

St. Aloysius 1954 Baseball State Champions

*This is the first installment of a new feature of Century II
which will profile Crusader and Kingsmen teams of the past.*

As the 1954 baseball season began, the *Times Picayune* proclaimed the Crusaders as a "dark horse." Eleven consecutive wins later, the dark horse was the champion of both the first and second rounds and on its way to the state playoffs.

The Crusaders' deep pitching staff was led by senior Emile "Chubby" Marks, junior Bobby Folse and junior, Don Watts. All three pitched college baseball.

First-year coach M. L. "Mel" Lagarde fielded a potent line-up with senior Ronnie Abel at second, junior Jim Bouche in right, another junior Joe Boullosa in center, junior third-sacker Jules LaCoste cleaning up, then another junior, John Schroeder, who began the season at short but switched to catcher when Bobby Stechmann, an all-state performer in both basketball and baseball in 1953, returned midway through the season from a serious knee injury. Rounding out the order were Joe Murray, senior left-fielder, and Bill Grush and Joe Trapani, seniors who shared first base. Senior Joe Macaluso began the season behind the plate and provided solid backup when Stechmann returned. Junior "Butsey" Jurich and senior Vince Marinello also saw action in the outfield.

The Crusaders jumped out fast with victories over Warren Easton, DeLaSalle and defending champion Holy Cross. Stechmann made a dramatic appearance in the 8-3 victory over the Tigers with a 6th inning two-run pinch single to put the Saints (as the newspapers frequently called the Esplanade athletes) ahead for good.

Jesuit fell next, followed by Redemptorist as LaCoste's two-run single in the top of the 7th broke the deadlock. A win over Nicholls clinched a tie for the first round before an easy win over McDonogh (newly coed) cemented the title. The round ended with a bang as Folse no-hit Fortier in a 14-0 victory.

The "second round" was actually a round-robin among the top four teams from the first round. The team did not let up, defeating Fortier again, 4-0, behind Marks this time, then Jesuit 5-1, and Holy Cross 4-3. The final game ended in exciting fashion as LaCoste drove home Marks from second with two outs for the winning run.

Marks, LaCoste, and Boullosa made the all-prep team with Schroeder, Stechmann, and Folse earning honorable mention.

The Crusaders made quick work of Catholic High in the best-of-three South Louisiana Championship series. The Bears fell 4-2 in Baton Rouge on Friday and then 5-1 in New Orleans on Sunday, with Chubby notching both wins.

The state championship required another best-of-three series against the North Louisiana champion, another Bear team from Bolton in Alexandria. The Crusaders again started on the road and suffered their first defeat of the season, falling 2-1

Two days later the Saints had to win both ends of a day-night doubleheader at Roehm Park. When the score reached 7-0 in the 4th inning of the first game, "Butch" McCollum, who had shut down the Crusaders in the opening game, was dismissed to save him for action in the second game. Watts pitched the final two innings of the 8-1 victory.

Marks struggled to begin the final game, surrendering two runs in the first. However, it quickly became apparent why the Bolton coach had started McCollum in the first game. He had no one else who could retire the Crusaders, who pounded several pitchers for a 16-2 lead after three innings. Boullosa, Grush, and Murray slammed homers as the Crusaders captured the State Championship.

The *Picayune* reported that St. Aloysius had continued its string of "at least one [state] championship since 1947" with its third straight baseball crown. With so many juniors returning, the 'Saders won again in 1955.

In the interests of full disclosure, I must reveal that I was a freshman manager for the team. I kept the scorebook in the dugout. The details of this article come from newspaper clippings in a scrapbook my grandmother made for me that year.*

— Brother Neal Golden CJ '57

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1954 State BASEBALL Champions



Kneeling: Ronnie Abel '54, Dave Macaluso '54, Joe Boullosa '55, Dick Pigeon '55, Jules Lacoste '55 & Frank Abene '54, manager. Middle row: Don Watts '55, Bobby Folse '55, Marshall Piper '55, Jimmy Bouche '55, Chubby Marks '54, & Butsey Jurich '54. Standing: M.L. Lagarde '45, Coach, John Schroder '55, Bobby Stechmann '54, Joe Trapani '54, Vince Marinello '54, Billy Grush '54, Joe Murray '54, Roger Mmahat '54, manager.