



Joseph Byrne was the second youngest of ten children. The family called St. Lucy's their second home. After completing two years of high school there, Joe had the opportunity to follow his brother John Class of '23 to Christian Brothers Academy. He played basketball and baseball for three years and football in his last year graduating in 1927. During the 1925-26 season, the CBA basketball team achieved a 20-2 record including a 41-34 victory over the Passaic High School "Wonders" to win the 1926 Glens Falls Tournament. Joe played stellar defense throughout the tourney and scored six points in the semi-final game. The 1926 baseball team posted a record of 11-1-1. Joe, a fine hitter, superb bunter, and a speedster on the base path, completed his second year of errorless ball at second base, handling 68 chances without an error.



During Joe's last year at CBA, he quarterbacked the football team. Again, he played guard on the basketball team that compiled a 17-2 record. At the 1927 Glens Falls Tournament they trounced Passaic High 35-23 to become the first team to win this tournament two years in a row. So effective was Joe defensively that a frustrated Passaic player picked Joe up and hurled him into the spectator stands. Joe concluded his high school baseball career on a team, which had a 12-2 record. During this year again he hit well, ran the base paths with blinding speed and played errorless ball at second base.

During the 1927-28 basketball season, Joe, together with former CBA teammates Tom Allen, Joe Sheedy and Francis Maloney, played for the St. Lucy's Church team in the Knights of Columbus League and won the Syracuse Diocesan Championship. After the season Joe attended Dean Academy for the second school semester where he played baseball. After returning from Dean Academy, Joe drifted into coaching as well as officiating. He began his coaching career at St. Lucy's in 1931. His first two teams defeated other Catholic schools as well as teams in the county, from Buffalo, Utica and New York City. Perhaps the most impressive game was a 30-28 victory over the Syracuse University Freshmen team. In 1936 St Lucy's became the first team to win the Parochial League playoffs, a feat they duplicated in 1937. After winning 79% of his parochial league contests, Joe had to retire from coaching to build up his service station business

Joe's second stint at St Lucy's, from 1940-44, pitted him against his brother John who had built a powerful team at St Vincent's. After winning 25 consecutive games, St Vincent's was defeated by St. Lucy's. World War

It began to affect everyone, even high school basketball teams. Rosters changed daily as young men left school to serve in the armed forces. Joe himself took on a couple of new jobs to add to what he already was doing. He drove a prisoners of war bus and he also drove a truck back and forth to Rochester.

In 1944 Joe Byrne returned to his alma mater, CBA, as basketball and baseball coach. In his first season he guided CBA to a second place finish behind champion Vocational. It is noteworthy that Vocational's only loss was to CBA. Also during this season came Joe's all time favorite game. CBA went to Rochester to take on a powerful Aquinas team. At halftime they found themselves on the wrong side of a 29-12 score. Obviously Joe sent a loud, clear wakeup call to the team who returned to the court like the Golden Tornadoes of old. They blew away the Aquinas team 39-32, holding the Friars to but three points in the second half while scoring twenty-seven. The 1945-46 basketball team won the league and playoff championship as they did again in 1947-48. In 1946-47 they were co-champions with Central.

In his three years as baseball coach, Joe's teams won three league titles as well as three Syracuse titles. Even though it was most difficult for Joe to resign, he had to attend to his service station business to support his growing family.

In 1952 Bishop Harrison, then the Cathedral Athletic Director, asked Joe to coach the basketball team after their coach had to resign at the last minute. When Scotch Mahaney, Rosary's basketball coach, passed away during the summer of 1953, Father Jack Carey, who was an outstanding player on his 1932-33 St. Lucy's team, asked Joe to take over the reins for both basketball and baseball. In 1958 Joe retired from coaching to spend more time not only at the service station, but also at his job with the City of Syracuse.

Joe remained an active basketball official until an accident permanently sidelined him in 1971. Joe was a lifelong athlete. He enjoyed tennis and golf, but his favorite recreation was playing handball at local firehouses for more than forty years, once winning the Syracuse Firemen Handball Tournament in the 1930s.

When Joe passed away in 1983, boxes of letters from the war years were found stored away at the service station and in his home. From 1942 through 1946, the service station became a "special services" post for soldiers, sailors, marines, airmen and coastguardsmen. The addresses read like St. Lucy's and CBA basketball and baseball rosters. Not only did Joe constantly write to his players away in the war, he encouraged friends and students alike to do the same.



Over the years Joe wore many different hats and received many different honors. He served as president of both the New York State City Sealers Association as well as the Central Board of Officials. In 1974 he was the first recipient of the Ancient Order of Hibernians Coach's Recognition Award. Probably the two that were closest to his heart were the plaque he received in 1962 from CBA acknowledging his distinguished service as a basketball coach and the plaque from the CBA class of 1927 for his loyalty and generous service saluting him on the golden jubilee of his graduation. As an invalid from 1971 until his death in 1983, Joe continued to follow athletics at CBA with pride.