

NEWTON STAR ATHLETE DROWNS IN RIVER

Billy Dean Rutledge Was All-Star Basketball Player

A summer afternoon fishing trip ended in tragedy Tuesday when Billy Dean Rutledge, 18 year old son of Mr. and Mrs. Dean Rutledge of 21 Laurel Street, Porterdale, drowned in Finning Shoals in Alcovy river, about 8 miles from Covington off Jackson highway. Rutledge was a star basketball player at Newton County High School.

According to Newton County Sheriff John Berry who was called to the scene, young Rutledge, who could not swim, was grappling for fish among the rocks of the shallow water, with Larry 18, Leon 21, and Delano, 24, Harper, also of Porterdale, when he slipped into a 25 ft. hole of water about 3:00 o'clock. His companions who were unable to rescue him, had to run more than a mile to the nearest telephone to summon aid. Leon Harper was slightly injured in rescue efforts when he was swept against rocks in the swift water.

Sheriff Berry alerted members of the local National Guard, Civil Defense, Fire Dept, and Game and Fish of Eatonton and Monticello. Sam Cowan, Covington Funeral Director, was also on the scene with oxygen as was local Civil Defense Director R. T. Floyd. Rescue operations were hampered by swift currents and undertows of the swollen river. The body was not recovered until 8:10 p.m., when it was located at a ten-foot depth about 50 yards downstream by Otis Parish, Jr. Fire Department member, who was dragging from a boat with Tebo Tuggle. Their boat was swept dangerously near the shoals, and had to be pulled out of the rapids by a motor boat before the body could be brought in.

Billy Dean, who would have been a Newton County High senior this fall, was recently named to the North Georgia All-Star basketball team, and was to have played in the North-South All-Star in Atlanta, August 6.

Survivors include his parents, three sisters, Mrs. Rufus Strange of Madison; Rita and Karen Rutledge; and two brothers, Michael and J. W. Rutledge of Covington.

Much credit for recovering the body before the late night hours is due Newton County Sheriff John Berry, Coroner Sam Cowan, Civil Defense Director, R. T. Floyd, Clayton Bailey, Rescue chairman of the Covington Fire Department, E. M. McCart, swimmers from the FFA-FHA Camp and Covington, and neighbors and friends who reported to the scene of the tragedy soon after it was phoned in to authorities.



BILLY DEAN RUTLEDGE

Cager Drowns

Billy Dean Rutledge, 17-year-old Newton County High School star basketball player, drowned near Covington in the Alcovy River Tuesday night.

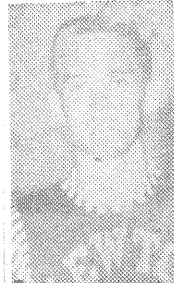
Police said Rutledge slipped and fell into the rain-swollen river while fishing. Three companions attempted to save him. Three hours later, the body was located in about 15 feet of water.

Rutledge averaged 18 points a game last year while playing for his school. He was to have played in the North-South All-Star basketball game, Aug. 6, at Alexander Memorial Coliseum.

Denny Halcomb, who paced Russell at the Region 4-AAA championship, was named to replace Halcomb in the North All-line-up.

Athlete, 17, Drowns Near Covington

A senior and star athlete at Newton County High School was drowned Tuesday in the rain-swollen Alcovy River eight miles south of Covington despite efforts of three companions to save him, police said.



He was Billy Rutledge, 17, of Porterdale, a guard on the Newton High school basketball team. He was scheduled to play with the North All-Stars in the all-star game scheduled in Atlanta Aug. 6.

The youth last year scored an average of 18 points a game and was considered one of the state's outstanding high school basketball and baseball players.

Rutledge and three companions — Delano Harper, 24; Larry Harper, 18, and Leon Harper, 21, all of the Porterdale section, were fishing.

Rutledge slipped on a rock, officers said. His three companions attempted vainly to reach him. One, Larry Harper, was slightly injured as he fell on rocks.

Newton Coroner Sam Cowan and R. T. Floyd, Covington fire chief, directed rescue operations. The body was located in about 15 feet of water four hours later.

Billy Dean Rutledge

(1941-1959)

Hearts of hundreds of Newton Countians were saddened Tuesday afternoon when informed of the accidental drowning of Billy Dean Rutledge, star basketball player on the Newton County Ram team last year. Billy Dean, 18, was perhaps the greatest basketball player to ever perform for the Rams.

Rutledge led the attack of Coach Ronald Bradley's team during the past season to a remarkable 21-1 regular season slate. He averaged 18 points per game and was an outstanding floor guard as well as an accurate shot at the basket.

We know that the hearts of four men — his coaches — probably feel the sting of his being taken away from youth in his prime, more than anyone else except his immediate family. Billy Crowell started Billy Dean on his court career at the Porterdale Junior High School. As a member of the Newton "B" team he played under Coach Kirk Price. His first year as a member of the Ram varsity was for Coach Don Shea. This past year Coach Bradley helped bring out his further potentialities.

Rutledge's crowning achievement in basketball was to have been on August 6 at the Alexander Memorial Coliseum in Atlanta. He was recently chosen as a member of the North Georgia All-Star team.

Our deepest sympathy goes out to members of his family today on his untimely death. Athletic fans of Newton County have truly lost a fine young man.

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Billy Dean Is Laid To Rest

Billy Dean Rutledge, star basketball player of the Newton County high school team who drowned Tuesday afternoon in the Alcovy River, received his final tribute from friends, former fellow-students and neighbors at the Porterdale Gymnasium Thursday afternoon at 3:30 o'clock.

Due to young Rutledge's innumerable host of friends, the funeral was held in the spacious gymnasium instead of the Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ in Porterdale. More than 1,000 persons attended the service and heard the last eulogy to the young man delivered by Bishop J. T. Payne.

The minister stressed that he didn't know of any young man who had more friends and acquaintances than Billy Dean. "These young people and adults here today, to pay their last respects to Billy Dean attests to his popularity," he emphasized.

Floral offerings, displayed throughout the big gymnasium were beautiful and some of an unusual design. In the basketball basket of the gym a huge basketball design with the words "All-Star" on it graced the backboard through which the deceased young man had started his cage career some eight years ago under Porterdale Coach Billy Crowell.

Members of his basketball team of last season were selected as pallbearers. They were Ed Hertwig, Billy Shaw, Gerald Autry, Richard Moore, Bobby Mobley and Larry Harper. Honorary pallbearers were Larry Parnell, Perry Haymore, Pat Campbell, Johnny Capes, Allan Rowe, Phillip Freeman, John Richardson, Tony McClure, Bob Mitchell, Jimmy Pickett, Robert Budd, Jimmy Johnson, Coaches Ronald Bradley, Don Shea, Billy Crowell, Bobby Way, Prof. Homer Sharp, and News Sports Editor Bob Greer.

Not all the persons attending the funeral were from Newton County as basketball players from Social Circle, Conyers and McDonough were present for the last rites.

When the funeral procession left the church for the trip to the Lawnwood Memorial Park on the Covington-Atlanta highway cars stretched the route for well over a mile. Once the procession reached the burial

Coach Ronald Bradley has announced that the NCHS Athletic Dept. will permanently retire the late Billy Dean Rutledge's familiar Number 13. Ceremonies will be held at the first home basketball game of the coming season on November 21. This is the first time that a local athlete's number will have been retired.

grounds the line of cars were noted all the way around the cemetery and many persons had to park their vehicles on Highway 278.

The three representatives of the Caldwell and Cowan Funeral Home, who were in charge of the arrangements and the interment, were Sam Cowan, Lewis Caldwell and E. W. Horning.

Other than the grief-stricken family, almost every person present when the casket was lowered into the grave, stood sadly and with a heavy heart and tear-filled eyes as young Rutledge was laid to rest.

Rutledge Rites Thursday At Porterdale Gym

Funeral services for Billy Dean Rutledge, Newton High star athlete, were held Thursday, July 23 at 3:30 at the Porterdale Gymnasium with Bishop J. T. Payne, pastor of The Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Porterdale, officiating. Interment was in Lawnwood Memorial Park near Covington.

Billy Dean, 18, drowned Tuesday, July 21 in Finning Shoals in Alcovy River while grappling for fish among the rocks of the shallow water when he slipped into a 25 ft. hole of water.

Survivors include his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Dean Rutledge; two brothers, Michael Don and J. W. Rutledge; three sisters, Misses Rita and Karen Rutledge, all of Porterdale and Mrs. Shirley Strange of Madison; grandfather, J. W. Hay of Covington and nephew, Jimmy Strange of Madison.

Serving as pallbearers were Billy Shaw, Ed Hertwig, Gerald Autry, Richard Moore, Bobby Mobley and Larry Harper.

Honorary pallbearers were Larry Parnell, Perry Haymore, Pat Campbell, Johnny Capes, Allen Rowe, Philip Freeman, John Richardson, Tony McClure, Bob Mitchell, Jimmy Pickett, Robert Budd, Jimmy Johnson, Coaches Ronald Bradley, Milton McLaney, Don Shea, Billy Crowell, Bobby Way, Prof. Homer Sharp and Bob Greer.

The NEWS extends deepest sympathy to the member of the bereaved family. Caldwell and Cowan Funeral Home were in charge of arrangements.