Skylight greats inducted into HOF
Sherry Winn and Charna Ophus-Seibert make up Northern Hall of Fame Class of 2015
By Chris Peterson
May 5, 2015

The Montana State University-Northern Skylights have enjoyed a lot of success over the years in NAIA college basketball. But no team in the school's history was better than the 1993 version, which brought home the Skylights' one and only NAIA national championship in women's basketball.

And after 22 years, two of that team's most important parts are getting their due as former Northern head coach Sherry Winn and former player Charna Ophus-Seibert were inducted into the MSU-N athletic Hall of Fame last Friday.

Winn spent five seasons on the bench for the Skylights and during her time she did it as well as anyone ever has. When her career at Northern was all said and done, she had a record of 137-19 with one national title and a remarkable five Frontier Conference championships. She was also named the NAIA coach of the year in 1993.

"It's great because I have so many of my players in there already and Charna is another one," Winn said of being inducted. "It's just such an honor to go into the Hall of Fame with these phenomenal players. I can't even describe what it feels like. The players were so good, they made me a great coach. I can't say that I came here a great coach."

Following her run of success at Northern, Winn moved on to have a pair of successful coaching stints across the country, beginning in Colorado State Pueblo, an NCAA Division II university, where she coached for five years. Then, she closed out her coaching career by spending 11 seasons on the sideline for the University of Charleston in Charleston, West Virginia.

At the end of it all, Winn finished with an impressive 442-234 record in 23 seasons as a collegiate head coach. But among all her successes, the national title she won at Northern still ranks right up there with the rest. Yet, she wasn't interested in talking about old wins or losses, she was more interested in seeing the players she coached so long ago and getting a chance to rekindle those relationships.

"How amazing it is to be here right now and see so many former players," Winn said. "I just have tears in my eyes thinking about all the people that are here. What an amazing event this is."

Ophus-Seibert felt much the same way as her coach as she returned to Northern to be honored for her great career on the hardwood.

"It's wonderful to be here right now," Ophus-Seibert said. "There are so many old players and coaches here right now that it feel like a mini reunion. It's great to see everyone and the community and it just feels so good to see everyone."

The former Big Sandy star, who helped lead the Pioneers to a 27-0 record and a Class C state championship, was also the point guard for the Skylights national championship team.
Behind Ophus-Seibert's leadership on the court, the Skylights won four conference and district championships during her time with the team and won a school record 35 games in 1993. Ophus-Seibert also earned academic All-Conference honors four times and an academic All-American in both basketball and volleyball. In addition to those honors, she still holds the Northern career record for assists with 641, steals with 99 and notched the first triple double in the history of MSU-N women's basketball.

After her four years, she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in communications and a Master of Education in guidance counseling.

"(Coach Winn) is being humble," Ophus-Seibert said. "She was a great coach and we had a lot of great players. It's amazing to think about what we were able to achieve back then. And I honestly I wish I was getting ready to play a basketball game instead of getting up to speak in front of everyone."

But there was no basketball to play at the SUB Friday night, the location of the ceremony. There was just Northern fans and alumni, listening to two greats tell stories about the glory days and each other. And everyone associated with Northern athletics got to re-live the 1993 Skylights national championship, even if it was just for a night.

Havre Daily News website