

# Catholic Grade School Invitational Basketball Tournament History

Way back in 1959, Father G. Mankowski, S.J. and Jack Andrews put together a plan for a grade school basketball tournament, "The Catholic Midget League Playoff." Joe Harden, Homer Cook, William Kucinski, and Don Sweeney assisted with the first tourney at Gesu Gym. Little did they know that this trial playoff would become the tremendous success that it is today.

Three years later, Monsignor Edmund J. Goebel, Ph.D., Superintendent of Schools, in a Department of Education Bulletin for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, dated February 21, 1962 (page 3), sanctioned one and only one basketball tournament. The Monsignor approved the name "Milwaukee Archdiocesan Catholic Grade School Invitational Basketball Tournament."

The number of tournament entries doubled from 16 to 32 in 1966, and two years later, the games were held at Gesu Gym for the final time.

The competition moved to St. Josephat for two years, where a new attendance mark was established. The Very Rev. Constantine E. Zielinski, O.F.M. Conv. and his parishioners proved to be substantial and hospitable hosts.

## 1971

The tournament found a permanent home at DeSales Preparatory Seminary this year. The Milwaukee Serra Club took on the sponsorship responsibilities and agreed to handle necessary details on behalf of the Seminary.

St. John de Nepomuc was triumphant in the first meeting at DeSales, toppling St. Gregory the Great in the finals. St. John came into the contest as the underdog, but managed to pull off a 46-36 upset.

## 1972

St. Gregory the Great was touted as the top team in the city, but it took three overtimes to defeat Ss. Peter and Paul, 35-33 in a semi-final confrontation. It was upset time again in the championship, as Holy Cross tripped favored St. Gregory the Great 45-40.

## 1973

St. John de Nepomuc tried to regain its title this year, but St. Matthew held on to capture a 36-33 squeaker.

## 1974

A pair of divisional foes squared off in this title match. The favorite, St. John Kanty, prevailed over St. Veronica by a 50-42 count.

## 1975

Although St. Matthew handled St. Anne during their regular season battles, it was a different story at tourney time. St. Anne nearly made a rout of it, stopping St. Matthew 54-42.

## 1976

Ss. Peter and Paul pulled off a come-from-behind thriller over St. Anne as superstars Mike Lemon and Bill Schwartz came up with a sound performance. The final tally was 50-46.

## 1977

Dark horse Blessed Sacrament earned the right to play in the title bout when Bill Lutz hit a jumper at the buzzer in overtime to down St. Sebastian in semi-final competition. Their next foe, Holy Family, entered the championship game with an unblemished 26-0 slate, but underdog Blessed Sacrament pulled off a 50-41 upset.

## 1978

The tournament lost two valuable figures this year. Elmer Beste, a long-time committee member, retired. One of the original members, Joe Harden, passed away after this tourney. The competition saw a pair of divisional foes battle. The favorite fell again, as St. Jude lost to Christ King.

## 1979

Two divisional rivals went at it again this year. St. Anne and St. Thomas had clashed four times during the regular season with St. Anne coming out on top in every meeting. In the finals the two teams battled into two overtimes before St. Anne once again prevailed.

## 1980

St. Sebastian pulled off another championship game upset, by overthrowing favored St. Nicholas by a few buckets.

Don Sweeney, another original founder of the tournament, resigned. Dave Sternig and Tom Kamoske were appointed to the tournament committee to serve along with Charles Nevismal, Frank Crivello, and John Burns.

## 1981

St. Anne's became the first team to win the tournament three times as they downed Holy Angels 36-33. Anthony Houston scored 14 for the losers and was named the tourney's Most Valuable Player.

## 1982

First-time tourney winner St. Agnes of Butler jumped out to an early lead and coasted to a 38-25 triumph over St. Jude the Apostle. Joe Spredemann paced the champs with 14 points, while Peter Ament added 14 for St. Jude.

St. Anthony was the only team to return to the final four, stifling St. Joseph in a 43-42 thriller for third place.

## 1983

In the final tourney held at DeSales Complex, Holy Family stifled Blessed Sacrament, 47-41, behind MVP Chad Hammen's 23 points. Hammen scored eight second quarter points to spark Holy Family to a 27-17 halftime advantage.

Kevin Murphy topped Blessed Sacrament with 14 tallies. St. Bernard claimed third place honors with a 42-34 victory over St. Rita.