Friars' Blast in The Past: A review of "Homegrown" by Paul Lonardo

Paul Lonardo's book "Homegrown" sheds light on the Providence Friars' 1972-73 men's basketball season, possibly the most magical season in Rhode Island sports history. "Homegrown" serves as an introduction to not only the 1972-73 PC Friars, but also a history of Providence College basketball, and the state of Rhode Island in the 1970s.

"Homegrown" begins with the early history of PC basketball, which touches on regional NBA draft rules that were fascinating, but hard to picture. The backstory introduces one of Rhode Island's most important sports figure, Dave Gavitt. Lonardo uses the next few chapters to introduce and give some background on the Friar's' "Big 3" of that season (long before "Big 3" was a common term): Ernie DiGregorio, Marvin Barnes and Kevin Stacom. The story mostly focuses on DiGregorio, the star of the team, but Lonardo gives all of the players that played their due.

DiGregorio met Barnes while Barnes was still in high school, and Lonardo follows them through the disappointing 71-72 season, which was the first they played together as teammates. Both their bond and their talents became stronger under the teachings of Gavitt. Both are painted as determined players who don't like to lose.

"Homegrown" is a quick and easy read, written like an extended newspaper article. The story is riveting, but it seemed like Lonardo pieced the information together through articles and online research instead of contacting the individual players, coaches, students, city workers, and fans for direct quotes and more inside stories. Pictures would have added a tremendous amount of depth to the story. Lonardo's descriptions only go so far, as I found myself yearning to see some photographs of the individuals, game action and the state of Rhode Island itself (especially before the "Civic Center" was built), but was left having to use my imagination.

Information about Paul Lonardo can be found here: https://www.thegoblinpitcher.com/index.htm