

Roncalli Catholic Baseball Team '81



The 1980 season marked the final year Roncalli competed in Class A baseball. Following an NSAA reclassification based on enrollment, the Crimson Pride moved to Class B for the 1981 season. Just one year later, the NSAA would eliminate class divisions entirely, placing all schools into a single class beginning in 1982.

Despite the move to Class B, Roncalli continued to face a schedule filled with Class A opponents, maintaining one of the toughest slates in the state. The team returned a strong nucleus from the 1980 Class A state runner-up squad and entered 1981 as a favorite to win the Class B title.

The pitching staff was anchored by Ron Siwa (7–1, 2.26 ERA), Rex Catton (8–1, 3.63 ERA), and Greg Munchrath (4–1, 4.75 ERA). At the plate, Siwa led the team with a .494 average and 31 RBIs, followed by Greg Martin (.415, 28 RBIs), John Heinzman (.403, 26 RBIs), and Catton (.341, 14 RBIs). Martin and Catton each swiped 26 bases—though both still claim to have edged the other by one. Their friendly rivalry helped fuel a record-setting team total of 71 stolen bases for the season.

Backed by talent, experience, and determination, Roncalli fulfilled expectations, capturing the 1981 Class B State Championship with a 3–0 victory over Laurel and finishing the year 22–5.

The victory was more than just a championship — it was history. The 1981 baseball team brought home the first team state title in Roncalli Catholic High School's history. They are the true champions and will forever be remembered.

Team Roster: Rex Catton, Greg Martin, Steve Andreson, Barry Gudenrath, Ron Siwa, John Heinzman, Matt Harden, Steve Dannenberg, Dan Altman, Kyle Munchrath, Jay Jadowski, Greg Munchrath, Steve Schroer, and Dan Grasso.

Coaches: Mike Culver Assistant Coach: Larry O'Brien

Dodie (Kocsis) O'Dean '88



Dodie Kocsis was born in Omaha in 1970, the 7th of 9 kids, She was fortunate, along with all her siblings, to attend St. Bernard's Catholic School but when it came to high school, Dodie had to make a choice. She believed in the value of a Catholic education, but because of family finances, she would have to pay for it herself.

She worked at collecting cans, baby-sitting, and making bread at a local bakery to earn the money to pay full tuition and attend Roncalli High School for all 4 years.

Dodie was always an inspired runner. She started running the 2 miles home from St. Bernard's during her elementary years. By 7th grade CYO athletics began in Omaha. Dodie, along with her brother, Marty, started competitive running. She won each race she entered in cross country and track for two straight years.

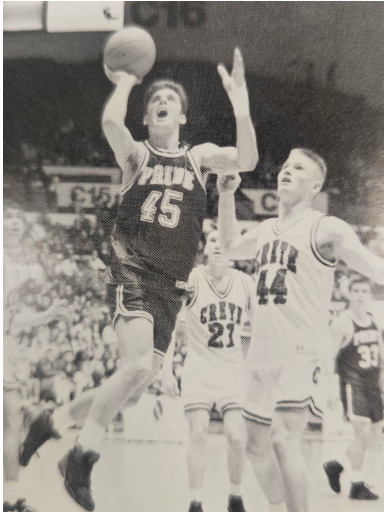
Dodie attended Roncalli from 1984-1988. She won almost every race she entered and left with school-records in cross country and the 800, 1600, and 3200 meter runs, a 2nd place State Track Team Championship trophy (she earned by herself winning all three distance races), an All-Class Gold medal in cross country, 8 Class B State titles, 3 Runner-ups, 15 District Championships plus numerous city titles and awards for athletic and academic achievements and records on various cross country courses in the area.

Dodie traded in her crimson and gold for brown and gold when she accepted a scholarship to the University of Wyoming. She excelled at distance events in indoor/outdoor track and cross country and completed all three sports in 4 years, earning 12 letter awards. Her accomplishments on the track included placing in the top three at the WAC (Western Athletic Conference) Championships in 5k and 10k events multiple times, she set a school-record in the indoor 5k, helped her team win runner-up at WAC Cross Country Championships in 1988, 1989 and 1990, and was an all-WAC performer and team captain.

Along with her athletic accomplishments, Dodie was on the Dean's Honor Roll and received many WAC awards for academics. She graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Education and went on to teach elementary school for 20 years, coach high school athletes, and continued running. She raced professionally in road races from 5k's to marathons across the country and ventured into triathlon competitions. She was 12th overall at the USA National Marathon Championships, missed qualifying for the USA Marathon Olympic Trials by a minute, won or placed in a multitude of races in the southeast. In 1994, Dodie earned a spot on the USA World Triathlon Team but competed in the Hawaii Ironman World Triathlon Championships instead, placing 5th in her age group and was 40th women overall, not bad for someone who could hardly swim!

Dodie moved to North Platte in 1999, where she taught 2nd grade and coached for many years. She currently works with her husband, Rick, at his funeral home, and they share their home with five cats.

Jay Heller '93 Roncalli Catholic



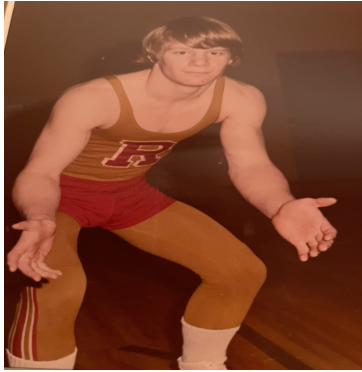
Born and raised in Omaha, Jay Heller graduated from Roncalli Catholic High School in 1993.

In his time at Roncalli, Jay was a member of the 1990 State Championship legion baseball team.

Playing basketball all four years of high school, Heller averaged 25 points and 10 rebounds per game his senior year and was named first team All State by the Lincoln Journal Star and the Omaha World Herald (OWH) and first team Super State by OWH. Named to the NSAA Class-B All-Tournament Team, Heller scored 37 points in a single game at the Nebraska high school state basketball tournament in 1993.

Following high school, Heller enrolled at Cloud County Community College in Concordia, Kansas, where he played basketball at the junior college for a year and a half. After his time in Kansas, Jay returned to Omaha to play basketball for the Mavericks at UNO. Following college, Jay worked at Boys Town for over 20 years, serving as the manager of the paint shop.

Barry Ballentine '74 Archbishop Rummel



Barry is the son of Fred and Marilyn Ballentine. He is the 2nd oldest out of six siblings. Barry began wrestling at the age of 10. He entered Rummel High School in 1970 and began his high school career under the direction of Coach Joe Carmody.

In his Junior year, '72/'73, Barry held a 66 – 0 record. He went on to win the Nebraska High School Wrestling Championship at 132 lbs. Barry is mild-mannered but was a beast on the mat!

Barry graduated from Rummel in 1974. He attended the University of Nebraska – Omaha on a wrestling scholarship. He finished his freshman year and went on to join the Heat & Frost Insulators Union Local 39. Barry worked as a journeyman in the trade for 32 years and retired in 2003.

Barry married his high school sweetheart, Kim, in 1976, and in June 2026, they will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. Together, they have one daughter, Melissa, and a son-in-law, Josh. They are also proud grandparents to two grandsons, Barrett (15) and Broker (13). Both boys are active in baseball and basketball, so Barry and Kim happily spend much of their time traveling between Omaha and Lincoln to enjoy watching them play.

Barry also makes Komboucha. He does this as a hobby and gives his fruity drink to many friends. They say it is the best!

Barry is a bicyclist. He has ridden in BRAN (Bike Ride Across Nebraska) twice. He has also been on group rides in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and South Dakota. He rides weekly with his fellow bicyclist friends, traveling to Fremont, Valley, and many other locations for about 50 miles weekly.

On top of bicycling, Barry spins 3 times a week at Lifetime Fitness. He never stops! The most important thing in Barry's life is his family and friends. He would do anything for them.

Paul Wolff



Paul Wolff is a 1986 graduate of Fort Calhoun High School and earned his degree in Criminal Justice from the University of Nebraska at Omaha in 1991. He currently works as a licensed contractor and serves in the construction lending compliance department at Dundee Bank.

Paul is married to Kristi Wolff, and together they have three children: Kasey (RCHS Graduate 2010), Allison (RCHS Graduate 2012), and Jacob (RCHS Graduate 2014). They are proud grandparents to two grandchildren, Wes and Theo—with two more on the way. Paul and Kristi are active members of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Omaha and are deeply involved in both faith-based and community organizations.

The Wolff family's connection to Roncalli Catholic High School began in 2004, when they were seeking a high-quality, diverse, faith-based high school for their children. After visiting several schools, their oldest daughter chose Roncalli—mostly because the students wore shorts instead of plaid skirts—and the journey began.

Kasey and Allison were introduced to the Roncalli community early through the PAL soccer league (playing for St. Pius/St. Leo) and a middle school girls basketball team, PRIDE, coached by Kenny Long. In the fall of 2006, Kasey enrolled as a freshman at Roncalli.

That same fall, the Wolff family began attending Roncalli football games at Benson High School's field. Paul soon connected with other parents who shared a vision: every school should have its own home field. This led to the formation of a committee dedicated to building a stadium.

At the same time, Jacob was entering middle school, and the Wolffs envisioned integrating him into the Roncalli culture through youth sports. Unlike his sisters, there wasn't yet a pre-high school sports program for boys—so the idea for Jr. Pride was born.

These two initiatives—building a home field and creating Jr. Pride—grew with the support of several key families. God blessed both efforts with energy, volunteers, and funding.

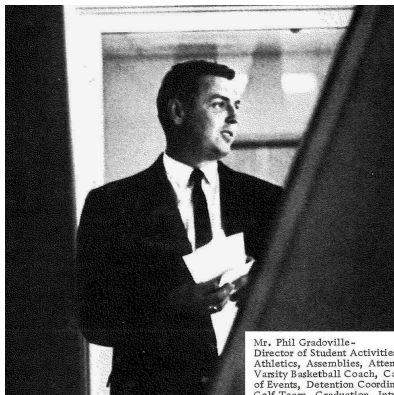
Jr. Pride evolved and grew to coach and mentor hundreds of student-athletes ages 6 to 14, offering programs in football, basketball, wrestling, baseball, and cheerleading.

Jacob proudly participated in Jr. Pride football and wrestling during his middle school years. The momentum from Jr. Pride carried into the stadium project. Volunteers worked tirelessly throughout 2008 and 2009. On August 28, 2009, Roncalli hosted its first-ever varsity night football game under the lights—an unforgettable milestone. Though the night was memorable, work continued.

The concession/restroom building, track, and fencing were completed during the 2009 season and into 2010. By the start of the 2010 season, the stadium was officially complete, and the dream of a true home-field advantage was realized.

Kasey, Allison, and Jacob all experienced the benefits of that home field throughout their high school years. The Roncalli experience helped shape their early lives, and Paul Wolff's vision—along with the dedication of countless volunteers—helped shape the future of Roncalli for generations to come.

Phil Gradoville



Mr. Phil Gradoville -
Director of Student Activities
Athletics, Assemblies, Atten
Varsity Basketball Coach, Ca
of Events, Detention Coordin
Golf Team, Graduation, Inte

Phil Gradoville was the first hire by Father Timothy of the Christian Brothers, as the first Athletic Director, All Sports Coach, and Disciplinarian at Archbishop Rummel High School in 1964 at the youthful age of 26. Previously, he was employed at Creighton Prep, his alma mater, as the freshman B team, reserve basketball coach, and teacher. In college, he attended Omaha University, where he excelled in basketball and baseball.

Throughout the ten years of Phil's time at the school, he poured his heart and soul into all things Rummel. Before the school opened, you would find Phil making many trips from his home in Papillion out to 64th & Redick Avenue (now Sorensen Parkway) to watch the construction progress and to assist in any way he could.

Among his unofficial duties, he swept floors, planted bushes, unpacked numerous shipments, and assembled furniture. He was instrumental in the construction of the athletic fields, including football and baseball, as well as the running track. He was even tasked with selecting the school colors and ordering athletic uniforms for all teams. In the early years, the washing of the basketball jerseys fell on his wife, Mary Alyce, who washed them in their home washing machine and hung them to dry from the rafters in the basement. During the school day, Phil "counseled" many students in his office to address disciplinary issues. It was said he had a way of working out problems with students sternly but with respect. For those who attempted skipping school, he had some allies positioned to catch the escapees and have them returned to the front entrance, where he was waiting for them.

During Phil's years at Rummel, his coaching assignments included golf, football, track and field, and his most successful, basketball. During the school day, he taught mostly math classes, but occasionally taught some electives such as typing, even though he was not a skilled typist. The school began in 1964 with a freshman class of 250, then a class of students was added each year. As the years went on and the school grew, more coaches were hired by Phil, including his assistant basketball coaches, Larry Bauer and Harry Forehand, who became close friends over the years.

Over these short years, Phil and his team of coaches developed a high-achieving varsity Class A basketball team. In 1971, just seven years after the inception of the school, and just four years after filling the school with four grade levels, Phil and his varsity squad were winners of the Class A-1 District, beating Prep 45-42, then beating Benson in the finals 61-60. Rummel had won the school's first trip to the state basketball tournament. Unfortunately, the team was eliminated in the first round by 7'1" Mike Heck and his Papillion team. The 1971 basketball team finished with a winning season 13 and 12.

1972 brought more success and a second-Class A-1 District win in thriller fashion. The A-1 metro district consisted of several top seeds which included ranked teams, 1, 2, 3, & 5. Phil led his team to an unbelievable victory over #1 ranked Central with a final score of 55-53, overcoming two previous regular-season losses to this team. In the next district game, Rummel defeated Westside in overtime in front of a crowd of over 6,000 at the Omaha Fieldhouse with a score of 37-36 to earn their second trip to Lincoln for the state tournament. In round one of the state tournament, Rummel blew out rival Creighton Prep 55-35, with a half time score of 35-4. With this final score, Rummel gave Prep their worst loss ever in the state tournament. The 1972 basketball team started their season at 6 and 4 and finished 19 and 5 with a final ranking of third in the state. As a result of this loaded metro district, the wild card was created.

Phil Gradoville made an enormous impact on the beginnings of Rummel High School and the legacy of the school which continues today as Roncalli Catholic. Countless alums speak highly of his integrity as well as the grit and intensity he instilled in his athletes on the basketball court. He was a mentor to many young men in the late 60's and early 70's and he helped form these young Rummel Raiders into righteous adult men.

Phil's professional career continued after Rummel as a coach and teacher at Omaha South High School and athletic director at Bryan High School. In September 1991, the Gradoville family lost Phil at the age of fifty-three as a result of complications from a car accident caused by a drunk driver. His personal legacy lives on in his family, including Mary Alyce, three children, seven grandchildren, three great-grandchildren, with one on the way. Terry and Mary Gradoville have two children: daughter, Allison Stoyrich, spouse Ben, and son, Philip. Katie and Joe Alitz have three sons, Nick, Tyler, and Tommy. Nick is married to Ally, and have two kids, Urban and Amelia. Tyler, a Roncalli alum, who passed away in 2014, inherited some of the Gradoville athleticism by signing a Letter of Intent to play Division I baseball. Phil's youngest daughter, Amy Kalina, and her spouse, Jerry, have two children, daughter Nicole Collins, who is married to Devan are expectant parents with a baby girl due in the spring. Their son, Jack, is married to Dani, and have one son, named Crew. Both Amy and son Jack also inherited athletic ability from Phil by competing at the college Division I level. Amy played volleyball and softball at UNO, and Jack played UNO baseball and football at Doane.

Mike "Bear" Berens



Mike "Bear" Berens was born in Sioux City, Iowa, and quickly stood out as a natural leader both on and off the field.

A standout athlete, he was an All-State guard in high school before continuing his football career at the University of Northern Colorado, where he played for five years and capped off his career as an All-Conference guard.

Bear went on to coach football for 43 years, dedicating his life to the game and to helping young athletes reach their potential. He began his coaching career at Humphrey St. Francis, spending eight years there—five as an assistant coach and three as head coach—compiling an impressive 28–5 record. In his very first year as an assistant, Bear helped lead a team that had gone winless the previous two seasons all the way to the playoffs, setting the tone for the toughness he would instill in all his teams moving forward.

In 1985, Bear took over as head coach at Roncalli Catholic High School, where he led the Crimson Pride for the next 31 years and 161 wins. He stayed on as an assistant coach until 2020. His tenure was filled with great memories and hard-fought seasons, highlighted by the 2003 state runner-up team—a group defined by toughness and heart, with only 16 players who played both ways. Bear was selected as a Shrine Bowl coach in 1995 and 2003. There is also a "Mike Berens Coaching Award" given out yearly by Huskerland Prep as an award designated to recognize a coach's ability to bring out the best in his team, creating a sense of overachievement.

More than the wins, though, Bear was known for his heart and his impact on people. He loved coaching kids, pushing them to believe in themselves, and helping them achieve things they never thought possible. His legacy lives on in the players, coaches, and families he inspired throughout his remarkable career.