

Bishop Amat Athletics
“*Goodness, Discipline, and Knowledge*”
by
Ronald C. Woolsey

In The Beginning

From the beginning, school officials decided that strong athletic programs would provide an impetus for the school’s future growth and development. The physical education curriculum created an early foundation for Bishop Amat’s sports program. Intramural programs and physical education classes helped identify talented athletes and provided a chance for students to display their physical prowess. The San Gabriel Valley *Tribune* observed, “As a result of the school’s initial attempts at football and basketball, student interest in the athletic teams has become evident.”

Bishop Amat developed a comprehensive sports program almost immediately. Students had a four-game football season with thirty-one freshman players during the fall of 1957. Under the direction of Father Frederick Furey, the first school athletic director, coaches were carefully selected, schedules planned, intramural programs organized, and tryouts and sign-up dates determined. Bishop Amat scheduled thirteen basketball games and over ten baseball contests. In March, 1958, the first Letterman’s Dinner was held at Sacred Heart auditorium. Early on, the Amat-U.S.C. connection was established. Don Clark, head Trojan football coach, was a guest of honor at the ceremonies. Sports writers from all over the metropolitan area attended the gala affair. Francis Cavezza (‘61), Ed Zitney (‘61), Hal Tilbury (‘61), Dick Wenzel (‘61) and Charles Jimenez (‘61) earned honors at that first sports banquet.

The Lancerette Basketball team also performed admirably during the first year of the school’s existence. In March, 1958, the team competed in the 15th Annual Catholic Girls Tournament in Long Beach. During that infant season, the girls defeated Pomona High and Bell-Jeff. In the next year the Lancerettes competed in a full schedule for both basketball and volleyball, with Miss Donna Cuklis as their new coach.

Parents were an important support for the athletic program. A newly formed boosters club and active PTA planned a St. Patrick’s Day Musical, barbeque dinner, dances and other fund raising events that spread an infectious enthusiasm throughout the school. At the St Patrick’s Day gala, student hostesses Cynthia Repp (‘61), Karen Cowley (‘61), Norma Jean Echabarne (‘61) and Josephine Brockett (‘61) modeled bright green costumes with shamrocks and clover trimmings for the party. With a community and student body energized, the future seemed bright, as the San Gabriel Daily *Tribune* noted:

Student interest in the athletic teams has become evident. The student body is presently applying itself to the task of selecting

a nickname for its teams. It might be advisable for the prep sports fan to watch for the outcome of this nickname contest because in the years to come this name may become synonymous with great teams. If overcoming first year obstacles is any indication of future successes, this certainly may be the case.

Father Benedict Folger assumed the role of athletic moderator, while basketball and track coach Phil Roche and football coach John Frampton led the early Amat boys' sports program. In those early years, the freshman and sophomore Lancers played a local schedule against Catholic school rivals such as St. John Vianney, Bishop Montgomery, St. Bernard and Mater Dei, along with neighboring public schools like Duarte, Charter Oak, Northview and Covina. In the school's first complete football season in 1958, the Lancers finished an 8-1 season with a victory over St. Paul at Pomona Catholic Stadium. Coach Frampton was pleased with his team's effort and he praised the student body, faculty and parents for their support. The future looked bright. "We have good material at Amat," Frampton said, "All these things make for a good season. But most important, the spirit of these boys is hard to beat. Bishop Amat Lancer squad will be one to reckon with in the future."

The Sixties: Establishing Traditions

Just as the physical discipline of Sparta balanced the aesthetic creativity of Athens, Bishop Amat offered a full complement of athletic programs. Along with the traditional sports, students could participate in bowling, wrestling, tennis, and golf. The girls programs also included the Pep Squad and Drill Team. The Drill Team competed in several tournaments, garnered prestigious awards, and became a fixture at the Covina Christmas parade. The Golden Lancerettes attended athletic games, boosted morale and provided a necessary support for school spirit. Sister Mary Bride recalled the dazzling Lancerette uniforms, cut just above the knee, in blue and gold, augmented with white gloves and boots. Drill majors of those early teams included Jo Ann Balkus ('61), Carol Ann Camarata ('62), Barbara Herrick ('63), Christine Watts ('64) and Helen Hartmann ('65).

During the 1960s the girls program included softball, volleyball, and basketball. Pat Arndt provided the coaching and guidance for these sports throughout most of the decade. The girls' basketball team steadily improved throughout the era. Since girls' athletics offered fewer sports than the boys program, students fiercely competed for the precious few places on the team. Standout athletes on these squads included Kathy Gideon ('64) and Diane Smith ('64). In 1966, Debbie Hulbert ('67), Lorraine Trujillo ('68) and Joyce Mikolajczak ('68) led the Lancerette hoopsters to their best season to date, earning awards in the Santa Maria and St. Anthony tournaments. Katie O'Halloran ('69), Sue Carlson ('68) and Mary Jo Salter ('70) guided the Lancerettes to tournament awards and winning league records in subsequent years. In volleyball, early standouts included four-year letterwomen Melodie McKamey ('64), Diane Smith ('64) and Kathy Gideon ('64). Teams of the late-Sixties included Sandra Taylor ('68), Diane Navarro

(‘71) and Judy Lehr (‘69). In 1969, the Lancerettes concluded one of their best seasons of the decade by earning a league co-championship title. In softball, Amat earned a league title in 1964 and co-championship in 1965. Susan Nassar (‘64), Laura Lampys (‘65), Debbie Hulbert (‘67) and Laura Wertz (‘67) provided those teams with power in the lineup. Standouts in later years included Mary Luevanos (‘70), Mary Walsh (‘69) and Mary Jo Salter (‘70).

Female athletics proved equally as competitive as the boys program. One male student admired the intensity of the girls’ game. “When they engage in it,” marveled David O’Brien (‘65), “their attention is completely absorbed in the numerous maneuvers which take place.” In 1966, that competitive spirit was reflected when the girls program incorporated a powder puff football game. Dozens of girls assembled for the tryouts and coaches were enlisted from the Varsity football team. Practices included basic plays such as a ‘dive right’ and ‘double reverse.’ Of course, the game was inaugurated amidst an atmosphere of ‘sisterly love.’ *The Lance* quipped, “Following the game there will be a spread and a movie for all interested GAA members and tired football players.”

The boys’ athletic program included the traditional sports of football, track and field, baseball and basketball. Wrestling and cross country were also offered during the year. An important addition during the early 1960s was a rigorous weightlifting program, supervised by the coaching staff. The weight room was located in the gym and open to all students during after school hours. In 1964, *The Lance* proudly reported, “A part of the athletic program here at Amat is weight training which plays an important role in making physically-fit athletes.” Each sports program had a varied degree of success, but the fortunes of several sports programs often rested on the success of the football team. During the off-season, talented football players were encouraged to participate in track and field, baseball, basketball and wrestling. Among the many standouts throughout the Sixties, Dave Plumley (‘66) had great success in the long jump; Bob Berg (‘66), Dan Harden (‘66), Kevin McNair (‘67) and Tony Pascal (‘70) dominated the sprints; Larry Billiu (‘64) set a school record in the high jump; Henry Barbosa (‘66), Bob Hennessy (‘69) and John Cromwell (‘69) earned several awards in wrestling; Bob Beran (‘65) was crowned the 1965 Santa Fe League most valuable baseball player; and of course, Pat Haden (‘71) had great success in basketball. The school established an award in Haden’s name to honor an athlete who excelled in the classroom and in at least two sports.

The Bishop Amat football program experienced great success during the early part of the decade. In their first full varsity season in 1960, the Lancers ended with only two wins and seven losses. Yet there was a promising future on the horizon with a large group of players returning the next year. *The Lance* prophetically reported, “The varsity shows promise in the future as the lower teams become full varsity members, having been well seasoned in this year’s contests.” Indeed, the following year the Lancers earned a CIF 2-A championship trophy. Bishop Amat was roundly defeated by St. Francis in league play, and the Lancers returned the favor by defeating their rival in the CIF 2-A final, 28-13. The excitement surrounding that contest was electric. The San Gabriel Valley *Tribune* and Los Angeles *Times* ran several articles during the week leading to the title game, calling it among other things, “a grudge game.” The victory was important to the San

Gabriel Valley as much as to the Lancers since it was the first time a valley school had won the championship since 1926. The *Tusitala* recorded the action.

At half the powerful Knights were leading 7-0 but Amat scored twice in the third frame to take the lead. The Lancer offense was at its peak. Piloted by Gary Walker ('63), they moved well in the air and even better on the ground. Amat's defense likewise sparkled. The player of the week award went to Jim Cash ('63) since he was a favorite target on offense and a tough man to get by on defense.

All-CIF honors in 1961 went to Gary Walker ('63), Dick Greene ('62) and Larry Volmert ('63). The next year, the Lancers moved to the CIF 3-A division and continued to have success throughout the season and playoffs. In the CIF semifinal match, Bishop Amat defeated Mater Dei in a defensive struggle, 7-0, to advance to the finals against South Pasadena. Adrian Young ('64), Ken Flannery ('63) and Tom Pansini ('63) led a rugged defense in the shutout of the Monarchs. However, the Lancers narrowly fell to South Pasadena in the championship game, 27-20.

During the next four years, Amat teams were respectable despite not winning a CIF crown. Standouts in that era included tough offensive and defensive lineman and linebackers; the unsung heroes, men in the trenches that opened the path for fleet-footed halfbacks, or sacked a quarterback and stopped opponents in short yardage situations. The familiar names heard over the loudspeaker that were usually involved in tackles or made crucial blocks included Kent Roberts ('66), Bob Hodel ('66) , Jim Leiblic ('66), Chuck Gover ('66) and Galen "Bunky" Pavelko ('66). In 1967, the Lancers returned to championship form by winning a league title and losing a close 7-6 CIF playoff game to the top ranked team in the state, Santa Ana. That Amat team showcased All-San Gabriel Valley first team selections Les Arehart ('68) and Tim Gaffney ('68). The following year, sophomores Pat Haden ('71) and John McKay ('71) contributed greatly to the Lancers 7-1-1 season and laid the groundwork for future success.

Most importantly, head coach Phil Cantwell was greatly responsible for providing the foundation of the Amat football program during the Sixties. Coach Cantwell, a Notre Dame graduate, arrived at Bishop Amat during the 1960 season. He had already attained success at Mary Star of the Sea and earned a state championship at Joliet Catholic High in Illinois. In fact, Father Kiefer was well aware of Cantwell's abilities since he had been principal at Mary Star of the Sea prior to his tenure at Bishop Amat High School. What's more, Father Kiefer was impressed with Phil Cantwell's strong Catholic values and personal integrity, along with his ability to impart those traits to young people. "There's more to coaching than what takes place on the football field," Cantwell admitted. The test of character lay in self-discipline, the hard work and dedication placed in the weight room and during summer practice. Cantwell was a builder of men as much as a mentor of athletes. A 1967 article in *The Lance* captured the essence of the man.

Mr. Philip Cantwell's personality and abilities have a diversity that is enviable. He can encourage, and instill with eagerness a class of new freshmen on their way to a new high school career. He can assure parents of their children's good attributes and discourage a negative attitude in dealing with boys. He is articulate and capable of being an easy acquaintance. But there is one thing Coach Cantwell can do and does do that overshadows all the rest of his tremendous abilities. It is a feat almost beyond belief and yet he continues to do it year after year. Mr. Cantwell makes boys into men.

Amat athletes earned accolades in several sports throughout the decade. Under the guidance of Jerry Barland, the cross country team garnered a league title in 1963 and the 1964 track and field teams were co-league champs. Bill Ruch ('65), Harry Chabram ('66) and John Miller ('64) were among the top runners. In later years, Bill Cordova ('68), Larry Ebner ('71) and Ted Mossbarger ('69) usually broke the tape ahead of the competition. In 1963, Bishop Amat inaugurated the Bishop Amat Relays, a premier track and field event held every spring, usually at Mount San Antonio or Citrus College. Dozens of schools competed at various levels in a two-day event that garnered regional attention. Several wrestlers over the years earned awards in both league and CIF competition. Dan Gibson ('66), Jack Heine ('66) and Sean Gaffney ('69) were among the many prominent competitors to hit the mat. In basketball, Charlie Bragg ('65) and Jim James ('66) were tall bookends to successful teams in the mid-sixties. In 1966, Amat hoopsters competed through three rounds of the CIF playoffs –the best performance in school history to that time.

Bishop Amat's athletic program had begun to gain national attention by the end of the decade. The 1969 football squad was ranked at one point as the top team in the nation, but lost a CIF 4-A championship final to Blair High School, 28-27. Along with Pat Haden ('71) and John McKay ('71), Rudi Brutocao ('70) and Lee Garcia ('70) led a tough defense during that winning campaign. In baseball, the Lancers won back-to-back CIF 3-A championships in 1968 and 1969. Manny Estrada ('70), Cary Crouch ('69) and Paul Barthelme ('70) used the glove and bat to spark the Lancers. Ace pitcher Frank O'Connor ('70) was almost invincible during the season. In the 1969 CIF final against St. Paul, a defensive play of the game combined all of their talents. Amat held a narrow 2-1 lead into the seventh inning when St. Paul loaded the bases with one out. *The Lance* retold the dramatic outcome. "The Swordsman sent a shot out into centerfield that was stabbed by Crouch. The runner on third tagged but was out at home plate as Crouch relayed the ball to Estrada, who fired to Barthelme at home." It was also the second consecutive championship for Pat Holligan, who earned recognition as the San Gabriel Valley coach of the year in both seasons.

The Seventies

In 1974, an editorial in *The Lance* explained the importance of the tradition of Amat athletics. Sports provided a common bond for the student body. A successful athletic

program affects enrollment and generates income, which translates into financial aid for academic programs and plant development. The article then noted that Bishop Amat was a prime example of the positive effects of sports on the school. From baseball playoffs to football titles and cross country awards, the Lancer tradition provided a shared feeling of camaraderie among the students. "We often view the next sporting event just as the next social or the next kiss. It possibly will always be that way. But certainly that next sporting event will continue to be one of the most important events in the school's lifetime."

The 1970s certainly perpetuated that winning tradition, but added new wrinkles to the school's previous success. This change was particularly noticeable in girls' athletics. After all, the women's liberation movement had gained momentum throughout the decade. Most states were debating whether or not to ratify An Equal Rights Amendment that would guarantee women "equal pay for equal work." At the Munich Olympics, fifteen-year-old Shirley Babashoff won the first of her eight gold medals in swimming.

In 1973, young people watched on television the much-hyped "Battle of the Sexes," when former male tennis champion Bobby Riggs lost to the female legend, Billy Jean King, before the largest television audience to ever watch a tennis match.

At Amat, athletic success and a greater offering of sports programs increased the competitive spirit and offered girls another avenue to participate and become involved with campus life. Unlike the boys programs, where plenty of Catholic schools had teams to make "all Catholic" school leagues, the girls competed against any school, public or private, traveling far and wide in order to compete in a league. Girls initially ran "unattached" in the track and cross country programs. Tennis emerged as an organized and competitive sport. In 1971, a rules change in Girls' Basketball allowed for more contact and to play the same 5-man game as the boys. *Lance* reporter, Regi Berg ('72), wrote in an article entitled, "Girls finally learn to play basketball," that previously girls' basketball existed as a six man team, with two guards that remained stationary, working offensively, and two rovers traveling full court. In 1972, GAA Commissioner, Katie Mclean ('72), organized a basketball intramural program among all levels, with playoffs divided among upper and lower level classes. *The Lance* observed that intramural basketball provided girls with "the opportunity to participate in a sport which no other extracurricular program might offer." Girls would have loved to have played football, but settled for an annual "powder puff" football game to display their skills and determination.

Volleyball and softball had success in the decade. Diane Navarro ('71) and Elizabeth Zito (('71) were among the volleyball standouts in the early 1970s. Spiker Theresa Allen ('76), along with Nancy Ventura ('75), Deborah O'Connor ('76) and Christi Velasco ('75), were familiar names in the mid-1970s. Led by Vella Carillo ('77), Kathy Laddusaw ('77) and Lisa Solis ('77), the 1976 volleyball team's 8-2 record earned them a second place finish in league and a trip to the CIF playoffs. It was the highest finish for an Amat volleyball team in recent history. Later in the decade, Tammy Cerneka ('79) and Anne Hartnett ('80) earned all-league recognition for their dominant play. The softball team won a league title in 1974, led by home run leader Mary Beke ('76) and the gloves and bats of Linda Kennerknect ('75) and Carol McNaney ('74). In the early 1970s, Mary Jo

Salter ('70), Anna Estrada ('73), Kathy Flores ('73) and Juanita Gomez ('72) powered the Lady Lancers into league contention. The softball team placed second in league in 1970. In the latter half of the decade, Pam Newton ('79) and Gail Boucher ('79) were among the players who provided the power and pitching for the team.

The girls' program was equally successful in basketball and tennis. In the early 1970s, Mary Jo Salter ('70), Karen "Stretch" Ventura ('71), Kathleen Brennan ('73) and Kathy Flores ('73) were consistent players who grabbed rebounds and scored points. During the mid-1970s, Cathy Convertino ('76) and Terry Allen ('76) were familiar names among the statistical leaders. In 1979, the team earned a consolation award at the Azusa and La Puente basketball tournaments, with standout performances by Angie Simon ('80), Terry Wahle ('79) and Kathy Brady ('81). Although the tennis teams had limited success during the decade, the program continued to grow in numbers. During the early 1970s, Miki Camarillo ('73), Sue Davidson ('73) and Cindy Duff ('72) provided the backhands, baseline play and power slams. In later years, Martha Hansen ('76), Marlene Lopez ('77) and Kim Hayes ('80) were among the individual standouts.

The most significant change in girls' athletics took place in cross country and track and field. These sports were easily accessible due to the overall success of these programs, and because a runner could compete as an individual without necessarily representing a team. In 1972, girls began competing in track and field, and Nori Gerardo ('75) was one of the first female athletes to run unofficially with the boys' program. In later years, track and field witnessed greater popularity and girls equaled the size of the boys' team by the end of the decade. Ann Hartnett ('80), Gretchen Lott ('81) and Charlene Kirchner ('81) were among the many fine athletes. By 1975, several distance runners emerged as excellent cross country competitors. Bridget Lott ('78), Mary Piper ('76), Jeanne Williams ('78) and Monika Hernandez ('77) ran during the 1975 cross country season. By 1976, the girls' cross country team had increased to nine runners, and then to an eleven member team by the following year. In athletics, size matters, and the larger the program the more potential talent is available to blossom and shine. By 1977, the girls' cross country team had become a truly championship program. Amat took first place at the San Gabriel Valley Invitational, a highly competitive meet that pits the top valley teams in competitive races, matching in separate heats runners of equal ability. The invitational is a testament to a team's depth since the total score depends on the performance of the top five team runners. In addition, the girls' cross country team finished in 5th place in the 1977 CIF prelims, held on the rugged, undulating hill course of Mount San Antonio College. The next year, they earned a spot in the CIF finals. More awards, league titles and championships would be earned in the next few years. In 1978, Theresa Ebiner ('81) earned recognition as an "All-Valley" runner by the *San Gabriel Tribune*. Laura Cazares ('80) and Angie Deleon ('78) were also among the outstanding runners of that era.

Boys' athletics began the decade with a football championship and national recognition. The Lancers finished the 1970 season with a CIF 4-A title. Pat Haden ('71) and John McKay ('71) led a potent offense while middle linebacker Ralph Buron ('71) and defensive lineman Murray Gugins ('71) complemented a stubborn defense. The

home games were moved from Kiefer Stadium to Mount San Antonio College in order to accommodate the large crowds that followed Amat football. Yet the road to a championship was not easy. St. Paul upset the Lancers in the final league game, 34-13. After defeating Anaheim and El Rancho, the Lancers played Lakewood for the CIF 4-A championship. It was one of the most exciting football games in Amat history. In regulation play, the game ended in a 17-17 draw so the California Tie-Breaker Rule was put into effect. Each team alternated four downs from the 50 yard line and the team that advanced the ball farthest would be declared champion. Lakewood's final possession ended with an incomplete pass deflected by defensive back John Sciarra ('72). The 1970 team won the school's first 4-A football championship and *The Lance* succinctly noted that "it was too bad a season like this had to end."

The 1971 club had a magical season as well. The team went undefeated and earned a CIF 4-A championship, along with a mythical national title accorded by several sports journalists around the country. Quarterback John Sciarra ('72) guided the offense while Rick Bryan ('72), Bob Garcia ('72) and Gary Crowe ('72) led an aggressive defense. When asked if the season had been a surprise, Coach Dennis McLaughlin replied, "This season has turned out better than I anticipated. I have received great effort from every member of the team, and the pride and emotion on this squad is fantastic."

Bishop Amat football continued to have individual success throughout the decade, despite not winning another CIF championship. John Zuro ('74), Chris Rice ('74) and Terry Carrigan ('74) piloted a successful 1973 team. Jeff Klein ('76), Tony Pinelli ('76), Nick Corso ('77) and Paul McDonald ('76) earned all-league honors in 1975. Chris Spohn ('78) and Ed Kelly ('77) were also among the standouts during the mid-1970s. In 1978, the "cardiac kids" led an explosive offense that produced nail-biting finishes and carried the team to Amat's first playoff appearance in four years. Familiar names crossing the goal line during that season included Mike Frazzette ('80), Larry Harnett ('79), Chris Brown ('79) and Brian Burrell ('80).

Basketball had winning programs during the decade. Under the leadership of Charlie Ruffin, who had coached the team for most of the previous ten years, Amat basketball produced several outstanding players and made the CIF playoffs in 1971. Mike Roche ('71), Gary Purdom ('71) and Pat Haden ('71) were among the many fine players of that era. Coach Ruffin earned his 200th win as a high school coach during that season. The basketball program also earned a CIF playoff spot in 1974 and 1978. In the mid-1970s, Charles Jennings, Ray Flores ('74) and Tom Branich ('75) grabbed rebounds and shot baskets for the Lancers, while Rainer Wulf ('78), Alex Acosta ('78), Tom Salter ('79) and Neil Romine ('79) were among the dominant starters of the second half of the decade.

In baseball, the 1970 team went 12-3 and won a Angeleus League title and advanced to the third round of the CIF playoffs. The following year, the Lancers had an even more impressive 19-3 record, again dominated the Angeleus League, but lost in the second round of the CIF playoffs. Amat teams during the rest of the decade contended for either the league title or a CIF playoff spot. Several outstanding players fielded, hit, or pitched

on the Amat diamond during the 1970s. Key players included Frank O'Connor ('70), Jesse Mendoza ('71), Phil Convertino ('71), Liam McGee ('72), Brian Kelly ('74) and Rick Liuag ('74) during the front end of the decade, while Sal Berumen ('77), Juan Martinez ('77), Mark Garcia ('77), Tony Palagyi ('79) and Ray Lopez ('80) scored the runs in the latter half of the 1970s.

The wrestling teams of the 1970s were dominant, with several mat men earning All-League and CIF recognition. Wrestling is one of the unsung sports in high school. With a small crowd following, rigorous training, and no one to blame for a defeat except oneself, a wrestler develops strong character traits of self-discipline and personal responsibility. In the 1970s, Coach Rich Cunningham brought these determined attributes to the program and consistently produced league titles. Bob James ('72), Howard Ohl ('71) and Paul Gonzalez ('72) had fine success during the early 1970s. Louis Gonzales and Steve Platimore earned All-League recognition in 1974. CIF finalists during the mid-1970s included Don Le Melle, Don Aragon ('76), Arthur Chance ('77) and Mike Lyons ('76). Joe Castorena ('78) and Dan Prescott ('79) were standouts as the decade came to a close.

Cross country emerged as a premier athletic program during the 1970s. Distance running is a lonely activity, with no cheering crowd urging runners onward, they breathlessly struggle to keep up with the pack at some far corner of a corn field, or stare up at the next steep switchback to climb. It is the lack of recognition that often is the motivating factor for distance runners, pitting them against all odds to run farther. *The Lance* captured this sentiment in a 1982 retrospective article.

Running on the cross country team in the early 1970s was much different than it is today. Running was not the popular activity it is today. Nobody ever ran on the streets just for health like the millions of joggers witnessed every day now at the crack of dawn or at nine in the evening. Amat runners were not accepted on the road. Back then drivers just did not expect to see a mass of thirty runners striding down the street. Even some students at Amat thought the sport was rather weird.

There were several important factors that contributed to the ascendancy of distance running at Bishop Amat. In the early 1970s, the infectious enthusiasm of head coach Phil Ryan gave long distance running notoriety on campus. He organized an alumni meet at the beginning of each season that built tradition and connected previous graduates with the team. Coach Ryan encouraged runners to keep personal logs with total miles and length of workouts. The team held workouts in the morning and evening to build stamina and endurance. The cross country team was runner-up in the 2-A CIF championship in 1972, won the CIF title in 1973, and finished 5th in the 4-A CIF finals two years later. The distance crew also captured the prestigious San Gabriel Valley Invitational in 1973 and 1975. *The Lance*, with a modicum of hyperbole, boasted that "heroes may die, wise philosophies may be forgotten and empires may crumble, but through all the ages Bishop Amat's Cross Country Team just seems to win again and again." The Robert Ebner family made important contributions to the running programs at the school. When Bob

Ebner was not busy practicing law or raising a family of fourteen children, he organized and promoted the Bishop Amat Relays while his sons emerged as outstanding long distance competitors. Larry ('71), Mike ('74), Chris ('75), Joe ('76), Frank ('77) and Matt ('79) provided a strong foundation for the boys' distance running program throughout the decade. Mike Ebner ('74) also returned to Amat and coached the successful boys and girls cross country teams in the late-1970s. To be sure, there were other standouts that contributed to Amat's success. These runners included Art Castillo ('76), Tony Perez ('77), Steve Reyes ('78), Bob Concho ('74), Chris Trujillo ('74), Eddie Padilla ('73) and Jeff Monical ('79). In track and field, middle distance runners Dave Navarro ('73) and Tim Walsh ('71), sprinter Pete Delegardelle ('74) and high jumper Brian Sarinana ('74) were among the many top performers of the decade.

The death of Coach Tate Duff in 1979 proved a great loss to Catholic education. "He had a wonderful rapport with faculty, students, and parents. Tate was an outstanding man." The *Tusitala* staff dedicated the 1980 yearbook in memory of Coach Tate Duff. "Last summer we experienced a great loss, Coach Duff passed away. Not only did we lose a member of the Amat family, but the world lost a wonderful man. Coach Duff will live on in Amat."

Tate Duff joined the coaching staff as a defensive specialist, and his leadership was instrumental in the success of the football program over the next several years. He earned the respect and love of his players through a quiet, plain-spoken demeanor. After winning the 1970 CIF championship, *The Lance* paid tribute to Coach Duff after that victory.

The defensive team, sometimes known as the dawgs or the mess-offs had to be playing their last game together for a better reason than just winning. Something tells me they were beating their brains out for an old Kentuckian who never owned a pair of shoes until he was 17. This tough old piece of meat is nobody else but the well-known Coach Duff. His voice, turned rough by the white lightning of the old Kentucky hills, barked something like 45 years of football experience. He could teach you tricks you'd never think of in a million years. The desire he had of winning at any cost was unreal. He was more than just a coach to his dawgs. He was so friendly in his way that he could even get along with the Fiend, Noel Rivas ('71).

The Eighties

The girls' program made the greatest strides in sports. Little wonder, since women had become increasingly active in professional and amateur programs, inspiring young ladies to organize and join sporting activities that had been denied them in the past. Heroes were everywhere. Evelyn Ashford and Valerie Brisco-Hooks dominated the sprints at the 1984 Olympics. In the distance events, Joan Benoit won the first Olympic women's marathon while Mary Decker smashed distance records from 1500 to 10,000 meters. Teresa Edwards and Katrina McClain led the 1988 United States basketball team to a gold medal

in the 1988 Olympics. Tennis enthusiasts watched as Chris Evert matched her baseline play against the power of Martina Navratilova, while youngster Steffi Graf challenged the old guard at Wimbledon and the U.S. Open by the close of the decade.

The Amat cross country program had great success during the early years of the decade. Alumni Mike Ebner ('74) was the coach and inspiration behind the development of the girls distance program. The girls' competition expanded from a two to three-mile race, just like the boys division. The rugged Mount San Antonio course was the site of many Amat victories, including the 1982 San Gabriel Invitational. The 1981 and 1982 teams defeated their arch-nemesis, the Mater Dei Monarchs, along with the rest of the Angelus League teams. *The Lance* reported in 1982, "Amat raced on a wing and a prayer to win League Finals for the second consecutive year to defend their title. Faster than the tempestuous Santa Ana winds..." These teams had a wealth of talent and included outstanding runners such as Eileen Ebner ('85), Joanne Maldonado ('84), Barbara Piper ('85) and Denise Sanchez ('82). Kathy Ebner ('83) was an All American and led the teams during the early years of the decade. Between 1980 and 1984, the cross country program earned several league titles and placed high in the CIF finals. Megan Witcraft ('87), Yvette Galvan ('87) and Kristie Bubbert ('91) earned individual honors during the latter half of the decade.

In 1985, the school initiated the first girls' soccer program under the leadership of Tish Jacobs. In the first season, sixty-two students participated in the tryouts and the team eventually won the consolation bracket of their CIF post-season tournament. Christine Apodaca ('86) epitomized the girls' resolve to make soccer a permanent part of Bishop Amat's sports program. "We have a lot of aggressive girls out there and a lot of girls with tremendous speed. The girls want to win and are willing to work very hard." Among the many talented halfbacks, forwards and goalies were Gina Gross-Rubio ('88), Kim White ('89), Michelle Ng ('90), Michelle Verti ('89) and Ryan Pascal ('89). Coach Jacobs would lead the soccer program for the next twenty years, the longest continuous serving coach in Bishop Amat history, and her teams would earn several league titles and CIF playoff victories over that span.

The girls' basketball, tennis, track and field, and volleyball teams did not produce league championships during the decade, but they had several outstanding players earn individual awards or all-league recognition. In basketball, the team won the Azusa tournament in 1980 and 1981. Nancy Baker ('82) and Nancy O'Sullivan ('82) led the early 1980s squads, while Paula Patterson ('85), Kristie Ur ('86) and Lori Thomas ('84) were among the scorers and rebounding leaders of the mid-1980s. During the later half of the decade, Kim Ur ('88), Gina Gross-Rubio ('88) and April Gallegos ('87) dominated the court. In tennis, Helke Schweigert ('82) and Mary Hollycross ('82) led the team during the early 1980s, while Tracy Halbmaier ('86) and Deanna Lawler ('84) provided consistent play during the middle of the decade. Familiar names on the court during the latter half of the decade included Marina Trigonis ('88), Claudia Palencia ('87), Sue Oh ('90) and Selena Sinson ('88). In track and field, the cross country runners already mentioned dominated the mile and two-mile events. Sprinters Gina Hernandez ('86), Chris Clayton ('87), Chris Apodaca ('86), Natalie Banks ('90) and Jackie Watts ('89)

usually broke the tape ahead of the competition, while Rhonda Kaufman ('89) and Dana Wright ('90) performed well in the hurdles. In volleyball, Nancy Baker ('82), Linda Keks ('82) and Kirsten Levingston ('83) led the teams during the early 1980s. In 1988, the team finished with a successful 22-9 record and won the Cal-Hi tournament for the third straight year. Katie Hartnett ('84), Robyn DeSilva ('87), Cheryl King ('89), Christine Romero ('89) and Michelle Garcia ('90) were familiar set-up players and strikers during seasons ranging from 1984 to the end of the decade.

The softball team often won or challenged for the league title during most of the decade. With a .300 team batting average, the 1980 Lancerettes went all the way to the CIF semi-finals. The team again revisited the CIF playoffs in 1983. Lisa Hartnett ('82), Cheryl Dazalla ('83), Debbie Mendoza ('81) and Kaelyn Silva ('83) provided pitching, slugging and a steady glove for the teams in the early 1980s. In 1984, Joe Rodgers took command of the girls' program. Coach Rodgers also worked with the offensive lineman in the football program and had coached Amat's freshman baseball team during the 1978 season. A burly, intense competitor with the heart of a gentle lamb, Coach Rodgers elevated the softball program to a new level. Rodgers simple philosophy was, "We're going to go out and try our hardest." During the rest of the decade, several talented players filled the lineup, including Michelle LaMasa ('85), Eva Hector ('86), Michelle Martinez ('89), Nancy Benevidez ('88) and Evelyn Ochotorena ('88).

A resurgence toward greatness occurred in many boys' athletic programs during the early 1980s. Several dedicated head coaches established the groundwork for winning teams well into the next decade. In football, Jim Patricio brought a hard-nosed approach to the game, stressing defense, quickness and hard work. He pushed his staff to teach discipline, watch film and scout on a 24/7 schedule. Preparation was everything. The coaching staff could often be found on Sunday afternoons in the coaches' office, breaking down film and designing plays for the upcoming opponent. Coach Tim Murphy ('76) demanded self-discipline and rigorous workouts of his many wrestlers, whom often were found running the stairs of the stadium or circling the track in full sweats to make weight for a match. Coach Murphy led by example. He competed as a Lancer wrestler in the 1970s, placing second in state competition and earning three gold medals in international events. The even-tempered demeanor of Mark Paredes built self-confidence and determination into the character of the baseball program, a sport where there is always another inning, and self-control is paramount in the face of a frustrating strikeout or embarrassing fielding error. And the patience of Coach John Montgomery ('69) eventually led to winning seasons on the basketball court by the end of the decade.

Not since the Haden-McKay-Sciarra era, nearly ten years earlier, had Lancer football been a true CIF contender. All that changed in 1980. Bishop Amat was the surprise football team according to the Los Angeles *Times*, jumping to a 9-0 record, only to lose the final two games of the season against St. Paul and St. Francis. The team used an explosive wishbone offense and the quickness of Pernel Taylor ('83), who gained over 800 yards for the season. The team closed with the best record since the Lancers won the 1971 CIF 4-A championship. The next year Amat entered the last game of the season with a 8-1 record and vying for a league championship against their longtime rival, St.

Paul Swordsmen. It was by far the most exciting football game since the 1970 CIF championship game. The Los Angeles *Herald Examiner* saw the match like a prize fight, with both teams slugging it out for three hours and twenty minutes and four tiebreaker periods. An enthusiastic crowd of 15,000 at Cranham Memorial Stadium watched the determined opponents battle to a defensive-style 14-14 tie in regulation play. Each team alternated four downs on offense, beginning at the opponent's 10-yard line, and each team produced scores in the first three overtimes. The Swordsmen scored on a five yard touchdown pass in the fourth overtime, keeping the pressure on the Amat offense. The Lancers had four cracks at tying the game for the sixth time of the night, but Tim Garcia's ('84) pass was intercepted on the two-yard line to give St. Paul a 42-35 victory. Both teams still went to the playoffs. The Lancers finished with a 10-2 record, including a thrilling 21-20 victory over the Loyola Cubs, while St Paul High School went undefeated to win the CIF 4-A championship.

The Amat football program continued to challenge for the CIF championship and earned several league titles during the rest of the decade. In 1983, quarterback Steve Burelein and the Servite Friars defeated the Lancers in the CIF 4-A championship game. During the early 1980s, Randy Tanner ('84), Mike Prescott ('82), Bill Alcantara ('82) and Ed Fletcher ('82) were among the talented offensive players. Greg Seman ('82) and Don Hiti ('82) opened the holes in the defensive line for the running backs. "Defense is the key to the game and the season," declared Coach Jim Patricio. Ron Brown ('82), Mike Munoz ('83), Adam Zuro ('84) and Mark Cazares ('82) were tough players who validated their coach's belief. During the mid-1980s, Eric Bienemy ('87) exploded onto the Amat gridiron, smashing records in almost all rushing categories. He was a compact runner, only 5'7" in height, with a strong upper body, powerful thighs and a low center of gravity, which allowed him to break the tackles of larger lineman. His track coach marveled at his agility, noting that before practice Bienemy would sit on the ground, legs spread, and have the flexibility to touch his nose to the ground. During the summer months, Eric often cycled a twenty-six mile route from Old Glendora Canyon Road to Mount Baldy Village as part of his training. In 1985, Bienemy ran for 305 yards against Los Altos, breaking a 21-year-old Amat single game rushing record. He finished the year with more than 1300 total rushing yards and went on to lead the team to a 11-1 season. Quarterback Rick Carter ('86) and running back Lee Barrett ('86) also provided scoring punch, while lineman Jack Montes ('86) and Richard Garrick ('87), plus tight end Mike Demerest ('86), Troy Auzenne ('87) and Pat Patterson ('85), were among the unsung heroes leading the blocks. The 1988 squad narrowly lost in the CIF Division 1 championship game against Fountain Valley, 24-31. Brian Harmon ('89), Jeremy Smith ('90) and Jason Green ('90) were among the many fine players who led the Lancers to an 11-3 record. Pat Sullivan ('89) aptly summarized the grit and determination of that club. "We were always outsized and outmanned by the other team; so we relied instead on speed, intelligence and a will to win to pull us through."

The Lancers cross country teams continued to race to the wire against their arch-rival, Mater Dei High School. Either the Monarchs or the Lancers won the league title in every season during the decade. In 1980, Mike Mireles ('81), Sam Rigney ('81) and scholar athlete, John Santos ('82), captained the team to a 5-1 record and second place finish in

the Angelus league. Robert Melendez ('82), another standout, won the high school division of the Culver City Marathon. Eric Jenkins ('83) and Frank Brummitt ('83) also contributed to the team's success, including three straight CIF prelim appearances between 1980 and 1983. Darrell Turner ('86) and Brian Ebner ('86) led the Lancers to victory in the 1985 San Gabriel Invitational, the first Lancer win in that competitive event in ten years. Chris Waight ('88), the 1987 Angelus League champion, achieved victories on three tough courses at the Colton Invitational, San Gabriel Invitational, and the Mount San Antonio College Invitational. Tim Cruz ('88), Ernie Sena ('84), Danny Taylor ('87) and Richard Wheeler ('87) also played a vital role in the program's success during the Eighties.

The basketball program steadily improved throughout the decade, which culminated in an appearance in the 1988 CIF championship game. Talented players as the decade opened included Sal Diaz ('81), Bradley Newmayer ('81), Tom Davis ('81) and Jim Allen ('82). The 1983 team advanced through the second round of the CIF playoffs before losing to the top ranked team, St. Bernards. "We all felt that if we were going to lose, losing to the first place team was worth it," reasoned Coach John Montgomery ('69). During the '83 season, Marc Thomas ('83) and Randy Tanner ('84) provided consistent scoring while Bill Delagardelle ('83) cleared the boards. The mid-1980s were building years as the basketball team struggled to play .500 in the tough Angelus League. Using an up-tempo game with a fast-paced offense, the 1987 squad reached the first round of the CIF playoffs with a talented core of impressive players. Stephon Pace ('88) and Geoff Lear ('88) earned first team all-league honors while Clarence Lamb ('88) and Terrance Lamb ('88) made the second team all-league squad. Pat Chylinski ('87) also provided rebounding and defense to help the team advance to the playoffs for the first time in four years. It only got better. The 1988 basketball team won the League title by defeating Mater Dei 70-56, ending their rivals 55 league-game winning streak. Coach Alex Acosta ('78) cautioned that "although we've defeated Mater Dei twice, I can't say that the title's won for sure. We still have to do our best." The Lancers won the Damien High School Tournament and the Covina High School Tournament and went to the CIF 5-A playoffs, but were upset in the championship game by Mater Dei, 74-65. The team still advanced to the state playoffs but lost a narrow 94-91 contest against one of the top ranked teams in California, Manual Arts. Nevertheless, it had been a Cinderella season, yet to be duplicated in the school's men's basketball history. As the *Tusitala* accurately observed, "Despite the loss, this remarkable season brought a great deal of pride to Bishop Amat."

The wrestling program continued to have individual success throughout the decade. Tom Obregon ('82), Speedy Murrillo ('82), Ramon Diaz ('86) and Joe Rosalez ('85) earned several individual awards for their efforts on the mat. Steve Krotzer ('84) and Bill Kirchner ('84) led the 1984 team to the Angelus League title. Tim Garcia ('84) also achieved CIF honors that year. "Wrestling is an individual sport, one on one, you against yourself, and when you win the glory is your own," explained Gerard Garcia ('86). The program steadily improved throughout the decade as many young athletes matured and dominated their opponents as upper classmen. Daniel Herrera ('89), Frank Guzman ('89) and Aron Gideon ('88) led a 1987-1988 team that finished among the top five schools at

the Alemany, Bonita and Whittier tournaments. The following year proved to be one of the finest of the decade. The team dominated the Del Rey League and taking the title from the defending league champion, the Mater Dei Monarchs. The high point of league competition occurred when senior Jesus Betts ('89) pinned his Monarch opponent to cap a suspenseful victory over Mater Dei, 39-22. The *Tusitala* reported on the special moment. "The announcement that Bishop Amat was Del Rey League champions brought the crowd to their feet in an ecstatic frenzy." Led by Wray Mamaril ('91) and Frank Orozco ('90), the mat men also won the Bolsa Grande and Downey tournaments. Senior Steve Cabrera succinctly observed that "all the time and effort paid off."

The soccer and golf programs made important strides during the decade. The boys' soccer program was organized in the 1983-1984 season. To almost everyone's surprise, the Lancers advanced to CIF post-season play as Randy Lack ('84) and Alex Moya ('84) led the team in that inaugural year. Gary Felix ('86), Chris Bravata ('86) and Jesses Sandoval ('89) were among the many standouts in later years. Ron Villaescusa ('86), a former ASB president, returned to coach the team during the 1989-1990 campaign. Top scorer Johnny Criscione ('90) led the team to top honors in the Wilson tournament. Overall, the team set seven school records and presaged even better results in the decade ahead. The Amat golf team spent long hours practicing at the prestigious Industry Hills Golf Course. Concentration and patience are the cornerstones of a good golfer. Joe Patterson ('90) summarized his love of the game. "Golf is a very stimulating game because it challenges the mind and improves coordination." Tom Cusick ('81) and Dennis Montellano ('84) were among the many talented players of the early 1980s. The 1987 team dedicated their season to the memory of their former coach, Bob Woods, who had passed away earlier in the year. Ryan Mendoza ('90) won all league honors in the 1988 and 1989 seasons. Chris Dukes ('88), Scott Ragano ('87), Glenn Ohno ('87), John Dykes ('89), Kirk Stroupe ('91) and Octavo Lugo ('90) were among the many top players that shot birdies and eagles over the years.

The track and field program experienced some of the best results ever, partly due to the strong football and cross country programs. Many sprinters, long jumpers, hurdlers and distance runners dominated the competition throughout the decade. In 1982, the Lancers took the CIF 2-A title with dominant performances by Ron Brown ('82) and Gary Brown ('83) in the sprints. Pernell Taylor ('83), Dirk Adams ('84) and Jeff Mack ('84) were among the many talented runners during the early 1980s. The cinder men continued to have success throughout the mid-1980s. Although they did not have the dominant individual performances that won the 1982 title, these teams had depth, with nearly 130 athletes participating in the program. It was an intimidating sight for an opponent to watch as three busloads of visiting Amat runners arrived for a duel meet. The Lancers swept Angelus League titles in the varsity, junior varsity and sophomore divisions during the 1985 and 1986 seasons. Paul Lugo ('85) and Charles Fraley ('87) took honors in the hurdle events, while Brian Ebner ('86) and Darrell Turner ('86) led the distance events. Charles Avery ('86), James Pierre ('86), Mike Simen ('86), Eric Bienemy ('87) and Johnny Brown ('86) advanced the 400 meter relay team to the 1986 Master's Meet. Sprinters Mazio Royster ('88) and Jeremy Smith ('90) also won individual honors in the latter half of the decade.

The baseball program continued to challenge or win league championships throughout the 1980s. Between 1981 and 1984, the Lancer ballclubs advanced to the CIF playoffs and also won league crowns in 1981 and 1982. Mike Munoz ('83), Kurt Maier ('81) and Jim Gustaveson ('85) tossed up the fastballs and changeups that shutout the opponents during the first half of the decade. Brian Kelly ('86), Mark Cazares ('82), Tommy Davis ('81) and John Jackson ('85) provided offensive punch during that period. Frank Anguiano ('82) earned the Angelus League Most Valuable Player award in 1982, and Randy Tanner ('84) duplicated the feat in the following year. Coach Mark Paredes considered Tanner's exploits and leadership a rare combination for a high school athlete, and he paid his talented ballplayer the supreme complement. "Randy Tanner was the finest athlete I've ever coached. He could do everything, power hitting, fielding – everything." The 1987 team advanced to the third round of the CIF playoffs. They finished with an impressive 22-5 record, led by James D. Romero ('90), Ken Kendrena ('88) and Roman Covarrubias ('90). Impressive hitting performances by Charles [J.R.] Phillips ('88), Brian Harmon ('89) and Eric White ('90) led the Lancers as the decade came to a close.

The Nineties

It proved to be a unique decade for Bishop Amat athletics. Never before had the school been so successful in such a wide variety of girls and boys athletic programs. Six different sports programs advanced to the CIF finals. The Lancers reached the final round on twelve different occasions and earned seven championship banners, which now drape the inside of the Amat gym. The girls' cross country, softball and basketball teams won CIF championships during the Nineties. The football, wrestling and baseball programs did likewise, making it the most successful decade in Amat sports history. The attitude behind this amazing success was probably best captured in a 1994 *Tusitala* survey of athletes, which covered a wide variety of topics related to their participation in sports. The athlete survey revealed that hard work, the sacrifice of personal time and inspiration of relatives were keys to success. Amat athletes put themselves through the rigors of training because of the camaraderie and pride that comes with teamwork, and their experiences taught them responsibility, patience and cooperation. Indeed, the Bishop Amat sports tradition is like a silent dynamo that offers every generation of new athletes a path to success. *Lance* reporter Gina Capobianco ('91) articulated that point. "Dedication, determination and a desire to win set Amat athletes apart. You can find evidence of this tradition in the Amat Hall of Fame, where former Amat athletes are honored."

Girls' cross country had great success in 1992. At the beginning of the season, Coach Mike Munoz accurately predicted, "we are fielding one of the strongest girls teams ever in Bishop Amat history. They resemble the 1982 championship team of the past and currently ranked as the top team in the San Gabriel Valley." The team won the CIF 2-A championship on the heels of Nancy Villanueva ('96), Megan Stewart (94) and Kristine

Galvan ('93). Important contributors to the championship also included Malinali Martinez ('96), Lisa Montelongo ('94), Selena Harrigan ('96) and Deana Ferree ('96). Teamwork is everything in distance running because of the support and friendship of those who endure long hours of endless miles in "the pack." Megan Stewart ('94) observed that "being friends with my teammates was like having another family." That year, Kristine Galvan ('93) and James Roldan ('92) represented the United States in the Third Annual Friendship Run in Shanghai, China. Both students were selected by other high school coaches to join the 122 member U.S. team. *The Lance* reported, "They returned from China, delighted to see their families greeting them at the airport, but sad to say good-bye to the friends they had met."

In 1994, the girls' cross country team easily won another league title and again earned a CIF championship. This dedicated group of runners recognized the importance of running as a "pack," urging their fellow runners onward, and realizing they were only as strong as their weakest link. *Tusitala* writer Madelyn Elias ('95) reported on the underlying character of this close-knit group. "After school, the cross country runners were found in the lunch area stretching before practice. Dedication was a quality found with the team. Overwhelming team support and the love of running contributed to a victorious season." Tonanzin Martinez ('98), Gina Alejandro ('98), Elizabeth Padilla ('96), Mary Cring ('98) and Sara Monje ('98) were among the top performers that year. Lisa Chiapetta ('97) best summarized the team's success. "After such a rewarding season, I gained the gifts of endurance and optimism."

The girls' basketball program reached the CIF finals in 1998 and 1999. Girls' basketball had achieved winning records throughout the decade with such standouts as Kristina Chavez ('94), Jennie Griffin ('94), Gina Perez ('92), Kiana Webb ('96), Ann-Marie Drohan ('93) and Kelly Chavez ('97). Led by senior Zakiya Gardner ('98), the 1997-1998 squad won a league crown and earned the runner-up trophy in the CIF finals. Teamwork led to success. "We're doing well this season, mainly because most of us have played together since we were freshman. We know each other pretty well, so it was never hard for us to click together as a team," commented Keisa Tagami ('98). The next year, the Lady Lancers defeated perennial power St. Bernard in a tough 63-51 final, winning the CIF title for the first time in the history of the Amat girls basketball program. Improvisation was a key to victory, combining set plays with an open court game that brought victory. "Our plays like *Arroyo* and *Walker* were borrowed from other plays which we smashed together and effectively executed as our own," observed Sue Okamoto ('00). Among the key rebound leaders and point scorers on the team were Allison Box ('99), Shannon Wosman ('99) and Stacey Williams ('99).

The girls' softball program had great success during the decade. The program enjoyed wide support from the student body and parents. The after school games were always well attended with enthusiastic fans stretched along the first and third base foul lines. The *Tusitala* noted, "Loyal families could be seen in the filled stands, showing dedicated support for the team, while stopping to take pictures of, or videotape their daughters." Sarah Gonzalez ('95) shared, "My parents came to every single game. My dad was also able to learn new plays since he was my coach for another league." The 1993 and 1994

teams reached the CIF finals based on a combination of power, speed, and pitching. Christine Gil ('96) aptly noted "there were many talented people on the team, and I was confident of our success." Rhonda Luna (1996), Gina Gomez ('92), and Natalie Kirkbride ('94) were a few of the outstanding players on those teams. The pitching of Kristina Chavez ('94) led to many shutout victories. Chavez was the first female winner of the Pat Haden Award, a prestigious honor given to an athlete for both academic and athletic achievement. As a pioneer in that groundbreaking milestone, Chavez felt humbled to be a role model for younger female athletes. Many excellent ballplayers would grace the softball diamond over the decade. Outstanding players included Christie Manning ('97), Colleen Moak ('98), Danielle Rodriguez ('99), Brandi Cross ('99), Jennifer Rojas ('00) and Pilar Robles ('01).

The football program gained national attention during the 1990s. In 1992, the Lancers won the CIF 4-A championship by defeating the Cubs of Loyola High School in a tense contest, 7-3, before 12,000 fans at Cerritos College. The team then capped an undefeated season with a victory over the city champions, Sylmar High School, in the CIF/Reebok Bowl held at Anaheim Stadium, a one-time event broadcasted on local television. The 1992 Lancers were the first high school in California to win fifteen games in one season. A tough defense, unrelenting offense and strong kicking game were characterized by the play of George Guzman ('93), Jason Harris ('94), Rodney Sermons ('94), Randy Guanko ('95) and Jeffrey Banks ('93).

What made the 1992 season truly special was the inspirational motivation the team derived from the memory of Charles "Stan the Man" Stanzione. Stan passed away due to complications from cancer prior to the 1992 season. He was associated with Bishop Amat for twelve years. He retired from the Navy as Chief Petty Officer and as a pharmacist assistant to the Chief Medical Corpsman. Stan coached the shot put and discus events for the track and field teams and served as equipment manager during the 1980s. Most of all, he provided inspiration for the young athletes of that era. "He was a fair man," said security man Pete Hernandez. The varsity football team dedicated the 1992 season to Stanzione, and they wore commemorative arm bands and helmet stickers with the name "Stan" and a cross on it. Robert Lund ('93) commented that "Without Stan," commented Robert Lund ('93), "I didn't know how the team would have made it through the season."

Joe Rodgers was another important Amat family member who passed away during this period. Joe wore many hats at the school. Over nearly two decades, Rodgers had coached softball and golf, and taught drafting classes. Joe was an aficionado of classic films and he graciously shared his vast video collection of old movies with the faculty. Joe could often be found dining with fellow coaches and friends at the *Northwood's Inn* after a late afternoon practice, generously paying for everyone's dinner on more than one occasion. He was a critical factor in the success of the football program, mentoring the lineman and helping to shape the team's reputation for tenacity and skill. A big man with a larger-than-life personality, Joe had a volatile style of coaching and his booming voice could often be heard across many an afternoon football practice. *Lance* reporter Karen Santos ('95) observed,

Joe was an intimidating man, in size and presence. He had a distinctive growl, which could scare those not familiar with him. On the field, he yelled profusely at his players. But, underneath his gruff exterior was a core of generosity. He gave to Amat everything he possessed: his time, his money, his talent. He devoted nearly half his life to serve Amat. But most of all, he dedicated his skills to teaching students the fine art of drafting and to teaching players the fine art of winning.

Joe Rodgers loved golf and the students he coached during the 1990s. "Golf helps me to release pressures of the day," he once remarked. Michael Di Fiori, a friend and fellow coach, provided insight into the character and personality of the man. "Mr. Rodgers was a man of loyalty and generosity. He did everything he could so that those kids could play golf, even if it meant taking money from his own pocket, and I truly believe that the boys appreciated this."

The 1994 and 1995 seasons provided some of the most memorable moments in Amat football history. The 1994 team was nationally ranked and featured such explosive athletic stars as Kory Minor ('95) and Daylon McCutcheon ('95). Minor earned national recognition for his defensive play from *USA Today*. The team marched through the league schedule and three rounds of CIF playoffs, only to lose in the championship game to the Mater Dei Monarchs before 10,000 fans at Anaheim Stadium. There were modest expectations for a CIF title when the 1995 season opened. The team had graduated several seniors and had a new quarterback and running back. However, the "little team that could" found a way to advance to the CIF championship game on the arm of Brian Russell ('96), the explosive running of Ralph Brown ('96), and the blocking of Brian Polak ('97). What made the running game so effective was a balanced offense, which featured a receiving corps that included Joey Getherall ('97), Andrew Woolsey ('96), Damon Samuels ('96) and Mark Verti ('96). Tough standouts such as Trey Sorenson ('96), Booker Bell ('96) and Abel Montanez ('96) led a stingy defense that provided good field position for the offense. The Lancers defeated the Loyola Cubs, 14-10, in a tense CIF championship game before 12,000 fans at the Los Angeles Coliseum. The team attributed their success to loyal fan support, enthusiasm generated at school rallies, encouragement from the booster club, and the devoted parents and relatives who filled the stands every Friday night. "The cheers and the drums got me fired up," remarked John Sherriff ('97).

The wrestling program had fine individual performances and the teams won several league championships and tournament victories throughout the decade. CIF standouts included Wray Mamaril ('91), Francisco Lopez ('95), Patrick Francia ('93), Jeremy Juarez ('97), Damien Herrera ('92), Julian Juarez ('93) and Keith Taylor ('99). "This sport taught discipline and responsibility," commented Christopher Gallardo ('93). Beyond strength and conditioning, proper technique is critical to a wrestler's success. The *arm bar* and *banana split* were part of an arsenal of traps and headlocks that led to a pin or point victory over an opponent. The 1992-1993 team made great strides by finishing as

a runner-up for the CIF title, a feat never before reached by the Amat mat men. The *Tusitala* observed, "Along with success came sacrifice. They endured grueling practices and tournaments. They followed a strict diet, which meant giving up junk food." Yet sacrifice and discipline are very qualities that make wrestling an attractive sport. David Loera ('96) remarked, "I joined because I love contact sports and it helped me bring out my full potential." The 1997-1998 squad finally won the first and only CIF championship in school history. Theodore West ('98) won a CIF championship, placed sixth in the Masters competition, and then qualified for state finals. Led by West, the 1997-1998 team won the CIF championship. Tom Pierre has been the force behind the program for the past twenty years. Andrew Woolsey ('96), a first team all-league selection and CIF qualifier, appreciated Pierre's dedication to his athletes. "Coach Pierre was a true motivator by always giving encouragement after losing a match, and never allowing a loss to turn into a defeatist attitude. He drove players home after practice, bought equipment for students who couldn't afford it, and did whatever it took to help his wrestlers succeed."

The baseball program has a storied tradition at Bishop Amat High School. Since the mid-1980s Lancer ball clubs either won or challenged for the league title, while Amat teams regularly advanced to the CIF playoffs. "Baseball required complete concentration in order to produce a successful season," said Mike Lamb ('93). Ballplayers such as George Garcia ('91), Gabriel Alvarez ('92), Steve Medrano ('95), Dennis Wyrick ('99), Gabriel Salazar ('98), Renecke Stelzriede ('00) and Christopher Cunningham ('98) were among the key pitchers and hitters of the decade. In 1996, the Lancers finally earned a CIF championship, the school's first title since the 1960s. Jesus Medrano ('97), Joseph Hurka ('96) and Abel Montanez ('96) were among the starting players who managed to produce key hits and execute critical fielding plays in important situations. Winning did not come easy. In the 1996 CIF finals, the Lancers came from behind in the late innings to defeat Lakewood for the championship. An underlying tension is always part of a baseball game. Leonardo Brambia ('96) revealed, "I always felt the pressure to get on base." *Tusitala* reporter Lauren Espineli ('96) summarized the tension in dramatic prose. "A batter steps up to the plate tensely gripping the end of his gleaming aluminum bat. On the mound, the pitcher sneers, spits and hurtles a white blur that slams into the catcher's mitt. The batter shrugs and awaits his second chance. Waving his bat in the air and eyeing the pitcher with an equally intense glare, his bat makes a loud connection with the ball that makes a high arc into the blue sky and beyond."

This Decade: Then and Now

The athletic program has taken a different turn in the past decade. Football, normally the most successful program on campus, has had a string of good, but not spectacular years. The last CIF championship was in 2005 and the program is in the process of rebuilding to the former days of dominance under Coach Mark Verti ('96). "We have incorporated new agility and speed drills along with an important emphasis on the basics—weightlifting and discipline." Yet the decade has brought Bishop Amat CIF titles in

other sports. Baseball, girls and boys basketball, and wrestling have dominated their divisions at one time or another, winning several CIF championships and earning high praise for the school.

In baseball, the Lancers won CIF titles in 2001 and 2002. Under the leadership of alumnus Ken Kendrena ('88), in an unpredictable sport where one error or a bad day at the plate means elimination, Ken's teams won several tournaments and successfully defeated their opponents to earn a national ranking. Assistant coach Pat Escalera observed that Coach Kendrena had a rich understanding of the game and brought an even-tempered disposition to the field. *Tusitala* writer Autem Clay ('00) observed, "In addition to the concentration and perseverance that the sport required, baseball demanded an enormous amount of patience." Of course ballplayers will deny it, but superstition is part of the game. "Each player believed it was unlucky to step on foul lines and avoided them at all costs. For good luck, the entire team agreed to go without haircuts until the close of the season," reported *Tusitala* staff members Alexis Lewis ('01) and Sonnae Taylor ('01). A key to their success was their coach's ability to keep the team focused, not become over-confident, and play within themselves. Self-control began with practice. *The Lance* reported "the boys work very hard in maintaining the field and practicing every weekday, from 7th period until 6:00 P.M. with only Sundays to rest. After the game, the players have to stay after to clean up the field, showing that they take pride in what they do and in their team." Steven Escalera ('02) revealed, "The whole team possessed a strong sense of unity." In 2001, the baseball team was honored at halftime during the opening football game at Kiefer Stadium. *Lance* reporter Darren Manley wrote, "After hitting homers and stealing bases to win last year's CIF title, the Amat baseball team stole the halftime show as they received their championship rings."

Pitcher Miguel Sanchez ('01) and designated hitter David Gomez ('01) led the team in 2001. The Lancers won the National Classic, a prestigious invitational tournament held in Orange County at Easter. After winning the National Classic and finishing with a CIF championship, *USA Today* ranked the Lancers #1 in the nation. The following year, Bishop Amat returned nine players from the previous championship club. The Lancers again won the National Classic and CIF title and earned a national ranking. Mike Lange ('02), Adam Simon ('02), David Pearson ('02), Anthony Hidalgo ('02), Mark Esparza ('02) Jordan Swaydan ('02) and Alex Ramos ('02) led the team during that magical season. With the help of a fine coaching staff that included Pat Escalera and Brian Lange ('94), Coach Kendrena developed a powerhouse program that continued to thrive throughout the decade. "I count myself blessed to have had the opportunity to coach at Bishop Amat and to have coached many talented players over the years," remarked Coach Kendrena.

The boys' basketball team earned a 2002 CIF championship primarily due to the rebounding and scoring of David Pierson ('02), Henry Largespada ('02) and Andrew Soto ('03). In a sport where individual statistics are a benchmark of success, Lancer teamwork provided the real key to winning, and egos were kept to a minimum. "We knew each other on a personal level which helped us during games," shared Cesar Rodriguez ('03). Eric Tintle ('03) noted, "We all worked together and got along with

each other just fine.” *Tusitala* writer Francine Arca commented, “Teamwork was important because it gave players a better understanding of each other and helped them communicate on and off of the court. This communication was the key to the varsity basketball team’s victories all season.”

The Lady Lancer basketball program has earned continued success throughout the decade. The 2002 and 2003 teams had excellent records, winning prestigious tournaments and defeating rivals such as Don Lugo, Ganesha, La Canada, St Lucy’s and San Marino. The 2003 team went 25-4 in the regular season and went deep into the CIF playoffs. *The Lance* reported, “Coming to watch these girls play is sure a spectacular sight.” Keri Wosman (‘02), Tiffany Greenwood (‘02) and Aasia Betts (‘02) were among the many instrumental players of that era. Yet a CIF title proved elusive, despite the growing following the girls had developed since their 1999 CIF championship. In 2004, the Lady Lancers earned the first of three straight CIF titles and two state championships. Chasmine Jones (‘04), Erin Myrick (‘04) and Amelia Alvarez (‘04) led a veteran 2004 squad to victory. “As the season went on, we grew closer, and we got to know our different strengths and weaknesses,” remarked Mariel Alvarez (‘04). The following year the team went 35-0 and easily won the CIF and state championships. The 2005 *Tusitala* observed, “The team’s dedication to maintaining their championship reputation was displayed through both their physical and personal temperaments. Throughout the year, they have had predicaments and injuries; however, in the end, they ultimately defined the elements needed to establish the perfect *fighting machine*.” The 2006 squad repeated as champions in the CIF playoffs and the state finals, led by the shooting of Amanda Alvarez (‘07) and Mattison Haywood (‘06), along with the rugged inside game of Christen Myles (06). The Lady Lancers had another winning season in 2007, led by Kristen McCarthy (‘08) and Candice Brown (‘07), although the team lost in the championship game of the CIF and state finals. McCarthy was named San Gabriel Valley 2007 *Player of the Year*. The determined battle cry is “wait until next year.” Coach Richard Wiard (‘82) has long been the anchor behind this smooth sailing ship. Richard has taught self-discipline and hard work as the necessary building blocks to success. “He was very thorough and organized, and I always knew what to expect from practice,” said Claire Guevara (‘07).

The top ranked wrestling team captured the 2007 CIF title with four mat men ranked in the State. In the finals, Morro Bay grabbed the early lead, but the momentum switched to Amat at the 103 lbs weight division. The Lancers erupted for four consecutive pins and victories in six of the next eight matches to win the title. During the year, the team won the Amat Classic, a prestigious 24 team tournament that included three CIF champs from the previous year. The team went on to defeat Wilson, Charter Oak, Bonita and Diamond Ranch to take the Miramonte League title, the thirteenth league title in the past nineteen years under Coach Tom Pierre. Outstanding Amat wrestlers included Andrew Mascarenas (‘07), Andrew Hernandez (‘08), Julian Silva (‘08), Carlos Villegas (‘07) and Daniel Escamilla (‘08). Wrestlers Andrew Ortega (‘08) and Stevie Espindola (‘09) advanced to the Masters Meet and earned an eighth and fifth place awards respectively. For Coach Pierre, wrestling is more than just the power and force of physical domination. Rather, the sport has a subtle beauty, an art form with an aesthetic value similar to

painting a picture or watching a ballet. “When you have two well conditioned athletes, awesome technique and the power and leverage to accomplish great movement, it is beauty in motion. That is my goal as a coach, to train an athlete to that level,” noted Coach Pierre.

Wrestling continued their winning way in the winter of 2008 as they advanced to the CIF-SS Division IV semi-finals before bowing to Ventura 33-31. The grapplers captured the Miramonte League Championship and two Amat wrestlers earned a CIF-SS Coastal Division Championship, Andrew Ortega 125lbs, and Julian Silva 215lbs. Both Ortega and Silva were *All – CIF*, and Ortega was the first Amat wrestler to earn a trip to the Nationals in Bakersfield, California.

Two thousand and seven and 2008 proved to be a year to remember for the baseball program. First year head coach Andy Nieto was hired in 2007 after spending 13 years as assistant baseball coach at U.S.C. Nieto wasted no time leading the Lancers to back to back CIF Championships.

Early in the 2007 campaign the club won the Glendora Tournament with a 4-3 win over Crescenta Valley. Along the way the team travelled to Nevada and competed in the Bishop Gorman Easter Tournament to prepare for the league season. The Lancers did not disappoint as they won the Del Rey league title going undefeated. The team entered the CIF Division V playoffs and raced to the finals defeating Monrovia High School. Pitchers Maverick Olivares (‘07) and Chris Eusebio (‘07) teamed up to stifle the Wildcats at UC Riverside. Maverick earned *CIF Player of the Year* and *Del Rey Pitcher of the Year* awards. Chris Eusebio and Andrew Mistone (‘08) were named to the *All CIF Baseball Team*.

Picking up where they left off, the Lancer nine finished the 2008 season 26-4 and captured the Del Rey League Championship and CIF-SS Division V Championship over arch rival St. Paul 6-2 in yet another appearance at UC Riverside. Paul Paez (‘10) was named *Del Rey Pitcher of the Year* and Jordan Fox (‘08) was named *Del Rey Player of the Year* and the *CIF-SS Division V Player of the Year*. Fox and Paez were joined on the All CIF team by teammates Andrew Mistone (his second such honor in as many years) and Tommy Reyes (‘08). Coach Nieto was named the Division V Championship coach for the second year in a row.

Not to be outdone by the boy’s baseball team softball under head coach Walt Martin advanced to the CIF-SS Division IV finals in 2008. The Lancers played tough before bowing to Ocean View 8-3. The season was highlighted with a Del Rey League Championship and Jessica Traxler (‘08) and Amy Lwin (‘08) earning *All CIF* honors.

The spring was not quite over when Kylie Price (‘11), Lauren Salgado (‘09), Margaret Taylor (‘11) and Kristen McCarthy (‘08) won the Del Rey League and CIF-SS 4x100 meter race in track. All four were named to the *Del Rey All League* team and earned *All-CIF* honors. In the Del Rey League Iliana Ibrahim (‘10) won the triple jump, Renee Hays

(’08) won the shot put and went on to earn *All CIF* honors, and Jasmine Roth (’10) won the Pole vault.

The fall of 2008 began the tenure of 1st year football coach Steve Hagerty (’80). In the second game of the season the Lancers upset the #1 team in the state and nation Lutheran Orange at Orange Community College. Lutheran was up 24-0 but Amat scored 35 unanswered points and went on to win the game 47-39. In successive weeks against San Gabriel Valley opponents, the Lancers disposed of West Covina (42-6), Damien (47-24) and Diamond Ranch (17-6). The team improved to 6-1 with Mission League cross-over wins against St. Francis and Chaminade, West Hills. In the Serra League the Lancers rallied from a 15 point deficit, converting a two point conversion to knock off 10th ranked Encino Crespi 22-21 at a packed Kiefer Stadium. The team played Sherman Oaks Notre Dame for the league title but lost 56-21. Bishop Amat (7-4), the San Gabriel Valley Tribune’s No. 1 team, used superb defense and timely efforts from running back Deshawn Gasie and quarterback Jerry McClanahan to take a 10-0 halftime lead over No. 1 seeded Long Beach Poly in the CIF-SS, PAC 5 playoffs. An exciting season came to an end as Poly overcame deficits twice to pull out a 21-17 triumph at Veterans Stadium. “It didn’t turn out the way we wanted,” Coach Hagerty said. “Our boys played hard, they came up a little short tonight.” Brent Seals (’09) and Sheldon Price (’09) were selected 1st team All Defense in the Serra League and named to the All CIF Defensive team for the PAC-5.

Ruben Gonzalez was hired as program coach for girls’ soccer in 2007-2008. Coach Gonzalez came to Amat with experience and knowledge as he serves as the head women’s soccer program coach at Cerritos College where he had won National Championships in 2007 and 2008. Coach Gonzalez implemented his style of play, hard work and conditioning immediately. The team found success in 2007-2008 as they finished 11-7-8. The following years the girls made steady progress finishing 18-3-4 (2009) and 27-1-2 (2010) while winning back to back Del Rey League titles. April Juarez (’11) was named *All Del Rey Most Valuable Player* and earned *All CIF-SS Division III Player of the Year* honors. Nicole Ragano (’11) was awarded the *All Del Rey Most Valuable Goalie* as the team finished undefeated. Ragano gave up 9 goals against the entire year.

Needless to say The Bishop Amat Lancers Girls soccer team won the Del Rey League Championship and the Division III championship with a 1-0 win over the top seeded Ayala Bulldogs in 2011. The Lancers got a goal from Natalie Rivas (’12) in the 26th minute and their defense shut down the Bulldogs for Amat's first ever CIF Soccer Championship. The Lady Lancers next advanced to the CIF State tournament another first in the history of the school. The team travelled north to Bakersfield and came away with a 2-0 win over Frontier High School. Natalie Rivas and Kathleen Zamora (’12) tallied goals for the Lancers. Advancing to the second round of the State tournament the Lancers found themselves on the road again this time travelling south to La Jolla to match up with the Vikings of La Jolla High School. The Vikings outscored the road weary Lancers by 2 and Lancers ended a historic season 28-2. End of the year awards were plentiful for the young Lancers. For the second consecutive year April Juarez was

named *All-CIF-SS Division III Player of the Year* and the *San Gabriel Valley Tribune Player of the Year*. Alyssa Cabral (^12), Jessie Gener (^12) and Yazmin Montoya (^12) were also selected by the coaches committee to the *All-CIF-SS Division III Soccer Team*.

After a historic soccer season it was a banner year for the baseball team. Rio Ruiz (^12), who verbally committed to USC during his freshman year and who many believe could be a first-round draft pick in the 2012 Major League Baseball First-Year Player Draft, delivered on the biggest stage, hitting a momentum-changing two-run home run at Dodger Stadium that started the dominoes falling in a 7-0 victory over top seed Palm Desert to lead the Lancers to the Division IV championship.

After Amat trailed 4-0 early in the semifinals against Torrance at U.S.C, the same team that knocked Amat out of the playoffs in 2010, the Lancers rallied to tie the score 4-4. Then, leading off the bottom of the seventh, Ruiz doubled and later scored the game-winning run, on Andrew Guitierrez's (^11) RBI single, in a 5-4 victory that sent the Lancers to the title game.

The left-handed swinging third baseman was among the area leaders in just about every statistical category, and compiled those numbers while playing one of the toughest schedules in California, a reason Amat finished as the top-ranked team in MaxPreps' Southern California & State poll, regardless of division, and finished in the top 10 nationally.

Ruiz batted .455 with three home runs, 35 RBIs, 29 runs scored and 14 doubles. He also became the team's part-time closer and was downright scary in seven appearances on the mound. He pitched 11 innings and struck out 18 without allowing a run. For his efforts, Ruiz was selected as the *Tribune Baseball Player of the Year*, the *Del Rey League Most Valuable Player* and *CIF-SS Division 4 Player of the Year* after the Lancers finished 29-4. "He's one of those guys who shows up somewhere around the country every 10 years or so," Amat coach Andy Nieto said. "With all due respect to everyone else, nobody has to deal with the expectations and pressure that Rio has on his plate, but he plays through it, and like the great ones, he came through in the big moments. That's what it's all about."

A big part of the Lancer baseball success has always been solid pitching. In 2007, 2008 and 2011 Olivares, Eusebio, Paez, Brady Zuniga (^09), Brandon McNitt (^10), David Berg (^11), Ryan Serrato (^11) and Daniel Zamora (^12) respectively have developed under the leadership of pitching coach Chris Beck (^95). Beck, who spends the summers as the Orleans Cardinals pitching coach in the Cape Cod League has been instrumental in three Lancer championships.

