that week, Neenah lost to the Ripon Tigers (66-64) despite Don Metz' 25 points. The Rockets opened their Northeastern

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Wisconsin Conference season four days later as they were tipped by the Shawano Indians 39-38. Neenah was outscored by only five points total in their three early season losses.

On December 7, Neenah swamped the Clintonville Truckers (64-43). The following week, Neenah decisively beat Kaukauna (84-42). Continuing their winning ways, Neenah rallied to beat Two Rivers (47-45) on December 21. After a 54-45 loss to Kimberly, the Rockets were back to their winning ways beating New London (70-41) and Menasha (49-43).

Neenah began the second round of play by tipping Shawano (53-44), beating Clintonville (63-60) and Kaukauna (62-59) before being upset by Two Rivers (41-37) and losing to Kimberly (59-58). Neenah set a NEW Conference record on February 22, when they soundly whipped the New London Bulldogs 100-37. In their final conference game, Neenah defeated Menasha in a thriller (53-51) on a last second rebound and shot by Don Metz.

In the first game of the regional tourney Neenah beat the Oshkosh Indians 53-46 in one of the biggest upsets in the entire state. Neenah then beat Menasha for the third time (61-51) and edged Kaukauna (46-44) in a thriller to earn a berth in the sectional tournament. At sectionals, Neenah swarmed Gillet 69-40 and after overcoming a 10 point deficit in the second half, Neenah went on to beat the Shawano Indians 44-42 on March 15.

At Madison, Neenah could not get going on the first day of the state tournament and was eliminated from the championship flight by Superior Central (50-47) after a fourth quarter rally by the Rockets fell short. The Rockets scored an easy win over Altoona in the consolation game (68-39), but were defeated by Wauwatosa 66-65 in overtime in the consolation finals.

Neenah finished their season 18-8 overall and 10-4 in the conference. Team captain Dick Jorgensen and Don Metz were both named to the All-Conference Team. Jorgensen, who went on to play at the University of Wisconsin, made the All-State tourney first team while Metz, who went on to play at Marquette University, made the second team.

1962 – Conference Champions



The Rockets soared past the competition early in the 1961-1962 season beating their non-conference opponents Wisconsin Rapids (60-49), Fond du Lac (73-58), Green Bay West (68-65), and Appleton (59-54). Once conference play began, Neenah continued its winning ways starting the conference season 6-0. Neenah then faced a tough Two Rivers team and the Rockets succumbed in a thrilling, double overtime defeat

(97-94) for their first loss of the season.

Neenah got back to their winning ways again, winning their next six rising to number two in the state rankings. Tickets were at a premium for the Two Rivers rematch in the tiny Two Rivers gym. Unfortunately, Neenah encountered another bad night and was defeated (64-58). The conference race ended with Neenah and Two Rivers sharing the conference crown.

In the first regional game, Neenah dominated New London (82-59), but fell short in the next round. After destroying Menasha in two regular season games (74-46) and (84-67), Neenah was stunned by Menasha in a heartbreaker (64-63).

Neenah finished the season 17-3 overall and 12-2 in the conference. The team was paced throughout the season by Dave Burton; the leading scorer, rebounder, free through shooter, and most valuable player. Burton and teammate Doug Ankerson were chosen as co-captains and both were named to the All-Conference team.

1972 – State Runner-Up



The 1972 Neenah Rockets returned two starters from the 1971 team that finished 25-1. Both Jim Crist (1972-1st team all-conference, FVA Player of the Year) and Ed Hawley (1972-2nd team all-conference) were all conference performers for the Rockets in 1971, and would be looked upon as leaders of the 1972 team. Both Hawley and Crist were part of a dominant Rocket team in 1971 that was ranked #1 in the state and became the first team in school history to complete a regular season undefeated. Regrettably, the 1971 Rockets couldn't maintain a 10-point second half lead to eventual state champion Janesville Parker in the WIAA state semifinals and finished the season 25-1. The Rockets began the 1972 campaign winning their first five games. During their fourth game of the season the Rockets defeated Baraboo 85-52. During the post-game hand shake the Baraboo head coach notified Coach Einerson that Baraboo would never have any interest in coming back to play at Neenah, "because it was wild." Few high schools had the deafening home court advantage that was the Ole Jorgensen ("O.J.") Gym in the late 1960's and early 1970's. In fact, the noise levels would rise so high in the O.J. Gym during pregame introductions that many times the players could not tell whose names were being called.

Neenah's first loss of the year was a controversial 52-51 outcome against Appleton West, which eventually cost them a share of the conference title. Neenah won eight out of their last nine conference games to finish the FVA season slate at 10-2. The Rockets only other conference blemish was a 77-61 mid-season loss to Kimberly, however Neenah

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would get revenge on both the Terrors and Papermakers during the second half of their conference run. The Rockets buried Appleton West 74-56, and later traveled to Kimberly and defeated the Papermakers 67-60 in front of a packed gymnasium. Neenah finished the regular season second in the FVA at 10-2 and 16-2 overall. In post season play Neenah overwhelmed Oshkosh (89-57) and Menasha (61-42) to advance to play Appleton West for a third time. The Rockets shot over 60% from the field in a 75-69 victory over the Terrors. At the sectional, Neenah defeated a very good Mayville team 50-43, and then beat Ripon 65-53 for their fourth consecutive trip to Madison. In the state quarterfinal, Neenah thumped an undefeated Kewaunee team 81-65 behind 22 points from 1st team all-conference senior Dene Storch. In the state semifinal, the Rockets got their revenge on the defending state champs by edging Janesville Parker 59-57. Storch hit two free throws with 24 seconds left to provide the winning margin. For the third time in four years Neenah found itself playing in the WIAA state title game. Despite leading 39-28 late in the 3rd quarter, Milwaukee Hamilton would come from behind to beat the Rockets 58-52. The Rockets finished the season 23-3.

Consider this statistic on Neenah's dominant four-year run between 1969-1972: The Rockets went 93-11 with three runner up finishes and one third place finish. When analyzing the accomplishments of Neenah basketball over the past century, this is the greatest four-year run in program history. Rockets receiving all-conference recognition in 1972 were Jim Crist (first team and FVA Player of the Year), Dene Storch (first team), and Ed Hawley (second team). Both Crist (third team) and Hawley (honorable mention) were selected on the Associated Press all state team.

1982 – FVA Conference Champions



Coach Einerson's Rockets claimed their seventh FVA title within an eight-year span in 1982. Neenah started their season with a bang winning six straight games by defeating Waukesha North (75-59), Oshkosh West (69-32), Kaukauna (77-65), Milwaukee Hamilton (51-50), Appleton East (50-44), and Oshkosh North (62-56). The victory over Appleton East was a key early season win for Big Red as they overcame a 16 point second half deficit to send the Patriots home in defeat. The Rockets then suffered back to back defeats to Milwaukee Madison (69-60) and a one-point overtime setback to Kimberly (47-46). Neenah then rattled off three consecutive conference victories over Menasha (64-52), Appleton West (56-51) and Kaukauna (72-36) before absorbing another two-game losing streak later in the season to Stevens Point (56-47) and Appleton

East (56-55). The Rockets finished their conference ledger in dominant fashion winning their final five regular season games over Oshkosh West, Oshkosh North, Kimberly, Menasha and Appleton West by an average of 21 points per game. Neenah's victory over Menasha in front of a sold out crowd at the Armstrong fieldhouse clinched the FVA title with a week to go in the regular season. In WIAA regional action the Rockets defeated Menasha (55-50) before being stunned in an upset loss to Oshkosh North (74-66). What made the loss to Oshkosh North so surprising was that Neenah had beaten that same Spartan ball club 83-45 at the end of the regular season. The Rockets would conclude their season earlier than expected with an overall mark of 15-5. Rockets receiving all-conference recognition in 1982 were Omar Atassi (first team), Jeff Ertl (first team) and Dave Hutchings (honorable mention).

1992



The 1991-92 Rockets' season started without head coach Ron Einerson on the sideline. Coach Einerson was diagnosed with colon cancer and had surgery in the fall of 1991. In his absence, junior reserve coach Tim Hopfensperger filled in as interim coach for the Rockets. Hopfensperger had a successful playing career as an all-conference guard at Sun Prairie before playing college basketball at South Dakota State and Wisconsin-Platteville. The Rockets' season started Thanksgiving weekend with a non-conference game at traditional rival Madison West. In a game where Neenah trailed by 11 after one quarter and by as many as 17 in the second quarter, the Big Red put on a memorable comeback against the Regents. The Rockets ultimately defeated the eventual 1992 WIAA state champions in overtime by the score of 76-75. Senior Dennis Ruedinger tied the school's all-time single game scoring mark at 38 in the victory, which remained the school record until it was broken in 2019. Neenah lost their FVA conference opener at Appleton West (68-60), but trounced Stevens Point (81-58) one night later. The Rockets then defeated Oshkosh West to level their conference mark at 1-1 on the young season, and followed that by splitting two games in their annual holiday invitational losing to undefeated Nicolet (65-47) and defeating Reedsburg (70-45). Coach Einerson returned to the sideline in January and the Rockets engaged in a triple overtime battle against Fond du Lac in his return. Unfortunately, Neenah squandered a 17-point lead in regulation and lost to the Cardinals (71-68) in triple overtime. The following night the Rockets ran out of gas and put forth their worst effort of the year losing at Appleton East (72-43). Things didn't get any easier for the Rockets as they faced undefeated Oshkosh North six days later. In a game

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where the Rockets led by 18 points, once again they could not hold the lead and lost another heartbreaker, this time to the Spartans by a score of 74-70. Neenah put an end to the brief losing streak with two double digit victories over Menasha (57-47) and Kaukauna (69-49) before falling to Appleton West 71-65. The Rockets responded again, however and won their next three games in comfortable fashion defeating Kimberly (59-40), Oshkosh West (78-67) and Kimberly again (68-38). This set up an important Valentine's Day matchup at Fond du Lac in the intimate setting of Goodrich High School gym. In their most impressive conference victory of the season, the Rockets defeated the Cardinals 62-61 with Dennis Ruedinger leading all scorers with 28 points. Neenah returned home a week later to defeat Appleton East (44-36) before falling at Oshkosh North a few nights later (71-54). The Rockets finished out their regular season with victories over Menasha (71-66) and Kaukauna (87-61) to finish 10-6 in the FVA which was good for fourth place behind state ranked Oshkosh North and Fond du Lac and eventual state tournament participant Appleton West. The Rockets three team WIAA regional was loaded as it consisted of #3 ranked Oshkosh North and #10 ranked Fond du Lac. In their regional semifinal rubber match against Fond du Lac, the Rockets unfortunately blew an 11 point second half lead and ultimately lost 62-50. The 1992 Rockets concluded their season at 13-8 with six of their total eight losses coming to state heavyweights Oshkosh North, Fond du Lac and Appleton West. Rockets receiving all-conference recognition in 1992 were Dennis Ruedinger (1st team), Will Carstens (honorable mention) and Brad Dittmann (honorable mention). Ruedinger was also selected all-state honorable mention.

2002



With most of the minutes from the previous season returning, the 2001-2002 Neenah Rockets squad began the year with high expectations. Returning from the previous year were seniors Pat McCarthy, Mike Lamps, Nick Backman, Marc Goodman and Kevin Francart, along with juniors Chris Kellett, Kyle Popp, and Troy Hoelzel. Joining them were senior Steve Rankin and juniors Scott Peters, Zac Schneider, Casey McAllister, and Luke Kautzer.

The Rockets split their first two non-conference games, losing to Green Bay Notre Dame (56-54) and beating Green Bay Preble (47-34) before setting up a thriller to start the conference season. Neenah traveled to Appleton West to face junior Brian Butch and the Terrors. It was a matchup of the conference's top two teams. A packed house at the Dick Emanuel gym saw an instant classic, but unfortunately

one where Neenah came out on the losing end. The Rockets were defeated in four overtimes (58-56). Neenah won six games and lost three through the first round of conference play. The second round of conference play started with another Appleton West showdown, this time at home. The packed Armstrong field house saw another classic high school basketball game, but again, Neenah was defeated (49-47).

Things turned quickly after this game and the Rockets finally hit their stride. Neenah won the rest of their regular season slate, rattling off eight straight wins. The last seven victories were all by double digits margins: @Oshkosh North (70-58); vs. Menasha (56-38); @Appleton East (62-44); vs. Fond du Lac (58-31); @Oshkosh West (49-32); @Kimberly (56-34); and vs. Kaukauna (54-26). Neenah earned the #1 seed in the Oshkosh sectional and was rolling as they entered the WIAA tournament.

Unfortunately, the Neenah offense disappeared as the tournament started. Neenah struggled through a regional final overtime win over Oshkosh North (73-67). In the sectional semifinal at the Kolf Sports Center, Neenah couldn't find their shooting and were stunned by Fond du Lac (45-44) in overtime. A Neenah basketball community anticipating another deep state tournament run left Oshkosh that night in shock. To add to the heartbreak, Fond du Lac's Cinderella run would go on all the way to the state title game, eventually losing the Division 1 state championship by three points to Madison La Follette.

Neenah completed the season 16-6 overall and 14-4 in conference, good for second place in the FVA. In one of the more amazing stats you will find, Neenah's six losses that season were by a combined 10 points, never losing a game by more than two points. Three of the six losses came in overtime. The 01-02 Rockets set a school record for least amount of points given up in the season at 1023 and average points allowed at 46.5 per game. Junior Chris Kellett was named first team all-conference. Senior Pat McCarthy was named second team all-conference. Senior Mike Lamps and Junior Troy Hoelzel were named honorable mention all-conference. McCarthy and Hoelzel were named to the FVA all-defensive team.

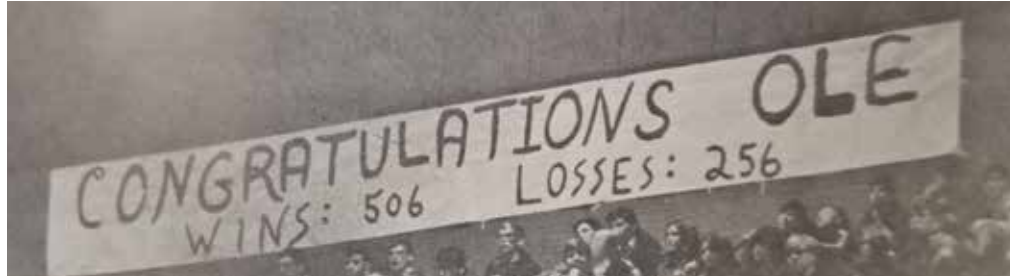
2012



Following the surprise resignation of Head Coach Chas Pronschinske in the summer of 2011, Neenah turned to 2000 alum Aaron Shaw to lead the boys' basketball program. Shaw inherited an experienced team that returned seven varsity contributors from a 2010-11 season where the Rockets

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struggled to a 9-14 finish. The Rockets got off to a quick start during Thanksgiving break when they defeated Cedarburg (64-40) and Stoughton (54-39) to start their season 2-0. Neenah followed up those two wins by getting pounded at Kaukauna (67-37) in their FVA opener. The Rockets bounced back for a (50-40) victory over Fond du Lac in the home opener at the Ron Einerson Fieldhouse. Neenah then lost their next four conference games to Appleton East (48-45), Oshkosh North (57-37), Kimberly (60-48) and Appleton North (61-59) to enter the Christmas holiday at 3-5. A much needed non-conference victory over South Milwaukee (58-44) in the Wisconsin Basketball Yearbook Shoot-Out at Concordia University started a three game winning streak where the Rockets also defeated Menasha (65-36) and Oshkosh West (66-48) to break the .500 mark at 6-5. The inconsistent Rockets then lost their next three games to D.C. Everest (56-43), Appleton West (66-61) and Kaukauna (49-33) to slip to 6-8 on the season. During the next two weeks the Rockets split their next four games defeating conference bottom feeders Fond du Lac (56-43) and Appleton East (48-44) and losing to conference heavyweights Oshkosh North (54-49) and Kimberly (65-61). Neenah finally played their best ball of the season winning their final four games of the regular season defeating Appleton North (62-57), Menasha (62-30), Oshkosh West (63-42) and Appleton West (53-51) to finish their regular season 9-9 in the FVA and 12-10 overall. An early March snowstorm moved the WIAA regional semifinal to a Saturday night event where Neenah defeated Stevens Point at home 50-36. The following Monday, the Rockets lost a heartbreaking 61-57 battle at Oshkosh North in a regional final where Neenah led for the vast majority of the game. The Rockets' season would conclude at 13-11. Rockets receiving all-conference recognition in 2012 were senior Dylan Heemstra (2nd team), sophomore Adam Pohlman (honorable mention) and senior Jordan Entwisle (honorable mention).



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