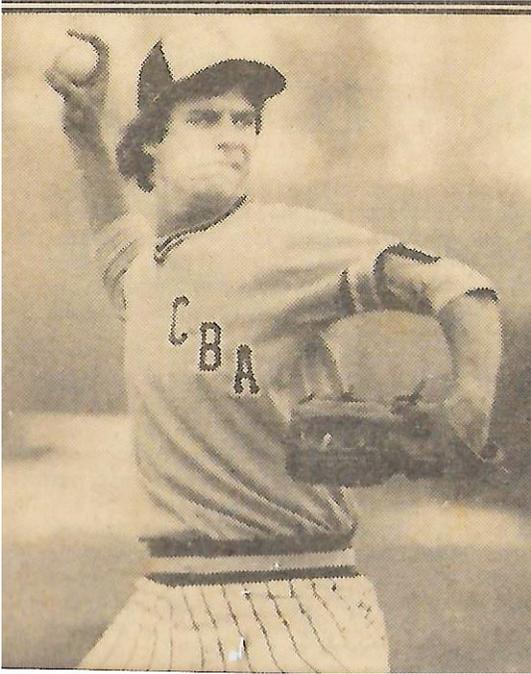




It was the winter of 1974 - 75 and a young 8th grade athlete from the Strathmore area was contemplating his options for high school. His current school Most Holy Rosary was an option, as was Bishop Ludden. But Paul Headd, whose son Marty was attending CBA at the time, was trying to persuade Mike Burns to follow the same path. Now CBA just had its' open house last weekend for perspective students and their parents to try to convince them that CBA is the place parents to send their children. But for Mike it didn't take an open house, it took a basketball game! He attended the CBA – Sacred Heart game in December, two of the top programs in the area facing off on a Sunday afternoon. The atmosphere was electric with a big raucous crowd and an excitingly competitive contest. On that day Coach Felasco's charges won on two fronts. They beat the number one team in the state and they swayed young Mike to don the purple and gold; a great coup for CBA, and a life changing move for Mike Burns.

Mike had always shown a propensity for athletics and Basketball and Baseball were his two loves. In his first two years at CBA, while a couple of guys named Headd and Belcher were leading the Brothers hoop fortunes, he worked his way up that ladder in one of the top programs in the state. When it was his turn as junior, he made the most of it. Bob Felasco was entering what would be his last year as head coach and he joined Danny Fletcher and Greg Dunn on the Varsity. In his senior year, he really came into his own. With new coach Jack Conroy taking over he counted on Mike and Bobby Vinciguerra to be the leaders of the squad. The co captains formed a formidable one two punch. That season he averaged over 17 points per game and scored 21 or more points 4 times including a 26-point effort against Corcoran. Mike had a great jump shot but was tough inside as well, averaging nearly 8 rebounds a game. Coach Conroy said of Burns "He had a knack for always being around the ball, and was in constant motion." For his efforts, Mike was chosen as a first team All-City selection.

Where Mike really made his mark was on the baseball diamond. He was chosen for the varsity as a freshman, when coach Tom Petroff went with a youth movement. He and classmate and basketball teammate Bob Vinciguerra joined sophomore Greg Dunn and a bunch of talented juniors as starters on the Brothers defending league champion team. The youngsters earned valuable experience that year to prepare them for the next three



years of success. Before the 1977 there was a coaching change. Fiery Pete Birmingham was hired to take over the program. He inherited a talent filled program with future college stars Dunn, Pat Murphy, Mike Zamba and molded them into a championship team with Burns manning the hot corner. In Mikes' junior year he moved to the mound where he really began to get noticed and developed into one of the areas' top pitchers. Double digit strikeout totals were the norm when he took the mound. He struck out a season high 12 vs. Bishop Ludden and while Mike had a tremendous junior year, earning All-City honors, the team came up one game short of repeating as league champions. So, for his final year, on a team with 10 seniors including Tim Glisson and Fred Manarra, they were on a mission. Birmingham said before the season that "I don't want to add to the pressure but if we can play to our potential we should win", quite a bold statement for a high school coach. Even before the year started the accolades were already coming in for Mike. He was tabbed by the post standard as one of the three most talked about

pitchers in the area. And he lived up to the hype; 13 k's and a one hitter against Auburn, 12 strikeouts in an extra inning game against Watertown. But the two 1 – 0 games against Ludden were his most memorable. The first was a nine strikeout no hitter but the second game was even more interesting.

Those of us that know Coach Birmingham, understand that he is a no-nonsense kind of guy and not everyone could handle his style of coaching. However, Mike thrived under his tutelage. In fact, Mike attributes his hard-nosed style of play and toughness to Pete. In the second Ludden game, Mike was not the starting pitcher. Instead he was put in an unfamiliar position of playing left field. As fate would have it, early in the game Mikes' inexperience at the position showed and he played a routine fly ball into a triple. An incensed Birmingham came out to the mound and motioned for Burns to come in. Assuming he was going to be replaced, he hurried in to his coach to take the perfunctory tongue lashing and then go to the bench. Instead, Birmingham told him, "you got us into this mess, get us out"! So, Mike became the reliever, he did get out of the inning and the Brothers eventually prevailed winning another 1 – 0 decision. This time the team won their league title, the second in three years. Again, Mike was selected to the All-City team.



After high school, Mike wanted to continue his baseball career. He looked at several schools but decided on LeMoyne College, following the path of other CBA players like Tom Fletcher and Greg Dunn. The Dolphins had a pretty fair team and a decent pitching staff. The rotation one year was Mike, Tom Browning, Jim DeShaies and Mike Junior. I'm not sure of their pitching order but that's a pretty formidable staff nonetheless. Mike had a great career on the heights, winning over twenty games. His senior year he led the staff with a 4 – 1 record and an ERA of .66, a fitting end to a great career.

Mike, you had a distinguished yourself on the field and on the court and you have always made it known that you were proud to be a Brother. Tonight, we want to show you that we are proud of you as you take your place in our LaSallian Athletic Hall of Fame.