After watching the Movie, “Hoosiers,” the teacher will assign you one of FOUR biographic sketches to research the validity of the movie.

1 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hoosiers>

***Hoosiers*** is a 1986 film about a small-town [Indiana](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indiana) high school [basketball](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basketball) team that wins the state championship.

The story is set during 1951, when all high schools in Indiana, regardless of size, competed in one state championship tournament. It is very loosely based on the story of a real Indiana team of that period, the [Milan High School](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milan_High_School) team that [won the 1954 state championship](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1954_Milan_High_School_basketball_team).

[Gene Hackman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gene_Hackman) stars as Norman Dale, a new coach with a spotty past. It co-stars [Barbara Hershey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barbara_Hershey), [Sheb Wooley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sheb_Wooley) and [Dennis Hopper](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dennis_Hopper) as a basketball-loving town drunkard, a performance that brought Hopper an [Oscar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academy_Awards) nomination.

The movie was written by [Angelo Pizzo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angelo_Pizzo), who would go on to co-produce the underdog sports movie [*Rudy*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rudy_(film)), and directed by [David Anspaugh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Anspaugh), who directed that film. The [score](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Film_score) was composed by [Jerry Goldsmith](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerry_Goldsmith), who was also nominated for an [Oscar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academy_Awards) for [Best Music, Original Score](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Best_Music,_Original_Score).

*Hoosiers* was ranked number 13 by the [American Film Institute](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Film_Institute) on its [100 Years... 100 Cheers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AFI%27s_100_Years..._100_Cheers). The film was the choice of the readers of [*USA Today*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USA_Today) newspaper as the best sports movie of all time. In 2001, *Hoosiers* was selected for preservation in the United States [National Film Registry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Film_Registry) by the [Library of Congress](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Library_of_Congress) as being "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant".

In June 2008, AFI revealed its "Ten top Ten" — the best ten films in ten "classic" American film genres — after polling over 1,500 people from the creative community. *Hoosiers* was acknowledged as the fourth best film in the sports genre.[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hoosiers#cite_note-0)[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hoosiers#cite_note-1)

A museum to commemorate the real life achievements of the 1954 Milan team has been established. [[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hoosiers#cite_note-2)

*Hoosiers* was re-titled as *Best Shot* in the [United Kingdom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom).

Norman Dale arrives in the rural Indiana town of Hickory to be a teacher and coach basketball. His friend Cletus has offered him the job, knowing that it is something of a last chance for Dale, who lost a previous position after physically striking a student.

Like much of the state, Hickory's community is passionate about basketball. It is also painfully aware that the best player in town, Jimmy Chitwood, does not intend to play on this season's team, and Hickory faculty member Myra Fleener warns the new coach not to try to persuade Jimmy to change his mind.

The enrollment is so small that Dale has very few players on his squad. Nevertheless, when his strict rules are disobeyed, he dismisses a key member of the team. The coach further alienates the community with a slow, defensive style that does not immediately produce results and by losing his temper, causing him to be ejected from games more than once.

Dale needs a new assistant coach and invites a knowledgeable basketball fan known as Shooter, the alcoholic father of one of his players, to join him on the bench. This, too, confounds the town, including Shooter's son.

By the middle of the season, an emergency town meeting is called to vote on whether Dale should be dismissed. Fleener appreciates the coach's staying away from Jimmy Chitwood and sides with him, but the town nevertheless votes him out. At the last minute, however, Jimmy asks permission to speak and announces that it is time for him to begin playing basketball again -- but only on one condition, that Dale remain as a coach.

From this point on, Hickory becomes an unstoppable team. Despite a setback in which Shooter arrives drunk to a game and ends up in a hospital, Coach Dale's team advances through tournament play, with contributions from unsung players such as the pint-sized Ollie and devoutly religious Strap.

Hickory shocks the entire state by reaching the state championship game. There, in a large arena and before a crowd the likes of which these players have never seen, Hickory faces long odds in defeating a team from South Bend that is deeper and more athletic. But with Chitwood once again coming to the rescue at the last possible second, tiny Hickory takes home the 1952 Indiana state championship.

**Cast**

* [Gene Hackman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gene_Hackman) as Norman Dale
* [Barbara Hershey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barbara_Hershey) as Myra Fleener
* [Dennis Hopper](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dennis_Hopper) as Shooter
* [Sheb Wooley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sheb_Wooley) as Cletus
* Maris Valainis as Jimmy Chitwood
* Brad Long as Buddy
* Steve Hollar as Rade
* David Neidorf as Everett
* Kent Poole as Merle
* Brad Boyle as Whit
* Scott Summers as Strap
* Wade Schenck as Ollie

The film is not really based on the story of the 1954 [Indiana](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indiana) state champions, [Milan High School](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milan_High_School) (pronounced [/ˈmai lən/](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:IPA_for_English) *MY-lun*), but the term "inspired by a true story" may be more appropriate as there is little in the movie that coincides at all with Milan's 1953–54 season other than both were small schools that won the State Championship in the 1950s. The game winning shot in the movie was based on [Bobby Plump](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bobby_Plump)'s last second shot to win the 1954 Indiana State Basketball Championship. In most US states, high school athletic teams are divided into different classes, usually based on the number of enrolled students, with separate state championship tournaments held for each classification. At the time, Indiana conducted a single state basketball championship for all of its high schools, and continued to do so until 1997. Today, only [Kentucky](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kentucky), [Delaware](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delaware), and [Hawaii](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hawaii) continue to use the one-class system to determine the state high school basketball champion. Some elements of the film do match closely with those of Milan's real story. Like the movie's Hickory High School, Milan was a very small high school in a rural, southern Indiana town. Both schools had undersized teams. Both Hickory and Milan won the state finals by two points: Hickory won 42–40, and Milan won 32–30. The final seconds of the *Hoosiers* state final hold fairly closely to the details of Milan's 1954 final; the final shot in the movie was taken from virtually the same spot on the floor as Bobby Plump's actual game-winner. The movie's final game was even shot in the same building that hosted the 1954 Indiana final, [Butler University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Butler_University)'s [Hinkle Fieldhouse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinkle_Fieldhouse) (called Butler Fieldhouse in 1954) in [Indianapolis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indianapolis).

### Differences

* The rosters

In the movie, Hickory begins its season without tryouts, as only seven players are even concerned with playing basketball for Hickory. Two players quit the team on the first day of practice, though one returns the next day and the other also returns to the team later into the season. Jimmy Chitwood is also added halfway through the season, bringing its roster to seven plus Ollie, the manager, who sees some time on account of injuries. At Milan, 58 of the 73 boys enrolled at the school tried out for the team, and had a roster consisting of 10 players.

* Coaching controversy?

The controversy surrounding the coach and his methods, an important element of the movie's story, was completely absent in Milan — at least by 1954. Milan had fired its previous coach, Herman "Snort" Grinstead, after the 1951–52 season for ordering new uniforms against the superintendent's orders. Years later, Plump would tell an ESPN interviewer that Grinstead had been "the most popular coach in Milan's history." While Grinstead's successor, Marvin Wood, would initially make some waves in Milan, he was never the target of a town meeting to have him fired (unlike the movie). In his first season as coach in 1952–53, he would lead Milan to the state semifinals, defusing any remaining criticism.

* Town drunk

The town drunk character in the movie, Wilbur "Shooter" Flatch, is the father of one of the members of the team, and becomes one of the assistant coaches. He has no Milan counterpart.

* The previous coach

In the movie, Hickory's best player initially refuses to play, devastated by the sudden death of his previous coach. This has no parallel in the Milan story; as noted above, Milan's previous coach had been fired two years before their championship.

* The manager

Hickory's manager, Ollie MacFarlane, plays in one game when the Huskers have no other players left, and sinks two free throws to win a key game. Milan had a manager with a similar name, Oliver Jones, but he never played.

* The school song

The school song played twice in the Hickory/Linton game is not Milan's, but Manchester High School's located in [North Manchester, Indiana](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Manchester,_Indiana). Filmakers wanted to use it because it was one of the few only original school songs in Indiana. The song was composed by former [Manchester High School](http://mcs.k12.in.us/mhs/) band and [Manchester Civic Band](http://www.civicband.org) director Harold Leckrone.[[4]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hoosiers#cite_note-3)

* Underdog status

Hickory is depicted as a massive underdog throughout the movie. Milan entered the 1953–54 season as one of the favorites to win the state title, as it returned four starters from the state semifinalists of 1952–53.

* Close tournament finishes

In the movie, Hickory wins each of its tournament games by two points or less. In 1954, Milan won seven of its eight tournament games leading up to the final by double-digit margins, and the other by 8 points.

* Head coaches

Wood, who died of bone cancer in 1999, could hardly have been more different from Hickory coach Norman Dale (the Gene Hackman character). Dale is a middle-aged former college coach with a shady past and a volatile temper, and had a romantic relationship with a fellow Hickory teacher. Wood was only 26, and married with two children, when Milan won the state title, and had coached the Indians to the 1953 state semifinals. By almost all reports, Wood was a soft-spoken man of high integrity who often practiced alongside his players.

* The championship game opponent

In the state championship scene, the movie portrays [South Bend Central High School](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Bend_Community_School_Corporation) (chosen presumably because Milan had lost to South Bend Central in the 1953 state semifinals) as a predominantly black team. The real team was from [Muncie Central](http://www.thestarpress.com/tsp/series/milan/muncie/index.htm) High School, which had a predominantly white team with three black members. The movie probably borrowed from the actual history of the 1954 semistate final (state quarterfinals), in which Milan defeated the segregated [Crispus Attucks High School](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crispus_Attucks_High_School) in [Indianapolis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indianapolis), led by all-time great [Oscar Robertson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oscar_Robertson), then a sophomore. In the movie, the South Bend Central coach is played by Ray Crowe, who coached Crispus Attucks in 1954 and would, the next year, lead the team to become the [first all-black team](http://www.indystar.com/library/factfiles/history/black_history/attucks.html) in the United States to win a state championship playing against schools with white players. The Attucks team, with Crowe as coach and Robertson as floor leader, would repeat as state champions in 1956, becoming the first undefeated team in Indiana high school history.

### Similarities

There were other connections between the movie and real life. The announcer of the championship game in the movie was [Hilliard Gates](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hilliard_Gates), whose voice was familiar to Indiana high school basketball fans of the 1950s and 60s. The legendary announcer [Tom Carnegie](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tom_Carnegie) played the role of the public address announcer during the final championship game at [Hinkle Fieldhouse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinkle_Fieldhouse). Ray Craft also has a role in the film, welcoming the Huskers to Butler Fieldhouse as they get off the bus for the championship game. The game winning shot for the championship is shot by Matt Melvin.

### Behind the scenes

During filming on location at [Hinkle Fieldhouse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinkle_Fieldhouse) at [Butler University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Butler_University), directors were unable to secure enough extras for shooting the final scenes even after casting calls through the Indianapolis media. To help fill the stands, they invited two local high schools to move a game to the Fieldhouse. Broad Ripple and Chatard obliged, and crowd shots were filmed during their actual game. Fans of both schools came out in period costumes to serve as extras and to supplement the hundreds of locals who had answered the call. At halftime and following the game, actors took to the court to shoot footage of the "state championship" scenes, including the game-winning shot by Hickory. (Note: Look closely at the short stands behind one of the Fieldhouse goals and you'll see a Chatard Letterman's Jacket bearing the year '86 worn by one of the student extras.)

Speculation exists that the character of Norman Dale was named for [Norm Ellenberger](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norm_Ellenberger), whose middle name is Dale. A longtime assistant coach for [Bob Knight](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bob_Knight) at Indiana, he once played basketball for coach [Tony Hinkle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tony_Hinkle) at Butler.

The film's producers chose [New Richmond, Indiana](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Richmond,_Indiana) to serve as the fictional town of Hickory, and recorded most of the film's location shots in and around the community. Signs on the roads into New Richmond still recall its role in the film.

2 <http://us.imdb.com/title/tt0091217/>

**A great portrait of Indiana high school basketball's glory days!**, 27 April 2005   
8/10

Author: [stevenmcatee (stevenmcatee@aol.com)](http://us.imdb.com/user/ur4205925/comments) from Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

When I heard that a movie was being made about Milan (Indiana) High School's improbable 1954 boys' basketball state championship54, I was excited. Not only because I, like most Hoosiers, love basketball but also because of my family connection to "The Milan Miracle," as it's widely known. One of my uncles, Bob Wichmann, was a member of that team. MHS was by far the smallest school to win the championship in Indiana's 87 years of single class basketball. I was really looking forward to see who they were going to choose to play Uncle Bob!  
  
When I learned around the time of the movie's release that it wasn't going to be be an actual biography but merely inspired by the Milan 1954 team, I was disappointed. Shortly afterward, on my 16th birthday, my maternal grandparents - Uncle Bob's parents - took me to see the movie at a theater. I didn't dislike it but I had a hard time being objective about it because it was something other than what hoped it would be.  
  
But I recently gave "Hoosiers" another shot. I bought its two DVD collector's edition - largely for the bonus features - and saw the movie for only the second time ever and the first time in 18 years, a little over half of my life. The second time, I managed to view it simply as it is as opposed to my original expectations and I enjoyed it much more.  
  
"Hoosiers" in a fictional story about the 1951-52 Hickory High School team. The Huskers are coming off a solid 15-10 season but are now in disarray following the death of their coach and the subsequent departure of their best player, the painfully quiet Jimmy Chitwood (played by Maris Valainis).  
  
Their new coach, Norman Dale (Gene Hackman), arrives after practice for the new season has already begun. Dale is a former college coach who has spent the last 10 years in the Navy and his tenure with the Huskers gets off to a bad start. Two of the team's seven remaining players quit during his first practice - though both end up returning - and he alienates much of the town with his dogmatic philosophy and sometimes abrasive style.  
  
Among those not pleased with Dale is fellow teacher Myra Fleener (Barbara Hershey) who thinks that basketball is over emphasized and academics are under emphasized. She and Dale clash a few times early on, which means, of course, that they end up falling in love.  
  
The season starts off badly for the Huskers and a town meeting is soon scheduled to decide whether to fire Dale of keep him. Fleener has discovered that he was fired from his college coaching job for hitting one of his players but doesn't reveal that information and speaks on his behalf. Still, the audience seems largely unmoved.  
  
It looks like Dale is about to be fired but Chitwood enters like the calvary and, speaking for one of the few times in the movie, says that he is ready to return to playing but will do so only if the coach stays. Dale's job is saved and from there, the team improves greatly and becomes a state championship contender.  
  
You can probably figure out what happens in the end, but the movie works the underdog formula to perfection without being overly cliché.  
  
The performances in "Hoosiers" are great, particularly Dennis Hopper's best supporting actor Oscar nominated role as Shooter, the father of one of the players. Hopper does a phenomenal job of acting like a basketball crazed drunk, though I thought it was a bit much for Dale to make him an assistant coach. That is one of a few cases of over Hollywoodization in this movie.  
  
And where I think the movie succeeds the most is in portraying Indiana's unique love for high school basketball. Many non-Hoosiers who see the movie probably think that the residents criticizing the coach on the street, the caravan of cars traveling to away games, the emotional town meeting on the coach's fate and the general hysteria are an exaggeration. That is not the case.  
  
High school basketball in Indiana was an obsession for several decades and still is, though to a lesser extent. Many small towns passionately embraced the local high school team, which was often a point of unity, identity and pride.  
  
One other strong point about the movie, the late, great Jerry Goldsmith's adrenaline pumping music heightens the emotion of the game scenes down the stretch.  
  
The collector's edition DVD set also contains three bonus features that I think are worthy of mention here:  
  
\*A 29 minute documentary about the making of the movie, the Milan '54 story and Indiana's love for basketball.  
  
\*The 1954 state championship game between Milan and Muncie Central. I'm almost 100% sure that the commentary is done by Tom Carnegie, who was been the voice of the Indianapolis 500 since 1946. Tom was the commentator on the ESPN broadcast of the game last year.  
  
The game footage is far from great but it's not bad and it's good to have any at all. The audio quality is shaky. But it's great to finally have this monumentally historic game easily available.  
  
\*Several deleted scenes, introduced by director David Anspaugh and writer Angelo Pizzo. In my opinion, a few of the scenes were unnecessary but many should have been included. One of those scenes gives insight in Buddy Walker's (Brad Long) return to the team and several others give deeper insight into the romantic relationship that developed between Dale and Fleener. Pizzo and Anspaugh said they wanted to include some of those scenes but were told by the movie company to make the movie under two hours.  
  
In conclusion, I now greatly enjoy "Hoosiers" as fiction and its new collector's edition DVD set is a great buy for any sports movie fan! 8/10

3

<http://www.chasingthefrog.com/reelfaces/hoosiers.php>

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| --- | --- |
| **Hoosiers (1986) Starring Gene Hackman, Barbara Hershey, and Dennis Hopper *based on the true story of the 1954 Milan High School basketball team*** | |
| **Reel Face:** | **Real Face:** |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Gene Hackman Hoosiers | **Gene Hackman Born:** January 30, 1930 **Birthplace:** San Bernardino, California, USA | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Marvin Wood coach | **Marvin Wood** (Norman Dale in the film) **Born:** January 21, 1928 **Birthplace:** Morristown, Indiana, USA **Died:** October 13, 1999, South Bend, Indiana *(lymphoma)* | |
|  |  |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Maris Valainis | **Maris Valainis** **Born:** 1963 **Birthplace:** Indianapolis, Indiana, USA | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Bobby Plump Milan | **Bobby Plump** (Jimmy Chitwood in the film) **Born:** 1936 **Birthplace:** Pierceville, Indiana, USA | |
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| *"In Milan, people didn't look at us as if we were something special. We were just part of the community. The only way I knew we were special was when the motorcycle policeman revved up his motorcycle and took us through all those red lights."* - Bobby Plump on winning the 1954 Championship (1995 Teacher Magazine Interview)  **Questioning the Story:**  **Is the name of the championship team really the Hickory High Huskers?** No. The championship team on which the Hoosiers true story is based is actually the Milan High School Indians. There is no town of Hickory in Indiana.   **Was the Coach really a middle-aged man?** No. The real Coach of the championship team, Coach Marvin Wood, was only 26 when Milan won the title. His counterpart in the movie *Hoosiers*, Coach Norman Dale, was played by Gene Hackman who was 55 when the movie was being filmed. Screenwriter Angelo Pizzo said the following about keeping the Coach in the movie the same age as his real life counterpart, "I wrote it that way and the movie didn't work. If he had failed, he still had the rest of his life. I went back and made the character older, a guy with a last chance." At the time of the actual championship, Coach Marvin Wood had been a recent graduate of Butler University, where he played both baseball and basketball. At Butler, Marvin played on two Hoosier Classic championship teams (1947-48 and 1948-49) when Butler defeated both Indiana and Purdue in the same tournament.  **Was the Coach really hired to replace a former Coach who had died?** No. In the film, Coach Norman Dale is hired to replace a well-liked Coach who dies. The team's star player, Jimmy Chitwood, refuses to play for part of the season because he's so upset. In real life, Coach Marvin Wood was hired the previous season to replace Coach Herman "Snort" Grinstead, who was fired for ordering new uniforms against the superintendent's orders. In an ESPN interview, Bobby Plump (the real Jimmy Chitwood) said that Coach Grinstead was "the most popular coach in Milan's history."  **Was it really the Coach's first season with the team?** No. As stated above, it was Coach Wood's second season with the Milan Indians. He actually took them to the semi-finals the previous year. During his second year, which is what the film depicts, the town was no longer skeptical of his new strategies for offense and defense. The town was behind him. This is opposite to what is shown in the movie, where a community referendum is held to determine the Coach's fate.  **Did the team's star player really sit out half the season, upset over the previous coach's death?** No. The Milan Indians star basketball player, Bobby Plump, played the entire season. Although the former Coach was well liked, he did not sulk over the firing (not death) of the previous coach, Herman "Snort" Grinstead.  **Did a romance really develop between the Coach and a teacher?** Coach Wood with Wife Mary Lou and ChildrenNo. In the movie Hoosiers, a budding romance forms between Coach Norman Dale (Gene Hackman) and teacher Myra Fleener (Barbara Hershey). In real life, Coach Marvin Wood was married with two children (pictured left). He was not romantically involved with a teacher from the school. Coach Wood's wife, Mary Lou, often worried aloud, "If a basketball and I were placed at half-court, which one would he choose?" Rick Paridaen, a friend of the family, believes the answer would easily have been Mary Lou, the real love of Marvin's life. The film's romance was an element of fiction added by screenwriter Angelo Pizzo, whose other work includes the script for the 1993 football drama [*Rudy*](http://www.chasingthefrog.com/reelfaces/rudy.php), also based on a true story.  **Was Dennis Hopper's character based on a real life assistant coach?** No. Dennis Hopper's character of "Shooter", who is the town drunk and father to one of the players, is entirely fictional. It is a little ironic (or maybe not so ironic) that this fiction-based performance resulted in an Oscar nomination for Hopper, which was the only acting nomination that the film received (*Hoosiers* was also nominated for Best Original Score). In real life, Marc Combs and Clarence Kelly were the assistant coaches. Neither of them were drunks.  **Did the real Coach wear a shirt and tie to practice?** No. In the movie, Gene Hackman's Coach Dale is a hardliner who runs his drills in a shirt and tie. Coach Marvin Wood was much more soft-spoken and often suited up and played with the team during practices.  **Had the real life Coach been previously fired from coaching for punching one of his players?** No. The somewhat volatile Coach Dale in the movie had been fired from coaching on the collegiate level for punching one of his players. In real life, Coach Marvin Wood had never been fired for punching a player. Screenwriter Angelo Pizzo based Gene Hackman's outspoken Coach Dale partially on Indiana University's legendary coach, Bobby Knight. "I wondered what would happen if Knight punched a player," says Pizzo. Many who knew the real Coach have stated that Coach Marvin Wood was much more soft-spoken than his onscreen counterpart. Coach Wood often said of his championship squad, "God was coaching that team, not me."   **Was the real school so small that it could only field six players for the team?** Not entirely. Similar to the fictional Hickory High in the film, it's true that there were only 161 students enrolled at the real school (Milan High). However, unlike in the movie, 58 of the 73 boys at the school tried out for the basketball team. There were 10 players on the Milan team in 1954, not six.  **Did the real-life Coach practice the philosophy of four passes before a shot?** No. *Hoosiers* screenwriter Angelo Pizzo based this fictional element on Indiana University's coach, Bobby Knight. "I utilized Knight's offensive philosophy: four passes before a shot," says Pizzo.  **Did the team's manager really hit two free throws to win a game in the semi-finals?** No. The movie shows the team's manager, "Ollie," coming on to the court to hit two free throws to win a semi-final game. Milan's manager, Oliver Jones, stayed on the sidelines and never shot any game winning baskets. The only real similarity with the movie's character is the name.  **Did Milan really win every game in the tournament with a final second shot?** No. In the movie, Hickory barely squeaks by its opponents in the state tournament, winning each game with a last second shot. In real life, Milan won seven of its first eight tournament games by double-digit margins. Milan's 1954 tournament record is posted below. They were 19-2 in the regular season.  1954 Milan Tournament Record  SECTIONALMilan Indians 1954 State Title Newspaper  OPPONENT SCORE  Cross Plains 83 - 36 (W)  Versailles 57 - 43 (W)  Osgood 44 - 32 (W)  REGIONAL  OPPONENT SCORE  Rushville 58 - 34 (W)  Aurora 46 - 38 (W)  SEMI-STATE  OPPONENT SCORE  Montezuma 44 - 34 (W)  Attucks 65 - 52 (W)  STATE FINALS  OPPONENT SCORE  Gerstmeyer 60 - 48 (W)  Muncie Central 32 - 30 (W)  **In real life, did the Coach really measure the height of the hoop where the state finals were going to be played?** Yes. Coach Marvin Wood measured the height of the hoop at Butler University's enormous Hinkle Field House, where the 1954 state finals were played (and where Wood himself played in college). Coach Wood did this to "cast out their fear" by illustrating to his players that although the field house was much larger than their hometown gymnasium, everything about playing basketball was the same. Rev. Daniel Motto spoke of this moment at Wood's funeral in October of 1999, saying that when he saw this scene in the movie *Hoosiers*, it was then that he realized the film was truly inspired by Wood.  **Were the final game scenes in the movie shot at the actual field house?** Yes. The scenes for the final game in the movie were shot at Butler University's Hinkle Field House, which was where the real life events behind the Hoosiers true story unfolded. The filmmakers could not find enough extras to fill the field house. Therefore, in order to give the large arena the appearance it was full, 1,000 extras had to be moved around the arena. Filling Hinkle Field House was not a problem for the actual 1954 game. The arena was filled to the rafters, and tickets were being scalped outside for as much as fifty dollars.  **Is the announcer at the final game in the movie the real 1954 announcer?** Yes. The announcer at the championship game in the movie, Hillard Gates, is the real life announcer who did the 1954 championship game.  **Did the team really win the championship in 1952, coming out of nowhere?** No. In the movie Hoosiers, the Hickory Huskers emerge from nowhere to win the title. In real life, the Milan Indians won the title in 1954 not 1952, with a 19-2 regular season record. The Indians had made it to the semi-finals of the state tournament the year before, after the 1952-53 regular season. They were however, often considered underdogs because of their small school size of 161 students.  **Was the championship game won 42-40 against the South Bend Central Bears?** No. The real championship game was won 32-30 against the Muncie Central Bearcats. Like South Bend from the movie, the Muncie Central Bearcats were a powerhouse team from a much bigger school.  **How much of the championship game played in the movie is accurate?** Not much. In real life, Coach Wood ordered a stall twice during the final quarter. Milan's star player, Bobby Plump, literally held on to the ball, without moving, for 4 minutes, 13 seconds, before taking a shot (and missing) with a few minutes still left on the clock. On Milan's next possession, Plump again stood stationary with the ball as the clock ticked down from 1:18 to 0:18. In 1987, Milan star Bobby Plump told the *Saturday Evening Post*, "The final 18 seconds were the only thing factual in the movie about the Milan-Central game. From the time the ball was in bounds after the final timeout, the movie was accurate." This includes Plumps thrilling game-winning shot.  **Did the star player really convince the Coach that he should take the final shot?** Plump's final shotNo. During the final timeout, with the score tied near the end of the movie, Hickory's star player, Jimmy Chitwood (Maris Valainis), is told by the Coach that he'll be a decoy while the team runs its "picket fence" play, where a fellow teammate will take the last shot. The teammate, who is uncertain of himself, looks to Jimmy, prompting Jimmy to say with confidence to his Coach, "I'll make it." In reality, Coach Wood told Bobby Plump to take the final shot all along. "I was a very shy kid," Bobby Plump told the Washington Post in 1995. "I never would have said, 'I'll make it.' " Pictured at left is a photo of Plump's famous shot going through the basket at Hinkle Field House.    **What is a Hoosier exactly?** Hoosiers is the nickname of Indiana University athletic teams. Webster's dictionary defines the word Hoosier as "a native or inhabitant of Indiana". In 1919, historian J.P. Dunn revealed that the word Hoosier came from the Cumberland dialectical term hoozer, which means something large or big, literally a big hill. This origin is referenced in Webster's, but it is believed by some to be false, since Hoozer did not appear in a Cumberland dialect word list until 1899. This is well after the first recorded usage of the word Hoosier in the US. In 1826, the word Hoosier appears in the June 2 edition of the Chicago Tribune: "The Indiana hoosiers that came out last fall is settled from 2 to 4 milds [sic] of us." This early usage suggests that the term may have been used to describe an uneducated, rural yokel, a rustic. The word was later adapted to mean someone from the state of Indiana. In Europe, the movie was renamed *Best Shot*, because most Europeans were unaware of the word Hoosier and its relation to Indiana and Indiana athletics.  **Who was the producers' original choice to play Coach Norman Dale?** The original choice for Norman Dale was Jack Nicholson. He backed out due to a scheduling conflict, telling the producers that if they couldn't find another actor to play Dale, he would do it the following year. Robert Duvall also passed on playing Coach Dale. Gene Hackman then stepped in to take on the role.  **Did all of the actors on the team have high school basketball experience?** Not quite. Surprisingly, actor Maris Valainis, who portrayed the movie's star player, Jimmy Chitwood, was the only actor on the Hickory team who hadn't played basketball in high school. Valainis was only 5-foot-6 as a teenager, and he got cut three straight years from his high school basketball team. For the scene where his character Jimmy shoots baskets while he listens to Coach Dale (Gene Hackman), Maris Valainis said that he "wasn't even listening to him. I was just concentrating on making them and I made one and they kept going in." Today, the *Hoosiers* actor is a golf pro at Rancho San Joaquin Golf Course in Irvine, California. He has a 1-handicap.  **What happened to the Coach after winning the championship?** Marvin Wood continued to coach basketball until 1999, the year of his death. At the time of his resignation, the 70-year-old Wood had been busy coaching his granddaughter's seventh-grade basketball team. He stopped after he learned that bone cancer, which had been in remission for more than seven years, had returned. Wood is survived by his wife Mary Lou, their daughter, Deidra, and three grandchildren. He was elected to the Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame in 1971.  **What became of Milan star Bobby Plump?** Bobby Plump todayAfter high school, Milan star Bobby Plump (Jimmy Chitwood in the movie) played basketball for Butler University where he became a 4-year letter-winner, MVP his junior and senior years, and one of the NCAA's best free throw shooters of all-time. After graduating from college, he played three years for Phillips 66 of the National Industrial Basketball League. Plump eventually took on a career operating a life insurance and financial consulting business for nearly forty years. He opened a restaurant called Plump's Last Shot, located in the Broad Ripple area of Indianapolis. It is filled with memorabilia from the 1954 state championship team. His book, *Last of the Small Town Heroes*, was published in 1997. It is available on the right.  **Did any members of the original team have cameos in the movie *Hoosiers*?** Yes. 1954 Milan Indian Guard, Ray Craft, has two cameos in the movie. He is the person who greets the Hickory Huskers when they arrive at the state finals. He is also the person who tells Coach Dale (Gene Hackman) before the state final, that it is time for his team to take the court. In real life, Ray grew up to become the assistant commissioner of the Indiana High School Athletic Association.  **Why was there so much fiction injected into the movie Hoosiers?** Hoosiers screenwriter Angelo Pizzo summed up the film's heavy dose of fictionalization by saying that the added drama was necessary, "because their lives were not dramatic enough... The guys were too nice, the team had no real conflict." Angelo Pizzo is a Bloomington, Indiana native and the college roommate of fellow Indianan and *Hoosiers* director David Anspaugh. The two had often talked about making a movie "about the meaning of basketball to people in Indiana."  **1954 Milan Indians Team Photo:** The photo below opens in a separate window. The following text identifies the individuals in the team photo. Front row, from left: team manager Oliver Jones; cheerleaders Marjorie Ent, Virginia Voss, and Patty Bohlke; and team manager Fred Busching. Middle row: Assistant Coach Clarence Kelly, Roger Schroder, Bill Jordan, Gene White, Bobby Plump, Ken Delap, Ray Craft, Coach Marvin Wood. Top row: Principal Cale Hudson, Assistant Coach Marc Combs, Ken Wendlman, Bob Wichman, Ronnie Truitt, Glenn Butte, Rollin Cutter, Bob Engle, Superintendent Willard Green.  [[Milan Indians team photo](http://www.chasingthefrog.com/reelfaces/hoosiers/tmphto.jpg)](http://www.chasingthefrog.com/reelfaces/hoosiers/tmphto.jpg) [**Click to Enlarge the 1954 Team Photo**](http://www.chasingthefrog.com/reelfaces/hoosiers/tmphto.jpg) "  4  <http://www.sportshollywood.com/hoosiers.html>  A basketball hero around here is treated like a God." -- Hickory High School teacher Myra Fleener in *Hoosiers*.  *Hoosiers* is a cherished sports film, starring **Gene Hackman**, **Barbara Hershey**, and **Dennis Hopper**, in an Oscar-nominated performance. In the story, Hackman coaches a 1950's Indiana high school team in what could be his last shot at a title.    This story is loosely based on a real event in 1954, when a team from a tiny high school in the farmlands of Indiana rose against all odds to win the state basketball championship.    In 1954, Milan was a quiet rural town in the southeastern part of Indiana, with a high school of 161 total students, 75 being boys. But it became the scene of one of the greatest basketball stories in history. Their championship season, immortalized in the 1986 film, had plenty of real-life drama, but, said **Angelo Pizzo**, the scriptwriter, a great deal of fictionalization was necessary for the Hollywood feature "because their lives were not dramatic enough... The guys were too nice, the team had no real conflict." So changes were made... But how truthful is the film?     |  | | --- | | Victory **1954 Indiana High School Basketball Champs: Back Row (left to right) Glen Butte, Kenny Wendelman, Rollin Cutter, Bill Jordan, Clarence Kelly, asst. coach, Indianapolis policeman, Pat Starke, Coach Marvin Wood. 2nd Row: Marcus Combs, Jr. High coach, Roger Schroder. Front Row: Bob Engel, Gene White, Ron Truitt, Bob Plump, Ray Craft** |      In 1954, tiny Milan, with a sharpshooter named **Bobby Plump**, dominated much larger schools on their way to a 28-2 record and the Indiana state finals. Among their victims was **Oscar Robertson**'s high school team (Crispus Attucks High School in Indianapolis). In the finals, they shocked everyone when they squeaked past powerhouse Muncie Central for the Indiana state crown on Plump's last-second shot. It was considered one of the greatest basketball games ever played, and has attained a legendary status. In September 1999, *Sports Illustrated* named this team one of the top 20 teams of the century. The sports writers of Indiana named the "Milan Miracle" the #1 sports story in Indiana history.    It is a story that bears repeating. Milan's 32-30 victory over heavily-favored Muncie Central has since been a rallying cry for every small school in the state.   |  |  | | --- | --- | |  | Hoosiers | | **In real life, Milan High School didn't come out of nowhere. The Indians had made the state semifinals the previous season.** |      But the real story actually begins a year before that championship season. In the 1952-1953 season, their new coach, **Marvin Wood**, brought a "continuity basketball" program to one of the state's smallest high schools and also taught his young charges a full-court trapping defense and a four-corners offense he called "the cat and mouse." At first Wood was not very popular in the community -- he was replacing a very popular coach, and closed the team's practice sessions to the public while changing the offensive and defensive schemes. This caused quite a bit of controversy. But under his leadership, the Indians advanced to the final four of the state, bowing out in the semi-finals to South Bend Central (the school the fictional Hickory Hucksters defeated for the state title in *Hoosiers*). The nucleus of that team returned to form the '54 championship team.   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **1954 MILAN INDIANS SCHEDULE** | | | | | | | | | | | **REGULAR SEASON (19-2)** | | | | | | | | | | | **OPPONENT** | SCORE |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | Rising Sun | 52 - 36 (W) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | Vevay | 64 - 41 (W) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | Osgood | 48 - 44 (W) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | Seymour | 61 - 43 (W) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | Brookville | 24 - 20 (W) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | Hanover | 67 - 36 (W) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | Lawrenceburg | 50 - 41 (W) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | Versailles | 39 - 35 (W) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | Frankfort | 47 - 49 (L) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | Columbus | 52 - 49 (W) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | Rising Sun | 74 - 60 (W) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | Versailles | 52 - 46 (W) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | Napoleon | 41 - 34 (W) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | Holton | 44 - 30 (W) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | Hanover | 38 - 33 (W) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | Napoleon | 61 - 29 (W) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | Sunman | 42 - 36 (W) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | Versailles | 48 - 42 (W) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | North Vernon | 38 - 37 (W) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | Aurora | 45 - 54 (L) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | Osgood | 38 - 30 (W) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **SECTIONAL** | | | | | | | | | | | **OPPONENT** | SCORE |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | Cross Plains | 83 - 36 (W) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | Versailles | 57 - 43 (W) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | Osgood | 44 - 32 (W) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **REGIONAL** | | | | | | | | | | | **OPPONENT** | SCORE |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | Rushville | 58 - 34 (W) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | Aurora | 46 - 38 (W) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **SEMI-STATE** | | | | | | | | | | | **OPPONENT** | SCORE |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | Montezuma | 44 - 34 (W) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | Attucks | 65 - 52 (W) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **STATE FINALS** | | | | | | | | | | | **OPPONENT** | SCORE |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | Gerstmeyer | 60 - 48 (W) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | Muncie Central | 32 - 30 (W) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |      The Indians began their rise to the top of the 751 teams entered in that year's tournament, with a record of 19-2. The mighty men of Milan then cruised through the state tournament relatively untested, until the final game against the Muncie Central Bearcats.    Wood knew that his players would be intimidated in the spotlight of a state championship. So, in a scene recreated in the film, he measured the height of the basketball goal in the monstrous Hinkle Fieldhouse as the team took the floor for a practice, to illustrate that it was exactly the same height as the goal in the tiny gym at the team's hometown school. That act, Rev. Daniel Motto later told the *South Bend Tribune*, was meant to reassure the team that, despite the enormous size of the field house where the state finals were being played, the team should "cast out their fear." Motto said when he watched "Hoosiers" for the first time, he sat on the edge of his seat, waiting to make sure that scene was in it. When it was, Motto said, he knew the movie was truly inspired by Wood.    The final game was a bruising, low-scoring affair. The Indians were paced in scoring by senior **Ray Craft**. However, Coach Wood's delay tactic game plan would place the ball in the trusty hands of another senior, Bobby Plump.    With the score tied at 30-30 in the final quarter, Plump held the ball at the top of the key for **four minutes** before firing a shot that missed its target.    The Indians kept Muncie Central from scoring on its next possession, setting the stage for Plump to redeem himself.    The senior guard would not disappoint, draining a shot at the top of the key with barely any time left to win the state championship 32-30. "The coach just shortened the game," Craft said. "If we went at the rate the game was going at, he felt that we wouldn't have won. Bobby held the ball once, missed, and then we went back to him. The right guys won."   |  | | --- | | Plump **The Miracle Men of Milan: Bobby Plump (second from right) and his Milan High School Indian teammates celebrate after winning the state championship on March 20, 1954. Picture thanks to: Bill Herman / The Indianapolis News** |      Plump's famous final second shot assured the championship victory for the Indians, and the Indiana High School Athletic Association awarded him the Trester Award for mental attitude, sportsmanship, and character.    "The shot heard 'round the world'" changed his life, his teammates' lives, and his community's image forever.    "We came from a small community," Ray Craft said. "We wouldn't have gone on to college, unless we had won. I think about nine of the 12 guys on the team graduated from college. It was an important event for the community."    Even today, the '54 Indians impact is still felt by the community.     "Bobby Plump is a legend. He could've probably been governor of this state if he wanted to," said Roger Dickinson, president of the Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame. Plump was named one of the Most Noteworthy Hoosiers of the 20th century by *Indianapolis Monthly Magazine*. He was also one of the 50 greatest sports figures from Indiana in the 20th century, according to *Sports Illustrated*.   |  | | --- | | **A DIFFERING HISTORICAL OPINION: REVISE, REVISE, REVILE:**  As part of the social fabric of Indiana, basketball has always mirrored broader social patterns in the state. Given the context of Indiana's reluctance to adequately desegregate its high schools, the notion of containing blacks on the court by slowing down the game, stalling, and cat-and-mousing takes on deeper meaning. The educational, as well as the social and political, containment of blacks in everyday Indiana society reflects the same desire behind the effort to prevent black basketball players from, literally and figuratively, taking off. The motivation behind both forms of containment is white paranoia: What would happen if "we" let "them" go? Would "we" lose "our" schools? Would "we' lose "our" pastime? *--from 'Under the Boards: The Cultural Revolution in Basketball,' by Jeffrey Lane; University of Nebraska Press, 2007 (Chapter 5: My Dad Was a Military Man: Bob Knight, Paternalism, and Hoosier History).* |  |  | | --- | | Huddle |      "The community is still celebrating," Don Swisher, superintendent of the Milan Community School District, said in an October 1998 article for the *Odessa American*. "People come from all over to see the trophy and team picture in the foyer of the gymnasium."    "It gave the little schools the chance that they could win. It gave hope. It gave dreams to people that we can beat the big guys," Dickinson said. "It made this state great in its basketball heritage."     |  |  | | --- | --- | |  | Hoosiers | | **Gene Hackman's "Norman Dale" was a fiery coach -- much different from real-life coach Marvin Wood. The screenwriter actually based the character more on Bobby Knight.** |      And *Hoosiers* has helped to keep the story alive. In 1998, the current-day Milan and Muncie Central squads played against each other at the gymnasium where the movie was filmed. The game sold out, and was televised across the entire state and Indiana television added additional lighting to the gymnasium (actually in Knightstown).    Sadly, though, an actual "David vs. Goliath" match-up will never happen again in this state, as the Indiana High School Athletic Association did away with the single-class, "everybody in one big tournament" format at the end of the 1997 season.    Wood was elected to the [Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame](http://www.hoopshall.com/inductees/1975/wood.html) in 1971. Wood never stopped coaching. Finally, in 1999, he resigned as the coach of his granddaughter's seventh-grade basketball team because of a recurrence of bone cancer. The 70-year-old Wood submitted a resignation letter to the Kirtland (Ohio) School Board in the wake of learning that bone cancer which had been in remission for more than seven years had returned. He died in 1999.    Plump went on to play basketball for Butler University where he was the MVP his junior and senior years, and one of the NCAA's best free throw shooters of all-time. After graduating, he played for Phillips 66 of the National Industrial Basketball League. After retiring from basketball he sold life insurance for many years. But he was always best known for his final shot for Milan.    Finally deciding to make that notoriety work for him, Plump opened a restaurant called 'Plump's Last Shot' in Indianapolis. It's filled with memorabilia from the 1954 state championship.    Indian guard Ray Craft became the assistant commissioner of the Indiana High School Athletic Association. He has two cameos in the movie: Ray is the person who greets the Huskers when they arrive at the state finals, and the guy who tells the team that it's time to take the court for the final game.     "Hoosiers" is one hour and 54 minutes long. Although, as Bobby Plump said in an ESPN chat, "the film captured what it was like growing up in a small town in Indiana and how important basketball was," there's probably more truth than accuracy in the film. "The final 18 seconds were the only thing factual in the movie about the Milan-Central game," Plump told the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1987. "From the time the ball was in bounds after the final timeout, the movie was accurate."   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **HICKORY HUSKERS vs. MILAN INDIANS** | | | | | | | | | | | **HICKORY HUSKERS** | MILAN INDIANS |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | PLACE IN HISTORY: "Hoosiers" was called the best sports film ever made by Marv Albert, and was nominated for two Academy Awards. | PLACE IN HISTORY: *The Indianapolis Star* said the "Milan Miracle" was the top sports story in Indiana history. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | CHAMPIONSHIP YEAR: 1952 -- they came out of nowhere. | CHAMPIONSHIP YEAR: 1954 -- they lost in the semi-finals the year before. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | ENROLLMENT: Hickory High School's total enrollment of 161 is so small that it can only field a team of six players. They finish one game with four players on the court. | ENROLLMENT: Milan High did have an enrollment of only 161, but 58 of the 73 boys in the school tried out for the team. Milan High had 10 team members in 1954. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | |  | | --- | | Dale |   HEAD COACH: Norman Dale (Gene Hackman) is a middle-aged man with a mysterious past. It turns out that he is fresh off a 12-year stint in the Navy, which he had joined because he was fired from his previous job as a national champion collegiate coach for hitting one of his players. He is banned from college basketball. | |  | | --- | | Wood |   HEAD COACH: Marvin Wood was 26 years old when he coached Milan to the title. Wood often said, "God was coaching that team, not me." Kerry Marshall, who wrote the biography of Wood, called "A Boy, A Ball, and a Dream," remembered that Wood's favorite song was "Jesus Loves Me" and his favorite words were "I'll try." |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | FORMER COACH: The previous coach has died, and the team's star player, Jimmy, doesn't want to play basketbal anymore because he's still grieving. | FORMER COACH: The previous coach, Herman "Snort" Grinstead, was fired for ordering new uniforms against the superintendent's orders. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | PRACTICES: Coach Dale is a taskmaster during practices, running the players through drills. He always wears a shirt and tie. | PRACTICES: Coach Wood often suited up in workout clothes and played with the team during practices. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | TEAM MANAGER: "Ollie" (Wade Schenck) comes on the court in the semifinal and hits two free throws to win the game, granny-style. | TEAM MANAGER: Oliver Jones stayed on the sidelines and didn't make any heroic buckets, granny-or-any style. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | ASSISTANT COACH: "Shooter" (Dennis Hopper) is the town drunk and the father of one of the players. | ASSISTANT COACH: Marc Combs and Clarence Kelly were the assistants -- neither of them drunks. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | LOVE INTEREST: Coach Dale romances teacher Myra Fleener (Barbara Hershey). | LOVE INTEREST: Coach Wood was in fact married with two children, so it can be assumed that there was no romance with a teacher at the school.  His wife, Mary Lou, often worried aloud, "If a basketball and I were placed at half-court, which one would he choose?"  Rick Paridaen, a friend of the Wood family, finally revealed at Wood's funeral, "The real love of his life was Mary Lou." |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | STAR PLAYER: The moody-but-talented Jimmy Chitwood (Maris Valainis) sits out half the season because he's so upset about the previous coach dying, and is busy being tutored by Myra Fleener, who hates basketball. | STAR PLAYER: Bobby Plump played the entire season without any moping or whining about the previous coach, although he said in an ESPN chat that "Snort" was "the most popular coach in Milan's history." |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | STATE TOURNAMENT: The Huskers win every game in the tournament on a last-second shot. | STATE TOURNAMENT: Milan won their first eight games in the tournament by at least eight points. Seven of those victories were by double-digit margins. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | INSPIRATIONAL COACHING MOMENT: Coach Dale gathers his nervous team and has them measure the height of the hoop where the state finals will be played. "Ten feet," a player answers. Coach Dales reminds them that it's exactly the same height as the hoop in their tiny home gym, and is nothing to be afraid of. The players laugh and nod, ready to take on Goliath. | INSPIRATIONAL COACHING MOMENT: Yup, it really happened. Coach Wood measured the height of the Hinkle Field House, where the 1954 state finals were played to "cast out their fear." Rev. Daniel Motto spoke of this moment at Wood's funeral in October of 1999, saying that when he saw this scene in the movie, he realized the film was truly inspired by Wood. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | FINAL GAME ATTENDANCE: It was impossible to find enough extras to fill Butler University's Hinkle Fieldhouse, where the scenes for the final game were shot. About 1,000 extras had to be shuffled all around the arena as the actors went through their moves. | FINAL GAME ATTENDANCE: Hinkle Fieldhouse was packed to the rafters, and tickets were being scalped for up to $50. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | FINAL GAME ANNOUNCER: Hillard Gates. | FINAL GAME ANNOUNCER: Hillard Gates. Yup. The same guy. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | FINAL PLAY: The team huddles during the timeout with 18 seconds remaining in the championship game and the score tied. Jimmy Chitwood is told by Coach Dale that he'll be a decoy on the final play, while the team runs its "picket fence," and a teammate is assigned the final shot.  When that teammate gives a look of dismay and eyes Jimmy, Coach Dale asks the team, "What's the matter with you guys?!?"  They all turn to Jimmy.  Jimmy says, with confidence, "I'll make it." | FINAL PLAY: Coach Wood told Plump, not another player, to take the final shot. "I was a very shy kid," Bobby Plump told the *Washington Post* in 1995. "I never would have said, 'I'll make it.' " |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | LAST SHOT: Hickory wins the action-packed, team-oriented final game by a score of 42-40. Chitwood makes a thrilling last-second shot. | LAST SHOT: Milan won the final by a score of 32-30. During the final quarter, with Milan trailing 28-26, coach Wood ordered a stall.  Plump literally held on to the ball, without moving, for 4 minutes, 13 seconds, before taking a shot (and missing) with a few minutes left on the clock.  On the next possession, Plump held the ball *again*, without moving, as the clock ticked down from 1:18 to 0:18. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | QUOTE FROM THE LOVE INTEREST: "This place doesn't show up on most state maps. A man your age comes here, he's running away from something or he has nowhere else to go." -- Hickory High School teacher Myra Fleener (Barbara Hershey), to coach Dale. | QUOTE FROM THE LOVE INTEREST: “It’s nice to be important, but it’s more important to be nice.” -- Mary Lou Wood, wife of coach Marvin Wood, after the Indians’ 1954 state championship |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |   **TOP PHOTO:** Front row, from left: team manager Oliver Jones; cheerleaders Marjorie Ent, Virginia Voss, and Patty Bohlke; and team manager Fred Busching.  Middle row: Assistant Coach Clarence Kelly, Roger Schroder, Bill Jordan, Gene White, Bobby Plump, Ken Delap, Ray Craft, Coach Marvin Wood.  Top row: Principal Cale Hudson, Assistant Coach Marc Combs, Ken Wendlman, Bob Wichman, Ronnie Truitt, Glenn Butte, Rollin Cutter, Bob Engle, Superintendent Willard Green |