

The Early Years Through the Roaring Twenties

By Rick Cabral, CBS 1970

{Disclaimer: As records for the early years are spotty, this report draws on information which does remain from that era, principally CB yearbooks and other publications.

Also, due to a scarcity of other secondary or prep schools in the area, Brothers baseball teams ventured far in search of baseball competition, often playing against commercial competition or company teams. The yearbooks refer to the Village of Cement, Spartan A.C. and Columbia Market, entities which are unfamiliar to us today.

As was the practice in the 1920s, the yearbook writers routinely referred to a student exclusively by his last name and on occasion included the first initial of the student's first name. In those instances where we located the student's full name, we have included it.

Alumni and friends who have additional records which supplement or correct the information presented here are encouraged to contact _____ at the school.}

Christian Brothers has produced many fine baseball teams over the years, some of which went on to claim the city championship. One in fact, coached by Dick Sperbeck, was designated the California Team of the Year (1962).[^]

Over the years Brothers has produced many great players, including eight who enjoyed careers in major league baseball: Walter "Duster" Mails, Elwood "Kettle" Wirts, Earl McNeely, Jimmy O'Connell, Joe Marty, Charley Schanz, Wally Westlake, and Andy Fox.

[^] *In 1962, Bishop Armstrong's baseball team, which produced six All-City players, was designated California Team of the Year and Coach Sperbeck was voted Coach of the Year by Cal-Hi Sports, which is now a division of ESPN Rise. Read about this team's great season at:*

http://www.baseballsacramento.com/History-Travelin%27_1962.html

1910

While we do not know the year when Christian Brothers fielded its first "base ball" team, the earliest known record appears in the May 1910 *College Times*, a CB publication. At that time, the Christian Brothers College was located at 12th and K Streets in downtown Sacramento. CBC was the only boys' school in the Sacramento area and featured a boarding school along with the traditional day school. For decades, Christian Brothers educated students in four departments: primary, grammar, high school and commercial (or trade school).

In the 1910 *Times*, we learn that Brothers upper division baseball team had recently abandoned the ballpark it had called home in Capitol Park for a new diamond located at 9th and K Streets. Apparently the Capitol Park site was like a bandbox for the older boys, resulting in numerous balls being hit over fences and lost during contests. This was not a problem, however, for the Juniors and Midgets teams formed by Brothers' grammar classes. The new ball field was, cited the *Times*, "considered to be the best amateur diamond in Sacramento," one where there was little danger of a player knocking a ball over the fence." Quite a contrast with today's modern professional ballparks and an emphasis on balls "leaving the yard."

Ironically, that spring the owners of the Sacramento professional ball club (then known as the "Senators") had just opened a new baseball park at 10th and Y Streets (now Riverside and Broadway), across from the city cemetery. This remained the location of Sacramento's Pacific Coast League teams for 50 years.

As Sacramento High was the only other secondary school in the area, the CB "Collegians," as they were referred to, ranged far and wide for competition, playing against commercial teams such as the Cascade Laundry located at 1515 20th Street, whose home park was at "the Rookery grounds." Little else about the baseball team is recorded in the *Times*.

1913



A blurb in the Catholic Herald, written by Armando Rendón, reported the 1913 team included Frank Knott and Dick Shroeder, pitchers; Jerry Desmond, first base; Vince Horton, second; "Shorty" Smith, shortstop; Dick Coyle, 3rd; Clem Rooney, left field; Pierce Rooney, right field; Joe Gallagher, center field; and Elwood "Kettle" Wirts, catcher, who was one of the eight CB alums who played in the major leagues.

In November, 1913 Brothers dispatched a baseball team to play the convicts at Folsom Prison, and became "the first outsiders to play inside the prison walls." The photo above details the names of the inmates and the CB players who played there that day.

1918

Our next installment of the *College Times* yearbooks comes from 1918. The players on that club included: Pierce Rooney, L. Smith, Paul O'Neil, Clem Rooney, Tom Kelley, Steve Coyle, Ed Doyle, Tom O'Neil, L. Hill, F. Delahunty, and Steve O'Neil.

In early March, Brother Albion selected Tom O'Neil as manager and tabbed Ed Doyle as captain of the Brothers '18 team, which in those days went by the moniker "Red Sox." On March 16, the boys journeyed to "the Farm" in Davis to play the agricultural college boys. Brothers quickly scored two in the top half of the first on a pair of hits, followed by sacrifice bunts. While the Red Sox compiled a big lead, Davis climbed back. But with the bases loaded for CBS, Smith hit a three-run triple to give CBC a 9-4 win.

Their next game wasn't played until nearly one month later, when "the College Red Sox journeyed in machines" to play Stockton High. Tom O'Neil twirled a four-hit shutout as Brothers claimed a 10-0 victory.

On Sunday, April 21, Brothers again played a road game, this time against "the village of Cement," which had beaten CBS twice the year before. As this marked Cement's first game, they were accused of fielding ringers from the nearby Navy troupe, but the sailors weren't much help as Paul O'Neil tossed a gem, and Brothers emerged with a 16-3 win, their third victory against no losses. Clem Rooney, Tom Kelly and Steve Coyle each rapped out three hits. (Editor's Note: "Cement" may have been a town team located in the East Bay near Vallejo's Mare Island due to the reference to "the nearby Navy troupe.")

The following Saturday the Farm boys from Davis played a return match at McKinley Park. According to *The Times* "The Farm men are much older than we, but if they ever want to beat us they will have to show more 'jazz.'" Rooney pitched a good game and made three hits, while younger cousin Steve O'Neil managed a triple, single and three walks as Brothers won 9-4.

Brothers once more hit the road when they played a second-string squad at St. Mary's College located at that time at the Oakland Brickpile. "Along with the team came many rooters," stated *The Times*, "giving the Oakland Brothers many of us to feed that day." Brothers brought a ringer of their own this day, George Gliebe "an old Sox veteran," who tossed all nine innings while holding St. Mary's to three runs on seven hits. Brothers won 8-3. Tom O'Neil, Gorman and Smith each banged out a pair of hits to lead Brothers' to its fifth straight and final victory of the 1918 season.

1925

The next installment picks up in 1925 with the *Sacraformian*, the odd-sounding name for the school's annual yearbook throughout the 1920s. The school had just moved into its new facilities at 21st and Broadway, under the supervision of Br. Vellesian, F.S.C., Principal.



In the opening of the Baseball section, the yearbook states that in years prior CB was not known for its football or basketball teams, "and many other teams may have been very poor, but this is not so with our baseball teams. Our school has always been noted for the remarkable nines that it has produced. And this year our boys have upheld the tradition that has been set for them."

The squad was led by former Brothers Boy, Paul O'Neil. Team members included: Joe Noonan, (a future CBS baseball coach), Americo Zazzi, Bill Morebeck and older brother Herb Morebeck (another future CBS baseball coach), Maurice Corcoran, Bill Hester, Tom Waite, Harold Bunker, Frank Lagomarsino, Clarence Hamilton, Toad Stackpoole, Joe Rooney and Bill Towne.

The season opened with home and away games against a new San Juan High School and beat them both times, 7-4 and 7-1. Clarence Hamilton and Joe "Red" Rooney were the winning pitchers.

The school "issued a challenge" to Sacramento Junior College and snookered the JCs 20-1. Hester was the big hitter with two homers, while Hamilton claimed his second victory. The Brothers nine next trounced the Spartan A.C. at Land Park by 10-5 with for their fourth consecutive victory.



For their fifth game, Brothers ventured out to Davis to contest the Cal Aggie college team. With Rooney scattering a smidgen of hits through seven innings and leading 2-0, he gave way to Hamilton. The Aggies bunched six hits and three runs to take the contest, and serve CB with its first loss of the season.

CB next traveled to Oakland to play St. Mary's Preps and came away with its second loss. A game against rival Sacramento High resulted in a 6-0 shellacking for the Brothers third consecutive loss. The Cal Aggies traveled to Sacramento to play on Brothers' new diamond. The teams traded scores and Brothers emerged victorious, 8-7. The final game of the year was played against an undefeated Willows High. Behind Hamilton's pitching, CB won by a score of 11-5, bringing their overall mark to 6-3.

1926

In 1926, Brothers baseball team opened the season with the following starting lineup:

Herbert Morebeck, second base; Clem Coyle, third base; F. Scharetg, first base; Joe Noonan, pitcher and centerfield; Thomas Waite, left field; Americo Zazzi, shortstop; F. Allen, right field; Francis "Bud" Atkins, center and right field; Victor Bordes, catcher; Clarence Hamilton, pitcher. The substitutes were Bernard Moore, F. O'Brien, and K. Kleaver.



Brothers opened the season with Sacramento Junior College and behind the pitching of veteran hurler Clarence Hamilton defeated the JC's 8-5.

CB next trounced Columbia Market 16-3, then defeated the Willows High nine 4-3 with Hamilton earning his second win.

Brothers took on the Cal Aggies of Davis and lost 5-4, despite a 14 strikeout performance by Noonan.

St. Agnes of Stockton visited the Brothers diamond and lost to CB 9-4. While collecting 14 hits, Brothers was led by Bordes and Hamilton who "never missed an opportunity to send the ball on a journey through the atmosphere" noted the '26 yearbook summary.

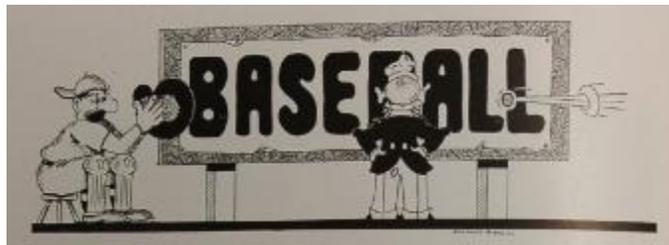
The Aggie Nine once again toppled Brothers, this time 9-1, handing CB its second loss of the season, albeit both at the hand of a college team.

Brothers made its annual visit to Ione and defeated the Preston Institute for Boys 9-1 behind Hamilton's strong pitching (13 strikeouts) and hitting by Noonan and Coyle, who each went 4-5.

Christian Brothers next traveled to Oakland where they endured their first high school loss of the season to St. Mary's 2-0. In the next game, CB defeated St. Mary's at home 12-3. The *Sacraformian* reported that on the eve of the game a rally and bonfire helped stoked the spirits in preparation for their victory over St. Mary's, which was then considered the top private high school in Northern California.

Brothers concluded the 1926 season with a 7-3 record.

1927



In the 1927 *Sacraformian* we learn of the school's first use of the nickname "Fighting Irish." No doubt the Brothers teams proudly adopted the "Irish" name because of the Rooneys, Noonans Coyles, Doyles and O'Neils who formed the backbone of past teams. Also, around this time, Knute Rockne's Notre Dame teams dominated college football and may have had an additional influence in the name change at Brothers.

Coach Tatti's lineup that season included: Tom Parodi, right field; R.H. Noonan, center field; George Flahive, shortstop; Ed Halleuer, second base; Bernard Moore, left field; Earl O'Brien, first base; Wing, pitcher and Victor Bordes, catcher. The subs included Rose, Moore, Wheeler and Wamsley.

CBC opened the season at home and defeated San Juan High 5-0 on sterling pitching by Wing. In the second contest Sacramento Junior College shut out CB, 4-0.

Brothers posted victories in their next three games, starting with a 7-3 pasting of San Juan. Parodi went 3 for 4, while Flahive, "our diminutive shortstop," knocked a round tripper. Next, Brothers walloped Rio Vista 17-3, with Noonan collecting a cycle while hitting 5-5. Waite was the winning pitcher, allowing only two hits. Waite again was the winner in a home contest against Preston of Ione, 7-0.

In the last two games of the season pesky St. Mary's of Oakland took two from Brothers. They won the first contest 17-8, which was played at Moreing Field, home of the Sacramento Senators. Waite was the lone star for CB, going 4 for 5. In Oakland, Brothers lost to St. Mary's 6-3, to finish the season 3-3.

Brothers' grammar school fielded an "unlimited team" in the Playground Baseball League and won all six of its games against local grammar schools.

1928

Scant information was reported in the *Sacraformian* for the 1928 season. Apparently the team failed to field a coach until later in the year when it turned to recently graduated Joe Noonan, the club's pitcher in 1926-27. As a result, CB competed in just five contests.

Brothers won the opening round against the Aviators at Mather Field by the score of 13-12. Next the team turned to another non-high school opponent, defeating a team from the Sacramento City Police Department 6-3.

In the third game, Brothers met rival Sacramento High at McKinley Park and lost 2-0.

In the last two games, CB defeated St. Agnes of Stockton 27-17 (Brothers apparently missed an extra point in that football contest), and then downed Courtland High 4-3. Captain Vic Bordes, who had been the catcher in prior years, was the winning pitcher in that game, while Joe Valine garnered two triples in leading the winners in hitting. According to the yearbook, Vic "Frenchy" Bordes had captained the football and baseball teams three years running.

1929

Nineteen Twenty-Nine represented another year of change, but this seemed for the good. Once again, CB recruited another new coach and former player—Herb Morebeck—who guided the team to an undefeated season.

Brothers traveled to Ione for the traditional home and away series with the Preston Institute for Boys. Brothers took the game 9-5 behind the pitching of Valine. The following week, Preston visited Christian Brothers campus and the Irish won again, 12-7. Mark Separovich was the winning hurler and the team was led by Vic Bordes with three singles, Bill Hallauer who tripled with the bases loaded, and Prato, who sent one out of the yard and "across Y Street" (referring to the campus' northern boundary).

The next game was won on a forfeit due to the death of a Dixon teammate days before the scheduled game. Brothers then traveled to Courtland and defeated the locals 10-5 behind Valine's pitching and Tom Parodi's three safeties on the afternoon.

In the next contest, Brothers hosted Sacramento High at William Land Park. Valine again emerged victorious, as Morebeck's Boys walloped the Dragons 5-2. Mickey Callahan drove in all five runs on the day. The CB yearbook writer also crowed that this represented the second straight defeat of Sac High, referring to an earlier winter win against the "basket-ball" team.

At home against Courtland, Brothers won, although the score was not reported. Bud Hanna, Brothers' future head baseball coach, made a leaping catch in the outfield, while getting two hits. Tom Prato drove in three runs in with a bases-loaded double.

The Irish next traveled to Jackson where they played on a snow-covered field and won 8-6. "Bordes and Hallauer showed the natives a few things about how a real keystone pair should work, turning in three fast double plays," reported the *Sacraformian*.

In the final game, Brothers again ventured beyond the city boundaries, this time to Placerville, where the team outpointed the locals 18-8 behind Valine's fine pitching and great fielding by Parodi, who also smacked a grand slam. The team finished the year with a perfect 8-0 record.

This concludes Brothers baseball from the Early Years through the 1920s.

