

# Phog Allen: Remembered as a Jayhawk but his Greatness Began in Jackson County

By Blair Kerkhoff

On the day that Kim Anderson was introduced as Missouri's new basketball coach, a University of Central Missouri tradition was continued.

Anderson joined a long list of Mules coaches who went on to a major college program. Not all took a direct path from Central Missouri to the next stop, but coaches at Kansas State, Washington, Kentucky, North Carolina, Memphis and UCLA all have had coaches who spent time in Warrensburg, none more prominent than Phog Allen, whose seven years at Central Missouri preceded his final 36 years at the University of Kansas.

Allen would become known as the Father of Basketball Coaching because he was perhaps the first to take the profession seriously when the game was in its infancy.

And Jackson County knew Forrest Clare Allen before his coaching career commenced and before he had been given the unusual nickname because his long, loud calls as an umpire were mindful of a foghorn.

Allen, who by the time he retired from coaching in 1956 was the game's winningest coach, learned basketball and sports growing up in Independence.

He was born in 1885 in Jamesport, Mo., in Daviess County and he was two years old when the family moved to Independence, in a house on North Union when he was about three years old.



*The 'Amazing Allen Brothers' in 1904. From left are Harry (who went by Pete), Forrest, Homer (Ham), Elmer (Jammer), Hubert (Hub), and Richard (Dick). Standing in front is Homer Jr. (Little Ham). Jackson County Historical Society Archives.*

Harry Truman was a few years older and the families knew each other, but Allen said he had more in common with Bess Wallace, Harry's future wife. She was more sports-minded.

Independence — and his five brothers — shaped Allen's life.

In newspaper and magazine profiles, Allen often recounted that he and brothers, Homer, Elmer, Pete, Hubert and Richard —Forrest was the fourth brother, after Pete —would spend countless hours outdoors playing games. As they grew older, athletics became a natural diversion.

Pete, three years older, was the most athletic and Forrest's idol. From a hayloft in an Independence barn, Forrest watched his brother play games for the Independence YMCA on March 30 and 31, 1899 against the University of Kansas. This was the first year of basketball at Kansas, and the

university team was coached by the game's inventor, James Naismith.

Basketball's two great influences didn't meet that day, but their paths would soon cross. In 1905, Allen enrolled at Kansas and the campus was delighted because it was getting a bona fide sports star.

Allen was fresh off his first great triumph as a sportsman.

It happened earlier that year. The 19-year-old Forrest Allen had become a basketball whiz while playing for the Kansas City Athletic Club and the 1904 Olympic Games in St. Louis had grabbed his attention. A basketball tournament was played and won by a team from Buffalo, N.Y.

Allen issued a challenge to the Buffalo Germans — come to Kansas City to meet the KCAC with the winner laying claim to the title World's Champion.

The Germans accepted because Allen arranged to have their travel expenses paid, and the best-of-three series captured the imagination of Kansas City. The Kansas City Star called the event "...among the most important ever played in the West."

Every ticket to every game was sold in the 5,000-seat Convention Hall, unheard interest for a basketball game at the time, and the first two games were split. The teams squabbled over the officiating in those contests and agreed to have Naismith referee the deciding game.

It was no contest. The KCAC won 45-14. In the day, one player shot all of a team's free throws, and Allen made 17 for the winning team. Kansas City had a new sports hero.

But the KCAC and Kansas weren't Allen's only hoop teams. As a teenager, the Allen brothers formed their own squad, the Amazing Allen Brothers, who took on all comers. They barnstormed throughout the area, and according to Hubert lost one game in five years, at Baker University.

At the time, Baker was coached by Phog, but he played with his brothers in that game. Phog played

with his brothers longer than he did with the Jayhawks.

Allen's coaching career started at Baker, and before 1910 he had also coached basketball at Haskell, Kansas and Independence High.

But the coaching came to a stop for two years when Allen enrolled in Central College of Osteopathy in Kansas City. The reason was simple enough. Allen was having back problems, the result of injuries while playing football and basketball and he wasn't satisfied with the medical attention he received.

**I**n the fall of 1910, Allen took classes in the building at 729 Troost Ave. He was there a short time when he started treating athletes for injuries. One of his first was a baseball player from Central High named Casey Stengel, who would become one of the greatest managers in major league history.

As a coach, Allen treated his players, opponents, and athletes in sports. After the Kansas City Athletics joined the American League in 1955, major league players would visit Allen in Lawrence during their trips here so he could treatment them.

One of his success stories was Johnny Mize, who hit 25 home



*Allen in 1928. His Kansas teams had won six Missouri Valley championships in his first eight years back in Lawrence, and would win 24 conference titles in his Kansas career.*

runs in the final 90 games of the 1950 season for the New York Yankees after receiving shoulder treatment from Allen.

By 1912, Allen was back in coaching, leading the basketball and football teams at Central Missouri and in 1919 moved to Lawrence where he achieved his greatest fame. Allen did more than coach and mend. He was the driving force behind basketball in the Olympic Games, was the founder of the Kansas City-based National Association of Basketball Coaches and established one of college basketball's most tradition-rich programs.

Kansas named its basketball field house for Allen in 1955, a season before he retired, and in 1961, he was inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame. Many others in the Hall, like Kentucky's Adolph Rupp and North Carolina's Dean Smith, were coached by Allen.

It started in Jackson County.

### Phog Allen Coaching Record

School	Time Period	Years	Record
Univ. of Kansas	(1907-09, 1920-56)	39	590-219
Central Missouri	(1912-19)	7	84-31
Baker	(1905-08)	3	45-9
Haskell	(1908-09)	1	27-5
<b>Total</b>		<b>48</b>	<b>746-264</b>

*Note: Allen coached at two different schools simultaneously for three years (1906-09)*