

## **Justin Sharp – Kentucky Basketball Story**

My basketball story began when I was in elementary school. About six or seven of us guys would play every day during recess and lunch. Our basketball court consisted of nothing but dirt. During the winter months, our teachers would take us to the restroom and run warm water over our hands to thaw them out. That is when my love for the game of basketball began, and I have never lost my love for the game.

In junior high school, I played on the seventh and eighth grade teams. “Duck” Carlton, a parent, coached us. In my eighth-grade year, our high school basketball coach became the principal at Earlington School, and the school board hired Robert “Bob” Fox as the basketball coach. Coach Larmouth had talked to Coach Fox about the fact that I was playing basketball outside in the cold during my elementary years. When the high school team started basketball practice, Coach Fox came to my eighth-grade classroom and told me to start coming to varsity practice.

During the first team meeting, Coach Fox said these words that I will never forget: “I don’t care if your dad was a town drunk or the mayor. All I want from you is to play basketball.” This was when I knew I had a chance to play. So, in 1963 as an eighth grader, I won a starting role on the varsity team.

Our record that year was 25-5. Our main player was Wesley Coffman, who went on to play for the University of Tennessee. I cannot find any record of what I accomplished as an eighth grader.

Our practices with Coach Fox were long – as much as three hours long. However, I never grew tired of practicing and improving. Coach Fox has had a lasting impact on my life. I visited him from time time to time throughout the years after high school, even traveling to see him in Florida when his health was declining. We both learned to like golf almost as much as he liked basketball.

My freshman year, 1963-64, Earlington went 19-9. We lost in the regionals. Our top player that year was Gary Gamble, who went on to play at the University of Kentucky.

My sophomore year, 1964-65, our record was 30-3. This was the year that Earlington and Earlington Million consolidated to become one school. One of the key players was Charles Moore who went on to play college basketball at Austin Peay. We won our district but lost in the finals of the regional tournament.

I was the only starting player to return for the 1965-66 season – my junior year. The other players moved up from junior varsity. Our record that year was 29-7. We won district, region, and made it to the Sweet 16. However, we lost to Harrison County in our first game.

1966-67, my senior year, we won thirty-eight games and lost only one (to Louisville Male by four points in the LIT Tournament). We won our district and our region; but, best of all, we won the Sweet Sixteen State Tournament. That season, as a team, we averaged 79 points per game and held our opponents to an average of 53 points per game (Attachment #3). During the state tournament we beat Russell County (76-72), Louisville Atherton (85-64), Breathitt County (69-64), and Covington Catholic (54-53).

During the state tournament, Coach Adolph Rupp of the University of Kentucky called our team's defense the best that he had ever seen. For two years, we had full court pressed every team the entire ball game.

During my final three years in high school, I didn't play but about three-fourths of every game because we were so far ahead of the opponents! Earlington's combined record for the five years I played varsity was 141-25. During my senior year, I set a school record by grabbing thirty-one rebounds in one game.

Since high school, I have maintained contact with nearly all my former teammates. We got together in Lexington on the fiftieth anniversary of our state championship. We had a wonderful time reminiscing. Since then, we have developed a group text and keep up with each other's highs and lows. Last summer (2023), many of us traveled to Earlington to visit our old school and gym one last time before it closed for good. No matter what happens to that building, I'll always consider myself an Earlington Yellow Jacket.

I have recorded my high school career accomplishments on the following page.

1966 - 1967 EARLINGTON YELLOWJACKETS SCHEDULE				
DATE	OPPONENT	SCORE		RECORD
		EARLINGTON	OPPONENT	
11/22/1966	Drakesboro	78	53	1 - 0
11/25/1966	Dawson Springs	106	62	2 - 0
11/26/1966	West Hopkins	55	24	3 - 0
11/29/1966	Henderson Holy Name	75	39	4 - 0
12/1/1966	South Hopkins	68	64	5 - 0
12/8/1966	Sacramento	103	51	6 - 0
12/13/1966	Christian County	67	40	7 - 0
12/15/1966	Webster County	82	44	8 - 0
12/16/1966	Madisonville	68	51	9 - 0
12/19/1966	Muhlenberg Central (1)	103	58	10 - 0
12/20/1966	Central City (1)	75	65	11 - 0
1/3/1967	Davies County	58	37	12 - 0
1/6/1967	Hopkinsville	68	58	13 - 0
1/10/1967	Henderson County	74	53	14 - 0
1/12/1967	Hopkinsville Attucks	86	59	15 - 0
1/17/1967	South Hopkins	77	65	16 - 0
1/19/1967	Louisville Ahrens (2)	57	44	17 - 0
1/20/1967	Louisville Male (2)	55	59	17 - 1
1/24/1967	Henderson City	83	65	18 - 1
1/27/1967	West Hopkins	90	54	19 - 1
1/31/1967	Dawson Springs	82	50	20 - 1
2/3/1967	Hughes-Kirk	75	41	21 - 1
2/4/1967	Madisonville	71	39	22 - 1
2/7/1967	Hopkinsville Attucks	88	65	23 - 1
2/9/1967	Trigg County	91	70	24 - 1
2/10/1967	Lyon County	84	44	25 - 1
2/14/1967	Graham	93	33	26 - 1
2/18/1967	Caldwell County	81	59	27 - 1
2/21/1967	Greenville	107	65	28 - 1
2/24/1967	Todd Central	83	61	29 - 1
3/3/1967	West Hopkins	72	40	30 - 1
3/4/1967	Madisonville	77	44	31 - 1
3/7/1967	Hopkinsville	87	68	32 - 1
3/9/1967	Christian County	67	48	33 - 1
3/11/1967	Providence	106	53	34 - 1
3/16/1967	Russell (3)	76	72	35 - 1
3/17/1967	Louisville Atherton (3)	85	64	36 - 1
3/18/1967	Brethitt County (3)	69	64	37 - 1
3/18/1967	Covington Catholic (3)	54	53	38 - 1
		3076	2078	
	Season Average	78.9	53.3	25.6 (4)
NOTES				
1	Central City Invitational Tournament			
2	Louisville Invitational Tournament (LIT)			
3	Kentucky Sweet Sixteen Tournament			
4	Season Margin of Victory			

## **Justin Wayne Sharp – basketball statistics**

Earlington High School 1963-67

Total Points – 1950

Rebounds – 1680

Assists – 773

### **Honors**

1964-65 All-District

1965-66

All Hopkins County

All District

All Region

All State Honorable Mention

1966-67

All Hopkins County

All District

All Region

MVP of 2<sup>nd</sup> Region

All Western Kentucky Team

All State 1<sup>st</sup> Team

All-Tournament Team in Sweet 16 1967

Member of State Championship KHSAA Team 1967

All American Honorable Mention

Played in Kentucky East/West All-Star Classic

2005 Inducted into Hopkins County Hall of Fame

### Team Won-Loss Records

1962-63 – 25-5

1963-64 – 19-9

1964-65 – 30-3

1965-66 – 29-7

1966-67 – 38-1

Total 141-25

A 3-minute video of the last minute of the Earlington vs. Covington Catholic 1967 Championship game can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/vvGW2GYcidE>