



# SPORTS MEMORIES

“I was in ninth grade at South St. Paul when I first went to the State High School Hockey Tournament. Eight teams throughout the state were invited. To get there was the ultimate goal. The prize was the cherry on the soda.

The tournament was important to the townspeople. They came down in caravans. Last one out, turn out the lights. Because your hockey program was developed by the people of your town. It brought your hometown together, brought your school together. Pride in the school.

The coaches, peewee to bantam, were running outdoor practices at seven and nine o'clock at night. Not much glory in it. Probably got \$500–600 a year. And it was damned cold. But they were prominent people in town. They and the mayor.

So the state tournament was like David and Goliath, with Warroad, Roseau, Hibbing [as the] Davids, and city high schools like Minneapolis's Roosevelt and St. Paul's Johnson [as the] Goliaths.

You played whoever the draw was. People would come all day: two afternoon sessions, two evening sessions. It was an opportunity to show your talent to the Harvards of the world—to recruiters—to get a chance at a scholarship.

I got there four times in four years. I played center. We stayed at the St. Paul Hotel. Jaycee sponsors took care of us.

One night we got beat 1-0 in the finals. A shutout. There had to be 4,000 people who gave us a standing ovation. That's the moment. That's the moment.

Ask any of those players who went professional, like Neal Broten, and they'll say the highlight of their sporting career was the State Hockey Tournament, second Olympics, third NHL.”

---

—*Doug Woog, coach of University of Minnesota Gophers men's hockey team (1985–99), member of the United States Hockey Hall of Fame (2002)*





# SPORTS MEMORIES

“Even casual baseball fans know the basic story of Ted Williams, the ‘Splendid Splinter’—the last player to hit .400 in the big leagues, and someone who gave up his best playing years to serve his country during WWII and the Korean War. Serious baseball fans also recall his fierce determination to become the greatest hitter of all time, and his tumultuous relationship with the Boston press and Red Sox management. But I was lucky enough to know a different Ted Williams, from his years working with my father as manager of the Washington Senators and Texas Rangers. After countless ballgames, I accompanied Williams and my father to dinners (often, his favorites—burgers and milkshakes) where they would dissect each pitch, hit, and play. Was Williams capable of being crusty and brusque? In some settings, yes, but the Ted Williams I knew was a straightforward man, with modest tastes, singular focus, and deep insight into America’s signature pastime. Those traits, together with his passion for the game, made him a great baseball player, and a great teacher of the game to me.”

---

—*Marianne Short, Managing Director, Dorsey & Whitney LLP*





# SPORTS MEMORIES

“Having played both football and baseball at the University of Minnesota during the late 1950s (three letters in each sport, team MVP in football, National Champions in baseball), I have many fond memories involving my participation in Gopher athletics, but one of my special Gopher memories involved a football game in which I had no involvement.

It was the summer of 1949, I was 11 years old and, with my parents and brother, had just moved from St. Louis to Minneapolis. We were living with my mother’s parents on 32nd Street and Oakland Avenue for a few weeks as our new home in Edina was being finished. On a Saturday morning in late August or early September, a neighbor boy about my age knocked on the door, introduced himself, and asked my brother and me if we would like to go to his house to listen to the Gopher football game on the radio (nobody that I knew had TV at that time). The Gophers were playing the Washington Huskies with Hugh McElhenny, their All-American halfback. Being new to Minnesota, my brother and I knew virtually nothing about the Gophers. We didn’t know any of the players’ names, and their colors could just as well have been red and white.

However, what I vividly remember was that I was absolutely captivated by the announcer’s excitement, the crowd noise, the constant playing of the *Rouser* by the marching band, and the mental picture of 65,000 fans screaming encouragement for the Gophers. I remember thinking at the time that some day I wanted to play for the Gophers. I did.”

---

—*Tom Moe, former U of M football player and interim athletic director, and former managing partner at Dorsey & Whitney LLP*





# SPORTS MEMORIES

“I love being in gyms, watching my sons play basketball. It is my oasis. Whether it’s the gym at Benilde St. Margaret’s or the sweltering hot gyms of Vegas in August watching my son play AAU, as I watch, I’m struck by the purity of the game. I’m struck by how the boys compete, deal with the pressures of winning and losing, and what it means to be a team. I love the camaraderie of sitting in the stands, next to policemen, teachers, doctors, Democrats, Republicans, and Independents, because the one thing we all have in common is being parents. And all of us in those bleachers profoundly care about how our sons answer the inevitable call of the game—the ups and downs—the tests, big and small, that are intrinsically part of the game. We also universally wonder, ‘How could the ref have blown that call with my son?’ Watching it all play out, and seeing my boys learn lessons that will serve them well in life is deeply precious to me, and captures the notion of savoring every moment.”

---

—*Brian Dunn, CEO, Best Buy*





# SPORTS MEMORIES

“I never saw Paul Giel play football for the Gophers but I heard it on the radio, which made it even larger and more heroic. He was a good-looking Winona boy who quarterbacked for not very good Minnesota teams, and made All-American twice. After a game on a fine October afternoon I’d go over to the Days’ house, which had a huge yard, and play football with a dozen boys, all in our old leather helmets and homemade shoulder pads. I seldom got to be QB but I imagined I was Paul Giel anyway. I got his autograph at a Gopher basketball game in 1953, the only autograph I ever got in my life. Only one I ever wanted.”

---

—*Garrison Keillor, Prairie Home Companion host and author*





# SPORTS MEMORIES

“My childhood summer days were spent playing softball in the long, narrow vacant lot located next to my parents’ house. All the kids in the neighborhood gathered at the lot as soon as they could sneak away from their chores. The tradition of the game started with our declaration of which professional ball player each of us represented. Only a few of us never wavered on which player we favored. My brother, John, always declared he was Mickey Mantle, Mark was always Ron Santo, and I was always Ernie Banks.

Once the declarations were out of the way, everyone was reminded of the scoring rules. Hits to left field would either be an automatic out or automatic loss of the game. There was a house with aluminum siding in deep left field. If the ball hit the house, Mr. Linton would come out, pick up the ball, and take it back into the house without saying a word. We never saw those softballs again, so all the kids learned not to hit to left field.

Hits to right field were limited to a two-base advance. My Mom’s strawberry patch was in right-field territory and that meant any hit to right caused the game to be suspended until the ball could be found among the strawberry leaves. Also nobody who went into the patch to retrieve the ball ever left without telltale strawberry seeds in their teeth.

A couple years ago, the firm I worked for was negotiating a spokesperson agreement with Mr. Banks, so I had the opportunity to meet him when he arrived for a meeting with senior management. Upon seeing Ernie, the seasoned professional businesswoman I had become disappeared and was instantly replaced by an awestruck little girl who so loved to play ball.”

---

—*Susan Arndt*





# SPORTS MEMORIES

“I never thought I would have a UFC heavyweight champion for a close friend. But then I met Brock Lesnar. He was my neighbor and I was riding my horse on his property. He stopped me and said that he didn’t like people riding on his trails because he was a deer hunter and he believed the horses scared the deer away. When he found out that I was a neighbor of his, he gave his okay. A week or so later, he came to my house to ask me if he could put a deer stand in my woods. I told him it was okay with two conditions: 1.) He had to use a bow and arrow, not a gun, and 2.) He had to let me beat him at arm wrestling. In this photo, taken by my wife, Kathleen, he was about to get pinned by me.

He became a hero of mine because he went on to win the UFC Heavyweight Championship and he let me beat him in arm wrestling.”

---

—*Wheelock Whitney, Jr.,  
Minneapolis businessman, educator,  
sports team executive, and philanthropist*





# SPORTS MEMORIES

“Hockey was a way of life in my hometown of Eveleth, Minnesota, and it all began with Vic Essling, one of our early mayors, who put our town on the map by entering a team in the major league United States Amateur Hockey Association in 1920. That sparked great interest, which Cliff Thompson, who came to coach the high school and junior college in 1925, seized on. He created a hockey culture that produced great players who went on to play in the National Hockey League and at the college level.

The first great player to come out of Eveleth was Mike Karakas, who went on to play goal for the Chicago Blackhawks and help them win a Stanley Cup in 1938. He was followed by another goalie, Minnesota’s greatest, Frank Brimsek, who won two Vezina Trophies (best goalie) as well as a Calder (rookie of the year), with the Boston Bruins as they won Stanley Cups in 1939 and 1941.

But there were others, like goalie Sam LoPresti and defenseman John Mariucci. ‘Maroosh,’ as he was known, was a tough guy with the Blackhawks who had played for the Gophers and later coached them. One of the great college players he developed was John Mayasich, who helped the U.S. win its first Olympic Gold in 1960. But we can’t forget John Matchefts and Willard Ikola, who both starred at Michigan, and later pros Peter LoPresti and Mark Pavelich. And let’s remember that virtually all of these guys went to Eveleth High, which Thompson took to the State Tournament in 1945 and from 1948 to 1951, winning them all. That’s my hometown, Eveleth, the greatest hockey town in the U.S.A!”

---

—*Nordy, Minnesota Wild Mascot*







# SPORTS MEMORIES

“My childhood hero was Willie Mays, the great center fielder for the New York Giants (now San Francisco). I remember first being thrilled by his sensational catch in the 1954 World Series.

So, imagine my excitement a couple years later, when my parents took me to Milwaukee to see the Braves play the Giants. Even more exciting, the Giants players and we were staying in the same hotel.

To my dismay, however, they had arrived just before we did and were already in their rooms. All that remained were their suitcases on the sidewalk. My father and I looked over their name tags, and he asked me, ‘Who is Number 24?’

‘That’s Willie Mays’ number!’ I replied. The bellman, who had been searching unsuccessfully for that suitcase, thanked me and then asked, ‘Would you like to meet him?’

Would I? Would I!

We walked down the hotel hallway, the bellman knocked on the door, and Willie Mays opened it. ‘This young man found your suitcase, Mr. Mays,’ the bellman said, and my hero smiled at me! He looked at least eight feet tall, as I offered up my baseball for his autograph. ‘To Mark, Best Wishes, Willie Mays,’ he wrote.

Sadly, somewhere, somehow, that baseball was lost. The memory, however, will last a lifetime.”

---

—*Governor Mark Dayton*

