

History of the Padre Serra Tournament

In 1959, Father Max 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 tournament at Gesu Gym. Little did they know that this trial playoff would become the tremendous success that it is today.

In 1962, 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."

In 1966, the number of tournament entries doubled from 16 to 32 teams. Two years later, the games were held at Gesu Gym for the final time.

In 1968, 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.

In 1970, the tournament began a 13 year stint at DeSales Seminary, now known as the Archbishop Cousins Catholic Center. During this period, Monsignor Frank Scheider was a friend and supporter of the tournament. Also, during this time, the Seminarians often were seen assisting in the preparation and selling of "snacks". The Serra Club of Milwaukee assumed the sponsorship responsibilities for the tournament and agreed to handle necessary details on behalf of the Seminary. It became known as the "Serra Invitational Basketball Tournament".

In 1979, to provide for girls participation in the tournament, cheerleading competition was added.

In 1982, due to increased interest, the tournament was expanded once more, girls basketball competition was introduced.

In 1983, further changes came when Rev. John P. Hanley, Superintendent of Milwaukee Catholic Schools, in a letter dated December 21, 1983 to the Serra Club of Milwaukee, authorized the tournament to be held at Notre Dame High School's Marian Hall. The administrator, Father James Czajchowski made us welcome and supported the tournament.

In 1985, the name "Padre Serra Tournament" was Adopted. This better defines who the tournament is named for – Padre Junipero Serra.

In 1987, in order to broaden the base of participation, the tournament committee extended invitations to teams located beyond the city limits of Milwaukee.

In 1989, the tournament returned to the Archbishop Cousins Catholic Center, formerly DeSales Seminary, our host being the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

In 1991, due to declining participation of cheerleading squads, the decision was made to discontinue the cheerleading competition. The tournament returned to its original intent-providing a “basketball playoff” for grade school teams.

In 1992, the number of girls teams was increased to 18.

In 1993, a total of 34 boys teams and 20 girls teams participated.

In 1995, a total of 32 boys teams and 24 girls teams participated.