NN, VPI Basketball Great, Bucky Keller, Dies At 38

By RAY HEBERT
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Peninsula sports fandom was saddened Wednesday afternoon by the death of Herman John “Bucky” Keller.

Keller, 38, had been stricken by a massive stroke two weeks ago and had been unconscious in Riverside Hospital since. Funeral arrangements are incomplete.

Regarded by most as one of the State’s best basketball players, Keller led defunct Newport News High School to three straight State championships, and scored an all-time high Group One (now Group AAA) total of 1,880 points during the four years he played for the Typhoon.

During that span, he was the outstanding high school player in Virginia for two consecutive seasons, and was the only player at the time to be named to an All-Group One State team three years in a row. He also was named All-Group One quarterback in football as a senior.

Following his star-studded high school career, Keller accepted a scholarship to Virginia Tech, where he went on to become the fourth-leading scorer in the school’s history with 1,292 points. He currently ranks sixth.

“He was probably the best player ever to come out of the State until Moses Malone,” remarked University of Maryland Coach Lefty Driesell, who coached Keller in his senior year of high school. Malone played for Petersburg and led the Crimson Wave to State 3-A titles in 1973-74 and 1974-75.

“He was the best player I ever coached,” added Driesell. “He started all four years in high school, which was a rare thing in those days, and I guess still is today.”

Keller’s exploits on the basketball court didn’t stop after graduating from Newport News High.

At Virginia Tech, Keller was named the outstanding player for Virginia’s five major colleges as a senior.

Keller was selected to the All-Big Five Team twice, the All-Southern Conference once and All-Southern Conference tournament team twice.

“He had more athletic sense than any other kid I ever coached,” said Chuck Noe, who was Keller’s coach at Virginia Tech.

“It was amazing what he could do on a basketball court. He wasn’t fast, but quick and had just super intelligence.”

“A lot of people at the time Bucky graduated from high school said he wouldn’t graduate from college, but he did.

“He did it on his own, and he fooled them all by doing it. My biggest sorrow is that he didn’t become a high school coach after college. I think he would have been a fantastic coach. I wish he had,” added Noe, whose coaching career has spanned stays at Virginia Military Institute, Tech, South Carolina and Virginia Commonwealth University.

Keller captained the Tech team in his senior year. “He gave me the best single season of any captain I’ve ever had. We had four sophomores on the team that year (1962) and Bucky was the guy that kept them together.

“He didn’t go out to score points in every game. He did it on his own...”

TYPHOON’S BUCKY KELLER
Basketball Legend In Own Time

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