

Chapter 3 - Joe Shackleton



Joe Shackleton

Personal

Robert "Joe" Shackleton was born in Lansing, Michigan on January 12, 1953, the son of Bob and Mary Jean Shackleton, Bob having been "the voice of the Spartans" for many years on baseball, basketball, and football broadcasts. In addition to basketball, Joe also played tennis and varsity football as a wide receiver, defensive back, and punt returner. He played at 6'2" and 170 lb.

Okemos High School

1967-68

During his freshman year, Shackleton was on the freshman team.

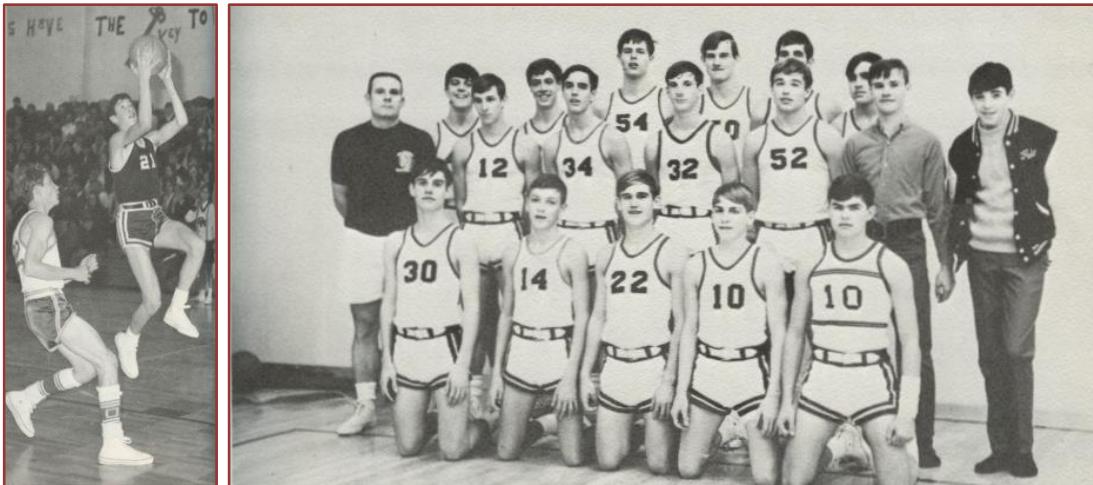
1968-69

During his sophomore year, Shackleton played most of the season on the Junior Varsity (JV) squad.



1969 Tomahawk Yearbook

On December 6, the Okemos JV team beat **Gabriels**, 63-57. The Shamrocks shot only 22% (making only 19 of 86 shots), while the Chieftains shot 44% (making 23 of 53 from the field). Playing at guard, Shackleton scored 10 points ([Source](#)). On December 12, the JV team defeated **Eaton Rapids**, 79-67, for Okemos' second straight Capital Circuit victory, with Shackleton contributing 15 points ([Source](#)).



J.V.'s speed on to victory with bottom row, left to right: D. Wheeler, J. Wiseman, M. Ehlinger, D. Steketee, R. Atkinson; second row, Coach Burgett, S. Smith, T. Chetrick, C. Lucas, S. Olds, E. Bukovinsky, R. White; top row, C. Sturk, J. Shackleton, D. Bobb, D. Hall, B. Peacock, B. Schiefer.

Toward season's end Shackleton was bumped up to the varsity squad and started the remaining four games. Stats on two of those games were reported in the *Lansing State Journal*. On February 14, Shackleton scored two points on one field goal, though **Holt** defeated Okemos, 84-55 ([Source](#)). On February 27, Okemos lost, 78-62, to **Haslett**, with Shackleton scoring 11 points on five field goals and 1-2 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).

1969-70

During Shackleton's junior year, he played on the varsity team; some press clipping highlights follow. Okemos opened the season on December 2, with a 99-76 victory over non-league opponent **Lakewood**, with Shackleton scoring 12 points ([Source](#)). On December 4, the Chiefs defeated **Catholic Central** 88-70, with Shackleton "providing spectacular scoring and rebounding punch ... Shackleton was Mr. Consistency, plunking in three baskets in every quarter, virtually all of them from the 15-foot range, hitting his only free throw to tally 25 points, high for the game" ([Source](#)).

On December 19, the Chieftains defeated **Howell** 64-39, with nine Chieftains breaking into the scoring column but only Shackleton scoring in double figures with 19 points ([Source](#)). Later that month, on December 26 and in spite of 18 points scored by Shackleton, **O'Rafferty** defeated Okemos, 78-65, in the first round of the Greater Lansing Holiday Basketball Tournament. On January 30, while Shackleton scored 21 points, the Chieftains lost, 70-56, to **Gabriels**.

On February 6, Okemos topped **Howell**, 77-46, with Shackleton scoring 19 points ([Source](#)). A couple of weeks later, on February 20, Okemos downed **Haslett** 74-62, with Shackleton leading all scorers with 22 points ([Source](#)).

Laurels

At Okemos High School's annual winter awards banquet, Joe Shackleton ("junior scoring sensation") and Don Read were recognized as Co-MVPs.



THE OKEMOS BASKETBALL TEAM was among the honored guests last Wednesday night at the annual Okemos winter awards banquet. Five cagers were singled out by their teammates and awarded special recognition. Standing left to right is Joe Shackleton (most valuable player), Dick Wagenvoord (tri-captain) and Don Read (tri-captain and most valuable player). From left to right in the front row is Kurt Shirmer (tri-captain), coach Stan Stoltz, and Jon Wiseman (most-improved player).

Okemos Winter Awards Banquet: Joe Shackleton (standing on left)

In March Shackleton was named to the First Team of the Capital Circuit's All-League Team by league coaches. He was also named to the Second Team of *The State Journal's* 10-man All-Area Basketball Team:

Joe Shackleton of Okemos manned both guard and forward slots for his team. He hit well outside and drove well in building up a 19-point per game average. He also was one of the team's most improved players, Okemos coach Stan Stoltz said.



SECOND TEAM

Player	School	Year	Ht.	Avg.
Bob Rehmann, St. Johns	Sr.	6-3	21	
Cal Woodard, Ovid-Elsie	Jr.	6-2	21	
Tim VanHouten, Holt	Jr.	6-7	22	
Joe Shackleton, Okemos	Jr.	6-1	18	
Mike Simon, Port. St. Pat.	Sr.	5-9	18	

All-Area Honor Team

Joe also was named to the Class B All-State Team:

Okemos' Shackleton Named To Class B All-State Team

Joe Shackleton, who helped lead Okemos High to its finest

basketball season, was named to the United Press International's Class B All State First Team announced today.

Shackleton, a 6-2, 170-pound senior, averaged just over 22 points a game on a team which was 20-2, won its first Capital Circuit championship and made it to the regional tournament finals.

Others on the first team were: Al Boswell, River Rouge; Craig Casault, Sturgis; Dirk Dunbar, Cadillac; Bob

Dye, Muskegon Catholic; Mickey Evans, Royal Oak Shrine; Eartha Faust, Inkster; Reggie Franks, Comstock; Mike Larson, Ludington; Pete Miller, Saginaw St. Stephen.

Those receiving honorable mention recognition from the mid-Michigan area included: Cal Woodard, Ovid-Elsie; Tim VanHouten, Holt; Mark Noss, Eaton Rapids; John Maxson, Bullock Creek; Dan DeMartin, Mason; Ted Allen, St. Louis and Art Merrill, Hastings.

1970-71

Going into Shackleton's senior year, Chieftains Coach Stan Stolz said: "Ability wise, this is the best team I've had here.... These kids definitely shoot better, and definitely are quicker. But we're a little young, and we don't have much size."



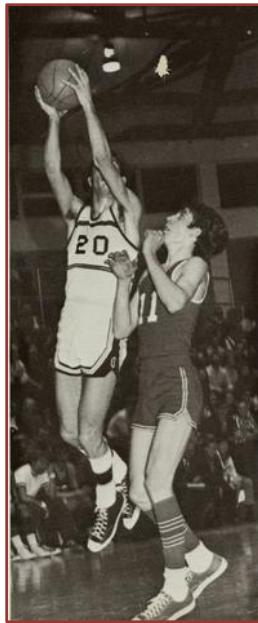
1970-71 Varsity Squad: Joe Shackleton (5th from left)

Regular Season

On November 27, Okemos opened its regular season with an 86-68 non-league win over **Grand Rapids West Catholic**. Joe Shackleton contributed 12 points ([Source](#)).

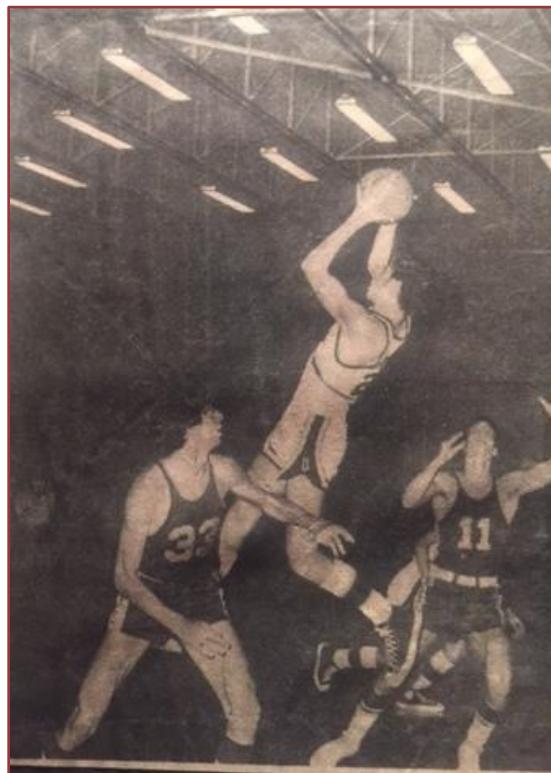
On December 4, debuting in the Capital Circuit league, Okemos defeated **Lansing Catholic Central**, 88-77, with "Shackleton providing spectacular scoring and rebounding punch," scoring 25 points on 12 baskets and 1-1 from the charity stripe ([Source](#)).

On December 11, Okemos upped its season average to 91 points per game in their 99-53 win over **Eaton Rapids**, upping the Chieftains Capital Circuit record to 2-0 and the team's overall record to 3-0. Shackleton was the game's leading scorer with 18 points on eight baskets and a perfect 2-2 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).



Joe Shackleton (#20) (1971 *Tomahawk*)

On December 18, Okemos defeated **Howell**, 101-63, with Shackleton leading all scorers with 19 points ([Source](#)).



"JOE SHACKLETON...goes high in the air to grab a rebound in the Okemos-Howell game last Friday night which Okemos won 101-63." (*Meridian Towne Courier*)

On December 23, Okemos lost to **Everett**, 83-59, in the opening round of the Greater Lansing Holiday tournament. While Shackleton led all scorers with 26, he didn't get "his usual double-figure scoring support...the next highest Chieftain was Scott Wood who didn't start" and finished with only 10 points ([Source](#)).

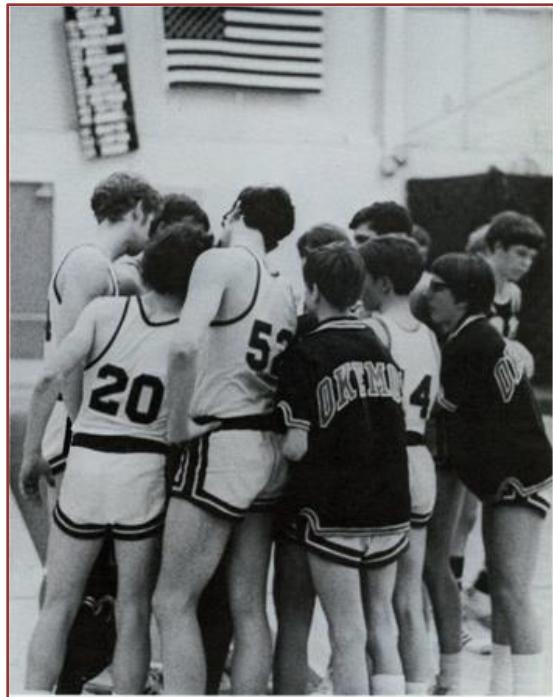
On December 28 the Chieftains downed **Catholic Central**, 69-62, with Central never recovering from turning over the ball 14 times in the first quarter. On the other hand, by halftime, the Chieftains had hit 17 of 33 shots (.515) with only seven turnovers, while Central lost the ball 21 times on miscues. The Chiefs scoring attack had five players in double figures, led by Shackleton with 17 and the Chieftains notching their fifth victory of the season ([Source](#)).

On December 29, Okemos beat **Holt**, 98-66, in the consolation final of the Greater Lansing Holiday Basketball Tournament. Shackleton, "a smooth forward-guard, hit on 14 of 20 shots from the floor and spearheaded the Okemos attacked with 29 points" ([Source](#)). The Chieftains again downed **Holt**, 85-73, on January 5, with Shackleton scoring 22 points before fouling out late in the game ([Source](#)).

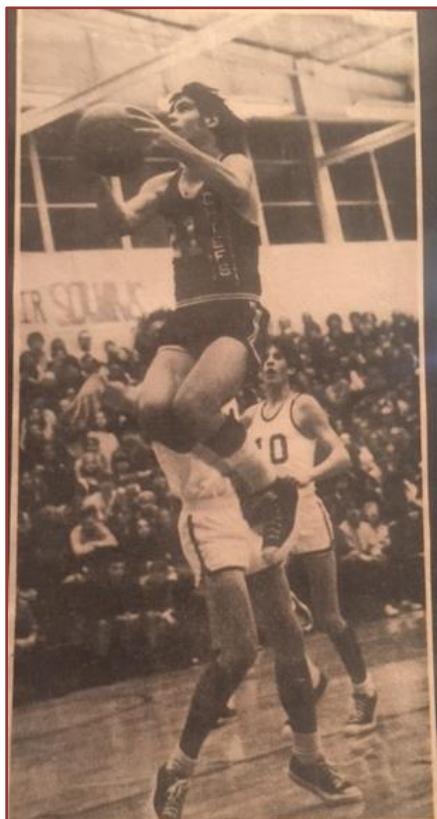


Shackleton Steals the Ball from a Holt Player

On January 8, Okemos beat **Mason**, 67-65, preserving a 5-0 record in the Capital Circuit 8-1 overall. While held scoreless in the first period, Shackleton scored 25 points in the game ([Source](#)).



Joe Shackleton (#20) in Team Huddle (1971 *Tomahawk*)



BIG GUN for Okemos Friday night was Joe Shackleton. Here he zips past Mason's Jim Swartout in a leap and carry shot good for 2 of his 25 points bagged for the night.

On January 15, the Chieftains defeated **Haslett**, 91-86, with Shackleton scoring 21 of his 27 points in the first half ([Source](#)).

Going into Okemos' January 29th game against **Catholic Central**, the Chieftains were scoring at a "blazing 88.5 clip per Circuit game, with Shackleton the Circuit's third leading point producer, averaging 22.7 points per game ([Source](#)). On January 29, Shackleton's 21 points led three other Chiefs who scored in twin figures, with John Wallick (15 points) hitting a game-winning 10-foot jumper from the baseline with just six seconds to play in the Chieftains 69-68 win over **Catholic Central** ([Source](#)).

On February 2, Okemos defeated **Eaton Rapids**, 87-55, with Shackleton scoring a game-leading 24 points and helping to notch the Chieftains eighth straight win in Capital Circuit competition and an overall 11-1 record for the season ([Source](#)). On February 11, Sports Writer Dave Matthews of the *Lansing State Journal*, wrote: "Joe Shackleton, one of the most deadly outside shooter[s] in this section of the state, continues to lead the charge. The 6-2 senior forward's league average is 22.6 a game, and not once in the last five conference outings has he been under 21" ([Source](#)).

On February 12, the Chieftains toppled **Holt**, 85-78, with Shackleton scoring 20 points, raising Okemos' Capital Circuit record to 9-0 and 12-1 overall ([Source](#)).



CIRCUIT STARS—The Capital Circuit's two leading performers, Joe Shackleton of Okemos, left, and Holt's Tim VanHouten, fight for the ball in this photo taken during their clash two weeks ago at Okemos, won by the Chiefs, 85-78, on their way to Circuit crown. (State Journal Photo)

On February 16, Okemos defeated **Mason**, 105-59. Shackleton scored 14 points and the Chieftains won their 10th in a row ([Source](#)).

On February 19, Okemos edged **Haslett**, 72-70, with Shackleton leading all scorers with 25 points and the Chieftains raising their Capital Circuit record to 11-0, clinching their first Capital Circuit championship in the school's history ([Source](#)). Reporting on the game, Ken Fettig wrote:

"Terrible," he said. The he pulled his head up from the drinking fountain and continued in a raspy tone: "I feel terrible, but I'm happy—happy we won it!" The speaker, Joe Shackleton, had almost been hospitalized with the flu the night before, but now the game and the game and the Capital Circuit race were finally over. . . . Shackleton, obviously off on his marksmanship in the game, nevertheless finished with 25 points (Source: *Meridian Towne Courier*).



On February 23, the Chieftains set a school scoring record beating **Hillsdale**, 110-63, winning their 15th in 16 games. Shackleton led all scorers with 31 points in three quarters of play ([Source](#)). On February 24, Okemos beat **Howell**, 79-62, with Shackleton contributing 21 points. The win raised the Chieftains Capital Circuit record to 12-0 and a 16-1 record overall ([Source](#)).

Approaching the Class B Basketball District tournament in Charlotte, the Chieftains had a 19-1 record with Shackleton leading Okemos' scoring pace with an average of 21 points per game ([Source](#)).



Joe Shackleton Shooting Free Throw (1971 *Tomahawk*)

Districts

On March 2, Okemos defeated **Eaton Rapids**, 101-61, although Shackleton did not play as the result of an ankle sprain in practice the previous Friday ([Source](#)). On March 4, the Chieftains posted their 18th win of the season, defeating **Mason**, 80-70 in the Class B District basketball tourney's semifinal, with Shackleton the leading Chieftains scorer with 21 points ([Source](#)). On March 6, with Shackleton scoring 13 points, the Chieftains defeated **Portland**, 59-52, to capture the Class B District title ([Source](#)).



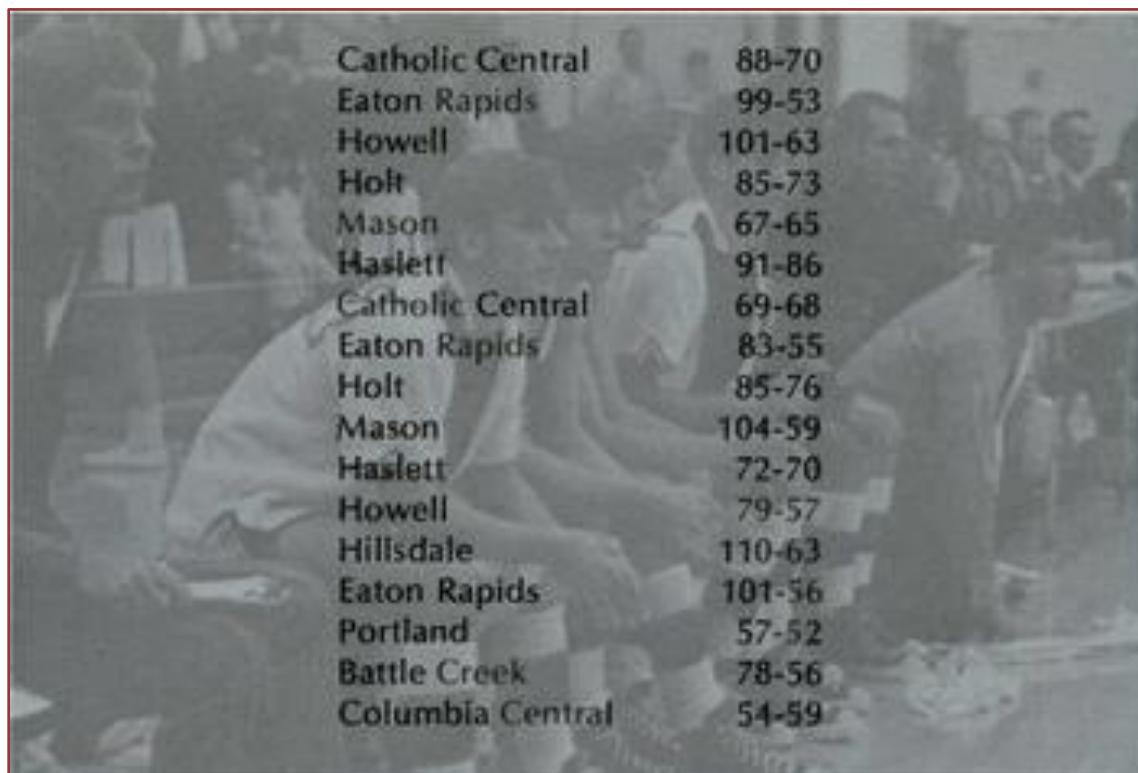
Shackleton (#20) in Team Huddle

Regionals

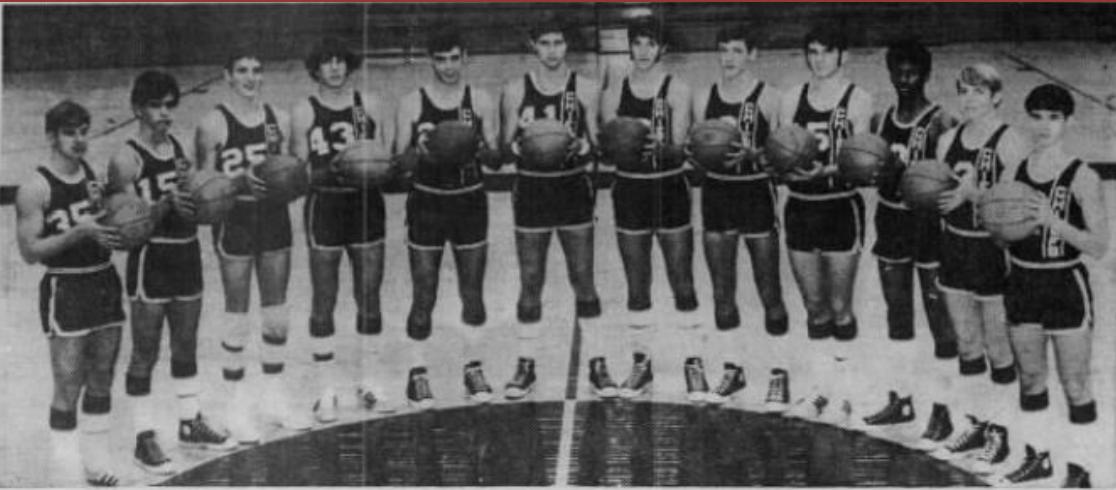
On March 10, Okemos beat **Battle Creek Pennfield**, 78-56 in the Class B Regional semi-final. *State Journal* sports writer Dave Matthews credited the win as “powered by Shackleton’s phenomenal outcourt artistry,” noting that Shackleton swished “six of eight first half shots, but outdid even that effort in the third quarter, pouring in six of seven, four of the six from ranges of 15 feet or more, as had been five of his buckets in the first half. The 6-2 senior finished with a game high 27 points, hitting 12 of 16 shots” ([Source](#)).

However, on March 14, the *State Journal*’s headline read: “Okemos Loses...Dream Shattered” as **Brooklyn Columbia Central** downed the Chieftains, 59-54, in the March 13 regional championship game. The “normally powerful 1-2 combination of Joe Shackleton and Jon Wiseman accounted for only 15 points. Shackleton, who sat out the whole second quarter with three fouls, got off just six shots [in the game], none at all the first half, and hit three [in the second half] for seven points” ([Source](#)).

Yet the Chieftains finished the season winning the Capitol Circuit crown with a 12-0 record and, overall, a 20-2 record—and their first ever game in the regionals.



Catholic Central	88-70
Eaton Rapids	99-53
Howell	101-63
Holt	85-73
Mason	67-65
Haslett	91-86
Catholic Central	69-68
Eaton Rapids	83-55
Holt	85-76
Mason	104-59
Haslett	72-70
Howell	79-57
Hillsdale	110-63
Eaton Rapids	101-56
Portland	57-52
Battle Creek	78-56
Columbia Central	54-59



CAPITAL CIRCUIT KINGS — Okemos clinched its first Capital Circuit cage championship by negotiating the league schedule with a perfect 12-0 record, and takes a 20-1 mark into Class B regional final play tonight. The Chiefs are, from left, Roger Cheney, Dave DeRose, Paul

Cryderman, Mark Haines, Joe Shackleton, Doug Bobb, Scott Wood, Jon Wiseman, Denny Forsberg, John Walick, Dan Steketee and Greg Hebdon. Shackleton and Bobb are the lone seniors.

Laurels

On February 27, Shackleton garnered *The State Journal's* Greater Lansing Teen Salute (see photo below).

THE STATE JOURNAL
GREATER LANSING
Teen Salute



Joe Shackleton

A senior at Okemos High School, Joe is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Robert E. Shackleton, 4556 Keweenaw Dr. He has played varsity football for one year, basketball for two. As a freshman he played cornet in the school band. Joe is an officer in the Senior Youth Fellowship group at Okemos Community Church, where he also teaches Sunday School. Joe plans to attend the University of Wyoming, will major in social science and also will enroll in Air Force R.O.T.C.

On March 17, Shackleton was named to United Press International's Class B All-State First Team ([Source](#)). Shackleton averaged just over 22 points a game on a team which was 20-2, won its first Capital Circuit championship, and made it to the regional tournament finals. "A "terrific all-around player," raved Don Little, of Lansing Sexton, to which Howard Cook of Lansing Eastern added, "great shooter" ([Source](#)).

On March 18, Shackleton was named to the guard positon on the Capitol Circuit All-League First Team ([Source](#)).

A year later the *State Journal's* Bob Gross noted what losing Shackleton to graduation meant to the Chieftains: "Losing a super-star like all-stater...Shackleton who did just about everything for Okemos in its brilliant 20-2 seasons a year ago has been evident in lack of rebounding and scoring leadership" on the Chieftain's 1971-1972 basketball squad ([Source](#)).



The Ingham County News, March 31, 1971



Joe Shackleton – Co-Captain - High Scorer - MVP

The loss of Shackleton to graduation was also noted by Okemos Coach Dan Stolz ([Source](#)):

"ANOTHER THING that people overlook is just who we lost last season," Stolz said. "They thought that we'd be able to replace Joe Shackleton and Doug Bobb without much problem. But it hasn't worked out that way."

Shackleton was the leading scorer for the Chieftains and is currently on the Michigan State freshman team, while Bobb (6-4) was the Okemos center and top rebounder.

Michigan State University

Shackleton played his first season on the Spartans freshman team and then two seasons on the varsity squad during his sophomore and junior years.

1971-72

During his freshman year, Shackleton was a starter in the **Varsity-Frosh** game on November 23, scoring nine points; however, the Varsity won the game, 88-63.

Varsity			Freshmen		
FG	FT	TP	FG	FT	TP
Breslin	6	1-2	13 Rivers	0	2-4 2
Miller	4	1-1	9 Shackleton	4	1-2 9
Kolgore	4	2-2	10 Hairston	6	6-9 18
Robinson	10	6-7	26 Davis	3	0-0 6
Ganakas	2	0-1	4 Bechard	0	0-0 0
Gutkowski	1	0-0	4 Glover	4	3-4 11
Lewis	1	3-3	5 Borenstein	4	2-2 10
Smith	6	1-3	13 Scholten	1	0-0 2
Fagen	2	0-0	4 Morehead	0	2-3 2
benington	0	0-0	0 Hubbard	0	1-2 1
Ridley	1	0-0	2 Higgins	0	2-2 2
Cohrs	0	0-0	Totals	22	19-28 63
			Varsity	41	47-58
			Frosh	22	41-63

Fouls: Varsity 21, Frosh 16.
Fouled out: Hairston

On December 4, MSU's freshman basketball team opened its season by beating **Muskegon Community College**, 117-82, with Shackleton scoring 9 points ([Source](#)).

On December 11, the Frosh cagers defeated **Western Michigan**, 70-66, Shackleton "missed all seven of his shots in a scoreless night" ([Source](#)).

On February 19, the freshman had their first defeat of the season, losing to **Purdue**'s frosh, 98-95, with Shackleton scoring nine points ([Source](#)).

1972-73

During Shackleton's sophomore year, he played as a forward in 11 varsity games, grabbing nine rebounds, scoring 12 points (making three of eleven field goal attempts and six of eight free throw attempts), averaging 1.1 points and 0.8 rebounds per game.

FINAL 1973 CUMULATIVE BASKETBALL STATISTICS REPORT									
ONLY GAMES AGAINST FOUR YEAR U.S. COLLEGES ARE INCLUDED IN STATISTICS									
College	Michigan State			Coach	Gus Ganakas			Final Record <u>13 - 11</u> <small>Won Lost</small>	
Class by Fr So Jr Sr	F	C	Pos	Ht	Games	Scored	Atts	Total	Avg
FIRST LAST NAME									
Mike Robinson	Jr	G	5-11	7	24	259	536	90	113
Bill Kilgore	Sr	C	6-7	24	163	284	75	117	239
Allen Smith	Sr	F	6-5	24	128	265	26	42	154
Lindsay Hairston	Sr	F	6-7	24	121	258	35	54	190
Terry Furlow	Fr	F	6-3	24	58	137	20	30	83
Gary Ganakas	Sr	G	5-5	24	45	96	22	28	49
Bill Glover	So	G	6-2	19	21	46	11	13	10
Pete Davis	So	G	6-1	9	13	27	4	9	9
Cedric Milton	Fr	F	6-8	13	10	32	4	8	22
Benny White	Fr	G	5-8	10	4	9	7	11	3
Joe Shackleton	So	F	6-2	11	3	11	6	8	7
OTHERS —					6	16	2	4	10



1972-73 MSU Men's Basketball Team (Courtesy: MSU Archives)

Note: Brian Breslin left the team before the start of the 1972-73 season.

1972-73 Michigan State Spartans men's basketball team							
No	Name	Pos	Year	Height	Pts	Reb	
10	Brad VanPelt	F	SR	6-5	1.0	-	
11	Gary Ganakas	G	SR	5-5	4.6	2.0	
12	William Glover	G	SO	6-2	2.8	0.5	
22	Bill Kolgore	C	SR	6-7	16.7	10.0	
23	Benny White	G	FR	6-8	1.3	0.3	
24	Cedric Milton	C	FR	6-8	1.8	1.7	
25	Terry Furlow	F	FR	6-3	5.7	3.5	
31	Mike Robinson	G	JR	5-11	25.3	4.2	
32	Peter Davis	G	SO	6-1	3.3	1.0	
34	Joe Schakleton	F	SO	6-2	1.1	0.8	
41	Thomas McGill	F	SO	6-4	1.0	-	
44	Allen Smith	F	SO	6-5	11.7	0.6	
45	Lindsay Hairston	C	SO	6-7	11.5	7.9	
-	Steve Borenstein	G	SO	5-10	2.0	-	
-	Terry Fagan	G	JR	5-9	-	-	
-	Dave Jackson	F	FR	6-3	-	-	
-	Jim Shereda	C	SR	6-8	-	-	

On December 29, the Spartans defeated **Rochester** in the Kodak Tourney, 103-61, with Shackleton scoring eight points on two field goals and 4-4 from the line ([Source](#)).

A key Spartan home game was against **Michigan** on February 28, a game in which Michigan's Campy Russell and the Spartans' Lindsay Hairston played to a draw, but the Spartans lost 102-92. While Shackleton scored six points (making 3 of 9 shots from the field and grabbing 8 rebounds), his playing time was significantly limited when he was forced to the bench early in the second half with four fouls ([Source](#)).

For the season the Spartans overall record was 13-11 (6-8 in the Big Ten in a tie for sixth place). Prominent teammates during Shackleton's 1973-74 season included Mike Robinson, Lindsay Hairston, and Bill Kilgore.

Laurels

At the end of the season, the Spartans honored Shackleton with the Stephen Scofes Inspirational Player Award (Joe Shackleton, personal communication).

1973-74

1973–74 Michigan State Spartans men's basketball team						
No	Name	Pos	Year	Height	Pts	Reb
12	William Glover	G	JR	6-2	7.0	2.2
15	Steve Borenstein	G	JR	5-10	-	-
21	David Cross	F	JR	6-5	-	-
22	Lovelle Rivers	F	JR	6-5	0.2	0.8
23	Benny White	G	SO	5-8	2.4	1.1
24	Cedric Milton	C	SO	6-9	4.7	3.4
25	Terry Furlow	F	SO	6-4	14.1	7.1
31	Mike Robinson	G	SR	5-11	22.4	2.9
32	Peter Davis	G	JR	6-1	5.4	1.2
33	Edgar Wilson	F	FR	6-4	2.7	1.6
34	Joe Shackleton	F	JR	6-2	0.3	0.1
41	Thomas McGill	F	JR	6-4	4.5	3.5
42	Brian Breslin	F	SR	6-5	4.4	2.6
44	Robert Chapman	F	FR	6-2	-	-
45	Lindsay Hairston	C	JR	6-7	16.2	13.6
-	Wayne Butler	F	FR	6-5	-	-
-	Dave Jackson	F	SO	6-4	-	-
-	Jim Shereda	C	SR	6-8	-	-
-	Kevin Vandenbussche	G	FR	6-4	-	-

On November 20, the Spartans played their annual **Green-White** game, with the Green team posting a 95-81 victory. Shackleton, playing on the White team, scored 16 points. "The play of Shackleton...pleased [Coach Gus] Ganakas. 'We thought we might have to start using him more at forward because we are so deep at guard and then [he] turns out to be one of our steadier guards in the game.... He's a very fine shooter and played some good defense" ([Source](#)).

On January 5, the Spartans lost to **Purdue** 77-75, hampered by two players (one being Shackleton) not available to play as a result of injuring his eye the previous Thursday evening when he ran into a clothes line trying to catch his dog" ([Source](#)).

During the Shackleton's junior year, he averaged 0.3 points and 01 rebounds. For the season the Spartans overall record was 13-11 (8-6 in the Big Ten in a tie for fourth place). Prominent teammates during Shackleton's 1973-74 season included Mike Robinson, Lindsay Hairston, and Terry Furlow.

Laurels

At the MSU cage banquet, Shackleton was honored with the Spartans' Stephen G. Scofes Inspirational Player Award (prior to 1975 this award was called the Sportsmanship Award).



Joe Shackleton, Lindsay Hairston and Mike Robinson were honored at MSU cage banquet

1974-75

Going into the 1974-75 season, Shackleton recalls, I "was very excited for my senior year, especially coming off the previous year winning the Stephen Scofes Inspirational Player Award" (Joe Shackleton, personal communication). But early on Shackleton sensed that something had changed. He recalled: "I showed up to camp and from day one felt something terrible was going on from my teammates. It was an incredible feeling of discrimination and as each day of practice progressed it got worse. I discussed this with [Spartan Coach] Gus Ganakas and he said it was my imagination."

Shackleton continued coming to practice with the team but after three or four weeks left the team, feeling that “B-Ball just stopped being fun.” Asked what had changed with the team, Shackleton shared a newspaper article about, as he called it, “the worst day in Spartan B-Ball history.” That day came later that season when all of the team’s black players walked out of a pre-game team meeting when one of the team’s two white players, Jeff Tropf, was named a starter for the Spartans game against #2 Indiana ([Source](#)). Our next vignette on **Greg Lott** recounts more on this story.

Career Statistics as a Spartan

After his freshman season, Shackleton played only two seasons on the Spartans varsity squad. The first two tables below provide Shackleton’s stats for the 1972-73 season.

Joe Shackleton 1972-73 Per Game

G	GS	MP	FG	FGA	FG%	FT	FTA	FT%	ORB	DRB	TRB	AST	STL	BLK	TOV	PF	PTS
11	0		0.3	1.0	.273	0.5	0.7	.750				0.8				0.6	1.1

Joe Shackleton 1972-73 Totals

G	GS	MP	FG	FGA	FG%	FT	FTA	FT%	ORB	DRB	TRB	AST	STL	BLK	TOV	PF	PTS
11	0		3	11	.273	6	8	.750				9				7	12

The following two tables provide Shackleton’s statistics for the 1973-74 season.

Joe Shackleton 1973-74 Per Game

G	GS	MP	FG	FGA	FG%	FT	FTA	FT%	ORB	DRB	TRB	AST	STL	BLK	TOV	PF	PTS
7	0		0.1	0.6	.250	0.0	0.1	.000				0.1				0.9	0.3

Joe Shackleton 1973-74 Totals

G	GS	MP	FG	FGA	FG%	FT	FTA	FT%	ORB	DRB	TRB	AST	STL	BLK	TOV	PF	PTS
7	0		1	4	.250	0	1	.000				1				6	2

While Shackleton left the Spartan varsity basketball squad before the start of the 1973-74 season, he continued playing basketball during that senior year with the MONY team in Lansing’s Class A City Recreation League.

After Michigan State

Shackleton graduated in 1976 with a teaching certificate (History major & Coaching minor). With teaching jobs scarce in 1976, Shackleton moved to Hawaii and entered the resort business. After Hawaii, Joe worked at Keystone Resort in Colorado in Jackson, Wyoming and in Winter Park, Colorado, and then at Breckenridge, Colorado.

In 1987 Joe became the general manager of Beaver Run Resort and Conference Center in Breckenridge. He has served as president of the Colorado Hotel & Lodging Association and was inducted into their hall of fame in 2004. In 2009, Joe founded Bridge Hospitality, the firm that now manages the Beaver Run Resort & Conference Center. He employs over 400 people and has one of the most successful property management companies in Colorado.

Joe met his wife, Christine Jeannero (OHS 1974) in 1976 and they were married in 1979. They have two children: Erin, 33 and Alex, 29. Erin is married and works for Joe as Director of Conference Services at Beaver Run. Alex was a four-year starter on the MSU football team under Mark Dantonio from 2007 to 2010. Alex now works for Waste Connections in Omaha.

Looking Back

Reflecting on his career playing sports for Okemos, Joe recalled:

Coach Stan Stoltz had a huge impact on my life. It started my sophomore year on the JV football team. He was just hired as the Varsity basketball coach but also served as the head JV football coach. Our class was coming off of a 0-7 freshman season. We scored one touchdown the entire season! Our JV team was 6-2 playing the exact same teams with the exact same players. It was Stan Stoltz that did that. Stan had a way of bringing the best out of people. He believed in setting goals for his team, the coaches, and himself, and making sure everyone worked diligently toward them. He never wavered. He was always consistent, rarely lost his temper and made all players feel that everyone contributes! (Joe Shackleton, personal communication)

While interviewing Joe, I asked him to look back to that basketball camp at the start of the Spartans 1974-75 season his senior year, noting that he had said he felt "from day one...something terrible was going on from my teammates. It was an incredible feeling of discrimination and as each day of practice progressed it got worse." Hoping to get more insight into what was going on early that season, I wrote to Joe and asked:

You now know that later that season the black players walked out of the team meeting when Coach Ganakas announced that Tropf, a white player, would start the Indiana game (replacing whichever black player would have started). Knowing this, do you think that, even earlier, during pre-season camp, there already was some growing resentment toward the white players already on the team (such as yourself) or who were trying to make the team?

After all, you had been playing with some of these same black players during your sophomore and junior years on the varsity team without any apparent issue.

I then asked Joe if anything from the prior season might have carried over into the pre-season camp that may have led to his black teammates becoming the source of the sense of discrimination that Joe was feeling. Further, I asked:

How did you pick up on this feeling? For example, did they not talk to you? Not pass the ball to you? Not say positive things when you made a block, steal, or basket? Did you feel excluded off-court (e.g., did they ignore you in the locker room)? Compared with how you related to your black teammates during your prior two seasons, did you feel they were giving you the cold shoulder, ignoring you, not joking around with you, or cooling you out? Was there a lack of leadership among the black players to deal with this, if discrimination was the problem, or did such leadership not pick up on this?

I added that Joe had noted that Coach Ganakas hadn't picked up on Joe's concern and had told Joe that the problem was in his "imagination." Joe was remarkably candid in his reply:

Yes, all of the above. The main reason (as I was told later) was because many felt their playing time was affected by Gary Ganakas, 5'5" point guard who was the coach's son. This went back to the previous season when Gary was playing / starting since his junior year. Given his height (5'5"), it was harder for Gary to see the court against taller defenders, make passes, score, and play defense. When Gary became a starter during his junior year and was getting more playing time, this took playing time away from players who felt they were more qualified to play the point guard position. Many of the players (most of whom were black) felt a lot of legitimate frustration, especially with Gary being the coach's son. Somehow the frustration turned from Gary to anyone who was not black. Cedric Milton (6'9" center from Denver who was part of the walkout) confirmed this to me about 20 years ago (Joe Shackleton, personal communication).

If leaving the Spartans basketball team in 1974 might well have been one of the worst days in Joe's life, one of the best days was yet to come 35 years later in 2010. That year Joe's son, Alex, was in his fourth year as the long snapper on Michigan States' football team. The long snapper refers to a center whose duty is to snap the football over a longer distance, typically around 15 yards during punts, and 7–8 yards during field goals and extra point attempts.

On Saturday, September 18, 2010, at Spartan Stadium, the Spartans were trailing **Notre Dame**, 28-25, in overtime. With just seconds to play on 4th down, the Spartans were 14 yards short of a first down and 29 yards short of scoring a touchdown. The Spartans lined up in a last ditch effort to tie the game with a 3-point field goal. Here is the video of what happened next.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p5pQh12PzMs>

Yes, it was Joe's son, Alex Shackleton, who snapped the ball to Aaron Bates who was to hold the ball for Dan Conroy to kick the field goal. But Bates, on receiving the snap and rather than holding it for Conroy to kick the field goal, stands up and throws a pass downfield to tight end Charlie Gantt who catches the ball and "walks" into the end zone. Touchdown! Clock expired!! Spartans win 31-28!!! In football lore, this play is now remembered as the "Little Giants" play.

Later that season, on Saturday, November 27 at Spartan Stadium, the Spartans played their last home game of the season against **Purdue**. The day, also Senior Day, honored Spartan players who would be graduating. Alex Shackleton was one of those seniors—and Alex's parents, Joe and Christine, were there for a memorable photo (Coach Mark Dantonio on right).



"I have had a blessed life with a beautiful wife, two great children, and a successful business. Life does not get any better!" (Joe Shackleton, personal communication)