

"We were shocked," said Smith. "I think it took a couple of hours before we realized what had happened."

Muller led St. John's in that game with 21 points, while Bernabei had 11. They were joined in the starting line-up by forwards Joe Weber and Jim Holmes, while Tom Grudnowski was the other guard. The top reserves on that team were Jerome Barney and Mike Dady (St. Cloud *Daily Times*, March 13, 1978, p. 21).

The 1968-69 season had been a genuine team effort which Smith compares with that of the 1978 regional champions. Two of the members, Paul Bernabei and Jim Holmes, were named to the all-conference team, and Bernabei received the first annual Joe Hutton Award as the most valuable player in the MIAC.

— 1969-1970 —

After the tremendous effort of the 1968-69 season, and the loss through graduation of Bernabei, Holmes, and Melancon and the transfer of Jerome Barney to another school, the Jays paused to re-group. However, they managed a record of 11-12 overall and 7-9 for fifth place in the conference. St. Thomas took the title. Two stand-outs for the season were Tim Muller, who led the team in scoring and made all-conference, and Tom Grudnowski, guard and all-round floor man.

— 1970-1971 —

Ten lettermen, including Muller and Grudnowski, and the entire first string from 1969-70 reported for practice—Kevin Coleman, 6-8, at center, Mike Dady, 6-6, paired with Muller at forward, and Tom Grudnowski, 6-0, paired with Bill Moeller, 6-1, at guard. Close competitors for places in the line-up were Vic Moore, 6-5, and Gary Marlow, 5-10, guards.

Smith followed his practice of opening games with big-time teams. This year the Johnnies gave Loyola a good contest, losing 56-68 in the last few minutes, but they couldn't stay with Marquette, which rolled to a 87-58 victory.

The Jays came on strong against local opposition and had built a 5-1 record by the middle of January. However, after mixing with some of the MIAC leaders, the SJU standing in the conference was cut to 6-4 by mid-February, as compared with 9-1 for St. Thomas, and 6-3 and 7-4, respectively, for Augsburg and Duluth. By the end of the season St. John's standing was 10-6 in the MIAC and 13-12 overall. St. Thomas won the title with a record of 15-1. Kevin Coleman was chosen all-conference center.

— 1971-1972 —

With most of the regulars back, St. John's was one of the four teams in the scrap for second place. St. Thomas, conference champion in the previous three years and undefeated in the early part of this season, had locked up first place, but Augsburg, Macalester, Duluth, and St. John's were battling for the runner-up position, which would entitle the fortunate one to a spot in the NAIA play-offs. However, Macalester staged a couple of upsets and pulled into second place. St. John's, with a 10-6 record, ended up in a tie for third place with Duluth. The overall record was 12-13, a lopsided figure which is deceiving because the opposition included such giants as Marquette, Loyola, and the highly ranked Stephen F. Austin College of Texas.

The team's disappointment in failing to make the play-offs was somewhat softened by their upset victory in the final game. With seven seniors—Kevin Coleman, Terry Maloney (6-6), Gary Marlow, Dave Plafcan, Dave Homan, Vic Moore, and Tom Grudnowski playing their last game, and with their parents and girl friends looking on, the Johnnies rose up and clobbered league-leading St. Thomas 87-79.

Kevin Coleman was again chosen all-conference, while Tom Grudnowski made honorable mention.

— 1972-1973 —

This season Jim Smith was faced with a two-fold handicap—the loss of eight veterans and a schedule which he dubbed the toughest in the state, with the exception of the University of Minnesota. Three of these toughies—Loyola, Marquette, and Detroit—served as openers to condition the team for the grueling MIAC season. A fourth big-name team, Creighton, was scheduled for early in February.

Only two players who had seen action in 1971-72 reported for practice—5-9 junior guard Sharon Storr, from Nassau, Bahama Islands, who out-jumped 7-4 Tom Rosier at the opening tip-off at the Tommie game in the Palaestra, and Bob Bauer, 6-4, forward. New prospects who looked promising in early season work-outs were Mike Schneider, 6-4 center, Scott Furey, 6-6 forward, Bill Sullivan, 5-9, and Steve Ward, 6-1, guards. In looking over the squad, Smith expressed two concerns: inexperience and lack of a big man to defense the opposition's big man.

These shortcomings showed up in the early part of the season during which, according to Bob Held in the St. Cloud *Daily Times* for January 2, 1973, the Johnnies "stumbled through six defeats while gaining a pair of triumphs." The team developed steadily, however, as the season progressed, and finished in third place in the conference

with 8 losses and 8 wins (11 to 16 overall). The momentum the team had gathered by the end of the season, however, carried them to resounding victories in the last three games over St. Cloud State, 78-76, Gustavus, 90-71, and Concordia, 82-74.

Sharon Storr was named all-conference guard and most valuable player on the SJU squad. Smith was pleased with the development the team had shown: "They had real togetherness and, with almost everyone back for next year, I'm looking forward to an enjoyable season" (St. Cloud *Daily Times*, March 19, 1973).

During this year, Jim Smith added the duties of Athletic Director to those of coaching and teaching, when George Durenberger reached retirement age and ended his long period of service to St. John's. Smith held the position of Athletic Director and chairman of the Physical Education Department until he was succeeded by John Gagliardi in 1976. During this time he also coached cross-country and track.

— 1973-1974 —

The 1973-74 season is memorable for two things: the first basketball season with home games played outside of the old 1902 battle-scarred Rat Hall, and victory over traditional rival St. Cloud State in the first game played in the spacious new Warner Palaestra.

St. John's, as usual, had its practice games against Loyola, Marquette, and Detroit, giving the last named a real scare before it pulled out an 81-77 victory in the last three minutes. These games were followed by the inaugural game with St. Cloud State on December 9, won by the Johnnies 67-53. Smith attributed the victory to the tight Johnny defense and the sharp passing of Sharon Storr to Mike Schneider, Steve Ward, and Scott Furey, who often completed the sequence with lay-ups.

After participating in the Granite City Classic at St. Cloud State, in which the Johnnies won the consolation title and Sharon Storr was named all-tournament player, the Johnnies turned their attention to the conference. They won the first game against UMD, and engaged in some very close and exciting contests during the remainder of the season, until the league-leading Tommies used their height (7-3, 6-6, 6-4, against the Johnnies' 6-6, 6-4) to defeat them 79-69 in the final game before a jam-packed crowd in the Palaestra.

The Johnnies ended up with a 10-16 record and 7-9 in the conference, for a sixth place tie with St. Mary's. Sharon Storr made all-conference.

— 1974-1975 —

Practice for the 1974-75 season opened without three of the leading scorers of the preceding season—Sharon Storr, Scott Furey, and Mike Schneider. However, Schneider returned as assistant coach while completing some graduation requirements, and there was a strong nucleus of veterans, including Steve Ward, 6-1, who was top scorer and had shot a torrid 53 percent in the preceding season—Terry Booth (6-2), Tom Witt (6-4), Jerry Berg (6-3), and Dave Super (6-0)—all of whom had seen a good deal of action in 1973-74. Other promising candidates were Mark Kosiek (6-0), Mike Koshmrl (5-11), Gary Putz (5-10), Tom Witucki (6-6), Mark Lenss (6-6), Ted Nowak (6-5), Jim Hoesley (6-1), Ken Bednar (6-9), Jim O'Connell (6-1), and Dave Theisen (6-2).

After the usual warm-up games with Loyola and Marquette, St. John's lost to St. Cloud State 67-72, before turning attention to the St. John's Invitational scheduled for December 13-14. The Johnnies rolled over previously unbeaten Southwest State 79-64, while Bemidji was finishing off Luther College 72-63. St. John's then met Bemidji in the finals and, supported by the sharpshooting of Steve Ward (30 points) and Terry Booth (15), slipped by the Beavers 67-61 to win its own invitational. Booth and Ward were elected to the all-tournament squad, and Ward was chosen the tourney's most valuable player.

After a short rest for the holidays, the Johnnies rushed into another tournament, the Granite City Classic at St. Cloud State. The treatment received in this engagement was less gentle. University of Wisconsin-La Crosse did everything right and rolled over St. John's 81-62. This game to a large extent set the pattern for the rest of the season. The Johnnies lost two more games in the Granite City Classic (to St. Thomas and St. Olaf), then managed to win 6 games during the rest of the season, ending up with an 8-19 overall record and 6-12 in the conference, good for fifth place, seven games behind co-champions Augsburg and Gustavus.

One encouraging feature of the season was the development of men like Jerry Berg, Terry Booth, Tom Witt, and Dave Super, as also the emergence of new talent in the persons of Mark Lenss, Mark Kosiek, and Tom Witucki. These men were to be heard from in the future. Steve Ward, who starred with three 31-point games during the season, was high point man for the Johnnies (averaging 17.5 points per game), and was chosen all-MIAC.

During the 1974-75 school year the St. John's basketball team was chosen to travel to Poland by the Enculturation Athletic Committee and the Polish Students' Organization. The players raised money to

finance the trip through various money-raising projects and left in June, 1975, for a 16-day trip through Poland, during which they played ten basketball games, breaking even with a 5-5 record.

— 1975-1976 —

Over fifty players, including 11 lettermen and 30 freshmen, reported for practice in the fall of 1975. Smith told reporters that there was no one outstanding player on the squad, but that there would be keen competition for the five starting positions. By the end of the season it was necessary to revise that statement. It is true that he had a balanced crew of starters, but by the end of the season St. John's had in Frank Wachlarowicz one of the most outstanding players in its basketball history.

Under the boards were seniors Tom Witt (6-4) and Tom Witucki (6-2½), who were being pushed by juniors Terry Booth (6-1) and Dave Philp (6-3). At the forward positions Smith was planning to rely on sophomores Mark Lenss (6-6) and Ted Nowak (6-4), with support from the strong freshman squad. As guards Smith could choose from seniors Dave Super (6-1) and Dave Theisen (6-2), juniors Jim Hoesley (6-1), Mark Kosiek (6-0), Jim O'Connell (6-1), and sophomores Gary Putz (5-11), Mike Koshmrl (5-11), and George Chovancek (6-1).

Most gratifying was the speedy adjustment to college competition by freshman all-state center Frank Wachlarowicz from Little Falls. He was the answer to Smith's prayer for a big man, the kind of player St. John's had lacked for years. Not only did he make the team in his freshman year, but he was also the key man on both offense and defense. As Smith told a reporter toward the end of the season: "Wach's most obvious contribution is his offensive play. Frank is shooting nearly 65 percent from the field. His defensive rebounding is an important key to our fast break. He always adds two or three tip-ins a game. He has also contributed with solid defensive play inside. At 6-5, he's generally playing against bigger men, but he has contained them very well." One evidence of his contribution was that the Johnnies, who finished fifth in the conference in 1974-75, ranked second in 1975-76.

But Smith had said that the Johnnies were not a one-man team. Wachlarowicz fitted into the team as a cog in a well-oiled machine, not as a prima donna striving for personal prominence.

St. John's won its first three games against the U. of Minnesota-Morris, St. Cloud State, and St. Olaf, and then won its own invitational by taking Jamestown 84-79 and Bemidji State 82-65. It lost the next three to schools outside this region—Eastern Montana, Gonzaga Uni-

versity, and Boise State, and then launched into the conference race, winning four straight games. Mixing in a few losses to perennial stalwarts like Gustavus (two games), St. Thomas (one game), and Augsburg (one game), the Jays hammered out victories against all other conference rivals, to end up with a 12-6 record in the conference and third place (17-10 overall).

Wachlarowicz led the team in scoring with 19.4 points per game and was chosen all-conference in this his freshman year.

— 1976-1977 —

At the beginning of this season Smith was given a chance to see his crew in action against a remarkably strong alumni team on November 20, and they gave a good account of themselves. Although matched against 1971 star alumnus Tim Muller, 6-7 center, freshman Frank Wachlarowicz poured in 27 points to lead the varsity to a convincing 97-73 victory. The scoring was well distributed, with co-captain Jim O'Connell, forward Mark Lenss, and guard Tom Witucki each accounting for 11 points, while Gary Putz and Paul Wotta added 10 and 8, respectively.

St. John's confined its practice games to only one toughie this year—Loyola of Chicago—losing 53-69. They failed to bounce back from this encounter, losing their second game to Minnesota-Morris 66-79 and their third to St. Cloud State, 80-90.

The Johnnies then lost their chance to claim a victory in the St. John's Invitational when little (5-9) Otis Carter of Jamestown College, North Dakota, swiped the ball from Mark Kosiek with the score tied 70-all and 46 seconds remaining, and, in the words of Dave Anderson of the St. Cloud *Daily Times*, "converted the theft into two points." Wachlarowicz evened the score at 81-81, but Carter again got his hands on the ball and dropped an 18-footer just as the buzzer sounded. Jamestown went on to win the tournament, while St. John's won the consolation crown by defeating Winona State.

Two weeks later the St. John's crew was eliminated from the Granite City Classic by University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, a top team in NCAA Division II which went on to win the tournament. The Jays salvaged something out of a spotty early season by winning the consolation game against College of Great Falls by the convincing score of 94-74. In this game Wachlarowicz paced the Johnnie squad with 29 points and 20 rebounds. His output for the entire tournament was 91 points and 43 rebounds. He was deservedly proclaimed the tournament's most valuable player.

The victory over College of Great Falls started the Jays on a five-game winning streak which received an impetus from the return to the line-up of Dave Neisen, 6-1, who poured in 34 points in the 87-79 victory over Hamline. They stretched this skein to six straight MIAC victories by taking the formidable Tommies 75-65, in a game which, according to the St. Cloud *Daily Times*, left the colorful Tommie coach fuming (too many fouls called on the Tommies, too few on the Johnnies by referees intimidated by the Rats).

An uprising by St. Mary's and a loosely played game snapped the SJU winning streak (63-78), and although the Jays scored easy wins over Macalester, 73-57, St. Olaf, 95-88, and a cliff-hanger over Hamline, 47-45, they fell apart at the end of the season. They lost heartbreakers to Augsburg, 72-80, in an overtime to St. Thomas, 79-82, and a double overtime to Macalester, 70-72, to end up with 14-12 overall and 10-6 and third place in the MIAC.

This record entitled the Johnnies to meet Minnesota-Morris (20-5), a team which had proved too rugged earlier in the season in the NAIA play-offs. Morris was just as rugged at the end, as the final score of 62-50 showed.

Although failing to win the MIAC title and losing to Minnesota-Morris in the first game of the play-offs, the Johnnies had played first-class basketball and gained a great deal in experience. There was little doubt that they would be heard from in the following season.

— 1977-1978 —

Despite the widely proclaimed power of Augsburg, St. Thomas, and St. Mary's, Jim Smith told reporters at the beginning of the season that although some teams in the league were much improved over the previous year, "I like our chances." He was probably looking over his squad as he said that—two-time All-MIAC and two-time Most Valuable Player Frank Wachlarowicz (6-5); Mark Lenss, 6-7 senior forward who had developed rapidly the previous year; forwards Dan Smith 6-5, Ted Nowak, 6-5, and Paul Wotta, 6-5; great floor-man, Pat McKenzie, 5-10; guard Gary Putz; and reliable reserves Mike Koshmrl and George Chovancek. Other as yet unproven but promising prospects were John Patterson, 6-3, Scott Erickson, 6-6, Dave Philp, 6-2, and Pablo Montanez, 5-10 sophomore from Puerto Rico. There were also several freshmen who were left to the care of Mark Kosiek, high-scoring forward from the preceding season who replaced Denny Lorusung as assistant to Coach Smith.

Smith's confidence in the squad seemed verified when the team rolled over St. Olaf 101-87, with four players scoring in double figures.

They received a setback in a hard-fought game with pesky Minnesota-Morris (64-67), but returned to form by beating St. Cloud State 91-84 in the championship game of the St. John's Invitational, in which some of the so-called inexperienced players began to show their stuff, especially Pat McKenzie, Pablo Montanez, Gary Putz, and Paul Wotta.

St. Cloud took revenge for that defeat by trouncing St. John's 87-81 a few days later, but the Johnnies snapped back, defeating Duluth 96-88, and went on to the tough Granite City Classic at St. Cloud State where they defeated University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse 97-90 in overtime, to reach the semi-finals, where they lost a squeaker to Augustana of Illinois (77-78), and to Indiana-Purdue 80-86 in the contest for third place.

The Johnnies then settled down to the grueling MIAC schedule, during which they won every game except two fiercely fought contests with Augsburg and one with St. Thomas (65-57) to end up with a 15-3 season in the conference and 22-7 overall. This was good enough for first place in the conference.

In the play-offs, the Johnnies rolled over second-place Gustavus 92-66, while Moorhead State flattened St. Mary's, which had tied for second in the MIAC, by 82-71. Two days later the Johnnies methodically decapitated Moorhead State by a score of 98-85 and earned their second trip to the National NAIA Tournament in Kansas City.

For its first game in the NAIA tournament St. John's drew Central Washington (21-7), a school which had made twelve appearances at Kansas City, with 1978 being its fifth straight trip. The Johnnies, though an unknown quantity as compared with Central Washington, were unawed. Under the brilliant floor leadership and ball-handling of little (5-10) Pat McKenzie, who seldom tried to shoot ("because if I do it'd be blocked") and the point production and rebounding of Wachlarowicz, Nowak, and Wotta, the Johnnies won their first game, 83-63.

Their second encounter, against third-seeded Drury of Missouri, was not decided until the final minutes. The score was 39-38 in favor of St. John's at the half, and they were leading 70-69 with 4:31 left in the game. Then Drury pulled ahead, but Wachlarowicz tied it with two free-throws. Then he drew his fifth foul, and the Johnnie attack was blunted. The final score: 79-86. Drury went on to the semi-finals.

The crowd gave Wachlarowicz a standing ovation when he left the game, the first player in the tournament to receive such acclaim.

The Johnnies also won other distinctions. The coach and the team were named the most sportsmanlike participants in the tournament.

Wachlarowicz was named to the All-American NAIA squad. Other honors were heaped upon Smith and the team after they returned home. Smith was chosen all-MIAC and all-NAIA District 13 Coach of the Year, and Wachlarowicz was awarded the Joe Hutton Award as the most valuable MIAC player—the second St. John's player to receive this award since it was granted for the first time to Paul Bernabei in 1969. Wachlarowicz was also chosen for the third time on the all-MIAC team, along with Ted Nowak, Mark Lenss, and Pat McKenzie.

The final record of 23-8 represented the greatest number of wins during any season by the Johnnies.

Dave Anderson, sportswriter for the St. Cloud *Daily Times*, who with his colleague Kevin Simpson covered the exciting sports events at St. John's, as well as off-campus engagements such as the NAIA Nationals, summed up the basketball season in one line: "The Johnnies have reached a new plateau, moving from good to great" (St. Cloud *Daily Times*, March 9, 1978).



CHAPTER IV

Baseball

The first recorded outside baseball game played at St. John's was with the "St. Cloud Crackers" in 1889, a game that was lost by the score of 15-7. The *Record* reporter wrote derisively: "We advise the home club to do a little more practicing and a little less mouthing if they want to invert the score" (*Record*, Vol. 2, p. 54). The next two games were played in May, 1900, with St. Cloud High School. St. John's was the challenger, quite certain of the superiority of its team. But the Cardinal and Blue (the school colors) lost the first game by a score of 4-14. It was a humiliating and wholly unexpected experience when it was discovered that in spite of its thirty-six years of intramural play there was still a lot to learn about caution in challenging outside opponents. The *Record*, for the comfort of the team, offered the almost naive consolation that, after all, they had not done badly, for "although they lost the game, they nevertheless found the pitcher 'well'—so well, in fact, that if the wind had not been against them the ball would have been batted out of the reach of the fielders" (*Record*, Vol. 13, p. 194). In a return game, however, St. John's won by the score of 12-11 and the local pride was restored.

These two games, though of little importance in themselves, touched off the movement that ultimately led to the initiation of intercollegiate athletics at St. John's. The two games were well attended and enjoyed on both campuses. It was inevitable that the appetite for more outside games would be whetted to a degree never experienced before, now that the break-through had been accomplished. Moreover, with the public interest in football running high, it was certain that eventually the