

“The Time Machine”

Art 36

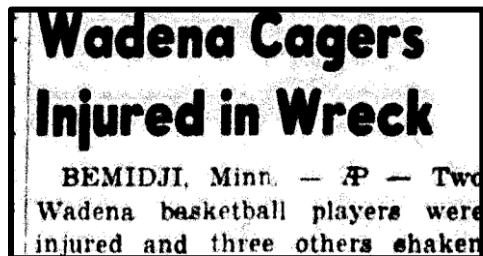
“The Best Teacher, Ever!”

Life is competitive. We see that in nature. We see that in sports, education, work, the arts, etc..... Winners and losers. We can't have light without dark, nor happy without sad. There are no winners without losers. Winning is the goal. It's easy to be a gracious winner. The same cannot be said about being a gracious loser. Some believe that if you are a gracious loser you don't care if you win or lose.. “Au contraire mon ami!” The late Madame Lillian Bradford, my French teacher of three years, would be quite proud of me. She was a great teacher, but not the best ever. Close. If I had to identify my best learning experiences through almost 70 years, hands down it would be learning from my failures, and my losses. For example, my divorce, my heart attack, my DUI. Powerful learning experiences never to be forgotten. All three proved to be blessings.

Let's shift to competitive sports. Same concept. I learned to be a gracious loser in 10th grade when our WHS basketball team lost 17 of 22 games. I learned to be a gracious winner when, in our senior year. we won 20 of 23 games. There is no doubt that winning is more fun, but I think losing is often more educational.

This past fall WDC had a tough football season. A number of significant headwinds were in play and the Wolverines understandably struggled. The young team did their best and their experiences will prepare them for the coming seasons, and for their life after football.

“The Time Machine” wants to look back at WHS boys' basketball to revisit some of the past teams that also struggled. WHS had much success in the 1920's and 1930's. The 1940's saw success at the beginning and at the end of that decade. In between, wins were hard to come by. The 1945 team, led by Bruce (Timmy) Wilcox, Pat Frost, and Dale Bessett ended up 7-14 overall and 1-11 in the “Central 8” conference. In the 1946 season, Wadena had only one returning player, Kelly Baden. They finished 1-19.



The 1947 season started with a bad omen and ended in controversy . On their way to Bemidji, for their first game, they collided with a lumber truck just south of Bemidji. Two players were injured and three were shaken up.

Their final game of the season was at Staples. A rough and tumble game developed into a fistfight. Perhaps our lads had not yet learned as much about being a gracious loser as I would have hoped. However, I would bet the brawl and loss eventually provided positive “lessons learned,” lasting a lifetime. Wadena finished that season 2-19, bringing their two-year record to 3-38. Their frustration boiled over. Boys will be boys.

court as they trounced the Wadena Orangemen 38-15 in a rough and tumble game developing into a fist fight in the third period.

The 1948 season saw some improvement with a young starting five. Led by senior Harry Wilcox, junior Keith Eng, and sophomores Pat Merickel and Bob Hedstrom, their season record was 4-16 and led the way for the two good years to follow, in 1949 (12-8) and 1950 (17-6). The 1951 team had no returning starters and only three upperclassmen. Their top players were Doug Imgrund, Darold Faldorf, Jim Kurz, Lloyd Tappe, and Harold Harrison. They went 5-16. The 2-19, 1952 team saw the return of Kurz, Tappe, and Harrison, joined by underclassman Fred Freeman. Freeman led the 1953 team along with frosh Dick Shearer and sophs Dale Skalisky, Gene Haight, and Jim Rice. Their record was 3-17, but the future looked promising.

The 1960's started with back-to-back seasons that yielded but four wins against thirty-three losses. The 1970's saw the first three seasons with a total of nine wins and fifty losses. That third season, 1972, was my sophomore year. We finished 4-16 as the district tournament was about to begin. We opened with a win over Backus. Up next, our neighbors, the Pirates of Verndale, A community that almost always fielded teams with good athletes. This year would be no exception. Seaton, Carr, Denny, Pilgrim, Paulson, and Callahan to name a few. Little did I know that I was about to experience my darkest hour in competitive sports. Here is what happened. Verndale was the heavy favorite to advance to the semifinals. However, they got off to a slow start and early in the second quarter we were up 32-17. From that point on the Pirates came to life. As we approached halftime our lead had been cut in half. The momentum had clearly shifted.

WADENA (56)	fg	ft	ftm	pf	tp
Berg, f	2	0	1	2	14
Schumacher, f	4	1	0	3	9
Bruninga, c	3	2	2	4	8
Kohoutek, g	6	4	2	1	18
Willis, g	1	1	2	1	3
Concensus, f	1	0	1	2	2
Daveenmuehle, f	0	2	1	3	2
Totals	22	12	9	16	56
VERNDALE (83)	fg	ft	ftm	pf	tp
Carr, f	5	4	1	3	14
Denny, f	3	0	0	2	6
Seaton, c	7	4	3	1	18
Tony Pilgrim, g	6	2	0	4	14
Callahan, g	9	4	1	3	22
Paulson, f	3	1	1	2	7
Borchers, c	1	0	0	0	2
Schmidt, g	0	0	0	1	0
Totals	34	15	6	16	83
Quarters:					
Wadena	23	39	47	36	
Verndale	11	31	49	83	
Officials — Mike Retica, Elmer Salvog (Hibbing).					

Coming out for the third quarter we hoped the half-time break might flip the momentum back to us. It did not. We were in our half-court offense when Mark Callahan stole the ball and was quickly on his way to the other end. I was in pursuit, close behind. What happened next did so in a matter of seconds. Here is what went quickly through my mind; don't let him get the easy layup, I have no fouls, foul him NOW. I pushed him from behind. Not a hard push, but he was running as fast as he could and he tumbled mightily. Thank God he was not hurt. The optics of my decision were terrible. The Verndale faithful were

not happy. Neither was my dad, Harold. At that moment I learned about flagrant fouls and disqualification. It was an embarrassing and humbling moment.

As I watched the rest of the action from the bench I saw the Pirates cruise to a lopsided 83-56 win. Another powerful learning experience I have never forgotten. Harold strongly suggested I pen a letter of apology to Mr. Callahan and I did. For fifty years I have hoped he was able to forgive me.

There is an old saying that may provide insight and allow us to redefine winners and losers:

“Winners never quit and quitters never win.”

Regardless of the score, perseverance is what matters. Been knocked down? Get up before an athlete steps on you! Persevere.