



Matt Howard takes a shot for the Butler University Bulldogs.

## Carrier's son makes it to NCAA championship

**S**tan Howard has a knack for numbers. So when he got laid off at the factory in 1977 and took his mother-in-law's advice to take the test at the Post Office, it was no surprise that he aced it—and landed one of the two jobs open to the 500 applicants. The test, after all, involved memorizing lots of addresses after briefly reading them.

For more than 33 years, Howard has delivered mail to his 700 customers (including his mother and mother-in-law, both 88) on a job he thoroughly enjoys. In all that time, he's missed—reluctantly—one day of work.

Recently, Howard has been dealing with a different set of numbers, as in the Final Four two years in a row—and more. Last month, his youngest son, Matt, a six-foot-eight forward, led Butler University to the NCAA championship basketball game. That marked a return engagement for Butler, a medium-sized school in Indiana that finished second the past two years to two of the nation's top basketball programs, Duke University and, most recently, the University of Connecticut.

As important to Stan and his family as all the sports hoopla was how the small Indiana community of Connersville rallied around the family, with residents helping send Stan and Linda Howard, together with Matt's siblings, to the Final Four in Houston. The town designated "Howard Family Community Day," held a parade and dispatched Ladder No. 1 fire truck to transport the family. The words "Final Four" were painted along Central Avenue in front of the courthouse.

"It means a lot to know that as a mail carrier what kind of impact you can have, just by doing your job," Stan, a member of Connersville Branch 239, told *The Postal Record*. "Everybody knows our family. They know what we're about."

Matt not only garnered national attention for his basketball prowess, the finance and information systems major also earned recognition as a three-time college academic All-American. His

teammates highly respect his hard work and team orientation, often urging the humble young man to shoot more and pass less. But sharing and team play come naturally to someone who spent his early years in a three-bedroom home with one bathroom—shared by five girls, five boys and two parents. ("I seriously don't know how that was accomplished," Stan says.) Matt started delivering the local newspaper at age nine, saving enough to buy a car, and auto insurance, when he turned 16.

Stan Howard was a pretty fair athlete in his own right as a semipro pitcher with an effective curveball. At a Pittsburgh Pirate tryout camp in Ohio, the six-foot-two-and-a-half lefty stymied a promising young third baseman named Mike Schmidt who, 500-plus home runs later, would breeze into baseball's Hall of Fame.

Noting that each of his sons was progressively taller, Stan jokes that if he'd had one more, that boy probably would have been a seven-footer.

Linda has much insight into the life of a letter carrier. The spouse of a three-decade carrier, she's also the mother of Dan, who's had a route for more than a decade, and the daughter of a man who began carrying mail in 1954 and retired in 1987. All three worked out of the Connersville Post Office. Her son-in-law carries mail in neighboring Ohio.

"I feel like I've been washing carrier uniforms all my life," she says with a laugh.

That, and basketball uniforms as well, with perhaps more to follow. Matt's skills and winning attitude make it likely he'll spend the next few years in the NBA or playing overseas. And on his route, Stan's friends—that's what he calls them, not customers—may be discussing Matt's exploits on a regular basis. ☒

Branch 239 carrier Stan Howard walks past one of the many homes on his route Connersville, IN, that have shown support for his son, Matt Howard.

AP Photo/The Star, Mike Fender

