

The steadily improving Johnnies took Augsburg 62-12 at homecoming, using 112 players in the onslaught, and Concordia 49-0. Against the usually tough Cobbers, with Norman connecting on 9 out of 13 passes for 123 yards, and Schmitz rushing for 79 yards and one touchdown, the Johnnies piled up 270 yards on the ground and 181 through the air, for a total of 428.

The story was pretty much the same with Macalester the following Saturday. The Macs put up stiff resistance for the first quarter, but wilted under the pounding of Tim Schmitz and Brad Eustice. Total yardage of running plays netted 562 yards and a final score of 70-13. The defensive line, led by nose guard Ernie England and linebacker Mark Griffin, held the Macs to 43 yards in 39 running plays. St. John's was now rated Number One in the NCAA's Division III and sixth in the nation by the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA). The contest with Gustavus the following Saturday did nothing to disturb this ranking. Against the usually tough Gusties, St. John's piled up 480 yards on the ground and 50 yards through the air versus 137 to 176 by the Gusties for a score of 44-14. Things were so well in hand by the end of the first half that Gagliardi removed Norman from the game and reserves Bill DeWitt, John Welsh, Chris Deckas, and Jerry Thygeson led the nation's number one small college team.

This 44-point score was an all-time high in the series between the two schools, dating back to 1923. Gustavus holds a 24-15-3 edge for the entire period, but the Johnnies hold an 11-10-3 edge since Gagliardi took over in 1953 and won his first championship.

St. Olaf was the last MIAC opponent, but the Johnnies did not take the Oles lightly. They had tied St. John's the year before and couldn't be expected to lie down and play dead in 1976. Coach Tom Porter bewailed the loss of regulars by graduation, but his team put up stiff resistance to the Johnnie juggernaut, holding them to 200 net yards rushing, as compared with their average of 370 for the season, and 90 yards passing. St. Olaf accomplished the unusual feat of making the Johnnies punt nine times in that game. Four fumbles prevented the Johnnies from getting up steam, but they kept coming back and back and finally pushed over four touchdowns, two of them in the last quarter. Final score: St. John's 29, St. Olaf 13.

A revived scoring power was unveiled in this and the preceding two games in the form of Brad Eustice, who had been a consistent ground-gainer in 1973 and 1974, but who had been obliged to stay out of school in 1975-76. He found his former slot filled to overflowing by Tim Schmitz, but he cheerfully accepted the supporting role, and did

it with such power that if it had not been for the extraordinary talent of the man ahead of him, he would have rated all-conference.

Although playing only part of the St. Olaf game because of injured ribs, Tim Schmitz re-entered the game to rip off a 51-yard touchdown run, which iced the game for the Johnnies, and raised his total yardage for the season above the 1,000 mark. His 100-yard total for the 17 carries against St. Olaf earned for him the designation by the ABC commentators as the Chevrolet Offensive Player of the Game. This honor won for St. John's a \$1,500 general-fund scholarship for the 1977-78 school year. An additional \$7,000 in scholarship funds was awarded by Chevrolet to be divided between the two schools.

The defensive play of the Big Red in the final game was nothing short of brilliant. Despite five fumbles (four of them lost), the defensive unit limited St. Olaf to 112 net yards, 64 by rushing and 28 by passing, and gave up only one first down in the second half with 42 seconds remaining in the game.

With the record just described, it was inevitable that St. John's would receive a play-off bid. In fact, the record was so good that the team received bids from both the NAIA and NCAA. There was a bit of a hassle as to which bid to accept, since St. John's had applied for participation in the play-offs of both organizations; but in the end, Gagliardi decided to go with NCAA, even at the risk of offending the rival organization.

St. John's first opponent in the NCAA Division III play-offs was Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois, which finished second to Carroll College (Wisconsin) in the College Conference of Illinois-Wisconsin (CCIW). Like SJU, Augustana had never tasted a post-season defeat, and on top of that sported a 24-0-1 record and a 1,000 average on their home field since 1971. The pre-game statistics of senior tailback Thompson's rushing (3,759 during his three-year career) and the passing of quarterback Necastro, who was leading the CCIW with 86 completions out of 170 tosses, for a season total of 1,295 yards, together with a complete supporting cast of linemen and blockers, provided sufficient evidence that St. John's would be in a for busy afternoon.

However, it really didn't turn out that way. The game was just a 46-7 romp on a beautiful, sunny November day. Behind their fast-charging line, the Johnnies established four new NCAA Division III play-off marks: Quarterback Norman scored five touchdowns, surpassing the single game record of Lloyd Ball of Wittenberg in 1972; Tim Schmitz led the team with 530 yards rushing, erasing the record of 446 set by Capitol College in 1970; and the clock-like performance of the

line and backfield resulted in piling up 592 yards of total offense, bettering the Randolph-Macon mark of 514 set in 1960. The Johnnies also set a new record for first downs—31, compared with Bridgeport College in 1969.

The next Johnnie victim was Buena Vista College of Storm Lake, Iowa, which had got to Round Two by slipping by Carroll College, winner of the CCIW title, by a score of 20-14. The Buena Vista game was played at St. John's in six-degree (Fahrenheit) weather, but a few degrees either way wouldn't have made much difference. While piling up a 61-0 score, Jeff Norman scored one touchdown, passed for two more, and kicked seven points after touchdowns. Several NCAA records fell as a result of this onslaught. Jeff Norman scored 47 points in two games to break the three-game play-off record by 11 points. The 61 score set a single-game high; and a two-game total of 107 points surpassed the old mark of 100 points set by Wittenberg in 1975.

St. John's out-gained Buena Vista 449 to 98 yards, and 365 to 35 in rushing. Middle guard Ernie England broke up play after play of the Iowans, and the fast-charging of his teammates and the alertness of the pass defense held the pass completions of Buena Vista star quarterback Rollie Wieber to only 6 of 23 for 62 yards. St. John's was ready for the title game.

The opponent for this game was Towson State of Maryland, which had won the right to meet the Johnnies in the Alonzo Stagg Bowl in Phenix City, Alabama, by beating C. W. Post College of New York 14-10 and St. Lawrence College 38-36. It has already been mentioned that this classic ranks with the famous Camellia Bowl game of 1963 against Prairie View College. The main difference between them is that the suspense of the 1976 game, played in the warm Alabama sunshine on December 4, was all crowded into the last half of the fourth quarter.

The Johnnies, who were enjoying the 60-degree weather, were relaxed and confident and went about their business of playing football as usual, piling up a 28-0 lead by the end of the third quarter. It looked like another Augustana or Buena Vista walkaway. For the first touchdown the Jays marched 66 yards with the opening kickoff, capping it with a 32-yard run by Norman on a keeper. Early in the second quarter, Norman tossed a pass to Schmitz, who rambled 46 yards to score. Then Norman threw a 10-yard touchdown pass to Jim Roeder for the third touchdown, and late in the same quarter Schmitz crashed for 52 yards off tackle for the fourth touchdown. Norman kicked all the conversions and the score was SJU 28, Towson 0. Everyone thought this

was a re-play of the first two play-off games, and some people were already beginning to leave the stands.

But Towson had other ideas. Although the alert Johnnie defense had intercepted three Towson passes and contained them on the ground until then, the Maryland school began showing the stuff that put them in the bowl game in the first place. Their star quarterback, Dan Dullea, began filling the air with passes, and during the final 15 minutes had completed 9 of 18. He tossed a 57-yarder to the elusive Towson end Ken Snoots, which took Towson to the five-yard line. Four plays later, Mike Maloney plunged over from the one. With so little time left in the game, this did not seem too disastrous to St. John's. It merely meant that the Johnnies had been deprived of a shut-out. However, Towson was fired up, and Dullea continued hitting Snoots with needle-threading passes.

Less than three minutes later, after completing three straight passes for 53 yards, Towson had its second touchdown. The Johnnies were still not terribly disturbed. However, despite some brilliant interceptions by Mark Hall, Jim Geraghty, and Joe Luby, as well as Ernie England's sacking of Dullea for a 17-yard loss, Dullea, aided by a pass interference call which would have been Geraghty's third interception, hit end Snoots for a 22-yard touchdown pass, with 1:03 remaining.

After an on-side kick recovered by Towson's Bill Doherty, Dullea found Mike Bennett with a 5-yard pass in the end zone, and Bielski made the conversion. The score with 34 seconds remaining was SJU 28, Towson 28.

But at this point the championship quality of the Johnnie team showed through. After a penalty for spiking the ball, Towson kicked off from their own 25 and St. John's got the ball on their own 41-yard line with 25 seconds remaining. On the second play Norman unleashed a long pass to injured Jim Roeder who was streaking down the right sideline. The ball fell into his arms and he cut in, picked up interference from an out-of-position official, and got to the one-yard line with seven seconds left on the clock. After a time-out to kill the clock, Norman called for a quarterback sneak, but the players were over-anxious and he never got his hands on the ball. Ever-alert Tim Schmitz fell on the ball a couple of yards from the goal, and St. John's called time-out again with only seconds remaining.

The rest is history. As the three seconds ticked away, Norman calmly kicked a 19-yard field goal, and the scoreboard showed SJU 31, Towson 28.

The game was televised and seen by hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, in the Southeast and Midwest. St. John's has a video-

tape of the game and it has provided fascinating entertainment for alumni at alumni meetings and wherever football lovers gather.

Further evidence of the championship quality of this team is that they played this game with a number of regulars out with injuries (and others who would have been if there had been reserves for them). Norman had suffered a shoulder separation three weeks before the game. Roeder, who had not even started because of a knee injury, came into the game when Chris Boyd, who was substituting for the injured Scott Edstrom, had to leave because of a back injury. Defensive end Terry Sexton sat out the entire game with a knee injury and tackle Joe Wentzell and defensive end Tom Kost were so banged up that they practiced only once during the week before the title game. Dan Dorgan missed the entire last quarter with an injured hip. It was fortunate that the season didn't last any longer!

The team spirit which characterized the 1976 Johnnie crew is illustrated by a news story told by Bob Schabert, the St. Cloud *Daily Times* sportswriter who was mingling with the players and crowd of well-wishers on the field after the game, looking for human interest stories. One of the sportswriters got to Norman after he had finished signing autographs for Phenix kids, and asked him whether he would like to be remembered as the quarterback who threw the long pass that put SJU on the one-yard line, or as the place-kicker who split the uprights with the winning field goal in the last three seconds.

Those who know Norman could have guessed the answer: "Actually, I just want to be remembered as part of the team that won the national championship."

Jeff Norman, who was voted the game's most valuable player, accounted for three touchdowns. He ran 32 yards for one, passed to fullback Tim Schmitz for the second, and to Jim Roeder for the third. Schmitz ran 52 yards for another touchdown and was the game's leading rusher, with 153 yards in 30 carries. Brad Eustice, back-up for Schmitz, came up with 103 yards in 12 carries. Norman made 137 yards through the air on four completions out of 12 attempts, but two of these four were for touchdowns.

The superb coaching and field performance brought nation-wide recognition to the coach and to the team. Gagliardi was named NCAA Division III Coach of the Year, and gave the principal address at an awards dinner in Miami in January. He was also invited to address the Gridiron Club in Washington, D.C., and to receive an award for the second time (1965 was the first). In addition to the Division III championship trophy presented to the team and the school, Norman

was designated the Chevrolet Offensive Player of the Year and won a \$1,500 scholarship for St. John's students.

The championship quality of the team was also given recognition at home. Eight players were named to the all-MIAC team: Joe Wentzell, defensive tackle; Terry Sexton, defensive end; Jim Roeder, halfback; Ernie England, though only a freshman, middle guard; Joe Luby, defensive halfback; Dave Grovum, center; Jeff Norman, quarterback; and Tim Schmitz, fullback. Jeff Norman was named the most valuable player in the MIAC at the St. Paul *Pioneer Press-Dispatch* annual college football awards dinner.

Anything that could happen after a year like this would be anticlimactic.

— 1977 —

The 1977 season could be described as bitter-sweet. It was sweet to take a fourth MIAC championship in a row, and be chosen twice in succession to participate in the NCAA play-offs. That would normally be the fulfillment of a coach's wildest dreams. But with the powerhouse of 1976 returned pretty much intact, and memories of the methodical way in which the Johnnies dispatched all conference rivals, there was general expectation that they would go all the way to the top as they did in '76.

The 1977 team performed as expected. With the exception of a 16-3 setback at the hands of pesky UM-Morris in the opener, which the Johnnies think might have been a different story if the game were played after they had more than their ten or twelve days of practice behind them, they rolled over all conference opponents in convincing fashion.

Not only were the scores convincing, but the comparative yardage provided definite proof of superiority as well. Following is a summary of the season in scores and yardage:

SJU		OPP.	YARDS
56	Hamline	7	561 vs. 205
25	St. Thomas	20	363 vs. 243
49	Augsburg	9	500 vs. 200
31	Concordia	0	389 vs. 96
70	Macalester	0	630 vs. 57*
28	Gustavus	18	335 vs. 202
21	St. Olaf	7	334 vs. 196

*Over 100 Johnnies were used in this game.

This record again merited an invitation to take part in the NCAA play-offs. St. John's was matched in its first game against Wabash, a small school in Indiana with about 800 male students, and an 8-1 season record. The winner of this game was to meet UM-Morris, the NIC champion, which was matched against Albion, Michigan. There was hope that both Minnesota teams would win and settle things by a late season game. But this was not to be.

St. John's met Wabash on the home field on a cold, snowstormy day. The game looked like the usual post-season contest for the Johnnies when Tim Schmitz seized the ball and ran for a touchdown on the first play of the game. However, Wabash came back with a terrific passing attack, and the game ended: SJU 9, Wabash 20.

The Johnnies had several bad breaks. Two touchdowns were called back, one on a very questionable clipping call. Their worst break was an off-side penalty on the one-yard line with four downs in which to score a touchdown.

Wabash went on to beat UM-Morris, but was itself defeated by its next opponent.

On December 8, 1977, Tim Schmitz, senior fullback on the 1977 team, was named to the Associated Press Little All-American football team and senior quarterback Jeff Norman received an honorable mention award to the third team. The honors showered on Little All-American and Most Valuable Player of the MIAC fittingly terminated the spectacular career of one of St. John's greatest football players. During his four years as a member of the St. John's team he rushed a total of almost 4,000 yards, averaging over 1,000 yards per season in his last three years. He averaged 315 yards per game in his senior year and helped St. John's be the top offensive team in the NCAA Division III in two consecutive years, 1976 and 1977. Honored with Schmitz with the all-conference award were Ernie England and Tom Kost, linemen, and Joe Luby, backfield on the defensive unit. On the offensive unit were Tim Schmitz, fullback, Jeff Norman, quarterback, Mike Grant, end, and linemen John Ringle and Steve Glocke.

As we go to press everyone is wondering what Gagliardi, stripped of the stars he developed, will come up with in 1978.



CHAPTER III

Basketball

The Beginnings

The beginning of basketball at St. John's was simple in comparison with that of football. Football was not accepted at first at St. John's, whereas basketball received a complete bill of health and was tacitly accepted as a forward moving sport when the authorities announced their building plans for the summer of 1901: "The authorities of St. John's have decided to erect a fine new gymnasium during the following summer, as well as a three-story library that will contain a museum, an art gallery, and a photographic studio (*Record*, January, 1901, p. 381).

There were several announcements regarding progress in the building plans during the following months, finally culminating in a report made by the athletic editor of the *Record* when he returned to school in September. On seeing the exterior of the new gymnasium he wrote enthusiastically that "the completion of the new gymnasium will bring another epoch in the history of athletics." He was confident that new sports would be added, "the most prominent of which will be basketball. This game is becoming very popular in the leading colleges, and, although not as exciting as football, is every bit as interesting" (*Record*, October, 1901, p. 268).

The construction of the gymnasium and the new library marked a tremendous step forward, a calculated decision by the faculty to meet the trends of the new century that had just opened up before their eyes. In an article of the *Record*, a student writer congratulated the administration for their foresight: