

1904 Football team. Photos courtesy of the University of St. Thomas Archives.



1945 Football team. Photos courtesy of the University of St. Thomas Archives.



Tommie Johnnie at Target Field (2017). Photo by Carolyn Meyer.

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A LETTER FROM THE TOMMIEMEDIA DIRECTOR

Dear Readers,

We at TommieMedia are excited to bring to you a special edition of "The Aquin" that looks back at St. Thomas' past and anticipates its new Division I journey.

Thank you for continuing to trust TommieMedia as your source for news that affects and interests the campus community. As student journalists, we are passionate about sharing the stories of St. Thomas, and we value your confidence in us.

Our staff has been working hard these past few months getting this special edition ready, and we hope you'll enjoy it. You can find additional stories about the Tommies' Division I move -- and much more -- at TommieMedia.com.

Roll Toms! #AqIsBack #TMDI

Justin Amaker

Director, TommieMedia

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Photo by: Andrew Brinkman

COACH CARUSO: *'WE'RE GOING TO BE WHO WE ARE'*

Tommies football coach Glenn Caruso sat down with TommieMedia and reflected on his expectations for the season ahead. He talked about changes, team culture and what's to come as a Division I program in the Pioneer League.

By Olivia Paradise

How have you been preparing your team for Division I?

“Internally, recruiting and utilizing the COVID blanket waiver to get as many legitimate practices in and competitive opportunities for our current student-athletes. And then external effects. That’s a term you want to use but it would be trying to familiarize ourselves with the league we’re going in. When (our coaching staff) came here 13 years ago, we went out of our way to get to know the (MIAC) before we made some key decisions as far as recruiting, staffing schematics. And I think, much like a great running back, if you just take a beat to try and acknowledge or recognize the environment you’re in, you’re more likely to be able to have success in that environment.”

What changes will we see?

“We’re going to be who we are, we’re going to have the same culture, we’re going to have the same attitude, we’re going to have the same thought processes but scaling it out to a trip to California, or New York, or wherever it ends up being, as opposed to 3 miles up Snelling Avenue, is definitely a large difference. ... So, the same thing that I would say in recruiting: It’s controlling the quality of the culture as we scale it out to a larger footprint.”

How has recruiting been going, and what is drawing players to UST over other football programs?

“The enormity of players that want to come here is something that we have to work through, but I think it speaks to the attention that the school is able to get because of something like Division I athletics, and we’re always going to share the same message: this just gives us a higher mountaintop from which to shout it.”



Photo by: Megan Vosbeek



Photo Courtesy: Carolyn Meyer



Photo by: Carly Hack



Photo by: Carolyn Meyer

What do you look for in players?

“It’s understanding that we’re blessed to be able to utilize football to grow to be better husbands, fathers, leaders in our community. At the end of the day, the focus has never been about the win, the focus has never been about points or the shutout or the yards or the sacks. It’s all part of a larger process to teach our young men how to live the best life that they can, and to be able to deal with adversities that will inevitably be at their feet, and serve other people. So, from that point of view, it’s being ridiculously intentional on the front end of who we are and who we’re not, and making sure that the type of person who we attract to the University of St. Thomas is one who is thoughtful and selfless.”

What is your goal for this upcoming season?

“A lot, a lot. The growth of culture. Knowledge of a new environment. That environment is not just Division I; that environment is a new league as well. Being able to be us at the highest of levels and be true to the core beliefs that we have. Those will be the biggest tests that we have, without a doubt, and I’m not trying to downplay the fact that the offensive line (and) that our defense will have to go against will be much, much larger and stronger and all those things—I get it. But the learning portion of it is what’s going to be pivotal but also what’s going to be the most exciting. And yes, there’s a lot of work to be done, but I will tell you, it’s not a tougher transition than when we got here and we took over a program that had to have just about every facet of that culture. We readjusted, recalibrated so we’ve done it before. And this is just the next chapter of our entrepreneurial journey, and it’s pretty exciting.”

What are you most excited about in moving to Division I?

“I can certainly tell you the new opponents and the travel and all this other stuff, but I’m really hoping that the biggest blessings and the things that will mean the most to us are things that we’ll find out along the journey, and I’m looking forward to it.”

PLAYING LIKE A GIRL

By Cam Kauffman

When St. Thomas became coeducational 44 years ago, women's athletics began with eight sports. Since that time, St. Thomas' women's sports have gone from "comic relief" to leading the charge in championships.

Betsey Murphy and Renee Twomey made history as two of the first St. Thomas female athletes to compete at the varsity level in September 1977. Murphy and Twomey's cross-country team consisted of only three women. In total, about 200 women tried out for basketball, softball, cross-country, track, swimming, volleyball, tennis and golf that year.



Old soccer jerseys served as uniforms in the early years. Notice the stenciled number 15. (photographer unknown)

Many women participated in multiple sports, including 1981 St. Thomas alumna Michele Hanson, then known as Michele O'Neil. Hanson played basketball, softball and volleyball.

"We didn't have any uniforms at first. For volleyball we wore the men's soccer uniforms because ours hadn't come, so there were some growing pains but (it was) fun and a way to meet people," Hanson said. "It's just amazing to me to watch how successful St. Thomas has grown to become in women's sports over these years."

Indeed, women's teams have accounted for nine of St. Thomas' 16 national championships. Yet early on, Tommies women's athletics were viewed as something of a joke, according to the school newspaper *The Aquin*.

An *Aquin* article published in April 1978 stated: "As with any first-year organization, women's sporting teams have provided their followers with a few chuckles. The women's teams at St. Thomas don't particularly enjoy being looked upon as comic relief."

Hanson admitted that in some ways it was funny seeing the volleyball team wearing soccer jerseys. She also chuckled at the quirky facilities back then.

"The gym for basketball was on the third floor of the old O'Shaughnessy building. There were dead spots on the floor," she said. "I think it was a home advantage if you knew where the dead spots were."

Eventually, Hanson learned to adjust to the floor just as St. Thomas coaches and female athletes learned to adjust to Division III competition.

"What I liked about St. Thomas was that we basically seamlessly added the women's sports with the same expectations that we had for the men's," said Joe Sweeney, who has coached the Tommies women's cross-country team since 1980. "As a result, I think we were ahead of a lot of other schools."

In 1981, the women's cross-country team became the first St. Thomas team, male or female, to win a national title. Sweeney coached his team to five national championships between 1981 and 1987.

Tommies women's sports evolve into powerhouse.

As for the move to Division I, Sweeney hopes that history might repeat itself.

"As we proved when we went co-ed back in 1977-1978 and got our women's teams up to speed quickly, I think the same thing will happen as we make this transition into the Summit League," Sweeney said.

Women's basketball coach Ruth Sinn holds similar expectations for her team as she prepares for her 17th season at the team's helm.

With 18 regular-season MIAC championships, a 211-21 regular-season record since January 2010 and 32 postseason trips in the last 33 years, the Tommies are ready to compete at the next level, Sinn believes.

“WE’RE NOT JUMPING (TO DIVISION I). WE’RE MOVING.”

"We're not jumping (to Division I). We're moving," she said. "One of the reasons that we were eliminated from the MIAC was because of our standard of excellence and the way we approach and utilize the talent we're able to have here and the excellence that we've achieved."

Future St. Thomas athletes will be able to leave their mark as the first Tommies to transition to Division I, just as first-year athletes like Hanson left their mark in 1977.

"I mean, I was there at the very beginning, so I'll take a little credit," Hanson said with a laugh.

From one history maker to another, Hanson offered some words of encouragement to future female athletes at the university.

"Enjoy the moment," she said. "The opportunity to play sports at a college level is a gift, and the opportunity to play at the highest level is really amazing."

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MEMORIES FROM THE MIAC

CHRIS OLEAN: 'FRIENDLY RIVALRIES'

Baseball coach Chris Olean has been with the Tommies for 24 years as a player, assistant coach and head coach, and in those years the team has never had a losing season. In 13 years, Olean has led the Tommies to eight MIAC championships as well as a national runner-up finish in 2021.

Olean remembers the 2001 season fondly, as that team went on to win a national championship. Another memory that stood out came during a game against St. Olaf when the Tommies' number one pitcher got off to a rough start until he was hit in the face by a line drive, leading to a bloody mouth.

"We go out to check on him and he's like, 'there's no way I'm coming out of this game,'" Olean said. "Somehow that woke him up and he proceeded to finish the game and I don't think he gave up a hit the rest of the way and literally struck out almost every single guy just throwing fast balls down the middle."

ST. THOMAS HOCKEY PROGRAMS ADD TO LEAGUES' DISTINCTLY MINNESOTA FLAVOR

By Justin Amaker

Minnesota will have all the more reason to call itself the State of Hockey when the St. Thomas hockey teams begin Division I play this fall, joining an already crowded field of Minnesota schools.

The men join the revived Central Collegiate Hockey Association consisting of Bemidji State and Minnesota State-Mankato, along with five schools in Michigan and Ohio. The women join the Western Collegiate Hockey Association, the home of all six of Minnesota's DI women's hockey teams along with Wisconsin and Ohio State.



Photo by: Justin Amaker

The CCHA existed from 1971 through 2013, when it was discontinued. One member of the former CCHA was Miami University of Ohio, which was coached by Rico Blasi from 1999 to 2019.

While the RedHawks did not return to the CCHA, Blasi did by becoming the Tommies' inaugural Division I men's hockey coach. He will fill the big shoes of former coach Jeff Boeser, who was involved as a player and coach at St. Thomas for nearly 40 years.

"Our values and the things that we believe in as a university are going to always remain a big part of our program," Blasi said.

A number of former players have not remained. But several, including sophomore forward Logan Ommen, managed to make the cut in the transition to DI.

"I came here knowing I didn't have a guaranteed spot," Ommen said. "My goal was to make that team, and it's a great school either way, so even if it didn't work out, it'd be OK."

The WCHA, now a women's-only conference, started in 1951 as a men's league.

Women's competition was added in 1999, and seven of the 10 programs that comprised the men's WCHA left this past season to join the CCHA, disbanding the men's conference.

Joel Johnson, who spent 11 seasons as an associate head coach for the University of Minnesota women's team, went across town to become the Tommies' head coach after it was announced that former coach Tom Palkowski would not return.

"It's just such a perfect fit, and I think that's why so many people choose St. Thomas," Johnson said.

Senior forward Anna Erickson said she feels good about the transition to DI.

"There's been some bumps in the road with all the new equipment, new gear and a whole new coaching staff," Erickson said. "But it's the same, just getting into the rink every day and working hard."

Not only is Johnson coaching at St. Thomas; he's also coaching the U.S. Olympic team in 2022.

“IT'S JUST SUCH A PERFECT FIT, AND I THINK THAT'S WHY SO MANY PEOPLE CHOOSE ST. THOMAS.”

"It's going to be a unique year," Johnson said. "We're going to have a staff, myself included, that's going to be committed to making sure St. Thomas has an unbelievable experience."

Both teams agree on one thing: Division I is more work than Division III.

"Obviously it's nerve-racking and kind of crazy," Erickson said. "We'll be going up against some of the best players in the country."

"You have to put in a little bit more time on and off the ice to excel and be at the level that you want to be to compete," Ommen said. "I'm not going to say DIII was easy, but it was definitely a little more relaxed."

The women were set to begin their season Sept. 24 at Ohio State University, and the men were slated to start about a week later, Oct. 2 at St. Cloud State University.

TOMMIES BECOME MINNESOTA'S FIRST DIVISION I MEN'S SOCCER PROGRAM

By Sam Larson

Of Minnesota's 19 NCAA men's soccer programs, St. Thomas holds the distinction of being the first and only Division I program in the state.

The Tommies this fall joined the Summit League, which includes opponents such as Oral Roberts, Omaha and the University of Denver. The Tommies leave behind a program record of 537-265-94 and eight MIAC championships in their 52-year history.

"To be able to be one of those first guys on the roster and be one of the first teams to kind of represent Minnesota in that way is groundbreaking," junior midfielder McRay Drong said.

Head Coach Jon Lowery acknowledged his team's challenging 2021 schedule. "We're super excited about that. We're also super realistic that we're just getting started," he said.

The Tommies opened the season with five straight losses, being outscored 11-2. Compare that to the 3-1 record the Tommies compiled in the shortened 2020-21 season, their final in the MIAC, in which they outscored opponents 6-2.

The St. Cloud State men's soccer team is making the jump to Division II at the same time as St. Thomas' move to Division I. With both teams moving up to join 17 Division III programs, men's soccer in Minnesota has become fully vertically integrated, with every level of play from PeeWee to Major League Soccer.

"We have a huge responsibility to put a program together that's going to be not only active on the field," Lowery said, "but active on campus and in the community."

Senior captain Halvor Houg is returning for a fifth year after gaining a year of eligibility because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It's going to be learning the differences in learning what it is to be a DI program," Houg said. "It's establishing ourselves and just keep growing."

The squad is returning 18 Tommies from the 2020 roster. It will be reinforced by six freshmen and three transfers. Logan Huber, Conner Aksoz and Jacek Nickowski all left their Division I programs to join the Tommies in 2021.

"We've got guys coming back next year to try this out, and they're literally putting off job offers because they want to challenge themselves," Lowery said. "They want to just see, what's this going to be like?"

The Tommies will join the Minnesota Loons as an example of high-level soccer in Minnesota.

"Hopefully the imagination of some young boys will be, 'I want to watch the Tommies, I want to watch Division I,'" Lowery said. "As a young hockey player, I knew the Gophers, and I think we're going to be able to tap into that."



Photo by: Casey Eakins

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FIFTH-YEAR SENIORS LOOK TO GUIDE NEW TOMMIES INTO DIVISION I

By Scout Mason

Several Tommie student-athletes have opted to use their extra year of NCAA eligibility to return to St. Thomas as fifth-year seniors and experience first hand the school's jump from Division III to Division I.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the NCAA has granted student-athletes an extra year of eligibility, and Tommies from the football, men's and women's soccer, basketball and women's cross country teams are jumping at the chance.

"Being the first, basically, group of kids to ever jump from Division III to Division I, looking back at it and thinking it over, it's just an opportunity that I really want to embrace," said Ryan Lindberg, a guard for the men's basketball team.

He's far from the only Tommie to feel that way. Twenty-two fifth-year seniors will be competing this fall for St. Thomas, and their numbers will almost certainly grow as winter and spring rosters are finalized.

"(I) really wanted to do this project to try something new and be the first one to ever go DIII to DI," men's soccer captain Halvor Houg said.

Many of the returners have already earned their degree from St. Thomas, so coming back was a decision they had to carefully consider.

"It was definitely a lot of conversations with Coach (Johnny) Tauer, about what my future might look like, both on the basketball end but also academically," men's basketball player Burt Hedstrom said. "(We) just organically came to this one, which is coming back and starting my graduate school, as well as the transition with basketball."

Houg said that being able to work through the decision with coaches and knowing that four other teammates would be joining him as a fifth-year senior helped.

"I had to think about it for a little bit, but had some time with coaches, some time with teammates, and (it) turned out most of my class wanted to stay and that was the big thing for me," Houg said.

With plenty of excitement surrounding their decisions and the future of their

teams, Houg said his team will need to work harder to make the transition.

"It's just a big gap between a DIII and DI team," Houg said. "It's kind of a weird dynamic because usually us upperclassmen, we know what's coming, and we know how it is and now everything's changing."

Despite being in unfamiliar territory, the fifth-year players said they are ready to lead their new teammates.

"I'm excited for basketball; I'm excited to play, but it's more about what can I do to be a leader to welcome these new guys," Hedstrom said.

Houg echoed that sentiment.

"My main part of being a captain and all these new guys coming in is showing them the Tommie way, really communicating how things are done around here and trying to make everyone part of one team," Houg said.

Though these players have never competed in Division I before, they will get extra time to practice with their team before the season starts, something that they didn't have as Division III competitors.

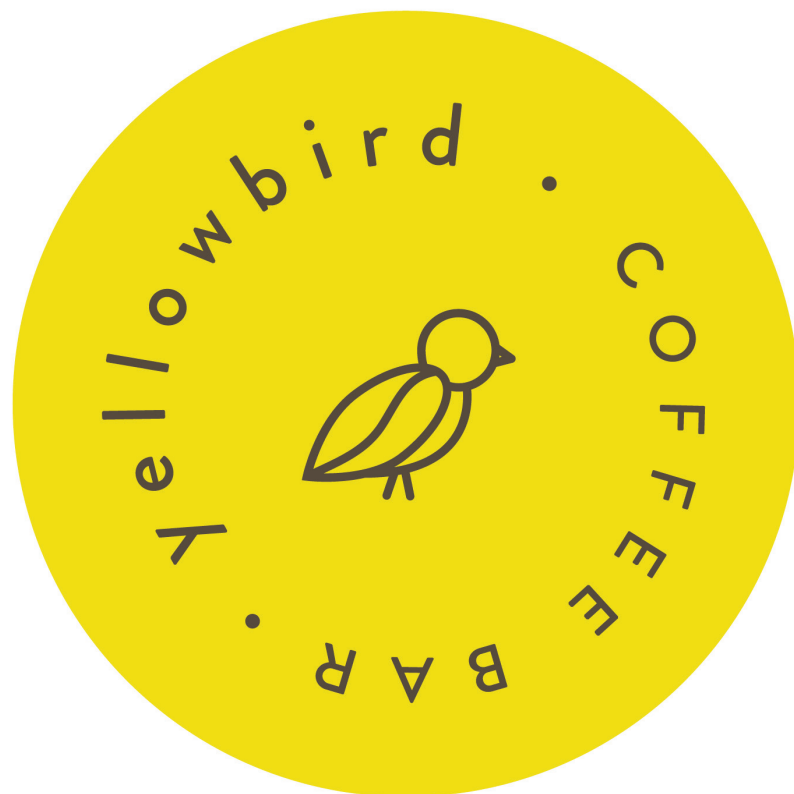
"Even before we start practicing, getting everyone together on the team, getting integrated and just playing open gyms and then hanging out outside of the gym will be really important to hopefully create that really strong team chemistry," Lindberg said.

Hedstrom said he wants to savor every aspect of his extra year of eligibility.

"Enjoying it all, enjoying everything from the extra conditioning we do to traveling on the bus with the guys to just spending another year being a college student and a college athlete," he said.

The Tommies will have a tough year ahead of them with more competitive games, but Houg didn't seem worried about his team's toughness.

"We're never going to show up to lose the game or just play well," he said. "We're showing up to win."



MEMORIES FROM THE MIAC

RUTH SINN: 'INVESTED IN OUR STUDENT ATHLETES'

Women's basketball coach Ruth Sinn has coached the Tommies for 17 years, boasting a 356-88 record. The Tommies' 250-31 record between 2010 to 2021 serves as the best ten-year winning percentage of any MIAC sports program.

Sinn said the MIAC's competitiveness has forced the Tommies to be better.

"One of the things that's really very unique about the MIAC is that the standards of excellence have been fantastic," she said.

She said that the care that student athletes received in the MIAC was very special.

"I think (what) really sets itself apart about the MIAC is the way that all of the coaches and the people involved are really invested in our student athletes, in growing our student athletes as strong people who are going to go out into that workforce and make a difference," Sinn said.

Although she will miss the MIAC, Sinn said it has prepared the Tommies to take the next step to Division I.

"I really am comforted in that the MIAC has really done a great job of preparing us for this next level with the coaching, and how they pour into their student athletes," Sinn said.

TOMMIE WOMEN'S TENNIS FOCUSED ON 'HERE AND NOW' AFTER REINSTATEMENT

By Mia Laube

Despite a turbulent spring and summer for St. Thomas women's tennis players, the team has one focus: the here and now.

St. Thomas announced its decision to cut its varsity tennis programs last May, but the women's team was reinstated a month later after members threatened to file a Title IX lawsuit against the university. Now, the team prepares for its first Division I competition at the end of September with a new coach, a new place to practice and new DI expectations.

“THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS THAT WE'RE HERE, AND WE'RE A TEAM, AND WE'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE.”

“Let's live in the here and now,” coach Lois Arterberry said. “The most important thing is that we're here, and we're a team, and we're not going anywhere.”



Photo by: Mia Laube

Senior Brooke Hapuku said players are adjusting to longer practices and a new strength and conditioning schedule.

“We definitely know it's going to be a lot more intense, and the atmosphere itself will be more intense,” Hapuku said.

Arterberry, who has coached several DI teams, said the team will be prepared no matter who is across the net.

“I think we have to have some pride in what we do, and not sort of bow down to anyone or look at a team like, ‘Oh my gosh, they're Division I? We're Division I as well,’ Arterberry said. “They're practicing, we're practicing. They're in the weight room, we're in the weight room.”

St. Thomas Athletics, the Board of Trustees and President Julie Sullivan cited a

lack of facilities and resources as reasons for cutting the programs in May, but things like locker rooms, indoor practice courts and scholarship funds are still in the works.

“I'd love the community to know that we do have the support from our athletic director and our president, and the rest of the staff here,” Arterberry said.



Photo by: Mia Laube

The team, which used to train at the University of Minnesota, now practices outdoors at St. Paul Academy and Summit School. Arterberry said there are no current conversations about building courts on campus.

While Arterberry hoped to schedule another tournament for October, Hapuku and the team were set to kick off the season with their sole fall tournament starting Sept. 25 at Creighton University

“My mindset is day by day, point by point, match by match,” Hapuku said.

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MEMORIES FROM THE MIAC

THANH PHAM: 'CHERRY ON TOP' Volleyball coach Thanh Pham has been with St. Thomas for 19 years, capturing an NCAA title in 2012 and leaving Division III with the fourth-highest win percentage (.791) among active coaches. Pham said he has loved being able to play in the MIAC.

“Obviously 2012 when we won the national title, that was the cherry on top, but every season has been remarkable,” Pham said. “I have three former players that I've coached that have been Tommies that are head coaches in the conference. I competed in the MIAC. I absolutely loved the MIAC.”

One thing that made the conference special, he said, was losing to former Tommie players.

“I never ever, ever, ever want to lose but if I have to lose and I lose to another Tommie that I've coached, I feel a sense of pride,” Pham said.

Pham said the unpredictability of the MIAC will help the Tommies move into the Summit League.

“In the MIAC you never know what was gonna happen on a given day,” he said, “and as long as the teams prepared well and did the work that they needed to, it was going to be a good match.”

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Football

OCT 9 / 1 P.M. VS VALPARAISO UNIVERSITY
OCT 16 / 12 P.M. @ STETSON UNIVERSITY
OCT 30 / 1 P.M. VS MARIST COLLEGE
NOV 6 / 12 P.M. @ DAVIDSON COLLEGE
NOV 13 / 12 P.M. @ DRAKE UNIVERSITY
NOV 20 / 1 P.M. VS PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGE

Men's Soccer

OCT 9 / 5 P.M. @ DENVER
OCT 16 / 4 P.M. @WESTERN ILLINOIS
OCT 23 / 1 P.M. VS OMAHA
OCT 26 / 7 P.M. @ MILWAUKEE
OCT 30 / 1 P.M. VS KANSAS CITY

Women's Soccer

OCT 3 / 1 P.M. @ SOUTH DAKOTA STATE
OCT 8 / 4 P.M. VS DENVER
OCT 10 / 4 P.M. VS OMAHA
OCT 17 / 1 P.M. VS WESTERN ILLINOIS
OCT 22 / 7 P.M. @ ORAL ROBERTS
OCT 24 / 1 P.M. @ KANSAS CITY
OCT 29 / 3:30 P.M. VS NORTH DAKOTA
OCT 31 / 1 P.M. VS NORTH DAKOTA STATE

Women's Cross Country *TIME TBA

OCT 15 @ BRADLEY PINK CLASSIC
OCT 30 @ SUMMIT LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIPS

Men's Cross Country *TIME TBA

OCT 15 @ BRADLEY PINK CLASSIC
OCT 30 @ SUMMIT LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIPS

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Men's Basketball *TIME TBA

NOV 9 @ CHICAGO STATE UNIVERSITY
NOV 13 @ ST. FRANCIS COLLEGE
NOV 15 @ FORDHAM UNIVERSITY
NOV 19 @ YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY
NOV 20 @ NIAGRA UNIVERSITY
NOV 21 @ SOUTHERN ILLINOIS-EDWARDSVILLE
NOV 27 @ SEATTLE UNIVERSITY
DEC 2 VS CROWN COLLEGE
DEC 5 @ DRAKE UNIVERSITY
DEC 11 VS MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
DEC 14 VS NORTHLAND COLLEGE
DEC 20 @ UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA
DEC 22 @ UNIVERSITY OF DENVER
DEC 29 VS NORTH CENTRAL UNIVERSITY

Women's Volleyball

OCT 5 / 7 P.M VS WESTERN ILLINOIS
OCT 7/ 7 P.M. VS UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA
OCT 9 / 7 P.M @ SOUTH DAKOTA STATE
OCT 14/ 7 P.M. VS ORAL ROBERTS
OCT 16 / 3 P.M VS KANSAS CITY
OCT 21 / 7 P.M. VS DENVER
OCT 23/ 3 P.M. VS OMAHA
OCT 28 / 7 P.M @ NORTH DAKOTA STATE
OCT 30/ 1 P.M. @ NORTH DAKOTA
NOV 4 / 7 P.M VS SOUTH DAKOTA STATE
NOV 6/ 3 P.M. VS SOUTH DAKOTA
NOV 11 / 7 P.M @ KANSAS CITY
NOV 13/ 1 P.M @ ORAL ROBERTS
NOV 20 / 1 P.M. @ WESTERN ILLINOIS

Women's Basketball *TIME TBA

NOV 10 @ UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
NOV 13 VS ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY
NOV 18 @ SOUTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY
NOV 20 @ PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGE
NOV 26 @ CAL POLY
NOV 27 VS UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS
DEC 1 VS UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA
DEC 4 @ CHICAGO STATE UNIVERSITY
DEC 11 VS IDAHO STATE UNIVERSITY
DEC 15 VS NORTHLAND COLLEGE
DEC 20 VS UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA
DEC 22 VS UNIVERSITY OF DENVER
DEC 29 VS UPPER IOWA UNIVERSITY

Women's Golf *TIME TBA

OCT 4-5 @ OMAHA INVITE
OCT 11-12 @ CREIGHTON INVITE

Men's Golf *TIME TBA

OCT 3-5 @ OMAHA INVITE

FORMER DIVISION I PLAYERS LOOK TO HELP TOMMIES MOVE FORWARD

By Scout Mason

While many St. Thomas teams include only newcomers to Division I this year, a handful of Tommies players and coaches can offer a glimpse of what lies ahead.

Players like men's hockey forward Joey Sofo and men's soccer midfielder McRay Drong are drawing on their Division I backgrounds to lead teammates and calm nerves.

"I try just to lead by example," Drong said. "Making sure that we're always on top of our game at practices, and then we're trying to work with the younger guys, too."

Men's soccer coach Jon Lowery, who played for Division I Ohio State, said that one of the hardest parts for his team will be adapting to the more demanding environment.



Photo by: Casey Eakins

"We're going to be really uncomfortable this fall. I can guarantee you that, and it's going to be challenging, it's going to be tiring, it's going to be rewarding," Lowery said. "We're going to learn how to get comfortable in this Division I world."

Sofa played DI hockey for the University of Alaska

Anchorage before transferring to St. Thomas last year. He said he told some of his teammates who haven't played Division I before that they'll be putting in lots of hours in to play minimal minutes per game.

"You have to love it," he said. "You have to enjoy the part of the game that isn't

skating out in front of all the fans and the fancy gear and nice rinks. You have to really enjoy the part of the sport that no one sees."

Tommie student-athletes will have to adjust to extra training time this year, the former Division I players agreed. Lowery said that the move to Division I will force athletes to be more accountable during tough traveling and training stretches.

"Your accountable hours from August until May are going to be far superior than they ever were," he said. "They're going to be put through a summer program that they've never had to be put through before because we need to be prepared physically."

Lowery said those long hours of training will be put to the test in a season that isn't long.

"It's kind of like a Formula One race that starts in August and ends in November. You just have to go as fast as you can," he said. "We're going to have to be at our best every single night."

“ WE’RE GONNA HAVE TO BE AT OUR BEST EVERY SINGLE NIGHT. ”

The transition for the hockey team from playing Division III teams to competing against teams with NHL prospects might appear intimidating, but Sofo said he feels prepared for the challenge.

"Everyone is so happy to be here and the opportunity is just, there's no ceiling, there's no expectations," Sofo said. "We're really excited to get the opportunity to surprise a lot of people."

Lowery said it will be important for athletic teams to remember that others are going through the transition as well.

"This is about the athletic department's goals going forward," Lowery said. "We're not putting it all on our shoulders. We know we're all in this together."

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ST. THOMAS COACHES FIND CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES IN RECRUITING DIVISION I PLAYERS

By Owen Larson

Rico Blasi had no time to savor his new position as St. Thomas men's hockey coach after he was hired to replace outgoing coach Jeff Boeser last April.

"Recruiting probably started the minute I got to my phone after the press conference," Blasi said. "But you know, recruiting is very important. Obviously, it's the bloodline of your program."

The St. Thomas coaching staff has faced a slew of new challenges in its move to Division I, not least of which has been recruiting in the midst of a pandemic. A handful of Tommies coaches recently shared their insights on the highs and lows of the recruiting scene.

How has the recruiting process changed now that St. Thomas is a Division I School?

Blasi: "There are players that are being recruited by other universities in our state and across the country that you're going to have to compete against."

Football coach Glenn Caruso: "The rules or regulations that surround Division I are gravely different than the ones that surround Division III, mostly with the recruiting calendar and when you can have contact (and) when you can't have contact."

Men's soccer coach Jon Lowery: "I'll definitely have some frequent flyer miles, because I'll be on the road a lot."

Women's basketball coach Ruth Sinn: "The whole process has moved up and it's bigger and it's faster because we're going across the platforms, as far as recruiting classes."

What about the process has not changed?

Men's basketball coach Johnny Tauer: "I think the things that don't change are the types of people that we're going to recruit. And we've always focused on wanting really good people who are really good students. I think we feel really good about the culture that we have in place, (that) is the product of decades of work in our men's basketball program."

Caruso: "(We go after) someone who is not interested in having his academic experience being marginalized or mitigated because he wants the ultimate student athlete experience."

Sinn: "One of the things we have to be careful about is just chasing eye candy and ... people that really don't fit who we are about."

How have you been showcasing the St. Thomas experience?

Caruso: "Inherently, St. Thomas has some really neat things. The location, the size — not just the breadth but the depth of education — and the fact that it's not a 2,000-person school; no one's going to mistake this for grade 13. But conversely, it's not 55,000 people, so it's got a nice balance to the size and the faculty."

Lowery: "I would be genuinely concerned as a coach if we didn't have the product to stand behind our sales pitch."

But once we get that pitch out there and once we expand our recruiting, I think a lot of people are going to learn quickly how great this place is. You share with them President (Julie) Sullivan's vision, and people get excited, and people like to be a part of exciting projects."

What has it been like putting together St. Thomas's first recruiting class?

Lowery: "One thing that's really changed is the transfer portal being so alive. It's really kind of created a unique element in the recruiting process where now you can go in the transfer portal and you can see players that are looking to move from university to university. I think they really see St. Thomas as being an upstart program. If you've kind of stalled out at your current program, maybe this is the place you could come."

What were some challenges that came up while recruiting in the age of COVID-19?

Editor's Note: In March 2020, the NCAA placed a ban on in-person recruiting of prospective student-athletes by Division I coaches, and urged schools to suspend all official and unofficial campus visits. The ban continued until May 31, 2021. Those 15 months, which came to be known as the "dead period," provided many challenges for coaches and players during the recruiting process.

Tauer: "Everybody has been doing more Zoom calls, and there have not been in-person visits on campus, and we can't go out and recruit in person. But at the end of the day, recruiting for St. Thomas should not be a high-pressure sales job. I think the university has so much to offer."

Caruso: "If I were to have (a player) on campus, we might have an unofficial visit. That's five hours long, or an official visit that's two days long. You can't do it on Zoom. No one's going to be able to stay that attached. So being able to distill those points down to the essence and then and then rolling those out in different ways. So, instead of maybe two campus visits, there might be five totally separate Zoom sequences."

Were there any new approaches that you were able to use in recruiting new players?

Tauer: "I think the biggest difference is being able to offer scholarships. I think there are very few universities in the country that can truly offer academic excellence and athletic excellence, be in a large metropolitan location that offers both career development, cultural experiences, social life, and be in the midst of a huge alumni base. When I look at St. Thomas, we have all of these things in place that I don't think are commonplace to have."

Baseball coach Chris Olean: "You have to find somebody that wants to be part of this process. They want to leave the program in a better place from when they got here, and guys that can kind of handle some adversity, too."

OUR NEW LEAGUES

A primer on the new leagues: Pioneer, Summit, WCHA, CCHA

Compiled by Ruth Moder

PIONEER FOOTBALL LEAGUE

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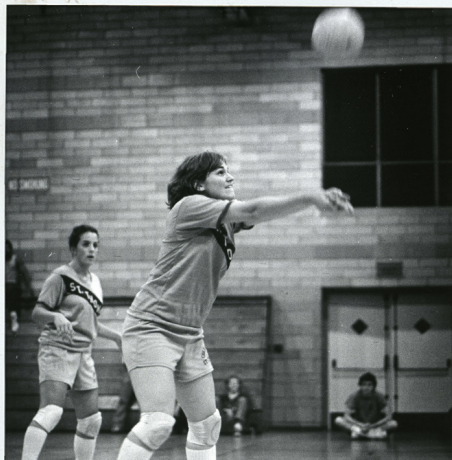
8 teams commissioned by **Don Lucia**.

Visit ccha.com

FASHION FORWARD

As with all fashion, University of St. Thomas uniforms have changed with the times.

Photos selected by Sarah Gottfredsen, Ruth Moder, and Paige Yurczyk. Photos courtesy of the University of St. Thomas Archives. Credited photos courtesy of TommieMedia.



Volleyball, 1977



Dick Chapman and Bucky Olson, 1949



Tom Feely, c. 1940



c. 1940



Taylor Berg, 2013

Photo by: Whitney Abrahamson



1995 Men's basketball



Frank O'Rourke, 1926



Homecoming queen candidate and Tommy Tiger, 1957



1988 Women's basketball

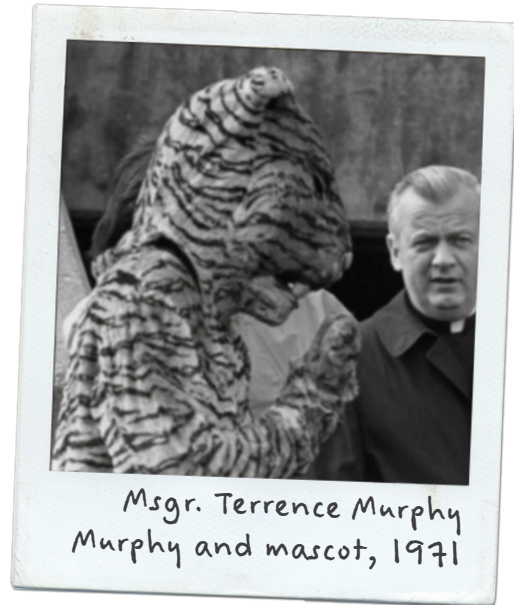
We thought that we'd take a look back while we're taking a step forward. Tweet us your favorites with the hastags #AqlsBack and #TMDI



Women's track, c. 1983



Jack Barry and Jack Longville, 2018



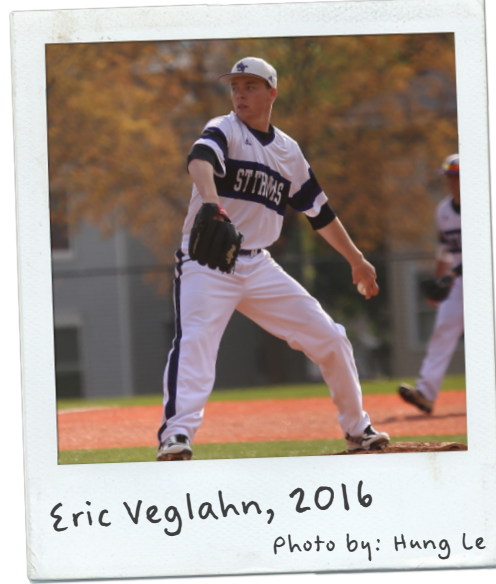
Msgr. Terrence Murphy
Murphy and mascot, 1971



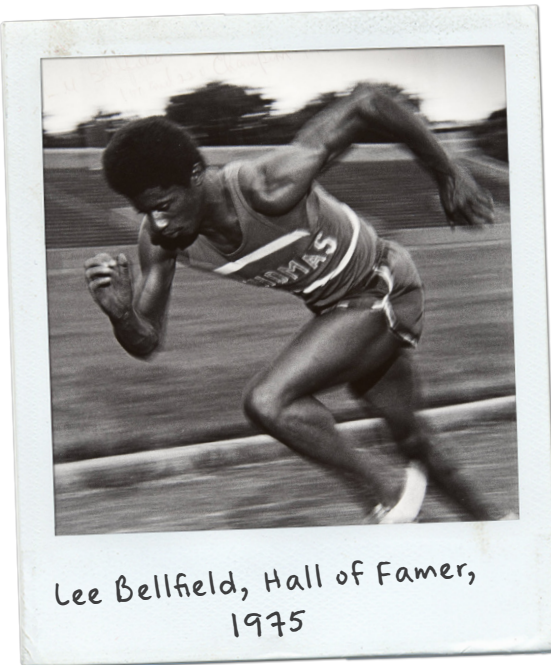
1901 Baseball team



Michele Feltault, 1978



Eric Veglahn, 2016
Photo by: Hung Le



Lee Bellfield, Hall of Famer,
1975



Tommie and child, 1984



MIAC cross-country champs, 1978

MEET THE RECRUITS

Let us introduce you to the future of St. Thomas athletics. These athletes have come from around the state, country and even the world to be a part of this historical transition to Division I competition.

By Olivia Paradise. Photos Provided by the recruits.



PAYTON WILLMAN - VOLLEYBALL

Why St. Thomas? “The amazing academics and the family culture they have on the volleyball team!”

Role model? “My dad. He is the hardest worker and best dad anyone could ask for. He has made a huge impact on my volleyball career and did everything he possibly could for it.”

What other sport would you play if you could? “I would totally wanna be a gymnast. I think it is so impressive how much strength they have.”

Pre-competition song? “Any song by Megan Thee Stallion hypes me up before games.”



MICHAEL FERRANDINO - MEN'S HOCKEY

Why St. Thomas? “Great history of culture and success within academics and athletics. Also, having the chance to start a new tradition of Division I hockey in a hockey-crazy market is an opportunity I couldn't pass up.”

Favorite athlete/celebrity? “Russell Westbrook because of the passion he plays with and dedication to his craft.”

Superstition/pregame ritual? “I try to have as many little handshakes as I can with my teammates and stick to them to a tee.”

Best part of being a student athlete? “Knowing you have the support of your peers that you see around school every day is something really special. Also, nothing compares to building friendships that will last a lifetime.”



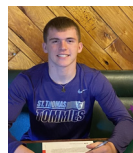
SKYLER LEVERENZ - WOMEN'S SWIMMING AND DIVING

Why St. Thomas? “I was looking to swim Division I close to home, and St. Thomas provided that perfect opportunity. I love the campus, coaches and faculty. It gave me the “home away from home” feel.”

Preferred superpower? “I would choose to be invisible because no one would be able to see me and what I'm doing. I could prank people all day and no one would know about it.”

Role model? “My mom. She has such a strong character and work ethic, and she does everything with a kind heart.”

Favorite athlete/celebrity? “I've never really idolized a specific person, but I've always admired athletes who are humble, hard-working, and are supportive of their teammates no matter their level of success.”



RYAN DUFAULT - MEN'S BASKETBALL

Why St. Thomas? “I chose St. Thomas because of the great winning culture the basketball team has, a chance to play for Coach Tauer, and it's a great business school.”

Favorite athlete/celebrity? “Chris Paul because he plays basketball the way I would love to play.”

Pre-competition song? “Any music by Lil Baby.”

Role model? “My brother, Nick, because he has always been a great mentor to me.”



REGINA TALAVERA GUADARRAMA - TENNIS

Why St. Thomas? “I fell in love with the approach this university takes to my course. Also, the women's tennis team felt like a family, and that is something I've always looked up in a team.”

Preferred superpower? “I would love to have the power of reading minds or being able to control someone else's mind. It would be super useful to identify who wants to hurt you.”

What other sport would you play if you could? “Volleyball. I used to play both when I was younger, and I loved it.”

Favorite athlete/celebrity? “Rafael Nadal. He is such a great tennis player and a human being as well. I always look up to him when I am facing obstacles and remember to keep my head up.”



LEO BUSTOS - BASEBALL

Why St. Thomas? “I chose St. Thomas because of how close it is to my hometown and being able to play baseball at the Division I level. I also know many people who go to school here which makes it easier to make more friends. Finally, St. Thomas is very well-known for its academics.”

Favorite athlete/celebrity? Mike Trout because of how crazy his life story is and to be one of the top players to come through the MLB. I love his drive and love for the game.”

Superstition/pregame ritual? “I need to shave my face. Look good, feel good, play good!”

What other sport would you play if you could? “Hockey. I grew up in Minnesota and go to school here so hockey is everywhere around me and the biggest attention is when the season comes around.”

'UNIVERSITY IS FAMILY' UST football alumni have fond memories of their days on the gridiron.

By Macy Berendsen

After playing more than a thousand games and capturing 20 MIAC titles over the course of 12 decades, St. Thomas football opened a new chapter this fall as a Division I program.

The move has given former players a chance to reminisce about their days as Tommies, reflecting on the connections they built and the friendships they still cherish now.

"Some of the best friendships I have in my life came from my teammates," said Tony Kadlec, a 1989 senior captain who played defense for the Tommies. "It was such a nice variety of guys with different backgrounds and different personalities."

Over the years, many Tommies players have remained in close contact after graduating.

"(St. Thomas) is special because of the people it brings," said 1981 alum and former football player Gary Harger. "There are relationships I have to this day. The university is a family, no matter what generation. You support the UST community."

Former players fondly remember the Tommies' infamous rivalry against St. John's University, which began in 1901 and became the most-watched game of the St. Thomas football season.

Harger counts his team's 30-0 victory over the Johnnies in 1979 as his favorite memory from Tommie football. It was a "beautiful St. John's game at home in the snow," he recalled. "It was the biggest victory of my career. We even have a DVD of that game."

Former players also talked about the lasting influences of their coaches.

"It's funny, my offensive line coach at the time, Don Rooney, literally used to say that football is the microcosm of life," said 1994 graduate Hatem Madkour, "and it

was corny and it was obnoxious because he said it so much and it didn't resonate as a college kid. Now I use it all the time. You get set back with challenges and you have to persevere."

Over the years, 31 Tommies have been drafted or signed to free-agent contracts with NFL teams including the Minnesota Vikings, New York Giants and Seattle Seahawks. One former Tommie, lineman Walt Kiesling, went on to become a member of the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Though Madkour never played Division I, he advised future Tommie players not to forget what got them started.

"It's still the game you loved growing up, and if you lost sight of what you loved as a kid and now the demands are greater and the pressure is greater, it's not just fun with your classmates at some point," he said. "It's still a game, and it's a game you love and that is why you started playing to begin with."

“ THE UNIVERSITY IS A FAMILY, NO MATTER WHAT GENERATION. ”

Good Luck, St. Thomas athletes!

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Matthew 19:26



Campus Ministry and the campus chaplains are praying for victory in St. Thomas' first DI football season! Come visit the Iversen Center for Faith to learn more about Campus Ministry!





MEMORIES FROM THE MIAC

Coaches reflect on the league St. Thomas helped to found.

By Scout Mason

JOE SWEENEY - 'SOMETHING BIG WAS HAPPENING'

As the longest tenured Tommies coach with 42 years at the helm, Joe Sweeney led the women's track and field team to 85 out of a possible 114 MIAC championships. Sweeney said that a special time for him was coaching his team to 11 straight titles between 1981 and 1992.

"Knowing now how hard it is to win one over the years, those have been really hotly contested," Sweeney said. "It's something that I don't think anyone will ever achieve again."

Sweeney said one of his favorite memories was in 1991,

when his team had to compete in the middle of the Halloween Blizzard, which dropped 28 inches of snow in St. Paul. The Tommies competed at a plowed St. Olaf track with 2.5 feet of snow around it. Sweeney remembers teams camped out in the field house as athletes would run their race and hurry back inside.

Sweeney laughed about a moment during the meet when he went out too far in the snow trying to catch an event when he heard the excitement of another race finishing up.

"I just heard this roar of this crowd like something big was happening," Sweeney said.

Sweeney was stuck in the snow and missed one of his runners passing four other runners at the end of the race to win the event.

"That was a real special memory, just everything that revolved around the blizzard," Sweeney said.

GLENN CARUSO - 'AS COOL AS IT GETS'

Football coach Glenn Caruso took over the Tommies in 2008. In his 14 years leading the Tommies, he's been named National Coach of the Year six times, more than any other current college coach.

Caruso said he loved the tough games against teams like St. Olaf and Bethel where the Tommies barely eked out a win.

He also savored the moments in games that few others noticed.

"The ones where a guy who's a senior who's never played before gets to run on the field for the first time and take his first reps," Caruso said.

Caruso grew emotional as he shared his memories of game days and the more than 300 players he's seen go through his program.

"When you're getting ready to play the game and you're looking across the field, and right above the visitors section on the veranda, you look up and you see 100 of our young alumni who have played for us in the last decade, that's awesome," Caruso said. "As you're getting ready to play the

game, they got their wives with them and they got their kids with them in the strollers. That's pretty cool."

While some might think that Caruso's favorite memory while at St. Thomas would be a big TOJO win or a championship, he said his favorite memory falls on a Thanksgiving practice day in 2017.

"Rachael (Caruso's wife) had just been diagnosed with cancer and she thought it was appropriate to share that with our team," Caruso said. "She didn't want to hide anything from the family. She wanted them to know that she drew tremendous pride in seeing our young men work the way we do and that she was going to be able to draw from those same type of experiences, to be able to fight the enormous battle that she was on the threshold of. And to see the whole team just literally and figuratively embrace her, that's as cool as it gets."

Overall, Caruso said he will miss the MIAC's rivalries. He said a lot of people just talk about the St. Thomas-St. John's rivalry but that over the years there have been strong fights

with each team in the conference.

"To be able to play in a league that locationally is very tight, I think provides some neat experiences because a lot of our guys who were playing against each other on Saturday afternoons in the fall, had been playing against each other the prior four years on Friday nights in the fall," Caruso said.

Caruso said that his team will be able to take what they've learned from competing in the MIAC into the Pioneer Football League.

"To be able to use that competitive spirit, the same one that we've been blessed to have for a long time and carry that into the next league is just part and parcel of who we are going to be," Caruso said.

JOHNNY TAUER - 'IT WOULD BE A GREAT BOOK'

Few people are as ingrained into the St. Thomas culture as Johnny Tauer. Both he and his dad played for St. Thomas, and he is now entering his 11th season as the men's basketball coach. Tauer was a star for the Tommies basketball team from 1991-95, and in his years as head coach, he led the team to a national championship in 2016 and was twice named Division III Coach of the Year.

Tauer said the constant challenge from different MIAC teams over the years was what made the conference special.

"Everybody talks about St. Thomas and St. John's," he said, "but quite frankly, if you look at our basketball program,

over the years, there have been other teams that have competed with us really well for MIAC supremacy."

Tauer said that he'll look back fondly on the MIAC's sportsmanship and competitive balance.

"When you walked away from a game, everybody wanted to win. And there was a tremendous desire to be successful. But I really felt like there was always after the game, a certain cordial respect between the coaches and the players," Tauer said.

Tauer said one of his favorite moments was when former St. Thomas basketball coach and Athletic Director Steve

Fritz and long-time former St. John's basketball coach Jim Smith came to the final Tommie-Johnnie game last March.

Although the Tommies are ready for the next chapter, Tauer said, leaving all these teams and battles behind will be tough.

"I think about the history that St. Thomas has with so many of these schools," he said. "I mean, really, it would be a great book, right?"



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TOMMIE SPORTS TRIVIA

By Mia Laube

- Q:** Which Tommies varsity sports team did not have a season in 1943 during WWII?
- Q:** Which school was part of the MIAC for less than 30 years, leaving in 1975?
- Q:** Who became the first MIAC Women's Coordinator in 1984-85? (This position lasted until 1990, when the men's and women's coordinators were combined into one office.) Hint: This person was also St. Thomas' first volleyball and women's tennis coach.
- Q:** What game broke the Division III attendance record with 37,355 fans?
- Q:** Which St. Thomas women's basketball alumna is one of only two players in Division III history to surpass 2,500 career points and 1,200 career rebounds?
- Q:** Which St. Thomas varsity sport has won the most national titles?
- Q:** Which St. Thomas varsity sport won the most recent national title?
- Q:** In which decade did football begin at St. Thomas?
- Q:** How many runs did St. Thomas softball score to set the MIAC single-game record in 2014?
- Q:** Which St. Thomas varsity program has the most wins among all Division III schools for its sport?

* Enter answers at tommiemedia.com/trivia by 11:59 PM on October 31, 2021. Entries with at least five correct answers are eligible to win one of two \$25 TommieShop gift cards. From the entries with at least five correct answers, the two winners will be drawn at random. The winners will be notified by November 5.



MEMORIES FROM THE MIAC

JEFF BOESER: 'ALWAYS COMPETITIVE'

Former men's hockey coach Jeff Boeser has had plenty of memories since taking the helm of the Tommies in 2010, including six conference championships and winning the MIAC coach of the year three times

The three-time MIAC coach of the year said the competitiveness of the MIAC was special.

"The last four or five years, it's come down to the last weekend for the top five teams that are gonna make it. Eight of the nine teams are vying for the top five spots," Boeser said

Boeser remembers playing against the very best of the MIAC.

"Everybody who played us was their rivalry to us," Boeser said. "There are many times where I go scout a game and I'm thinking, well they're not very good but then they play us and that wasn't the same team that I watched against another team."



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