

PERFECTION

This is the next installation of Br. Neal Golden's CJ '57 profiles of the Crusaders and Kingmen of the past

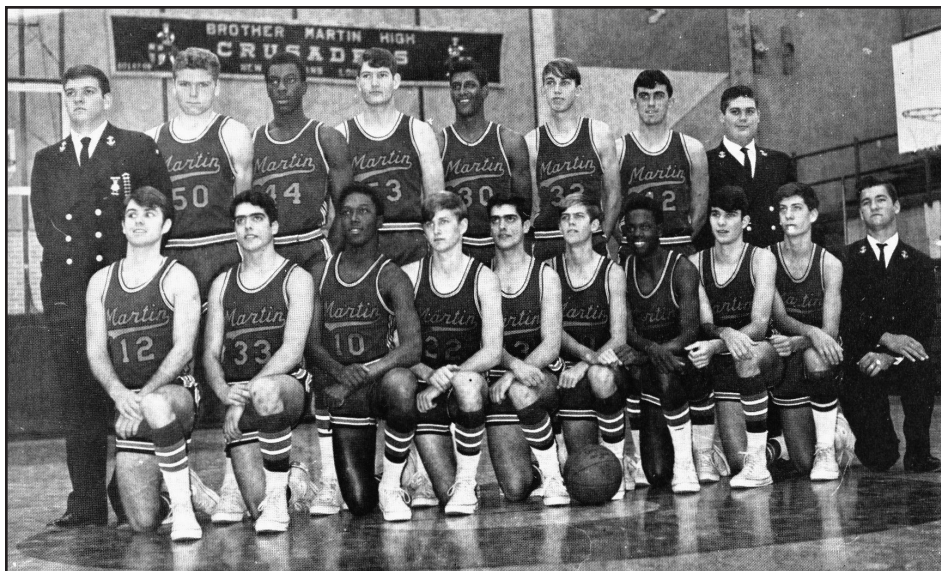
Beginning the 1969-70 season, **Coach Andy Russo** hoped that the players who had been at St. Aloysius and Cor Jesu would mesh into a unit that would give brand new Brother Martin High School a successful basketball season. They were more than that, they were perfect!

The Crusaders started by reeling off eleven pre-district wins in a row, the closest being 68-62 over McDonough. In the USL Tournament, they got a chance to measure themselves against teams from other areas of the state. Northside, Bolton, and Lafayette were no match for the 'Sader machine.

The starters were senior **Skip Brunet**, who led the team in scoring and rebounds, and junior **Glen Masson**, junior **Gabe Williams** at center, and two more juniors at guard, **Dale Valdery** and **Tommy Smith**. Providing front court depth were senior **George Comeaux** and junior **Philip Franco**. First off the bench in the backcourt was senior **Ed Rossi**.

The Crusaders cruised through District with a couple of close victories over De La Salle and St. Aug. **Brunet** was the most valuable player on both the all-district and all-city teams. **Masson** joined him on both squads.

In the first round of the AAA playoffs, the Crusaders hosted Nicholls, whom they had blistered 83-45 in November. The Rebels were coached by **Ray Froeba**, whose son **Gary** was a Crusader. Nicholls led midway through the third quarter before succumbing 77-72. Martin hit the road to Baton Rouge for a 92-68 thrashing of Lee High. The Crusaders then traveled to Alexandria



1970 State and National Champions—Back row **Alan Thriffley**, mgr, **Ed Constantine**, **Gabe Williams**, **Mike Materne**, **Ernest Brunet**, **George Comeaux**, **Glenn Masson**, and **John Calderara**, mgr. Front row: **Ed Rossi**, **Joe Furlan**, **Tommy Smith**, **Gary Froeba**, **Charles Furlan**, **Bruce Beter**, **Dale Valdery**, **Phil Franco**, **Jay Trapani**, and **Frank Slavich**, mgr.

for the Top Twenty Tournament. With several starters in foul trouble, **George Comeaux** came off the bench to secure a 76-67 semifinal win over Bastrop.

The stage was set for the game the whole state had been waiting for: 35-0 Brother Martin vs. 35-1 Captain Shreve. I was court-side providing statistics and color commentary for Champ Clark's broadcast on WBOK. (We may have been the first interracial announcing team in Louisiana history.) I have always contended that there were 20,000 people in the Rapides Parish Coliseum that night. When each of the first two games of the tripleheader ended, the fans didn't leave. When our fan busses arrived, all tickets had been sold and everyone walked in free. People sat in the aisles and stood at the edges of the court.

Thousands more milled in the corridors. The game did not disappoint the official crowd of 15,657.

Shreve was quicker throughout the first half, building a 36-20 lead. **Russo's** crew scored the final four points to trail by 12 at the break. After half, Martin confused

Shreve with its patented 1-3-1 zone trap. Holding Shreve to 20 second half points, the 'Saders tied the game 56-56 on a last minute basket by **Masson** who had been ill for several days. Shreve held for the final shot but a last second charge sent the game into overtime.

Within seconds of controlling the tip, **Brunet** hit a jump shot. Shreve missed its shot and the Crusaders hit another basket, then another, and another, plus foul shots. Martin made every field goal it attempted in the overtime and grabbed every rebound, outscoring the Gators 16-0 to complete the dream season. **Williams** had 23 points and made the Top Twenty All Tournament team. The victory pushed the 36-0 Crusaders past the 35-0 LaGrange squad of 1967-68 for the best record in Louisiana history.

Catholic New World, the Chicago archdiocesan newspaper, ranked Brother Martin 1st in the nation among Catholic schools.

With four of the five starters returning, the Crimson and Gold were considered a shoo-in to capture the 1971 state championship. They did but not without travails. But that's a story for another time.

2007 Plus 50 Gala Saturday, June 2, 2007



The fourth annual Plus 50 Gala will be Saturday, June 2, 2007, at Brother Martin High School starting at 4:00 P.M.

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