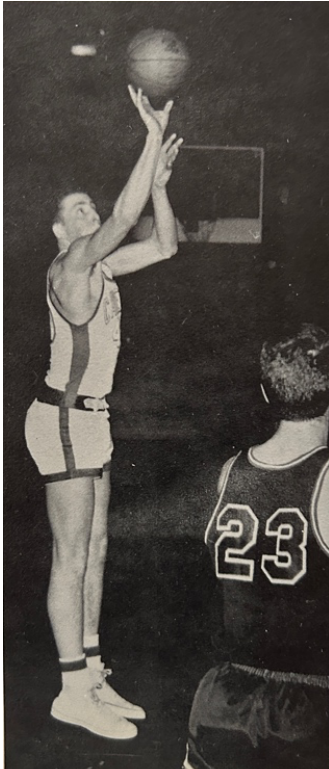


Royal “Rex” Benner Class of 1960



Growing up in Grants Pass, Rex Benner was involved in a variety of sports throughout his life including football, basketball, baseball, and track, and as an adult – golf. Rex enjoyed competition. His fierce desire to win resulted in success during his career as a Caveman. In football he moved from end to quarterback his senior year, where he was selected to the All-Conference Team (Honorable Mention) and in baseball, he earned 1st team All-Conference honors in 1959 and 1960. In addition to being a gifted athlete, Rex was a leader and was selected as a team captain in football, basketball, and baseball his senior year.

But basketball is where Rex really excelled. He was known for being able to shoot his long-range jump shot as well as for being able to weave through the defense to put up the perfect lay-up. Rex was a unanimous selection to the SOC All-Conference 1st Team in 1959 and again in 1960. He also earned recognition as a Journal All-State Team selection (Honorable Mention) in 1959 and 2nd Team Journal-Oregonian All-State in 1960. Rex was the leading scorer for GPHS his junior and senior years and also led the Southern Oregon Conference his senior year, averaging over 20 points per game. His team voted him as “Most Valuable Player” at the end of the season. When his GPHS career was over, Rex had set new Caveman season and career scoring records.

After graduation, Rex had a pro baseball offer from the Phillies and offers to play basketball from both the University of Oregon and from Oregon State University. He chose to play basketball for OSU and was one of the leading scorers on the OSU “Rooks” team his freshman year, but in the summer before his sophomore year, an eye injury resulted in the loss of vision in that eye. Rex didn’t let that stop him. After relentless work to adjust and shoot accurately with one eye, he was able to continue playing for OSU and later that season, was added to the OSU Varsity line up. In 1963, Rex and the OSU team played in the NCAA Final Four with over 22,000 fans in attendance. Rex is the only GPHS grad to accomplish that feat and no OSU team has reached the Final Four since. The OSU Final Four team was inducted into the OSU Hall of Fame and the Oregon Sports Hall of Fame. Of his basketball experience at OSU, Benner says, “It was a tremendous experience for me”.

Rex went on to teach and coach for 25 years and play golf, leading teams in Newberg, Hood River, Klawock (Alaska), Etna (CA), and Rogue River and participating in a multitude of golf tournaments. Rex is now retired but he has great memories of growing up in Grants Pass, playing for the Cavemen, playing for OSU and golfing in tournaments throughout the state.