

The season was a disappointment to the team followers. Following two opening victories, the first over the St. Joseph A.C. and the second over the University of Minnesota Aggies, the team dropped the remaining six games. The two losses to Hamline University were not wholly unexpected, however, for this year Hamline began its first long period of athletic dominance in basketball. Prior to 1910 Hamline had not been seriously interested in the game, but with the building of their gymnasium in 1910 a drastic change took place. As one of the Hamline historians wrote, "Basketball, which was only peeping over the horizon as a college sport, was destined to shine as a fully risen sun" (*Hamline History*, p. 101).

The newly risen sun at Hamline was the legendary Franklyn Blume who with his teammate Swanson dominated the basketball scene in Minnesota for the next three years.

The lowly record of the SJU 1912 team is easily explained. Not only was it a new team of freshmen and only one holdover from 1911, but for the first time St. John's was meeting the tough university and college teams of North Dakota and Minnesota, each of which was coached by men with university athletic backgrounds.

Budding stars of the team were Frank Kettler, a powerful six-foot-three-incher, who in 1916 furnished the muscle for the first championship team St. John's ever had, and Frank Braun (later Fr. Mark Braun, O.S.B.). Alois Goeb (later Fr. Cuthbert, O.S.B.), appointed abbot of Richardton Abbey in North Dakota in 1932, was a clever hot-shooting forward.

#### — 1912-1913 —

Fr. Benedict Schmit's energy and determination to establish an authentic intercollegiate athletic program was again manifested in the 1912-1913 basketball schedule of nine games, eight of which were with college teams. The season record of four wins and five losses, while satisfactory for the period, was a disappointment for those who had looked forward to something better. Team play was erratic at times, although Captain Frank Braun, affectionately nicknamed "Old Reliable" because of his consistent play at guard, was an inspiring leader.

After losing the first game to Hamline 14-26, the Cardinal and Blue won the next three games against stout competition: Luther College 50-10; St. Olaf 24-15; North Dakota University 27-25. Prospects for a big year took a nose dive, however, for the next four games were lost, partly through erratic play, partly because of the strength of the opposition: to Hamline 21-41, the University of Minnesota Aggies 27-30, the YMCA 18-23, and the St. Cloud Normals 7-32. The team

regained some of its lost prestige in its last game by defeating the Minnesota Aggies 27-25.

The poor score of the St. Cloud Normal game is a good illustration of the influence an inadequate gymnasium played in determining the outcome of a game. The St. Cloud gymnasium in which St. John's lost to the Normals 7-32 was poorly lighted and, in addition, was a narrow room with a height of twelve feet from floor to ceiling. Unaccustomed to the low ceiling and being unable to arch their shots, the Johnnies were easy victims.

#### — 1913-1914 —

In the fall of 1913, Fr. Virgil Michel, O.S.B., though not yet ordained, succeeded Fr. Benedict Schmit as moderator of athletics. It would appear that the era of the dynamic student-presidents of the Athletic Association had ended. However that may be, the frequency of the commendations of moderators that now appear in the *Record*, especially of Fr. Virgil, seem to indicate that the moderators were beginning to take a more active interest in athletics and recreational activities. It soon became evident that the athletic policy of the college was changing for the better under the leadership of the last two moderators, Frs. Benedict and Virgil.

The *Record* claimed that the 1914 team was the finest to have appeared on the St. John's campus since the memorable five of 1908. In a schedule of eleven games the team emerged victorious in seven games against four losses. On the other hand, only five intercollegiate games were scheduled, three fewer than the previous year—which means that the scheduling committee still found it difficult to secure more games with the colleges—which was what they were looking forward to. Six games were scheduled with high schools and amateur clubs of the Twin Cities and St. Cloud, simply to present a full program of athletic activities. Moreover, it was a strong team. Although the team lost three games to the colleges, the losses were by low scores. For example, of the two losses to Hamline, one was by a score of 16-21, and Hamline was at that time top team in the state. Hackner in one game held the great Blume to a single basket. Losses were also counter-balanced by decisive victories over the Minnesota Aggies 40-16 and St. Olaf 33-16.

Stars for the year 1913-1914 were Robert (Bob) Hackner, Frank Braun, Roman Steichen, and Bernard Karels, a highly talented Prep School recruit from the intramural ranks, who the next year was to be the first all-state basketball player in St. John's athletic history. Hackner and Frank Braun completed their sophomore year in college and



moved on, the former transferring to the Armour Institute in Chicago, and Frank Braun entering the Benedictine Order and taking the religious name of Mark, by which he was known for the remainder of his life. He became somewhat of a legend as dean of the college from 1929 until 1933, the wise, progressive, no-nonsense educator. He was appointed Abbot of St. Gregory's Abbey in Shawnee, Oklahoma, in 1932.

#### — 1914-1915 —

Basketball at St. John's took a turn for the better in the fall of 1914 when St. John's formally entered the Minnesota-Dakota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference. For ten years the St. John's scheduling committee each fall had struggled with only partial success to arrange a satisfactory schedule of games. With Fr. Virgil Michel as moderator of athletics, it was finally realized that the old system of arranging outside games was completely outmoded. There were only two alternatives, either to drop intercollegiate games entirely or to join the newly organized (1911) Minnesota-Dakota Athletic Conference.

The first and only notice of St. John's joining the conference was an entry in the December issue of the 1914 *Record*: "As St. John's has entered the new conference, a goodly number of games is assured. Now, fellows, give St. John's your best and we surely will gain a position at the top, if we do not win the championship" (*Record*, December, 1914, p. 580).

The announcement was greeted with enthusiasm, particularly because a new crop of promising athletes was coming up that would represent St. John's brilliantly in conference competition. With one exception (Al Wipfli) they were big men: Bernard Karels, Louis Mohs, Jack Stroeder, Frank Kettler, and Urban Knaeble.

The first burst of enthusiasm waned when suddenly it was learned that Coach Flynn and his family had been quarantined because of a contagious disease. But Fr. Vigil, who in his two years of association with the coach had formed a close friendship with him, took over the team. His enthusiasm and fire were an inspiration to the young players, who swept through a heavy schedule of ten games with six wins, three losses and one tie. Highlights of the season were a 36-13 defeat of St. Thomas and a 21-19 defeat of the University of North Dakota. The tied game was due to the Hamline scorer failing to register a St. John's free-throw. The Hamline faculty representative two days after the game apologized to Fr. Virgil and expressed his hopes that their good relations with St. John's had not been harmed.

The last game of the season, with St. Thomas on their home floor, St. John's lost 9-14. It was played on the dirt floor of the St. Thomas Armory. Not every college had as yet a satisfactory gymnasium!

In 1915 Bernard Karels, a freshman, won a place on the all-state team, the first in St. John's basketball history. Other stars were also freshmen: Louis Mohs, Urban Knaeble, Frank Kettler, and James Stroeder.

#### — 1915-1916 —

After thirteen years of basketball, St. John's finally had its banner year, the championship of the Minnesota-Dakota Athletic Conference. Unfortunately it had to share the honor with Carleton with its identical record of nine wins versus one loss. What is most remarkable about the championship is that St. John's had joined the conference only two years before and suddenly emerged as a powerhouse, placing three of its players on the all-state first team and one on the second team. The one loss of the season was to Fargo College by a score of 25-18, a team the players had underestimated and suddenly were taken by surprise by a smaller, fast-moving outfit that had been having an erratic up-and-down season.

The 1916 season was Captain Bernard Karels' second year on the all-state team. Other players who were awarded all-state berths were Louis Mohs and Urban Knaeble, the last of the outstanding Knaeble-brother athletes. A younger brother, George, was not as well known as an athlete as his older brothers. Frank Kettler was called "Shorty" because he was six-feet-three and weighed over two hundred pounds.

Bernard Karels was a genius with a basketball. Working by himself, he developed the long one-hand jump shot before it was recognized as the most valuable shot in basketball, one that ten years later was to change basketball from a low-scoring to a high-scoring game. At the end of the 1916 basketball season the *Record* reporter expressed the appreciation of St. John's for the work of this extraordinary player who, of a total of 465 points scored by the team, scored 219 himself:

This being Captain Karels' last year here, the school loses one of the best basketball players in the state. For the past three seasons he has worn the Cardinal and Blue. Last season and again this year he was awarded a forward position on the Minnesota All-State team. Many consider him not only one of the best players ever seen at St. John's, but also one of the most accurate, troublesome and sensational "shots" in the Northwest. Through his wonderful aggressive work he has far sur-



passed the enviable record set by Blume of Hamline University fame in the basketball arena (*Record*, April, 1916, p. 247).

Time has not changed the reputation of Bernard Karels among those who ever saw him play. While he was in the seminary he used to visit the gym once or twice a week all alone to practice his one-hand jump shot, the sweat pouring down his face as he spun around the basket like a whirling dervish, popping basket after basket with one hand. Once during a rest between spasms of activity he came up to the present writer, who was standing nearby marveling, and confided his conviction that the coaches he knew were half blind and possibly dumb: "When I was playing they could see me shoot fifteen baskets a game with one hand, and still they'd say it was a freak shot no one else could learn."

#### — 1916-1917 —

The 1917 basketball season has already gone down in history as the worst in St. John's athletic history. The *Record* lamented that it was a disaster year of major proportions. There were, for example, no holdovers from the championship year of 1916, and Coach Flynn was confronted with the problem of beginning at the bottom with an entirely new squad of players with fewer athletic talents than he had ever worked with prior to this year. One of the features of former years was that line-ups for games varied very little from the beginning to the end of the season. This year, however, the frequency of substitutions and obvious experiments from game to game make it apparent how desperately the coach was trying to find a winning combination. The only victory in a nine-game schedule was a 30-21 triumph over Kimball High School, a game originally scheduled to serve as a warm-up for the conference opening.

It would be an injustice to the coach and his squad not to mention the unusual circumstances they had to contend with. Some of the eight losses were by close scores: Luther College 26-27, St. Cloud Normals 21-23, South Dakota State 18-23—a fact lost sight of when the scores are compared with the overwhelming accumulation of points of the preceding year.

There were no stars to emerge in the 1916-17 season. The captain and chief inspirer for the year was Horace Lee, a hard-working leader who was faced by insurmountable handicaps.

#### — 1917-1918 —

The *Record* makes no reference to the military draft and preparations for World War I that were decimating the number of athletes,

actual or potential, on college campuses throughout the nation. St. John's was no exception. It was still a small college, however, and the loss of even one athlete was more acutely felt than in the other conference colleges that had larger enrollments on which to draw. On the other hand, St. John's was unique inasmuch as its main source of candidates for athletic teams was the College Preparatory department. To a great extent, the outstanding athletes at St. John's were "home-grown," and as one generation succeeded another there would always be groups of Prep School graduates waiting to fill the gaps left by departed students, whether they left for the world of business and graduate school or for the military service.

In the absence of statistics it is impossible to say to what extent the war years affected the sports program at St. John's in 1917-18. Observable from *Record* reports of games played there was the usual constant upward movement of Prep School stars to serve as substitutes when the regulars faltered, especially such coming athletes as William "Bart" Rooney, Matthew "Bill" Barry, August Kapsner, and George Reuter, all of whom were still seniors in the Prep School and evidently were considered eligible.

The 1918 basketball season was a moderate success, with an overall record of six victories and five defeats. Surprisingly good was the fourth place final ending in the conference race. Whatever embarrassment the team might have felt after two defeats by St. Thomas was softened by two victories over St. Cloud Normal School. Concordia College of Moorhead made its first appearance on a St. John's schedule in 1918, losing by a score of 22-20.

Outstanding players for this year were Captain Earl Stussi, Steve Tlusty and Joseph May.

#### — 1918-1919 —

Although the 1919 team ranked no higher than the midpoint in conference standings, it nevertheless enjoyed what was considered a successful season. St. John's was just recovering from the "disaster" years, 1917 and 1918. The conference record was an average percentage rating of .500—three victories versus three losses. Highlight of the conference games was a double sweep of St. Thomas, St. John's ancient rival. The overall record was six victories and six losses.

Of all the players on the team, the most versatile and talented was Captain William "Bart" Rooney, who, though only a freshman, was respected by all his fellow players for his leadership and knowledge of game tactics. The *Record* reporter wrote of him: "He was the mainstay of our Five, not only by his strong offensive and defensive play,



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but also his fine, inspirational leadership." Steve Thusty was the only veteran on the squad, but the young, talented graduates from the Prep School made up for any lack of experience. Among the newcomers were George Reuter, center; August Kapsner, guard; Matthew "Bill" Barry, forward; and John Daleiden, one of the most versatile of St. John's athletes, who supplanted the veteran Steve Thusty at his favorite forward position.

One great disappointment for the 1919 basketball season was the loss of two games to the St. Cloud Normals, through the play of their great center Freed.

#### — 1919-1920 —

The 1919 basketball season had ended in an euphoric mood with the student body confident that their 1920 team would make a strong race for the conference championship. Their optimism received a severe jolt in January when it was learned that John Daleiden and August Kapsner, forward and guard, respectively, were incapacitated for the entire season by knee injuries sustained in football. To cap their disappointment, their star center, George Reuter, failed to return to school after the Christmas holidays. Coach Flynn was faced with the difficult task of finding adequate replacements.

Notwithstanding his disappointment, the coach was able to mold together a new team that won third place in the Minnesota-Dakota Conference behind Carleton, the champion, and runner-up Hamline. On the team were Captain "Bart" Rooney, Bill Barry, Marcellus Haines, Donald Ryan, John Decker, Leo Galvin, and Melvin McDonald, the latter a newcomer from outside the Prep School circle. The schedule was entirely intercollegiate, as Fr. Virgil Michel had envisioned six years before when he engineered the entrance of St. John's into the new conference. The Cardinal and Blue was victorious in four games, but sustained six losses, two of which were to the St. Cloud Normals. Prospects looked good for the future.

Unfortunately for basketball at St. John's, Bart Rooney and Bill Barry, both stars, transferred to Notre Dame for their last two years of college work. Barry was the high scorer on the team, and Rooney a star at his guard position. He was awarded a place on the all-conference team, the fifth all-conference basketball player in St. John's history.

Fr. Mark Braun, Dean of the College, who had followed St. John's athletics closely for several years, both as a player and an observer, once remarked that Urban Knaeble '16, and Bart Rooney were the two most natural athletes he had ever seen at St. John's. Bart was quiet

and unassuming, yet he bore the marks of leadership even in his freshman year when he was elected to the captaincy. He served the year following again as captain. Donald Ryan, a teammate, remarked recently: "Bart was a born leader of men. It was simply part of his nature to lead." Bart Rooney never lost his love for St. John's. At his death a few years ago he willed a considerable part of his large estate to his alma mater. A member of the squad was Laurence Glenn, later Bishop Glenn.

#### Interim History—1920-1921

At the close of the 1919-20 academic year Coach Edward Flynn resigned to accept a similar position with the Fargo, North Dakota, Knights of Columbus. The move coincided with the entrance of St. John's into the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference, the present MIAC. Though there was no obvious connection between these two moves, it was known that Coach Flynn had found burdensome the position as director of all gymnasium activities, classes in physical culture, Moderator of Athletics since 1916, and coach of baseball and basketball.

Coach Flynn came to St. John's during the year 1909-10 as replacement of Frank Cassidy, then director of the gymnasium and instructor in gymnastics and physical culture. Flynn was a man of solid worth and character and quickly gained the esteem of the entire faculty. Soon he was given the additional tasks of coaching the basketball and baseball teams, as well as organizing a gymnastics program that was outstanding in the Northwestern gymnastic meets held annually in the Twin Cities. In his coaching years he enjoyed a moderately successful career. His basketball teams won 44 games and lost 42, for a percentage average of .511. His baseball teams followed the same pattern—36 victories to 33 losses, for a percentage average of .521.

The Minnesota-Dakota Athletic Conference that St. John's joined in 1914 had become unwieldy in 1920, primarily because of its widespread fifteen-college membership in the three states, Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota. There was dissatisfaction also with its rules as being too loosely observed, particularly in such matters as the eligibility of players and the methods of determining conference championships.

One rule of the new conference that worked to the disadvantage of St. John's was the ruling that required formal high school graduation of athletic candidates for membership on conference teams. This eliminated from competition the occasional Prep School senior who prior to 1920 had been permitted to play on the college varsity. What



worked also to the disadvantage of St. John's was the elimination from eligibility of all Commercial Department students, since they were not registered in the Liberal Arts program of the college. The result of the new requirements of the conference was that Edward Cahill, the successor to Edward Flynn, found himself faced with a situation he had not anticipated.

## From the Twenties to the Seventies

### — 1920-1921 —

Coach Edward Cahill was a graduate of St. Mary's College (Missouri) and St. Louis University, where he starred in baseball and football. On his call for basketball candidates he was greeted by a diversified crowd of some thirty candidates, one-third of whom were ex-Prep School stars who had played as seniors on the college varsity. Coaching in a field in which he was not as well acquainted as baseball and football, Cahill met the challenge by limiting his squad to ten players, eight of whom had gone through the tough intramural basketball of the Prep School. And they did well in the conference. The overall record of the first St. John's team in the MIAC was a record of eight wins in a schedule of fourteen games. Sparkplug and captain, John Daleiden led the team to a conference record of five wins to three losses, good for third place in the first conference season. Everything considered, it was an extraordinarily fine debut into the unknown.

Strangest loss of the year was a 21-1 freak loss to St. Cloud Normal in which John Decker, forward, played the role of hero by dropping in a free-throw and thereby saving the Johnnies from the ignominy of a shut-out.

The 1920-21 line-up: John Daleiden (now Fr. Charles, O.S.B., Richardton, North Dakota), captain and forward; John Decker (deceased), forward; Henry O'Donnell, center; Melvin McDonald (deceased), guard; Marcel Haines (deceased), guard. Reserves: Leo Leisen (Fr. Marcellus, O.S.B. (deceased)); John McNally, who never played basketball before but who was advancing fast; Henry Engel (deceased); Andrew Wahl and Paul Treanor.

### — 1921-1922 —

The slogan of the 1921-22 basketball season was "Champs or Bust." It was "Bust," for the team landed in fifth place. Spirits were high at the beginning of the season, however, since the team had been successful in the previous year and the only expectation possible under the circumstances was for improvement. Gone, however, were the 1921

sparkplug John Daleiden and the rangy O'Donnell who had been especially effective in controlling jump situations.

The 1922 team was not a high scoring machine, although it had an accurate shooting forward in Gordon Tierney and established a fine record in defensive play. Since the highest number of points scored was 28 on both sides, won or lost, most of the games were close. Two conference games were won by one point and one was lost. The overall record was eight games won and six lost. The conference record was four victories versus five losses, for a percentage of .444, slightly below average. The final MIAC standing was fifth place.

An interesting feature of the team was the large influx of graduates from well-coached Catholic and public high schools, whereas prior to this year the athletic squads were made up almost exclusively of ex-Prep School athletes. In 1922 the proportion was nine ex-Preps versus eight "outsiders." Among the outsiders were six authentic top athletes: John McNally, Gordon Tierney, Ernie Koepp, Tony Gornick, Joe McGovern, brother of Johnny McGovern, the famous All-American quarterback from the University of Minnesota, and Ben Siebenand.

Melvin McDonald was named guard on the all-conference second team and Gordon Tierney placed third in conference scoring.

The squad line-up was as follows: Gordon Tierney, forward; Marcel Haines, forward; John Decker (captain), center; Melvin McDonald, guard; Joe McGovern, guard. On the reserve list were John McNally, Don Ryan, Andrew Wahl, Tony Gornick, and Ben Siebenand.

This was Coach Cahill's last year at the basketball helm at St. John's.

### — 1922-1923 —

The 1922-23 basketball team was called the "Hard Luck Champion," and the title was fitting, for of the ten conference games, four were lost by the margin of one or two points, generally in the last few seconds.

The season had a really zany beginning. There were only two lettermen on the squad—Johnny (Blood) McNally and Tony Gornick—and the problem was to get the two men together to elect the captain. The *Record* reports the election as follows: "Jacta est alea! (The die is cast!). John V. McNally was at last made captain of the basketball team after two months were spent presumably in discussing ways and means of election. He and Gornick were the only lettermen of last year, and as each was too modest to vote for himself, they flipped a coin for the office. Mac won the toss. Congratulations, Mac!" (*Record*, 1923, p. 133).



The new coach, Fred Sanborn, a former star at the College of St. Thomas, found himself faced with the task of rebuilding the team on the basis of only two experienced players. He struggled with the problem and eventually came up with the best combination of players possible under the circumstances: G. Collins; Maurice Noack; John McNally, center; Tony Gornick, guard; Ernie Koepp, guard. Reserves: Andy Parnell, Leo Terrahe, Pierre Thomey, Frank Bauman.

The overall record was five victories against nine losses. In conference play St. John's finished the season with two victories and eight losses—as could be expected, in the cellar.

The only stars for the 1923 season were John McNally, who rang up 96 points, and Tony Gornick. Gilbert Collins, a forward, and Ernie Koepp did good work, especially Collins with timely baskets when needed.

### The Prep School, 1923

St. John's, on the recommendation of Fr. Albert Heuring, O.S.B., moderator of athletics, in 1923 organized a Prep School basketball team, partly to give special training for future athletes in the college. The Prep School team performed brilliantly and provided several stars for the college in the years following. Halsey Hall, then sports writer for the St. Paul *Pioneer Press*, wrote of them as "the fighters from little Collegeville, that hotbed of athletics." A *Record* wit with dry humor responded: "'Hotbed of athletics' is right! As soon as our athletes get a good sturdy start they transplant themselves to other fields."

### — 1923-1924 —

Fred Sanborn's second year in basketball was distinguished by one of his players, freshman Edward Powers who, according to the standards of the Minnesota College Conference at that time, was the equivalent of a superstar in the making. Powers was the crack forward on the 1923 Prep School team on which were based many of the hopes for the success of the college varsity in 1924. When Anthony Gornick, the captain-elect of 1923, failed to return to St. John's at the end of his sophomore year, the squad elected the Prep School phenomenon, even though he was only in his freshman year.

The team did not do well, despite the appearance on the squad of Eddie Miller, all-district center from Aitkin, Ray Humphrey (brother of Professor Steve Humphrey), Fred Budworth, Notker Thelen (now Fr. Constantine, O.S.B.), and Leo Terrahe. The conference record was one victory against six losses. The overall record was slightly better, four wins and ten losses.

The natural tendency to speculate and ask what is wrong when teams fail to improve found its inquirers at St. John's, and especially in 1924 when it was thought that the material had been steadily improving from one year to the next. In retrospect, however, it is easy to see that the problem lay in the fact that St. John's at the time was more like a junior college than a four-year college, as were those against which its teams were competing. It was the practice for all students, and not only athletes, to drop out of college at the end of their sophomore year in order to commence their professional studies in the universities, to go into business, or to enter the Benedictine Order or the seminary. What was wanting in the teams was not material but experience and maturity, both physical and mental. Championships are not usually won by freshmen and sophomores.

It was in recognition of this fact that Fr. Mark Braun, when he took office in 1925, made it an objective of his regime as dean to develop courses and programs on the junior and senior college levels—not for the sake of athletics, although he thought of that, but for the sake of the college itself. Failure in athletics was only a symptom of the general problem that faced the growing St. John's. It was due primarily to Fr. Mark's efforts on the academic level that St. John's was enabled to become a genuine four-year college, and eventually a major power in the athletic conference.

### — 1924-1925 —

The basketball squad began the 1925 season with three lettermen and two subs from the previous year. The Prep School program of building up high school athletes who became feeders for the college was beginning to pay off, for it contributed five first-class stars: Norbert Schoenecker, the two Schumacher twins, Carl (now Fr. Blase, O.S.B., of St. Gregory's Abbey, later a successful basketball coach in his own right) and Leo (now a pastor in the Sioux City, Iowa, Diocese); Henry Zimmermann, now Fr. Odo, O.S.B., a member of St. John's daughter house in Mexico City, and Joseph Conway. Finally, among the newcomers was George Durenberger, who in his four years of college at St. John's was to add luster to the name of the school in the fields of football and basketball. In addition, for the first time since 1920, St. John's appeared to be maturing as a four-year college, with sufficient athletic material to measure up to the requirements for strong competition in the MIAC.

1925 line-up: Walter Miller (captain), forward; Leo Terrahe, forward; Norbert Schoenecker, center. Reserves: George Durenberger,



Carl Schumacher, Leo Schumacher, Henry Zimmermann, and Joseph Conway.

— 1925-1926 —

But the fates were not propitious to the new coach, Gene Aldrich. The changes in the style of play and the lack of experienced personnel on the team did not permit the team to realize its potential. The three games won in conference play were a marked advance over the past two seasons but insufficient to save the team from a place in the conference cellar. The overall record for the season was six wins and eight losses.

Top performers of the season were Leo Terrahe and Walter Miller, both of whom were all-around athletes in football as well as basketball. Another star was Norbert Schoenecker, the outstanding basketball player in the 1924 Parochial Tournament held to determine the champion of the Catholic high schools of the state. Not mentioned in the *Sagatagan* as outstanding but already recognized as a star in the making was freshman George Durenberger: "His rangy build, his ability to cage tip-ins and long-range shots were the admiration of all who witnessed them. It does not require a vivid imagination to picture him as the holder of a regular berth on next year's varsity." Quite an understatement!

After unsuccessful seasons in both basketball and baseball, Gene Aldrich resigned in May, 1925, eventually to become a long-time coach at Cretin High School, St. Paul. His place was taken by Wilfred Houle, former football, baseball, and hockey star at St. Thomas College. His call for basketball candidates in the fall of 1925 was answered by some 40 men, the largest turn-out on record. The squad included Gordon Tierney, star forward on the 1922 team who returned after a three-year absence to team up with George Clifford at forward, George Durenberger at center and guard, and Norbert Schoenecker at guard. This nucleus was backed up by the Schumacher twins, Carl and Leo, Walter (Matt) Miller, Dan Buscher, and Fred Baker.

The Johnnies compiled a record of 10 wins in 17 engagements, several of which were with independent teams. In the conference their record was 5-5, good for fourth place. A bright spot in the rather colorless season was a resounding 40-20 victory over St. Thomas in the final game.

The title this year went to Gustavus.

— 1926-1927 —

The return of veterans Schoenecker, Clifford, and Durenberger, the maturing of Moynihan, Baker and Miller, and the addition of fresh-

men Mahlon Gann, Leo Manion, and Al Siebenand, gave the Johnnies a well-balanced squad. Although out-scored by 332-313, the team concentrated its scoring in certain games and ended with a 5-5 record in the conference which was good for fifth place.

Augsburg won the title this year for the first time.

— 1927-1928 —

The squad suffered crucial losses this year, as George Clifford left to enter medical school and Norb Schoenecker transferred to Gonzaga of Spokane, Washington. Lettermen Durenberger, Moynihan, Siebenand, and Baker formed the experienced nucleus around which Coach Houle built his team. He received help from Walter Woock, Bob Lowe, and Tom Bohnen, but the drive and experience of Schoenecker and the sharp-shooting and ball-handling of Clifford were sorely missed.

The team's record was 8-7 overall and 3-5 in the MIAC, which landed it in sixth place.

Gustavus again walked away with the title, for the third time in four years.

— 1928-1929 —

The 1928-29 season held forth promise of changing fortunes. George Durenberger was now a member of the coaching staff, sharing duties in both the Prep School and the college. Siebenand was developing into a sharpshooter from the outside and Vince Hensler at the other forward was also coming along fast. They received strong support from Tom Bohnen, Joe (Bucky) Hennen, Fred Holzapfel, Francis Weier, and Ken Raymond, who provided some height at the center position.

This season is remembered for the last-minute upset of the league-leading Concordia Cobbers. Siebenand, who is now George's neighbor at Upper Spunk Lake, near Avon, gives a vivid description of the game. Concordia had beaten St. John's earlier in the season, 31-24, and was leading the league as they and the Johnnies squared off at Concordia for the final game of the season. Before the game, the Concordia officials had invited the crowd to remain in their seats after the game to witness the presentation of the championship trophy and the awarding of gold balls to the players, after dispatching their last victim in their march to victory. The score at the end of the first half was 8-8. Neither team had had a lead of more than one basket in the second half, and with only seconds to play, the score was again tied at 16-16. Then Ken Raymond (now deceased) was fouled. He stepped to the free-throw line and sank the shot. Seconds after the ball was centered the gun went off. Final score: 17-16.



Bucky Hennen, '33, recalls that he and Fred Holzapfel contributed to the upset by taking turns guarding Helmrast, the Cobbers' high-scoring forward, keeping him from making a single basket all evening.

The St. Olaf team sent a telegram congratulating the Johnnies and thanking them for throwing the championship to them. The victory enabled the Johnnies to end up in third place with a 5-4 standing (7-6 overall). Al Siebenand was chosen all-conference on the second team, and Tom Bohnen and Lambert Keeley made honorable mention. This was the Johnnies' highest standing in the conference since 1920-21, the first year of the MIAC.

This gives us an excuse to take time out to ask why the scores in those days were so low. George Durenberger and Al Siebenand list several reasons. After every free-throw or basket, several seconds were wasted holding a center jump. Secondly, the usual way of shooting was a two-handed set-shot, with the player starting it about his knees, making it easy to guard. Gene Aldrich had been teaching the one-hand shot in 1924-25, but when players started using it under Coach Houle, he told them to cut out the circus stuff. Most coaches of that day considered it a trick shot of some kind.

The one-handed set-shot which was coming into use in the late 1920's has since evolved into the one-handed jump-shot of today.

A third reason for higher scoring is the fact that practically every city kid and most country kids now have a basketball hoop in their back yards and are practicing shooting from the time they can lift the ball. George also adds that modern youth get much better coaching in basketball from the grades through college. In the early days, a coach would be hired because he was a good football coach, but he would also have to coach basketball, and possibly, to piece out his salary, he might have to help with track or baseball. Usually, they could only excel in one sport, and too often basketball was considered merely an activity to keep the coach employed between the football and baseball seasons.

#### — 1929-1930 —

Captain Al Siebenand returned with four other lettermen in the fall of 1929—Ken Raymond, Lambert Keeley, Bill Geist, Vince Hensler, and several new prospects showed promise—especially Ambrose Osendorf (now Fr. Cassian, O.S.B.) and Roy Donaldson, both former Preps, and Rusty Hogan. However, St. John's suffered a loss of scoring power when Vince Hensler, running mate to Siebenand, broke his collarbone and was out of the line-up until mid-January.

Although the team won four non-conference games, including a 31-27 victory over St. Cloud State, they won only one conference game and ended up in the cellar. St. Olaf won the title.

This dismal conclusion of the basketball season, on top of a disastrous football season, motivated Coach Houle to turn in his resignation, effective June 30, 1930. The question was now whether a change of coaches could turn the Johnnies' fortunes around.

#### — 1930-1931 —

Upon Coach Houle's resignation, the school authorities began a search for a successor. As described in Chapter I, Joe Benda, who had starred in football at Notre Dame and had been a successful head coach at Duluth Cathedral in 1929-30, was chosen for the position. He reported on April 1, 1930, to take over spring football practice, while Bill Houle devoted his last few months to coaching the baseball team.

In basketball, as well as in football that fall, there was no noticeable improvement. Only five lettermen answered Benda's call for candidates—Bill Geist, Rusty Hogan, Jack Murphy, Ambrose Osendorf, and Bucky Hennen. Other prospects included Roy Donaldson, former Prep star, Martin Ernesti, and George Klasen, who later played an important role on the 1932 championship football team.

St. John's squeaked by St. Cloud State 23-22 on the home floor but lost another squeaker, 23-24, in the new St. Cloud State gym a week later. The Johnnies clipped Hamline twice, the second time on the strength of a last second basket by Roy Donaldson. The highlight of the season was a 40-32 victory over a powerful Gustavus club, in which Osendorf made 17 points for St. John's.

However, St. John's won only three conference games (4-11 overall) to rank seventh in the conference. Concordia won the title with an undefeated season.

#### — 1931-1932 —

Although the Johnnie fortunes in football took a turn for the better in 1931, the same could not be said for basketball. Red Fairbanks, former Prep star of whom much had been expected, dropped out of school, and Bill Geist was injured in mid-season and dropped off the squad. Donaldson at center and Osendorf at forward, with the support of George Klasen and Bucky Hennen and Zook Iten, piled up points, but usually not quite enough. The Johnnies won only two conference games (5-10 overall) and finished again in seventh place. Hamline won the title for the first time and began its long reign as the winningest