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A Seventies superstar may finally get his due

For the past several years Dennie Bridges has wondered why Jack Sikma '77, Illinois Wesleyan's star center and seven-time National Basketball Association All-Star, had not been elected to—or at the least considered for—the Basketball Hall of Fame. In one chapter of his book, *A Dunk Only Counts Two Points*, Bridges expressed that disappointment. He first described the injustice of Sikma's being passed over for the 1976 U.S. Olympic team and then discussed the Hall of Fame's similar slight.

In both cases, Bridges surmised, Sikma's college pedigree was the problem. U.S. Olympic Coach Dean Smith of North Carolina chose one of his own, Tar Heel center Tom LaGarde, over Sikma for the Olympics, even though most scouts agreed that Sikma had outplayed LaGarde. As for the Hall of Fame, Bridges figured it was more of the same—"The clout wielded by the big-time schools and coaches had an effect on the Olympics and appears to be an obstacle in the Hall of Fame selections," he wrote.

But then, as the manuscript entered its final stages, Bridges checked with officials of the Hall of Fame. The problem, he was told, is simple: Sikma had never been nominated.

That led Bridges to revise the chapter, softening his criticism and shouldering part of the blame for Sikma's absence. He didn't stop there, but immediately began gathering the documentation necessary to nominate his former star. The process will take time, but Bridges says he'll do whatever he can to ensure a place in the Hall of Fame for one of Illinois Wesleyan's great all-time athletes.—Jeff Hanna



Bridges' book includes several rare photos, including this portrait with Jack Sikma and Class of '77 teammates. Pictured front row (left to right): Dave Pitelka, Mike Rinker, Sikma, John Lenahan; (back row): Bob Spear, Bridges, Jim Molinari, and Mike Bradley. (*Photo from A Dunk Only Counts Two Points*)