

## **JERRY COHEN**

Jerry Cohen's earliest memories of basketball were when "I used to watch my dad play when I was five or six years old in Boston adult leagues. He is the one who introduced me to the game. I always looked up to dad as a player – and I always wanted to be better than he was."

"The first time I ever played, I discovered I loved the game," Jerry asserted. He grew up playing in parks and community centers, joining his first league in fourth grade. As he grew older, "I thought about playing football, but decided to play basketball all year long."

Jerry enrolled in John Glenn Middle School in 2002 under the Metco program, an integral part of the Bedford schools since 1974. He acknowledged that in daily life, "it was a big difference, a total change." Indeed, he didn't join the JGMS team until the following year, when he also played on the eighth grade travel team.

One year after his first organized school basketball experience, Jerry found himself on the Buccaneer varsity as a freshman, playing alongside seniors Alberto Rue and Jeff Hughes, as well as his four-year teammate, Terrance Favors. "It was overwhelming -- until I played my first game," Jerry recollected. "I remember the first game like it was yesterday. We were playing Boston Latin. The coach called my name and I just paused. My heart was beating out of my chest."

Jerry went on to win three Dual County League Most Valuable Player awards, and was a *Boston Herald* (2007) and *Boston Globe* (2008) all-scholastic. He played 92 regular and post-season games, and the Buccaneers won 67 of them, including a 21-2 year as a sophomore. He scored more than 1,300 points in his career, second only to Hall of Famer Kelly Elias '74.

Four times in four years the Watertown Raiders eliminated Bedford's post-season run. The 2007 game was in the Division North sectional finals. Bedford was in the Tsongas Arena spotlight because, back in the quarterfinal round, the Buccaneers overcame a 24-point second-half deficit at Lynn Tech. "That was probably the best game I ever played in -- just crazy," Jerry recalled.

The comeback was sparked by three consecutive three-point field goals by Jerry – much to Lynn's surprise. "Freshman and sophomore year I basically played center. Everyone expected me to stay low. But when I stopped growing I realized I also I had to take my game to the perimeter," Jerry said. He finished the game with his season's average of 21, all in the second half, and scored 30 in the semifinals.

After graduation, Jerry played at Curry College in Milton, earning all-league honorable mention and averaging 15 points and seven boards. Now he works for the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, competes in a couple of Boston adult leagues, and hopes to try coaching as soon as his schedule permits. "I always felt I that knew the game well," he said.

Jim Byrnes coached Jerry and classmate Terrance Favors for those four memorable seasons.

“As talented as they were, I was always impressed by the way they handled themselves on and off the court, and the way they represented Bedford. They were received so well by the kids in school, coaches and teachers. They helped build that atmosphere – just win,” he said.

Jerry extended “thanks to everyone from Bedford for welcoming me in the town. I never felt out of place; it really is my second home.”