

Talent, luck led DeSales to four titles

By Barbara Ann Homick
Staff writer

GENEVA — When Geneva DeSales baseball players Jim McDermott, Frank Pane Jr., and Jim and Joe Vedora were 12-years-old, they played on the same Little League all-star team.

McDermott recalled that the four ball players were a little naive back then.

"We thought we were big shots and knew everything," said the catcher.

Six years and four sectional titles later, McDermott said he realized that the four-some didn't know quite as much as they thought they did back then.

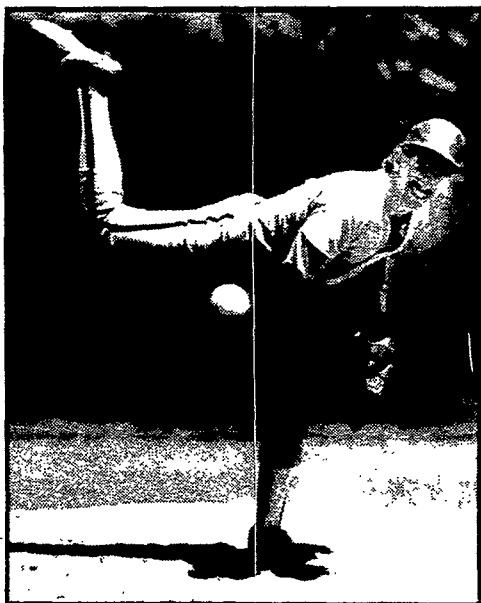
"We did nothing but learn for four years," said McDermott about his baseball career at DeSales.

During his Little League career, McDermott split his duties as a pitcher and shortstop. During his freshman year at DeSales, McDermott was offered the chance to be a starting pitcher for the junior varsity squad, but he had his eye on the varsity instead.

At that time, Coach Frank Pane was looking for a varsity catcher so he offered McDermott the position. McDermott was hesitant, however, because he had played every position but catcher during his Little League days.

The 18-year-old Geneva resident recalled that the DeSales coach was willing to work with him so McDermott decided to take him up on his offer.

McDermott recalled feeling little pressure behind the plate in 1988 because the baseball Saints were very young and they were not defending sectional champions. In fact, DeSales had not won a championship in baseball since 1984.



Pitcher Joe Vedora has plans to play for Hobart College this fall.



DeSales catcher Jim McDermott (center) was mobbed by his teammates after the Saints won their fourth consecutive sectional title at Silver Stadium June 8.

Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer

By the end of the 1988 season, the Saints had secured a record of 14-3 and clinched the Section 5, Class C title by beating Pavilion, 8-7, with a late-game rally. After that win, "the comeback kids," led by McDermott, Pane Jr. and both Vedoras, were on their way to building a baseball dynasty.

Pitcher Jim Vedora recalled that the pressure began to mount during his sophomore year. The team had begun a winning streak at the end of its freshman season, providing the burden to keep it going the following year.

In 1989, the Saints again earned a sectional title — this time in Class D — by nipping Bradford, 6-5. The Saints finished a perfect 15-0 to capture their second consecutive title.

McDermott said DeSales players really started feeling the strain from the winning streak during his junior year. And as the Saints' winning streak continued, many followers of DeSales baseball looked to the foursome to carry the team.

The Saints ended the 1990 season undefeated at 17-0 after winning their third consecutive sectional title — second in a row in Class D — with a 5-3 win over Canaseraga.

By the time the 1991 season arrived, many of the Saints were again tense over keeping the streak alive after putting three titles and two undefeated seasons under their belts.

McDermott said Coach Pane never paid much attention to the winning streak. "He knew it would be the kiss of death," said McDermott.

In fact, McDermott said he almost felt relief when Naples snapped DeSales' winning streak at 47 games. The DeSales catcher said it took the pressure off the players, who could concentrate on making it to the sectionals.

The road was tough this year, however,

because the Saints were plagued by several key injuries. Jim Vedora sat out the first six games of the season with an injured shoulder, and McDermott missed 12 contests after tearing ligaments in his ankle.

After his injury, McDermott's doctors predicted that he wouldn't be able to play the rest of the season. Yet, by the first-round of sectionals, the catcher was back behind the plate.

"My doctor told me to shave it (the ankle), tape it, air cast it and be careful," McDermott said.

The Saints captured their fourth title this year — this time back in Class C — after defeating Campbell, 3-1, at Silver Stadium.

Now, the four seniors who have known each other since grade school — in fact, the Vedoras and the Panes are cousins — are leaving DeSales for collegiate fields.

McDermott and Joe Vedora will join the team at Hobart College in the fall. Meanwhile, Jim Vedora should be a starter for St. John Fisher College, while Pane Jr. will play at Community College of the Finger Lakes.

Joe Vedora acknowledged that luck definitely played a major factor in the Saints' successes during his high school career. He credited much of the team's good fortune to coaching and lots of practice.

Pane Jr. said he never expected to be such an impact player at DeSales. "One

sectional would have been great, but four was unbelievable," he said.

Coach Pane, who has announced his retirement from coaching baseball at DeSales, acknowledged that he is sad to see the team graduate.

"They (McDermott, his son, Frank, and the two Vedoras) weren't always the best, so we had others on the team to fill in," said the 11th-year coach. "I was going to leave last year but they wanted me to stay. We had a lot of fun over the years.

"They were the four that started together and ended together," he concluded.

SPORT SHORTS



Bishop Hickey Golf Day set for Lima June 27

LIMA — The third annual Bishop Hickey Golf Day for priests, transitional deacons and seminarians is scheduled for Thursday, June 27 at Lima Country Club, Route 15.

Players will tee off between noon and 1 p.m. Cost for 18 holes of golf and a cart is \$18. A steak dinner, which will be held around 6:30 p.m., is also \$18. Both golf fees and the dinner can be purchased for \$35.

The event is being sponsored by Fathers Gerald Connor, Bernard Dollen, John Firpo, Lawrence Gross, William Leone and Jeremiah Moynihan. The deadline to register for the golf day is June 22. Checks made payable to Father Moynihan can be sent to: 411 Canisteo St., Hornell, N.Y. 14843.

Correction

The Geneva DeSales baseball player pictured on page 11 of the June 13 *Catholic Courier* was misidentified. The player was Jim McDermott. We regret the error.

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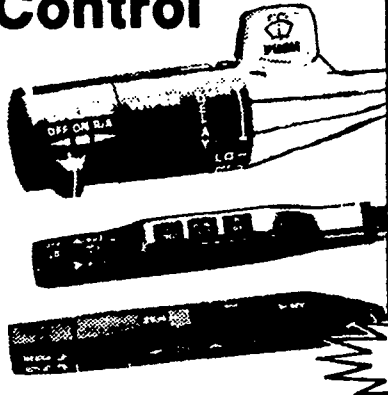


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