

Keeping it simple

Good people,
hard work
made Lacey
successful

By JOE MIEGOC

Record Sports Writer

BETHLEHEM — Ken

Lacey kept it simple and to the point.

He didn't read from prepared notes. There was no joke to open his speech. No story was told of all his successes. Less than 90 seconds was all the former Stroudsburg High School standout needed to say what was on his mind.

Lacey became the first Monroe County player or coach to be inducted into the Lehigh Valley Basketball Hall of Fame. Lacey, along with Traci Cyr, Truman Frey, who died in 1970, and Joseph 'Jody' Sylvester, were honored by the Via of the Lehigh Valley at a banquet at Freedom High School on Wednesday.

"It means a great deal to me (to be the first from Monroe County) because I come from a place like Stroudsburg that has a great tradition in sports," Lacey said. "I have sense of pride for Stroudsburg. I always have and I always will and to be their representative, that alone means a lot to me."

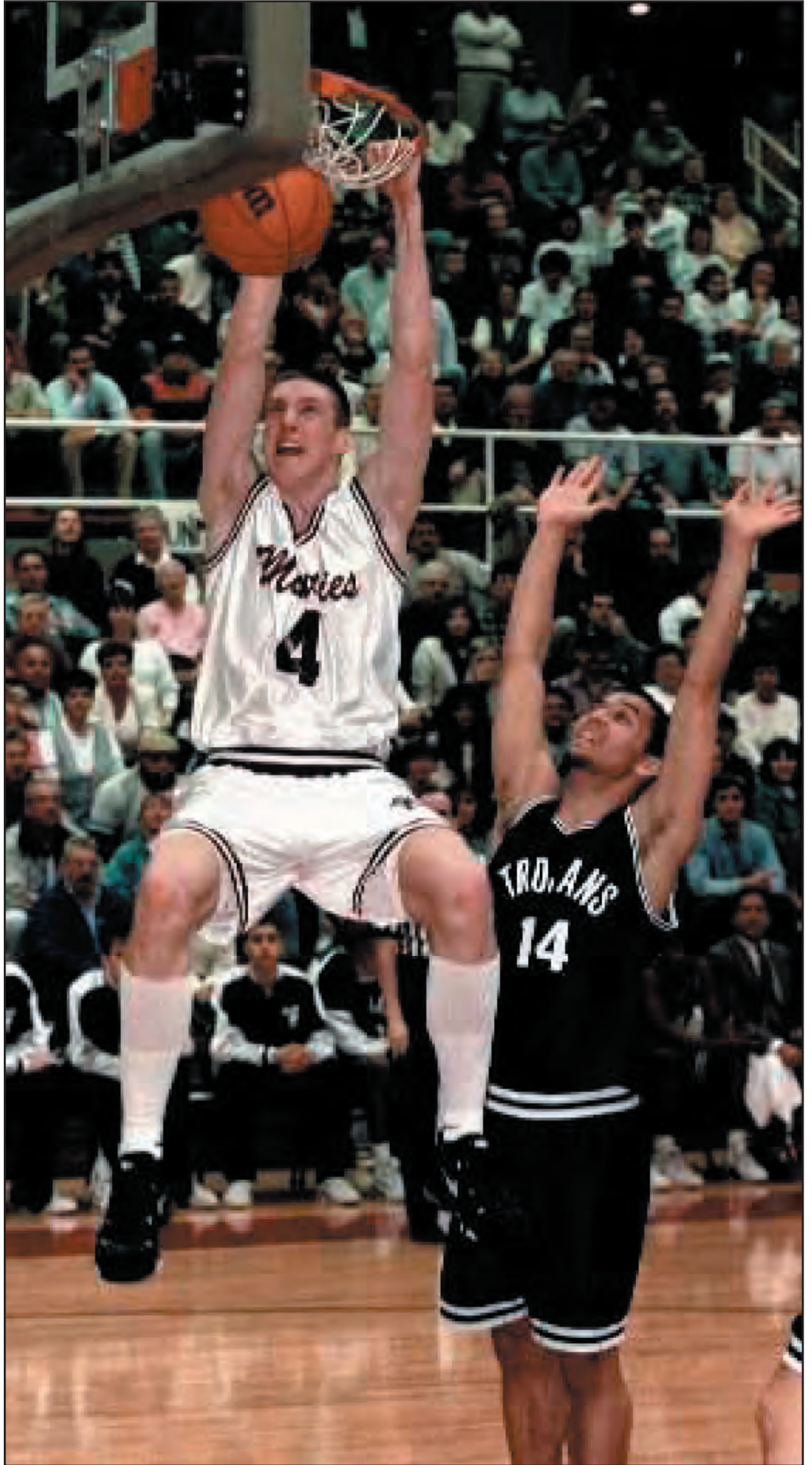
After Barry Frey, Truman Frey's son, Cyr and Sylvester gave their speeches, it was Lacey's turn.

"Over the years people have constantly asked me, 'What are some keys to success?'" Lacey told the audience. "And the only answer that I could give them was to surround yourself with great people and that's what I did and I was fortunate enough to keep all those people with me all these years."

Those people included his parents, Pat and Margaret Lacey, who saw their son lead Stroudsburg to the District 11 Class AAAA title in 1996, play three years at Rider University and nine years professionally in Europe.

There were Kyle Reed, Mark Slavin and Tarik El-Bassiouni, his teammates from that '96 team, and team manager Rick Rodriguez.

There was his youth coach, Bill White, and coach at Stroudsburg, Shawn Thornton, and another coach, Bill Hagy, who Lacey credited with toughening him up.



POCONO RECORD FILE PHOTO

Former Stroudsburg standout Ken Lacey (4) became the first Monroe County player or coach to be inducted into the Lehigh Valley Basketball Hall of Fame.

They all helped turn Lacey into a player who was never a star growing up and didn't see any playing time as a sophomore at Stroudsburg into a 1,000-point scorer in high school, three-year starter in college and nine-year professional veteran.

"The key is I wasn't a star and I wasn't a naturally gifted athlete," said Lacey, who scored 1,096 points at Stroudsburg. "I wasn't a somebody you saw as a young kid and said, 'Well, here's one of your future Hall of Famers.' It was the people around me. It was coaches

starting with Bill White in the sixth grade. The positive influences in my life, making sure I was a good person before I was a good basketball player and making me value the things that were important to me, the

See LACEY, Page C3

LACEY

From Page C1

priorities in life and, to me, being a great basketball player became a priority.

"So I just decided the only way to go about doing that was to outwork everybody else."

All that hard work finally paid off in his junior year at Stroudsburg.

After seeing no varsity action prior to that season, Lacey helped the Mounties win the Mountain Valley Conference title and earned a spot on the All-MVC first team for his play. The next year was even better as Lacey set single-season school records with 702 points, 380 rebounds and a field-goal percentage of 62.2 as Stroudsburg won its first district title. The Mounties won two games in the PIAA tournament before being eliminated by Kobe Bryant's Lower Merion team.

After a successful three-year career at Rider, Lacey decided to forgo his senior season for the opportunity to play professionally in Europe. His stay there lasted nine years as he played for eight teams in three different countries.

"It was probably one of the toughest decisions of my life," Lacey said. "It was a decision that I decided I was going to make without regret and I was going to do it for better or worse. I knew that was where I wanted my life to end up.

I thought that it was time and it was time to start early. I had no regrets and I think it was one of the smarter decisions that I've made. It probably made me grow up a little faster than I might have otherwise, but there's nothing wrong with that.

"It's been nothing but a great decision for me."

None of that would have been possible without the help and guidance of those people above.

"The people, my parents and my coaches, they were all about, 'What are you going to do now?'" Lacey said. "It's not what have you done. You never rest on the things that you've done in the past. You think about what you can do to improve yourself in the future."

For now, Lacey's future plans are to relax.

After playing for Olympia Larisa in Greece in 2007-08, Lacey decided to take a year off. He considers himself retired, but the books are not completely closed on his career.

"I would consider it retired," Lacey said. "The door is always open especially when you retire at 30. It's not like I'm 40. There are job opportunities there. I still have contacts over there and I'm still getting offers to go back and play. Right now I don't want to take advantage of them. I consider myself retired, but I always leave doors open and I don't burn bridges.

"The possibility of going back, I couldn't give you a percentage, but right now I'm really comfortable with my retirement."