

Rutgers-Newark Athletic Hall of Fame



Hank Bodner **Men's Basketball Coach/ Director of Athletics** (Inducted 1984)

The trouble with trying to write about the late Hank Bodner is that no matter how much of the truth you tell, the casual observer is going to find it hard to believe. How are you possibly going to convince anyone today that almost every nuance and refinement you see in basketball's zone defense today was either developed, utilized or even invented by the man. Starting with his days as a player on the Passaic High School Wonder Five (the greatest high school basketball dynasty ever assembled) and moving on through his years as head coach and athletic director at first Newark University and then Rutgers-Newark, he was light-years ahead of guys in the other locker room each time it came

down to the Xs and Os.

When LIU, for example, was at its zenith as a national basketball power, it was a seven-man team from Newark University that went over to Brooklyn and snapped a home-court winning streak, which the Blackbirds had run into the seventies. When Seton Hall first bid the national recognition with players like Bobby Wanzer and Pep Saul, it was Bodner and his zone-press, which held the Pirates to a slender 14-13 edge at halftime, and nearly made a little history that night.

He was less successful as a baseball coach but, in truth, for more than a decade Hank Bodner was the Rutgers-Newark athletic program. "I can't help but wonder," said Burt Geltzeiler, one of Bodner's star pupils and an inductee today, "what he might have done with scholarship players and Division I facilities. He was a genius."