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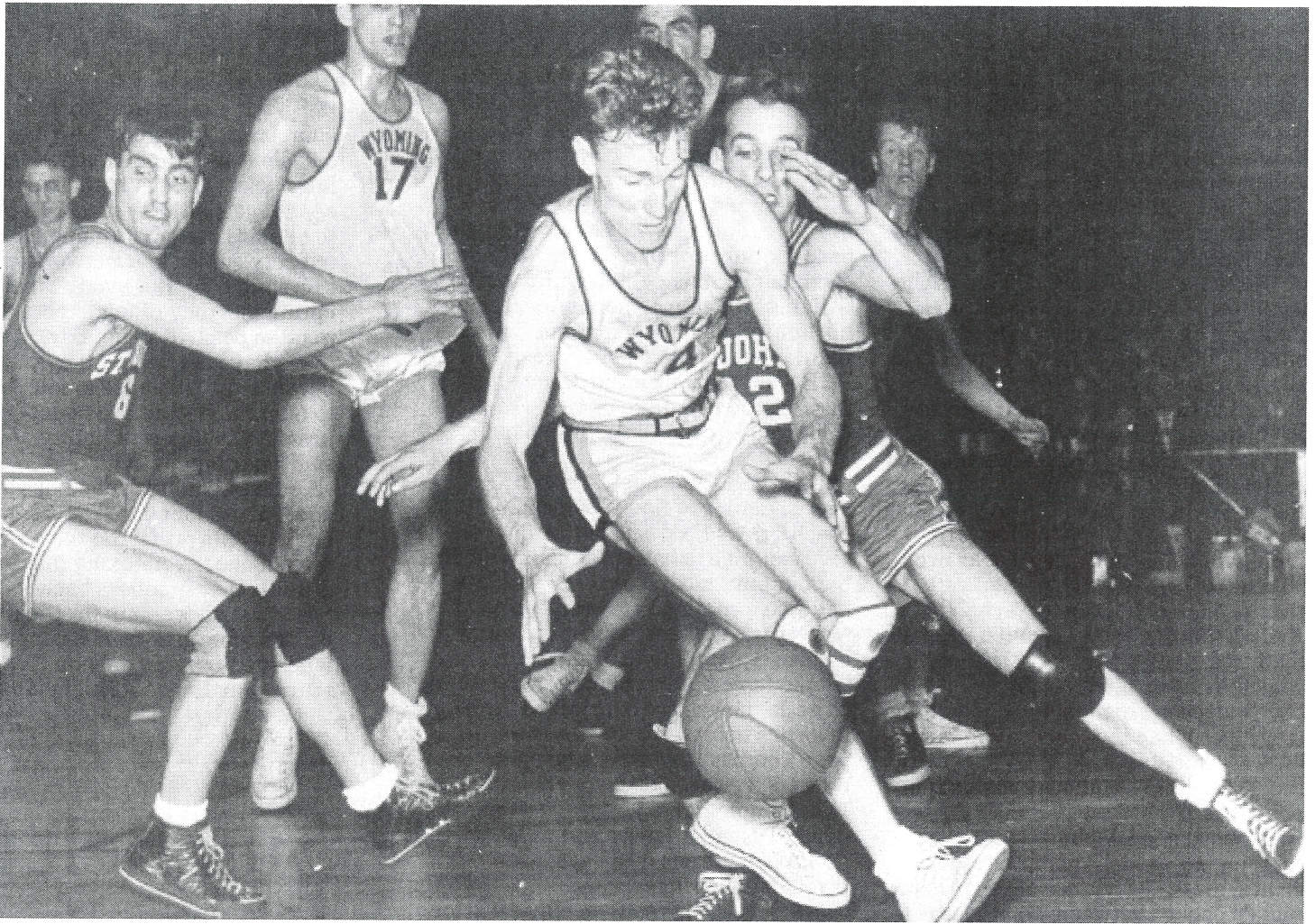
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SPORTS

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University of Wyoming's Kenny Sailors goes after a loose ball during the 1943 basketball season. Courtesy of the University of Wyoming

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER

Wyoming legend Kenny Sailors selected to National Collegiate Basketball Hall of Fame

By **BOB HAMMOND**
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It has been a long time coming but the Kenny Sailors saga is nearly complete.

The 91-year-old University of Wyoming basketball legend finally received the national recognition he deserved when he was one of

10 individuals selected to the 2012 National Collegiate Basketball Hall of Fame Class on Tuesday.

Joining Sailors in the 2012 class are Georgetown's Patrick Ewing, Kansas' Clyde Lovellette, North Carolina's Phil Ford, Winston-Salem State's Earl Monroe, Grambling's Willis Reed, Kentucky coach Joe B. Hall, Virginia Union coach Dave Robbins along with contributors Jim Host, a founder of Host Communications, and Joe Dean, of Converse and LSU.

"There have been a number of people who have tried to get me in (the Hall of Fame) through the years and I want to thank all those individuals," Sailors said in a UW press release.

"Now that it has happened I'm very

proud that I've made it. It's probably about the last honor I will receive, and it's probably the biggest."

Sailors and his fellow inductees will be recognized at this year's NCAA Final Four at the Superdome in New Orleans the weekend of March 31 through April 2. They will be officially inducted into the Hall on Nov. 18 in Kansas City as part of a three-day celebration.

"The Class of 2012 has incredible roots in the game of college basketball from the player who introduced the jump shot at Wyoming to the domination of a 7-footer at Georgetown," Hall of Fame chair Reggie Minton said.

See Sailors, page B3

Sailors: 'This is a great day for Kenny'

Continued from B1

"This group of coaches, players and contributors will no doubt bring back memories of national championships, All-American performances and the tremendous growth of the sport throughout the years."

Sailors led Wyoming to the 1943 NCAA Championship while being named the National Player of the Year and the Most Outstanding Player of the Tournament.

After the 1943 season, Sailors enlisted in the Marines and served in the South Pacific during World War II. Two years later he returned to Wyoming for the 1945-46 season and once again earned All-America honors.

"This is such a great honor for Kenny. The state of Wyoming and the university should be extremely proud," said former Cowboys basketball coach Jim Brandenburg, who campaigned on Sailors' behalf. "This is a great day for Kenny and everybody involved with Wyoming athletics."

While his accomplishments were great, the thing that made Sailors a national basketball treasure and game changer was his invention of the jump shot.

"Some people think I'm as old as Methuselah," Sailors said. "The only thing Methuselah didn't have that I do is the jump shot. I think the jump shot has done more to keep me in front of the people who select these types of honors than anything."

The shot didn't just change things in Wyoming, it changed the game forever.

"If you want to look at the milestones in the history of basketball from James Naismith forward, the invention of the modern jump shot is one of those peaks," Brandenburg added. "That's when offensive basketball really took off with people trying to emulate the two-footed, vertical jump shot with one-hand release at the apex of the jump."

"That was created by Kenny Sailors and nobody else. We have pictures of Kenny doing that; we can't find pictures of anybody else doing the same kind of



University of Wyoming basketball legend Kenny Sailors proudly displays the school's 1943 NCAA Tournament Championship trophy (left) and the Red Cross National Championship trophy.

Andy Carpenean/WyoSports photographer

modern jump shot back in those days. As good as this honor is for Kenny, the state of Wyoming and the university, this is even a bigger deal as far as the history of basketball."

The Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame has yet to recognize Sailors for his achievements in college basketball. That doesn't dampen this most recent accolade.

"We are so proud of Kenny's accomplishments as a player, and we are thrilled he is finally getting the recognition that he deserves," UW athletics director Tom Burman said. "But what makes Kenny special is the fact that he's so committed to the current Wyoming Cowboys and Cowgirls. He comes to their practices and games, which is phenomenal."