

# WCHS

## “Legends of the Games”

WHS 1921-23 Teams and Coach Kuefler

Induction #3

### 1920-21 Undefeated Team:

This 1921 team’s record is unknown but according to the WPJ December 10, 1970, edition, they were undefeated. Both the 1925 and 1926 teams played twelve regular season games. I assume these teams did the same.



**Back: Coach Kuefler, Merritt Dodds, Vern Wright, Clair Walker, Carol Parker**

**Front: Marion Blaha, Carl McDowell, Harold Kruger, Bill Stevens**

I was hoping to discover some items of interest about each member of this undefeated 1921 team. I came up empty.

About this team, I will say they laid the groundwork for the next two teams to earn invitations to the Minnesota State Basketball Tournament. As I recall there were sixteen statewide “districts” that each had a tournament to determine the district champions. A committee would invite eight district champions to the state tournament. This team was undefeated and got no invitation. They did, however, put WHS basketball on the map!

**Wadena PJ, December 10, 1970:**

This was coach Kuefler’s first year and this 1920-21 team was undefeated.

### **1922 District 6 Champs**

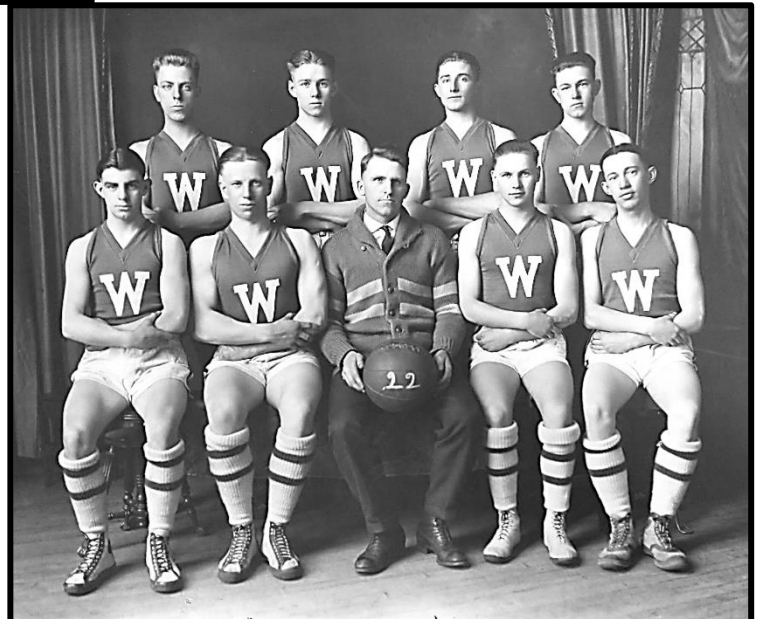
### **1922 Minnesota State HS Tournament**

**Quarterfinal – Wadena 27 New Ulm 17**

Wadena kicked off the 1922 Minnesota State Tournament early Thursday morning, in Northfield, against the Eagles of New Ulm. The teams played to a 10-10 halftime score. The second half was all Wadena as they won 27-17.

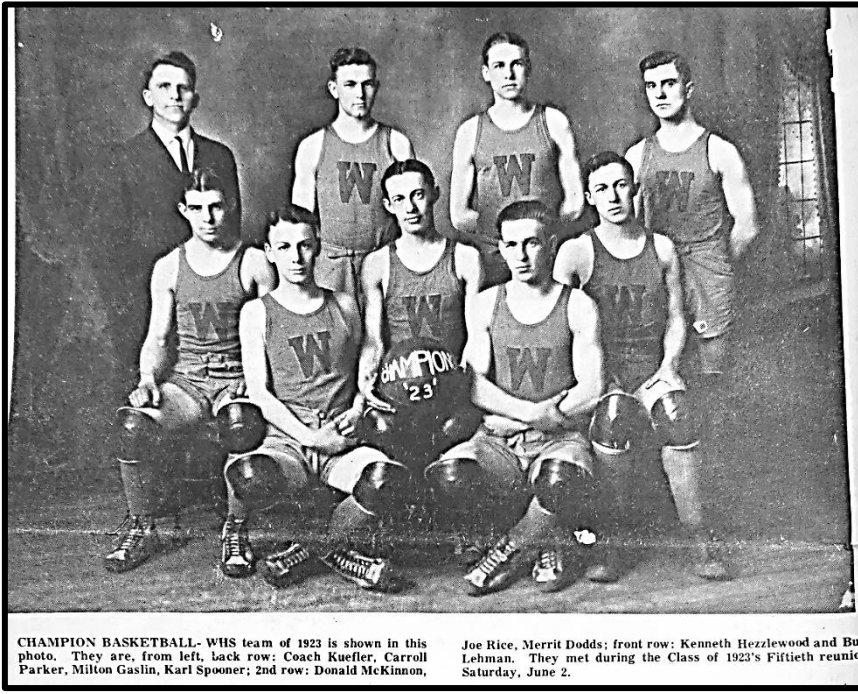
### **Semifinal – Wadena 34 Madison 35 (OT)**

In a back and forth see-saw battle, Madison led 16-8 at the half. Wadena rallied in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter to take a 26-21 lead going into the final stanza. With a minute to go Merickel made a free throw to put Wadena up 31-29 before Hendrickson of Madison beat the buzzer to tie the game. In OT Madison prevailed 35-34.



**Back: Bill Stevens, Vern Wright, Maurice Merickel, Carol Parker**

**Front: Don McKinnon, Clair Walker, Coach Kuefler, Marion Blaha, Joe Rice**



CHAMPION BASKETBALL- WHS team of 1923 is shown in this photo. They are, from left, back row: Coach Kuefler, Carroll Parker, Milton Gaslin, Carl Spooner; 2nd row: Donald McKinnon, Joe Rice, Merrit Dodds; front row: Kenneth Hezzlewood and Bu Lehman. They met during the Class of 1923's Fiftieth reunion Saturday, June 2.

## 1923 District 6 Champs 1923 Minnesota State HS Tournament

Quarterfinal – Wadena 16 Hopkins 17

I have no details about this game. Let's consider the two losses that knocked Wadena out of both tournaments. A one-point OT loss to Madison in the semifinals followed up with the one-point quarterfinal loss to Hopkins. How close it was and what might have been.

Clearly the best run WHS ever had in basketball. One undefeated team followed by two District 6 titles and back-to-back trips to the state tournament.

Back: Coach Kuefler, Carol Parker, Milton Gaslin, Carl Spooner

Front: Donald McKinnon, Kenneth Hezzelwood, Joe Rice, Ed Lehman, Merritt Dodds

### 1920 – Coach Otte – (final season)

### 1921 – Coach Kuefler (undefeated)

For new head coach Anton Kuefler, he inherited four players that played for coach Otte the previous year. Those four were Merickel, Rice, Stevens, and McDowell.

### 1922 – Coach Kuefler (Dist. 6 Champs and Minnesota H.S. State Tournament)

In Kuefler's second year he had Stevens, Rice, and Merickel returning for their third season as well as Parker and Walker prepared to contribute in their second year.

### 1923 – Coach Kuefler (Dist. 6 Champs and Minnesota H.S. State Tournament)

Rice would be the team captain, now in his fourth year, Parker in year three and McKinnon, year two.

And that is the recipe for the most successful three-year run in the history of Wadena HS basketball.

In addition to inducting the above three teams into the WCHS "Time Machine's Legends of the Games," I am inducting their coach, **Anton H. Kuefler**, for orchestrating that incredible three-year run.

#### Coach's Induction:

Anton Henry Kuefler (1899-1972)  
Catherine Elizabeth Peters Kuefler 1906-2000  
Calvary Cemetery – Wadena

#### Kuefler led WHS to:

-One undefeated season (1921)  
-Two District 6 titles (1922-23)  
-Two State Tournament appearances (1922-23)

## The Team of 1923 WHS 50<sup>th</sup> Class Reunion



BASKETBALL TEAM- in 1973. Shown here are Coach Kuefler, Carroll Parker, Milt Gaslin, Karl Spooner (standing); seated, Joe

Rice and Bus Lehman. Absent was Kenneth Hazzelewood. McKinnon and Dodds are deceased. (Rex McDonald Photos)

**Back:** Coach Kuefler, Carol Parker, Milton Gaslin, Carl Spooner  
**Front:** Donald McKinnon, Kenneth Hezzelwood, Joe Rice, Ed Lehman, Merritt Dodds

This picture is set up just as the 1923 team picture was set up. The three empty seats represent three deceased teammates, Donald McKinnon, Ken Hezzelwood, and Merritt Dodds.