



Photos courtesy of Truman Sports Information Department (Top): Harry Gallatin (right) follows a shot by teammate Ralph Pink (left). The two played together at Truman from 1946 to 1948. (Middle): Although Truman didn't keep rebounding statistics, Gallatin (44) proved he was a strong rebounder in the NBA. (Bottom): "The Horse" could also score when he needed to. He averaged 13 points during his NBA career.

GALLATIN | Scored 816 points and led team to 59-4 record in two-year Truman career

Continued from Page 15
League, which began in 1937. The Basketball Association of America was formed in 1946 and was made up of teams in the Northeast and Midwest. The two leagues combined in 1949 to form the National Basketball Association.

Gallatin graduated from Truman in 1948 and said he didn't really expect to play professional basketball.

"I didn't know for sure," Gallatin said. "I played against some of the players of the St. Louis Bombers at that time. Some of the players came for an exhibition, and I played against them and held my own. I was under the impression that the St. Louis Bombers would draft me because at that time all of the franchises had territorial choices, within 100 miles. That's where I thought I was going to play, and I was excited about that because it was home for me."

However, Kirksville wasn't within 100 miles of the St. Louis Bombers. Although the Bombers didn't draft Gallatin, that didn't stop another member of the BAA, the New York Knicks, from drafting him during the 1948 draft.

Gallatin flew for the first time, from St. Louis to New York, and joined the Knicks for the 1948-49 season. After growing up in Roxana, a small town in Illinois, Gallatin had to go through several adjustments.

"All of the noise and confusion that comes with the Big Apple was different — cabs everywhere, all of the noises and all of the things that go on in the big city," Gallatin said. "You have to go there to really find out what it's really like. It's kind of a rat race really. People are going everywhere. They seem to be in a hurry all of the time."

During Gallatin's rookie year, the Knicks still were part of the BAA. Gallatin averaged 8.3 points his rookie season and was fourth in points for the Knicks. New York joined the NBA in Gallatin's second season and finished 40-28.

Although the NBA didn't keep rebounding statistics during its first season, it was evident that rebounding was Gallatin's forte. Rebounding statistics were kept during the last eight years of his career, and Gallatin never averaged fewer than 10 rebounds. He led the NBA with 15.3 rebounds per game in 1953-54 and was named to the All-NBA first-team that season.

Gallatin said he was soon nicknamed "The Horse" because of his work ethic, rebounding and his ability to battle centers — although he was only six feet six inches tall.

"My favorite part was rebounding — securing the ball and working hard," Gallatin

said. "I felt that I had to give it my best regardless of what the situation was. Winning is the primary goal. Whatever it takes to win games should be any player's focus in any sport. I just wanted to make a contribution and listen to the instructions of my coach. I tried to do all that I could to have a winning team and possibly go to the playoffs and take it all."

During the nine seasons Gallatin played with the Knicks, the team finished with a losing record only one time. They also advanced to the NBA Finals three times during that stretch, but didn't capture the title, losing to the Minneapolis Lakers twice and the Rochester Royals once. Gallatin played his final season with the Detroit Pistons. The Pistons finished 33-39 in his only season.

While the Knicks continued to play well, Gallatin was recognized for his outstanding individual play. The first NBA All-Star game was in 1951, and Gallatin was selected to play alongside fellow future Hall of Famers such as Bob Cousy and Paul Arizin. Gallatin appeared in the first seven All-Star games and started in four of them.

"Playing with the rest of the best players in the league was a special thing," Gallatin said. "Anyone who plays in the All-Star game is very proud to be designated as one of the best players in the league. Meeting the other players and having the same goal instead of being enemies was something that was special. We played the games tough — you didn't get anything easy."

Gallatin averaged a double-double for his career, with 13 points and 11.9 rebounds. However, his ability to stay on the court was perhaps his biggest accomplishment at the time.

"Being the first player to establish a consecutive-games streak was something that I was proud of," Gallatin said. "Something that hasn't been discussed much is that I didn't miss a practice or a game in junior high, in high school, in college and in 10 years of pro ball. It's one thing that I think very few people can appreciate, but it's certainly something that I appreciate."

Gallatin retired from professional basketball after the 1957-58 season. Even

though he was no longer playing the game, Gallatin found a way to stay close to it. He was offered a job to teach and coach at Southern Illinois University Carbondale and had the position for four seasons.

After three years at Southern Illinois, Gallatin went back to the NBA as a coach for the St. Louis Hawks. Gallatin was awarded the NBA Coach of the Year after the 1962-63 season — his first as an NBA coach. He also coached the New York Knicks for 63 games during his four-year coaching career.

"Coaching was something that I had some idea about," Gallatin said. "I took my experience in playing and tried to apply it to coaching. I found that pretty easy."

Gallatin finished with a 136-120 record as an NBA coach and soon moved back to Illinois — to coach and teach at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. While he didn't coach basketball for an extended period of time, he did coach the golf team and led them to 17 NCAA Div. II Tournaments.

Michael Moore played basketball for Gallatin while he attended SIUE. Moore, the current athletic director at St. Louis Community College, said Gallatin still was humble at all times despite his NBA Hall of Fame status.

"I remember going to his house after a game," Moore said. "We were down in the basement and were looking at all of his trophies. Here is his NBA jersey and all of these plaques and trophies and it kind of sunk in. We were these marginal high school players that were playing for this guy who had done it all and seen it all."

Moore has kept in contact with Gallatin throughout the years. He said Gallatin was very structured and had an amazing ability to mesh any 10 players on the court. As a professional and collegiate soccer coach, Moore said he used what he learned from Gallatin to help his teams.

"I respected the man and as fortunate to play for him," Moore said. "I respect him more even now. I've always had a real love and admiration for the guy."

The man who once wore a Truman State Bulldogs jersey, coached basketball at the highest level and is enshrined in the NBA Hall of Fame still is making an impression on the people who know him.

"The reason that I came to Truman was because of one of my good friends, Ralph Pink. A number of people from Metro East (Ill.) decided to go to, at that time, Northeast Missouri [State Teachers College], and play basketball"

Harry Gallatin
Former Bulldog basketball player



Photo courtesy of Detroit Pistons (From left to right): Walter Dukes, Gene Shue, Harry Gallatin, Nathaniel Clifton and coach Charles Eckman pose for a picture outside the Detroit Pistons ticket booth. Gallatin played one season for the Pistons.

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