

The MIAC standings for 1960 are the following: Macalester (1), 64 points; St. John's (2), 63; St. Thomas (3), 53; Augsburg (4), 42; Gustavus (5), 26; Concordia (6), 22.

— 1960-61 —

Following the graduation of Jim Kuelbs, senior Robert Dumonceaux was appointed wrestling coach for the year 1960-61. During his first season the Jays posted an overall record of six wins and three losses. In competition with the MIAC colleges, the record was five meet wins and one loss.

In the MIAC meet held in March, 1961, St. John's dropped to third place, despite four St. John's wrestlers reaching the finals. Sophomore Ben Pulkrabek in the 191 class was the only St. John's division champion of the meet; in fact, he was beginning to show signs of becoming the outstanding wrestler of the entire period. To date he had won 17 individual matches with only one defeat. Bob Dumonceaux's record was 15 wins and three losses.

But Augsburg, gradually improving its MIAC status over a period of years, finally came to the front by winning the 1961 title, 58 points to Macalester's 51 and St. John's 49.

— 1961-62 —

From a large squad there were twelve to carry on St. John's wrestling fortunes into 1962: five freshmen—James Aust, Gerry Faust, Mike Lane, Tony Leifeld; three sophomores—Steve Dalseth, Ben Pulkrabek and Douglas Svihel; three juniors—John Fritz, Donald Noltmier and Jerry O'Rourke.

1962 was a championship year. Former student-coach Robert Dumonceaux, who entered the mathematics department as an instructor, was re-appointed by Athletic Director George Durenberger to take over the wrestling team. Bob Dumonceaux was the second non-student coach to undertake the leadership in wrestling. He was capable, for the team enjoyed a 10-3 record through the regular season and at the MIAC annual tournament brought to St. John's its ninth conference championship in a period of eleven years. With a total score of 70 points, St. John's defeated runnerup Concordia 70-57 and dropped Augsburg to third place 70-52.

In the MIAC meet St. John's wrestlers won four first place individual championships: Tony Leifeld in the 123 pound classification, John Fruth (a freshman) at 130 pounds, John Fritz, 147 pounds, and Ben Pulkrabek, heavyweight. Other point winners were John Kuelbs, third in the 157 division, Dick Steidler, Glenn Rother, Don Schreifels,

Gerry Faust and Dave Schaefer winning points in different classifications.

— 1962-63 —

In 1962-63 St. John's reverted to its traditional policy of appointing a student-coach to handle the wrestling team, the honor in this case being bestowed on Ben Pulkrabek, the outstanding wrestler of the past two years. Spirits were again high, and the Johnnies were confident of their ability to defend their 1962 conference title.

With a successful early season behind them (five wins, two losses and one tie), they entered the meet, poised and certain that they would emerge as victors. Their self-confidence was justified, for they won their tenth championship in a period of twelve years, though in a way they had not anticipated. The Johnnies won no first places. Five of their top wrestlers entered the finals, but had to settle for five corresponding second places. It was balance and depth, those precious qualities that all teams desire, which won for them. From the beginning of the season they had worked under a handicap by not having a sure-fire first-place member on their team when Ben Pulkrabek, their standby for the two preceding years, had to withdraw from competition because of academic problems.

St. John's won five second places in the following classifications: freshman Rick Spano, 130 pounds, John Faust 137, James Brum 157, Don Schreifels 165, Gerry Faust 191 pounds. Jim Keul (165) and Don Hinz (177) each won third places. Douglas Svihel took fourth place.

Ironically, it was through St. Thomas that St. John's won the championship. While the Jays were having their troubles winning their five second places, strong Concordia was gradually creeping up on them. But, luckily, St. Thomas defeated the upcoming Cobbers, thereby depriving them of the chance to close in on the 57-54 advantage of St. John's.

The outstanding wrestler for the Johnnies was Jim Brum, but he was upset in the finals and, like the rest of the top performers, had to settle for second place. The MIAC meet scores for the 1963 season were the following: St. John's 57, Concordia 54, Gustavus 50, Augsburg 43, St. Thomas 32, Macalester 28.

— 1963-64 —

John Kuelbs succeeded Bob Dumonceaux as wrestling coach for 1963-64. Lack of perfect balance was apparent from the beginning of the conference meets when the Johnnies suffered a 23-11 trouncing by Concordia on the St. John's floor. It was the first St. John's loss of the

season, since the team had defeated the University of North Dakota State earlier. St. John's lost the first three matches to the Cobbers' lightweight performers. In the fourth match John Faust was decisioned 4-0. Jim Keul, Jim Brum and Don Schreifels then picked up three wins that were followed by a tie. Stan Suchta, heavyweight, won his match.

The next reported dual meet ended in a decisive victory over St. Thomas, 28-8, with a revamped line-up that gave promise of better things to come. But that was not to be. The MIAC colleges had all tightened up their wrestling teams and the Johnnies left the conference tournament at Gustavus Adolphus in third place, overcome by what the reporter called the "tremendous balance" of Concordia that had made the Cobbers the pre-season favorites for the conference crown.

The wrestling standings of the conference at the end of the tournament were as follows: Concordia, first place and champions, 69 points, Gustavus 58 points, St. John's 56, Macalester 49, Augsburg 35, St. Thomas 23, Hamline 3. As for individual scoring by the Johnnies, Don Schreifels (177 pounds) was the lone St. John's champion. John Faust was runnerup in his weight (137). Jim Keul, also in the 137 pound class, almost came up with the surprise of the meet but was decisioned 1-0. Jim Brum was third in the 157 pound class. Stan Suchta and Mike Arens took fourth place in the heavyweight and 177 pound divisions respectively.

— 1964-65 —

When the 1965 wrestling season rolled around, a change in the coaching policy was immediately apparent. Wrestling had begun to decline in quality, though not because of lack of student interest. Interest was as lively as before—so much so that the student-coaches were being overburdened by the large number of candidates aspiring for fame on the wrestling mat. The student-coaches were paying the price of sports popularity by losing valuable time for their studies. Hence it was that in the fall of 1964 Robert Dumonceaux, a member of the faculty, was appointed wrestling coach.

The season opened with a resounding defeat by powerful St. Cloud State to the tune of 35-6. A defeat by Gustavus followed. In the Carleton Invitational, however, St. John's placed third in a large field, but behind Concordia and Gustavus. Emerging from these early contests were a few dependable point winners such as the senior star wrestler Donald Schreifels, and a powerful freshman from Iowa named Maury Neifeld, and Dave Carroll, heavyweight.

By the time the MIAC tournament came up, St. John's had a somewhat mediocre record of four wins, six losses, and one tie. Complete statistics of the meet were not published, though the final result squeaked through the silence that St. John's had placed third behind Concordia and Gustavus, as had been predicted. The one star of the meet was senior Donald Schreifels who, besides his two consecutive MIAC individual championships, ended his wrestling career with an overall record of 36 victories, 12 losses, and one tie. Freshman Maury Neifeld won his first championship at 191 pounds.

The lack of a complete listing of all the St. John's contestants who took part in the meet makes it impossible to mention who the other performers were. Among them were certain to have been Jim Brum, Dave Carroll, James Keul, Rick Spano, Roger Trobec, John Schaubach and Larry Anthony.

— 1965-66 —

Bob Dumonceaux coached his 1965-66 wrestling team to a very respectable 6-3 season with six dual meet victories and three losses. In the MIAC tournament the Jays took third place in a tough field of seasoned athletes. He started the season with eleven lettermen from 1965, but only one individual champion, Maury Neifeld, the powerful Iowan who was the lone winner of first place in the heavyweight division. Neifeld returned to Iowa to enter the state university at the beginning of the second semester, however, leaving the coach without a single champion for the remainder of the 1965-66 season. His absence was particularly felt because Gustavus and Concordia so dominated the field that the other colleges were completely out-classed—St. John's included.

Nevertheless, the pre-MIAC tournament record was impressive. The Jays took third place in the tough Carleton Invitational, and in dual meets won five straight victories over the following schools: Minnesota-Morris 25-10, St. Thomas 25-6, Carleton 36-10, Bethel 21-5, and the University of North Dakota 26-16. Impressive as were the scores of these meets, the losses were horrendous: 11-27 to Gustavus, 8-25 to Augsburg, 11-30 to Concordia. Outstanding performers for the year were Brad Haycraft, Tom Beyers, Phil Hartle, John Schaubach, Mike Oehler and Jim Keul.

The statistics of the 1966 MIAC tournament were not published. As a result, the following list of returning lettermen with their weights from the preview for the 1966-67 season is all the information available for the 1966 team: Tom Scanlan (123), Tom Beyers (137), Larry Anthony (161), Frank Schwab (152), Tom Edmond (160), Brad Hay-

craft (130), Phil Hartle (177), James Bisek (177), Bill Formen (177), Don Generous (177), Mike Haider (191), Michael Oehler (191), James Keul (177).

— 1966-67 —

It was an optimistic Coach Dumonceaux who opened up the 1966-67 wrestling season. He realized that his squad was inexperienced for the most part, but he was also convinced that the individual wrestlers had the most potential of any squad he had coached prior to this time. Injuries set the team back early, however. His team captain, Mike Oehler, suffered a torn knee cartilage and was supposedly out for the season. Thomas Wollmering, an ex-Prep wrestler of great promise, also damaged a knee and had to undergo surgery that definitely sidelined him for the remainder of the season. These major injuries, plus the current slight injuries that always hold up a team's progress, were discouraging without, however, changing the coach's feeling that better things were ahead.

The result of the injuries and delays, so the *Record* reported, was a dreary seasonal start, highlighted by three straight losses to St. Cloud State, the University of North Dakota, and Gustavus. Nevertheless, progress was made, for Captain Mike Oehler's knee mended without surgery and he was able to return to the squad after the Christmas holidays.

It was a happy event; the *Record* reported a resurgence in power despite the lackluster start. St. John's hopes climbed upward as the squad took first honors in two dual victories in Northfield, the defeat of St. Olaf 32-3, and of Carleton 25-15, thereby raising the season's record to three wins and three losses. Moreover, the weight department was improved by the addition of three big men: Dave Tripp, Tom Schutta and Phil Ledermann.

The outcome of the MIAC meet justified Coach Dumonceaux's optimism. The March 6, 1967, issue of the *Record* carried the headline: "Westby and Beyer Grasp Trophies as St. John's U. Matmen Regain Old Prowess." In holding third place, Dumonceaux felt that the team looked like the Johnnies of old. Haycraft at 130, Denny Scherer at 160, Phil Hartle at 177 and Captain Mike Oehler at 191, all took third places. Brad Haycraft defeated the 130 pound defending champion.

Bob Dumonceaux deserved the coach of the year award for a magnificent job in bringing up youngsters—freshmen and sophomores—to a challenging position against experience-hardened MIAC wrestlers. The third place finish in this particular year, as reporter Woodie Woodward observed, "resulted from the efforts of three freshmen, five soph-

omores, one junior and one senior." It was a young team and, given the continued influx of talented freshmen, St. John's was set for a great future in wrestling, a new beginning for the sport at St. John's.

— 1967-68 —

Terry Haws took over as wrestling coach in the fall of 1967 at a time when the fortunes of the St. John's wrestling program had been on a decline for several years. An experienced coach, first at St. James, Minnesota, and then at St. Cloud Cathedral, he had enjoyed a fantastically successful coaching career in football and wrestling. He was fully aware of the weaknesses of the team he was taking over, but was resolved to make the most of what he had as the nucleus for a new start. He set as goal for his first year a second place, if not first place, finish in the MIAC.

Captain Philip Hartle was unable to compete with the team before Christmas because of an injury, but Terry had, among others, heavyweights Dave Tripp and Dave Carroll, Bob Sullivan (135), and Tom Goebel (123) to take up the slack.

After a good record in the regular schedule of dual meets, the team was still no better than a darkhorse for the title and lacked depth. But the wrestlers were well trained and prepared. In the MIAC meet, held on February 24, the Jays took fourth place behind strong Augsburg, Concordia and Gustavus. Coach Haws was disappointed but was satisfied that the team would be a contender for the championship in 1969.

— 1968-69 —

Following the end of the 1968 season Terry had been busy recruiting, though it could hardly have been called that, it was so casual. He was well-known as a wrestling coach of superior ability, especially in Catholic high school circles, and after his first season succeeded in attracting five Catholic high school champions to St. John's. He had his own system. It was simply a matter of writing a note to wrestlers here and there, a note of congratulations for a victory, or good wishes for an upcoming meet, and the promise of a cheery welcome if and when they came to St. John's. His policy was not to contact the first-place winners in the state; the ones he preferred above all were the second and third place winners, the ones whose abilities he knew to be excellent but who would be passed over in silence by the big schools. Terry's system was recruiting on a high level!

Among his first five recruits from Catholic high schools were Tom O'Neil, James Kavanaugh, David Johnson and Leo Dehler, all of whom

played prominent roles in the success of St. John's wrestling program. Most prominent among a few others was Gary Svendsen, a freshman from Coon Rapids who had taken second place in the state high school wrestling meet in his senior year.

The new freshmen quickly gave proof of their superior training in high school. St. John's finished as a strong second-place contender in the 1969 wrestling meet—the runnerup to Augsburg. Terry was disappointed but not discouraged and predicted good things to come if the team would improve as rapidly as it had in the past season. Captain Dave Tripp would be the only loss to the team, and the talented freshmen would then be stronger, experienced sophomores. A sign of things to come was Gary Svendsen's capture of first place in the 118 weight classification, the beginning of an illustrious career. Eight of the eleven men competing were freshmen.

— 1969-70 —

The 1969 wrestlers had one of the best starts in St. John's athletic history. After the team had streaked through dual meet after dual meet with twelve victories, they accepted a bid to the Pillsbury Invitational. St. John's won first place in the eight-team tournament and followed up the victory with two more dual meet wins, bringing their number of undefeated meets to fourteen for the year.

Balance was the key to the victories, with Terry Elfering, Gary Svendsen, Bob Sullivan, Dave Johnson, Captain Henry Wollmering, Denny Legatt, Tom Miller, Larry Ackerman and Gary Eustice shouldering most of the load. The resurgence of wrestling on the St. John's campus was obviously due to the competence of the coach and his recruits.

In the February 21, 1970 MIAC meet, the Johnnies were competing successfully for the championship when two bad breaks spoiled their chances and they had to be satisfied with second place in the conference. First, Dave Johnson (130) suffered a neck injury and had to forfeit his match. Then followed a questionable call in overtime that cost freshman Gary Eustice his heavyweight crown. Outstanding performers were Gary Svendsen (134), Gordon Molitor (150), Dennis Legatt (158), Larry Ackerman (167), Henry Wollmering (177) and Tom Miller (heavyweight).

The National Catholic Invitational Tournament

Terry Haws, for all his quiet ways, was not content with merely local fame. He was certain that his wrestlers stood a good chance of performing well against any college in the country, and hence he ac-

cepted with alacrity an invitation to the National Catholic Invitational Tournament to be hosted by John Carroll College in Cleveland, Ohio. It offered a new opportunity to compete in a national tournament that was better known than the Minnesota MIAC, and Terry was elated to receive the invitation.

The competition, he afterwards reported, was the strongest St. John's had ever confronted—Notre Dame, Marquette, John Carroll, Dayton University, St. Vincent, Duquesne and other Eastern colleges. But the Johnnies responded to the challenge with their best performance of the season, capturing three individual titles and ending in second place behind John Carroll. Finalist winners of championships were Gary Svendsen, Tom Miller and Henry "Hank" Wollmering, the last named being chosen as the outstanding wrestler of the tournament.

— 1970-71 —

To tell the whole story of wrestling 1970-71 as reported by wrestler Tom Miller in the pages of the *Record*, would require more space than this history affords. It is the story of a team of fiery, championship-hungry young wrestlers directed by a calm middle-aged coach who possessed interiorly all the fire of his proteges, plus the ambition to make St. John's known nationally in wrestling as well as in football.

The St. John's "grapplers," as they were popularly called in the school paper, had a great year. In the preliminary part of the season the Jays won the Augsburg Invitational by a score of 27-11 (*Record*, January 22, 1971, p. 4). Prior to this, however, on November 21, St. John's had twelve place-winners in the Bemidji Invitational, in competition with twelve other Minnesota colleges (*Record*, January 22, 1971): Tom and Gary Svendsen (126 and 134 pounds), heavyweight Gary Eustice, Terry Elfering, Jim Cudi, Tony Schoenecker, Joel Hagen, Dennis Leggatt, Kurt Wachtler, Tony Fike and Jerry Workman.

Then followed a setback in the Carleton Invitational in which Augsburg edged St. John's for first place—a setback St. John's redeemed by a first place victory in the Pillsbury Invitational.

The MIAC conference championship meet was one of those close contests that are won only in the last match, a masterpiece by Jerry Workman. With the score 93-90 in favor of St. John's, Workman pinned his two-time Augsburg champion opponent in a match that put St. John's ahead 96-93. Then, with the outcome still in doubt, Tom Miller pinned his Gustavus opponent and the meet ended with St. John's the winner 100-97, the 1970-71 champions.