

Leonard F. "Jimmie" Lovley was the linchpin for the Elkton basketball dynasty in the early years of South Dakota basketball. Lovley played in four state tournaments from 1917-1920, was a runner-up in 1918, and won championships in 1919 and 1920.

As a sophomore, Lovley orchestrated two upsets of much larger schools to get Elkton into the state tournament. At the state tournament he led Elkton to the title game where he scored nine points in a 20-11 loss to Lead.

Elkton's feats were all the more remarkable because they practiced and played in an unheated opera house with twelve-foot ceilings. Road trips at the time were by train. Schools seldom provided financial support for the teams forcing teams to operate more like clubs. They charged admission to the games and then used the gate to defray rent, travel, meals, referees, and other expenses.

Lovley led a team from a school that was always the smallest in the tournament. Most of the other state tournament teams were county seats that often had more teachers than Elkton had students, and some had more students than the population of Elkton. Still, Elkton took on any and all opponents. South Dakota had just one class in the first decades of high school basketball and Elkton was the only small school to win a championship. All the other champions were county seats.

The 1919 team dominated losing just two games early in the season. Behind Lovley they romped over the competition with such outlandish scores of 75-12, 57-16, and 67-18. The dominance continued in the district tournament beating Clear Lake by the "awful score" of 50-14. The title game was even more one-sided with a decisive 45-5 score as "Elkton walked over, through and across Brookings".

A 28-11 victory over Dell Rapids and a 23-13 win over Flandreau put Elkton in the state championship game. Elkton then put on the most dominating display in tournament history with a 42-6 win over Mitchell. Their 36-point margin stood as a state record for decades. Lovley was named a first team all-stater.

The 1920 season was even more remarkable and rewarding. Elkton lost one game early in the season and from there they rolled over all their opponents. In a late January tour, they beat five of the best teams in the state on five successive nights.

Elkton was 19-1 and Sioux Falls was undefeated when they met on the last night of the roadtrip. Elkton's had just seven players but was described as a "basketball machine" by *The Daily Argus Leader*. They commented, "Captain Lovley, (sic) speedy right forward for the Elkton team, was easily the star of the game. His basket shooting being the best ever seen on the local floor." Elkton drubbed Sioux Falls, 43-17, with Lovley scoring 27 points. That was

more than any of Elkton's opponents scored that week and more than most teams averaged.

In the postseason, they earned a state tournament bid to Huron by beating Lake Preston, 62-4; Doland, 78-2; Clark, 42-17; and Watertown, 29-12.

Accusations were leveled by Huron claiming Elkton had played a game against the college in Brookings. Another allegation claimed one of the Elkton players had been paid for playing in a game with the men's team. Both claims were dismissed by the Board of Control of the athletic association.

Several teams lodged complaints against Huron as well stating they had used ineligible players. The Board of Control, after a sixteen-hour day, declared most of the Huron team ineligible because they weren't passing their classes and that the Huron administration had covered up the matter. As a result, Huron was kicked out of the tournament and banned from the athletic association for a year. Redfield, the district runner-up, was admitted in their place.

The rulings did not sit well with many in Huron, and threats against the Board of Control and the Elkton team were made. Cooler heads prevailed and the tournament went on as scheduled.

Elkton avenged their only loss, beating Redfield in the opening round of the tournament, 38-16. Jimmie Lovley had 22 points outscoring the entire Redfield team by himself.

A "tournament" blizzard on the first day knocked out the telegraph and telephone lines and stopped all train travel. Huron was isolated from the rest of the world until communications were restored around noon the next day.

Physical threats were made against the Elkton team, "They gathered in dark places along the street and intended to disable our boys..." according to The Elkton Record. The crowd at the semi-final game was decidedly partisan and tried to intimidate the Elkton team. Before the championship game, "The Hurons offered one of the Elkton boys \$500.00 to give the game away..." These unconscionable acts of unsportsmanlike conduct were all made against a group of teenagers just trying to play the game of basketball. It is astounding to think how well they held up against this adversity and it proved to foreshadow their accomplishments later in life. Lovley became a dentist, Johnny Trautman became a doctor. One of the 1920 Elkton players became a lawyer, and another became an engineer.

The Elkton-Mitchell semi-final is considered a classic. Most of the crowd sided with Mitchell and drowned out the small Elkton contingent. Mitchell led 21-19 at the half, regulation ended in a 33-33 tie, and it was 35-35 after a five-minute overtime. Elkton's 6'3" center, Joseph "Cy" Smith, hit a long shot at the end of the second overtime, clinching a 39-37 win. Johnny Trautman scored twenty-one for Elkton.

That night Elkton beat Madison in the final, 31-20. The silver loving cup for the first team to win three state championships was awarded to Elkton and is now on permanent display in a special case at the school.

Lovley and Trautman were first team all-state selections at forward. Adolph Hartwig was a second team honoree at guard. Freshman, Harry Timm, was the other starter for Elkton. Trautman went on to a successful basketball career at Creighton as well and later received a medical degree.

Elkton went on to win two games at a regional tournament in Madison, WI the following week.

When *The Sioux Falls Argus Leader* named their all-time team, Lovley was named the captain. He is in the SD Sports Hall of Fame.

Lovley's accomplishments at Creighton are well-documented, two-time captain, twice Helm's All-American, widely respected, and considered a true gentleman.