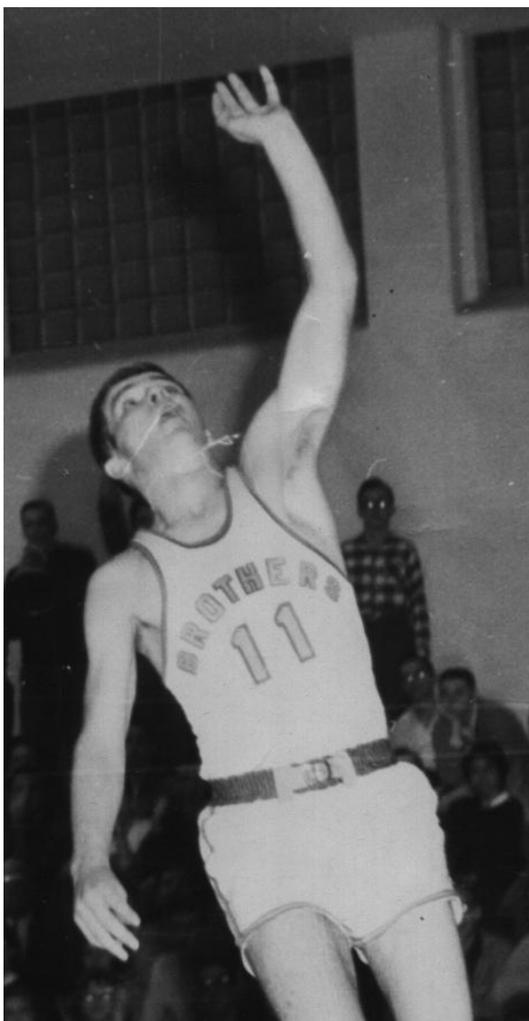


What is a coach? Webster says that it is one who instructs players in the fundamentals of a competitive sport and directs team strategy. But we all know that a true coach is much more than that. A coach needs to be able to understand his players and find ways that to relate to them and get them to perform to the best of their ability. Well for over 40 years, that was Tom Cooney. From high school to college, males or Females it didn't matter, Tom just loved to coach and was really pretty good at it.

But how and where did it all begin. Well, lets' pick up the story in 1956.. a young Tom Cooney first went to St John the Evangelist and then to Lincoln Junior High, getting ready to move onto high school. He loved playing sports baseball, football, basketball it didn't matter. He and many other northsiders were tutored by eventual Father Conti, a man who taught them about the dedication and discipline needed to succeed in athletics. Tom's brother, Joe, had already graduated from CBA and was always one of the leaders of his class. So it was only natural that Tom would follow in his brothers' footsteps. In fact, he was like many of us; the reason he went to CBA was... BECAUSE HIS FATHER TOLD HIM TO GO THERE.

Now Tom was always a hard working athlete. Not the tallest or fastest but there was a reason for that.... It was because he was actually the youngest. Tom started school at a young age so he graduated from high school when he was only 16 years old. Now that made him in some cases two years younger than his classmates. That fact haunted him for his first three years at CBA because his father wouldn't allow him to play football until he weighed 150 pounds. Finally by his senior year he made his fathers' requirement and got the opportunity to play for veteran coach Walt Ludovico. Having never played before, Tom had to start at the bottom and work his way up... and that he did. By halfway through the season not only was he the starting quarterback but also was named one of the permanent captains of the team.

But Tom's first love was always basketball. Playing for veteran coach John Gibbons, Tom teamed with George Deptula and became part of CBA's 1 – 2 scoring punch. In their senior year alone, George and Tom combined for over 400 points between them. OK, so maybe George scored 300 of them, but someone had to pass him the ball, right? For his efforts Tom was named first team all City. .. in fact it was written that "Tom was one of the cleverest floor men in the league. Although high scorers are normally all star shoe ins, Tom was the exception to the rule. Without him, the Brothers certainly would have finished down in the standings." This was high praise for the 16 year old senior who was still growing, maturing and getting stronger as time went on.



After graduating he moved on to LeMoyne College, another tough decision at the time that was made easier BECAUSE HIS FATHER TOLD HIM TO GO THERE. He would continue his academic career and hoped to continue playing basketball. But before his sophomore season, Tom was having second thoughts. It took some encouraging from Legendary Coach Tom Niland just to get him to try out for the team. But in the end, he was glad he did. As a soph, Tom was a role player for the Dolphins but was the hardest working player in the program. He continued to improve, contributing more as a junior. By his senior year, he and the team blossomed. That year, LeMoyne finished with an 18 – 6 record and qualified for the NCAA playoffs. That mark is still one of the top 5 seasons, in term of winning percentage in school history. And Tom was the leader. As team captain, **Tom** scored over 300 points (this time all by himself). He had matured as a player and personally and had earned the respect of his teammates and coaches. For his efforts, he was chosen LeMoyne Colleges athlete of the year for 1964.

Tom knew what he wanted to do when he got out of Lemoyne... he wanted to coach and work with young people. Even before he earned his college diploma he was hired to replace John Dobbertin as the varsity basketball coach at St Vincents. And that would start a coaching career that would span 40 years. He was lured back to LeMoyne as an assistant coach, and when Coach Niland retired in 1973, he was selected as the second coach in the schools' history. He coached there for 18 years (coaching the men and women during that time) He also had coaching stints at Jamesville Dewitt, Liverpool and Baldwinsville and has become one of the most respected coaches in the area. It takes a special person to be an

effective coach for that long. How did he do it? Former Teammate and Hall of Fame Coach Jim McGrath summed it up best when he wrote “Tom has an uncanny ability to work with young people in a productive manner. He encourages individuals to feel their own worth, dignity and importance as human beings. He shows a sincere interest in all of his players and treats them like family. His values and integrity are beyond reproach. As far as I’m concerned that sums up what we as coaches aspire to be and might be a fitting addendum to Websters definition. It certainly explains why Tom has been successful for so many years.

Tom, you have dedicated your life to athletics and working with our young people. We take pride in the fact that you got you start here as a Brothers Boy and now ask you to take your place in the LaSallian Athletic Hall of Fame.

