## **Program History**

## (Comprehensive) From Dormat to Dominant

Girl's basketball, including a suspension of the sport, at St Joseph Central Catholic High School can be traced to the 1973-74 school year. That original program continued for a decade or through the 1982-83 school year. At that time, for reasons unknown, perhaps because of a lack of interest, the sport was discontinued. The team picture in the school 1983 yearbook shows only six players. The suspension continued through the winter of 1996-97.

In 1997 the program was reactivated as a JV sport, and continued as such for three seasons or through the 1999-2000 school year. In 2000, basketball was upgraded to a varsity status.

Seven or eight players, depending on the source consulted, reported for pre-season practice in that first varsity season. Before mid season, from injuries and academic ineligibility, the small band had been reduced to five.

Head Coach Charlie Bryant called an emergency meeting of players and their parents following a home game. He cut immediately to the chase as he looked at his deleted squad.

"There are only five of you now. If you want to continue to play I'll coach you." The response from both players and parents, was a resolute positive.

Although unknown at the time in that instant of chronological time the seminal

seed that would lead to state championships was planted.

Program growth continued on the 2001-02 season as the team won for the first time. The first winning season followed in 2002-03. During the off season current incumbent Head Coach Shannon Lewis assumed command and set program goals. "We want to contend for a state championship each year."

Optimism increased as program pioneers logged another winning campaign. In their senior season.

With its pioneer leaders graduated losing ways returned in the winters 04-05 and 05-06. Lewis remained quietly steadfast. He knew that a corp of players with enhanced skills could and would reverse the trend and re-energize his goal.

He got that with the incoming freshman class of 2006. Winning returned and a short term objective was set.

"We wanted to go to the state so the players could see what it (playing at the States) was like."

The goal was achieved in 2007. The Irish, seeded eight, provided one seed and eventual champion Charleston Catholic with a major challenge in a 3-point loss. A St. Joe buzzer beater attempt to tie bounced on the rim three times before falling away.

A state runner-up finish followed the next season. Lewis left the Civic Center frustrated at his team's failure to protect a fourth quarter lead.

Via post season analysis the head mentor concluded a tougher schedule would better prep his team for the post season grind. A developing philosophy received added emphasis. "We look for and want to play the best teams we can Schedule." Lewis believes the strategy, dubbed locally as death valley, was a factor in his team's 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015 state title runs.

Following that 2010 run the core that started the achievement feat basically Graduated. In Its place came a talented core hardened by AAU travel ball but inexperienced in high school play. Would the Phase I success of the Golden Age Continue? The answer proved positive.

Phase II accomplishments included championships three, four, five, six and seven.

At present Phase III has included state title eight. The quest for nine provides the core of motivation for the 2018-2019 season.