

2002 IHSAA Class 4A Boys Basketball State Finals

March 23, 2002, Conseco Fieldhouse, Indianapolis

Gary West Side Hangs On In A Thriller

It took Gary West Side 30 years to get back to a state championship game and the Cougars made up for lost time holding on for a thrilling 58-55 victory over defending 4A champion Pike on Saturday (March 23) at Conseco Fieldhouse in Indianapolis.

West Side made the state championship game in 1972 at Assembly Hall in Bloomington but fell to Connersville, 80-63, but the 2002 edition of the Cougars would not be denied this time.

It was the seventh IHSAA state championship for Gary West Side, but the first in a sport other than track and field. It also was the first basketball state title for a Gary school since Roosevelt won the state title in 1991.

Despite holding a sizeable lead most of the game, the unranked Cougars had to hold off (Class 4A) second-ranked Pike in the late going.

Gary West Side held its biggest lead of 19 points on two occasions in the third period before Pike made its move in the fourth. Down 48-33 with 6:57 to go in the game, Pike turned up the defensive pressure forcing turnovers which spurred a 14-0 run that got the Red Devils back in the game.

West Side led 50-49 with 2:44 to go before senior guard Dennis Gates hit both free throws on two consecutive trips down the court for a 54-49 cushion. After Pike junior Justin Cage hit the second of two free throws, classmate David Barlow nailed a three-pointer to pull within one at 54-53 with :38 seconds left.

The Cougars then got a tip in by senior Chris Hunter after two consecutive offensive rebounds for a 56-53 advantage with :23 seconds remaining. Following a timeout with :10.9 left, junior center Parnell Smith rebounded and put back a missed three pointer by junior guard Darren Yates to cut the lead to one, but Brandon Cameron, one of West Side's four senior guards, sealed the game by hitting both free throws with :0.7 left for the final margin.

Cameron led all scorers with 17 points. Hunter scored 14 points and pulled down 15 rebounds. As a team, West Side pulled down a Class 4A game record 43 rebounds. Cage led Pike with 13 points, followed by Smith with 12 and Barlow with 10.

The Cougars (23-4) were coached by third-year leader John Boyd. The Red Devils of first year coach Larry Bullington finished 24-4 after losing their first game in 14 outings.

Game Notes

Gary West Side's Chris Hunter Named Recipient of Trester Mental Attitude Award

Christopher Hunter of West Side High School in Gary was selected as the winner of the Arthur L. Trester Mental Attitude Award in Class 4A Boys Basketball by members of the IHSAA Executive Committee.

Hunter, the 7-0 center for the state champion Cougars, was a three-year varsity letterwinner in basketball and was named the Most Promising Prospect for 2001 at the nationally recognized Five Star Basketball Camp. He led West Side in scoring this season at 22.7 points per game.

He ranks 37th in his senior class of 237 students and is a member of his school's National Honor Society. He also was featured in Lake County's Local Black History Makers Magazine this year.

The son of Edmond and Brenda Hunter, Chris will attend the University of Michigan on a basketball scholarship next fall.

The award, named in honor of the IHSAA's first commissioner, who served the association from 1929 to 1944, is presented to a senior in each classification who best displays mental attitude, scholarship, leadership and athletic ability. The student also must be nominated by his principal and coach.

Farm Bureau Insurance, the corporate partner of the IHSAA, presented a \$1,000 scholarship to West Side High School in Gary in the name of Chris Hunter.

Class 4A Records

Team

Most Field Goals Attempted – 64 by Pike.

Most Rebounds -- 43 by Gary West Side.

Individual

(Tied) Most Free Throws Attempted – 10 by Justin Cage, Pike.

State Finals Photographs and Team Posters

Visit the website of **20-20 Photographic**, the IHSAA's official photographer for its state championship events. The company will display action photographs from this year's Boys Basketball State Finals during the week following the event that you may purchase. Also for sale will be team posters commemorating your school's path to the state finals.

State Finals Programs Available

Couldn't be there for the Boys Basketball State Finals? You can still purchase a copy of the official state finals program while supplies last! Programs are \$3.00 if you purchase in person at the IHSAA Office (9150 N. Meridian Street in Indianapolis) or \$4.50 by mail (postage included). To order, send a check for \$4.50 made payable to the IHSAA, a note with your return address and brief description of your request and mail to: IHSAA Programs, PO Box 40650, Indianapolis, IN 46240-0650. Sorry, no credit cards. To further inquire, e-mail Assistant Sports Information Director Jason Wille.

Quotes

Gary West Side Head Coach John Boyd

"It was a tremendous honor to even be in a game like this. To be able to play a team like Pike is an honor. For them to make the kind of push they did at the end of this game is a credit to them. You would have thought it would have taken the life out of them. I give credit to their coaching staff (Pike) for keeping them focused. We just were not going to be denied."

(On Pike's full court press) "We've been pressed by many teams this year. Pike got some turnovers and we got some baskets. I think it took a lot out of them pressing. Their legs kind of left them at the end of the game."

Gary West Side Center Chris Hunter (Trester Award winner)

"Pike has a lot of great athletes and they made a great run at us."

(On being in foul trouble) "I knew we had good guys on the bench that could come in and do the job if I fouled out. I still needed to play aggressive."

(On winning the Trester Award) "It means a lot to me. It shows that I'm not just a basketball player and that my scholarship and hard work are a big part of what I do."

Pike Head Coach Larry Bullington

(On last possession) "We tried to run a guy off a double screen trying to get a three point attempt. We told our guys we didn't have any time outs left. When we got the rebound we should have kicked it out for another three point attempt."

"Our guys are competitors. We have to use this for motivation for next year. We get this far next year we won't be as tight as we were tonight."

"We didn't shoot well in the first half. We were only 5-for-31. In the second half we started to attack the basket and play with confidence. They spread us out on offense in the first half and we didn't do a very good job of taking care of the basketball."

“West Side is very athletic. They got the ball down the floor early and took it inside and that’s what got them their early lead.”