

PICTURE FROM THE PAST



Three Dexter players were named to the 1957 B-BB All-State Basketball team at the conclusion of the state tournament at Pearl. Jeanette Pittman, left, and Claude Ard, right, looked over the 19 trophies won by the Dexter squads for the 1956 and 1957 seasons. At center is Veronica Sorrell, whose picture was inserted to make a composite of the three ball players. She had left school early and was absent due to a funeral at Improve when the photo was made.

A look back at 1957 Dexter basketball

Editor's Note: This article was suggested by a clipping sent to The Times by a frequent contributor, Edwina Ard.

The year was 1957. For rural counties like Walthall, the main sport played was basketball. Only the larger municipal schools had football.

For most residents, basketball was the king of sports, schools carried on tremendous in-county rivalries and there was a county basketball tournament to decide the in-county champ.

It was the era of the segregated South but basketball enjoyed great pop-

ularity among the county's black schools, too. All fielded teams, some performing well. Most of the county's black teams played out-doors, without benefit of a gym. Team members that had played indoors did so when they travelled to a school lucky enough to have one.

At any rate, basketball was the one sport that all county teams had in common and it was far more popular than football. In fact, many county students had never witnessed a football game, but practically everyone old enough to walk had been to a basketball contest.

That was the atmos-

phere in 1957 when Dexter High School and its legendary coach, Rich Ladner, had three cagers named to the State B-BB All State Basketball team at Pearl. Dexter had two history-making teams that year, both boys and girls advancing to the state finals for the first time in history.

The Dexter girls won their opener defeating Ingomar by three points, then suffered a loss to Bassfield in the second game, but won the consolation game over top seeded Shady Grove to finish the tournament in third place. Veona Sorrell scored an overall 89 points in the three games,

including a whopping 42 points of Dexter's scoring in the consolation contest.

Dexter's boys lost to Anguilla, the No. 1 team in the north, 86-50 in the first game of the state tournament.

Jeanette Pittman was named to All-State honors for outstanding performance at guard, while Sorrell was named All-State for her scoring efforts.

Claude Ard made All-State for his play at the tournament. Ard had been an all-season standout for the Dexter team, called, at the time, as the best team in Dexter School history.