

Berry's All-Time Greatest Basketball Players

For three years I spent countless hours researching the history of Berry basketball, harvesting game scores and gathering interesting tidbits. Many days were spent in Memorial Library at Berry College, Sara Hightower Regional Library in Rome, the Kennesaw State University Library and Washington Memorial Library in Macon. Hours upon hours were spent reading scratchy microfilm of the *Rome News-Tribune*, the *Atlanta Journal* and the *Macon Telegraph*. Other information was gleaned from past editions of *The Torch* and *The Lavendar Blue*. The Georgia High School Association, the Georgia High School Basketball Project and the *National High School Sports Record Book* served as great references. Conversations with former Berry coaches and players were an important part of the research.

From all of this research I have chosen what I believe are the five greatest basketball players in Berry history -- two guards, two forwards and a center. They are presented here not only to honor their accomplishments, but to help preserve a slice of athletic history that should not be allowed to slip away. They are presented in chronological order.

--Jack Pigott, Class of 1969

Fred Benson

6'1" Forward Scottsboro, AL Number "31" Class of 1951

Berry's "Greatest Basketball Team", the 1951 state finalist team, was led by one of Berry's all-time great players, Fred Benson from Scottsboro, AL. Fred was a ferocious player, dominating the inside and rebounding against much taller competition. A tremendous leaper, Fred was only about 6' 1", but he played like a giant. His fierce competitiveness gave him an advantage over every opponent.

In Fred's junior year of 1949-50, Berry went through an undefeated regular season. The only loss that year came in the 7th District Tournament against Model in the game that would



have sent Berry to the state tournament in Macon. The team ended the season with an all-time best record of 22-1.

The next year (1950-51) as a senior, Fred once again led Berry to a near perfect season, dropping only one game. The team's only regular season loss was to Rockmart which was coached by the legendary Garland Pinholster. Berry won the 7th District Tournament and then won three more games in Macon at the State Tournament before losing in the championship game to Irwinville, which had won 71 consecutive games. The Irwinville team was coached by Hall of Fame coach Wallace "Country" Childs. Berry finished the year with a 19-2 record. After high school, Fred played for Berry College. Fred passed away in 2001.

Renny Bryner

5'11" Guard Lake City, FL Number "22" Class of 1961

Renny Bryner is a 1961 graduate of the Mount Berry School for Boys and one of the great athletes in Berry's history. Known on campus as

"Chigger", Renny led the 1960 "Bluejackets" to a 20-3 record, narrowly missing a trip to the state tournament.



In his senior year Renny teamed with junior Dickie "Doc" Weller to become the greatest one-two basketball scoring punch in the history of the school, leading the 1961 basketball team to a 24-3 record. The team won the Region 3A championship by beating perennial nemesis Valley Point 49-38. In the state tournament in Macon, Renny scored 22 points in a losing effort against a very good

Dublin team.

Though Renny never had the gaudy scoring average that players from the late 60s and early 70s had, he was an accomplished player in all facets of the game. In his junior and senior years his teams compiled a combined record of 44-6. His obvious talent was rewarded when he was named to the 1961 Georgia All-State Basketball Team and was selected to play in the state North-South All-Star game in Atlanta. He is the only Berry player in history to be so honored. After high school Renny starred for four years on the Berry College basketball team. Today, Renny is retired and lives in Blairsville, GA.

Dickie Weller

6'0" Guard Chattanooga, TN Number "20" Class of 1962

Dickie "Doc" Weller came to Berry in 1960 and quickly established himself as an outstanding basketball player and deadly shooter. As a



junior, he teamed with senior Renny Bryner to become the most outstanding and most feared tandem of guards in Berry history. His junior year, the year in which Berry first became known as the Falcons, the team posted a regular season record of 20-2. It then won four straight games on four consecutive nights to win the Region 3A championship and earn a trip to the state tournament in Macon. The team finished the season with a 24-3 record.

In his senior year "Doc" had to shoulder more of the scoring load. He averaged 20.3 points per game and he led the team to a 14-12 record. On December 1, 1961 he scored 44 points against Johnson High of Rome which set a Berry single game scoring record that stood for ten years. He is one of only five Berry players in school history to score over forty points in a single game and his 20.3 ppg scoring average in 1962 ranks him sixth on the all-time list. Dickie now resides in Hixon, TN.

Ben Ansley

6'8" Center Rome, GA Number "55" Class of 1971

Ben Ansley holds many single game and single season records at Berry. He was a dominating player both offensively and defensively. He ripped through opponents' defenses, scoring points while double teamed, and he grabbed rebounds as if his hands had magnets. "Big Ben" scored over 40 points on two occasions, the only Berry player to accomplish that feat. In his last regular season game on February 12, 1971 his 49-point performance against Davis High from Trenton, GA broke the single game scoring record that had been set by Dickie Weller in 1961. The 49 points



stands as the most points ever scored by any player, high school or college, male or female, in Ford Gym.

Less than a week later in the Sub-Region Tournament in what turned out to be his final game at Berry, Ben turned in one of his best performances with a 46-point, 25-rebound effort against state ranked Temple.

Ben finished his senior year with a 26.4 points per game average to go with his 18.3 rebounds per game. The single season scoring average is a Berry record and though rebounding records are incomplete or non-existent, it would be easy to believe that the rebounding mark could be an all-time best as well.

At the conclusion of the season he signed a basketball scholarship to play for UNC -Charlotte and he completed his college basketball career playing for Shorter College in Rome. Ben currently lives in Galax, VA.

Peter Marshall Jordan

6'3" Forward Douglas, GA Number "44" Class of 1975

When Peter Marshall Jordan arrived on campus in the fall of 1972 and decided that he wanted to play basketball, he had some big shoes to



fill. His oldest brother Jonathan had graduated that spring and Jonathan had established himself firmly in the Berry record book. Older brother Paul was a rising senior and leader of the current varsity squad. So behind these two older brothers, Peter Marshall followed, but not for long. He eventually became the family basketball leader. It was the Jordan family, you may recall, that had four outstanding basketball playing brothers. (Little brother Jamie followed behind Peter Marshall by a year.)

Peter Marshall's senior year was nothing short of sensational. At 6' 3", Peter Marshall had the range to play outside and the size to play inside. He scored from all over the court averaging 25.1 points per game in 1975, the second highest scoring average in school history, while leading the Falcons to a 13-9 season record. The 41 points that he scored against Cedar Bluff, AL in his junior year ranks as one of

the top single game performances of all-time.

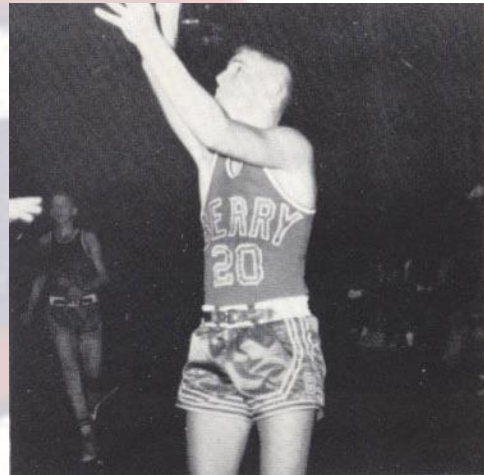
All of the Jordan brothers wore uniform number "44" at some point in their varsity career and in honor of their family and the basketball excellence they displayed, the jersey number "44" was retired in 1976 after the youngest brother Jamie graduated. It is the only jersey ever retired at Berry. After a stint in the military, Peter Marshall played collegiately at Berry College. Peter Marshall passed away in 2010.



Fred Benson



Renny Bryner



Dickie Weller

**Ben
Ansley**



**Peter
Marshall
Jordan**

