



# Simply the best

Pontiac Notre Dame Prep named state's most exemplary program

POSTED: APRIL 30, 2010

## Pontiac Notre Dame Prep named state's most exemplary athletic program

BY PERRY A. FARRELL  
FREE PRESS SPORTS WRITER

[Comments \(5\)](#) [Recommend \(1\)](#) [Print](#) [E-mail](#) [Letter to the editor](#) [Share](#)

When the 4,000-square-foot Betty A. Wroubel Athletic Performance Center officially was opened on the campus of Pontiac Notre Dame Prep on Feb. 24, little did anyone know that a month later the school would be the first private or Catholic school to be recognized as the state's most exemplary athletic program.

The Michigan Interscholastic Association of Athletic Administrators, in conjunction with the Michigan High School Athletic Association, bestowed the honor on the Fighting Irish program, citing the school for outstanding athletic programs, family and community involvement, and serving the students in an exemplary manner.

"We were the first private, the first Catholic school. ... We're really excited about that," said Wroubel, the school's athletic director, volleyball and softball coach. "We were the only school in the state of Michigan to receive the award this year.

"It really has very little to do with success in the athletic arena, football field or volleyball court. It's really about giving our student athletes a great experience, treating them fairly, giving them all equal opportunity to shine and to have a good educational athletic program."

Achieving those goals didn't come easy for Notre Dame Prep.

"It took us a couple of years," Wroubel said. "We had to do a self-study. We had to improve in some areas that we weren't as good as we should've been. It gets back to what high school sports ought to be about. It was hard work but well worth it."



Notre Dame Prep's Michael Brodzik hits a ball during last season's C-D Division Catholic League boys baseball championship game. (RASHAUN RUCKER/DETROIT FREE PRESS)



A version of this story appears on page 8B of the Friday, April 30, 2010, print edition of the Detroit Free Press.

Wroubel said students are encouraged to participate in three sports from their freshmen year on, and added that 70% of the student population participates in a sport. Wroubel said the students who participate in athletics have a combined grade-point average of 3.7.

One of the areas the school had to improve was its facilities, which the new center took care of.

"It's so embarrassing having my name on a building," said Wroubel, who has been at the school since 1979 when it was Pontiac Catholic. "Usually you get your name on a building when you are dead."

The Notre Dame program, started in 1994, is far from needing life support.

The boys golf team won a state title last year, the volleyball squad captured a state title in 2007, and the girls ski team was crowned state champs in 2006.

"Being a coach here is an honor," said lacrosse coach Ben Ingram, who graduated from the school in 2002 and has led the team to back-to-back Catholic League titles. "The kids aren't just good athletes, they are amazing students as well. Kids perform both in the classroom and on the field at a level you don't see very many places.

"Parents take an active role, and we've worked under Betty for a long time. She taught there, so we have a good relationship. She's easy to talk to, whether it's an agreement or disagreement. It makes it easier to get through the day-to-day stuff."

The MIAAA cited Notre Dame's commitment to providing the best facilities, equipment and staff to give the student-athlete a spiritual, emotional, social and moral background.

"We are extremely proud of our athletic department," said Mike Kelly, the school's marketing director. "Betty and her staff work phenomenally hard in keeping the program running on all 12 cylinders. As you know, besides the high school kids, Betty is responsible for sports at our lower level and middle schools, which offer many athletic opportunities to students from elementary through eighth grade. Plus, there is a pretty comprehensive summer camp program for kids from kindergarten to 12th grade.

"I'm amazed at what Betty and her crew do with such a large program that includes boys and girls in both CYO and the Catholic League. To get acknowledgement from the MHSAA that the program has done it in all the right ways just further validates it. To be the first Catholic or private school ever to earn the honor is icing on the cake."

Tim McCormick, an All-State basketball player at Clarkston who attended the University of Michigan and played in the NBA, has his son, Kellen, at the school; his daughter, Danielle, will enroll as a freshman next year.

"The reason that I'm sending my kids there is that they are one of the strongest academic schools not only in the state, but in the country," said McCormick. "They really promote family values. They have good facilities and excellent coaches."

Kellen said he's excited that the basketball team might play Detroit Southeastern and Birmingham Detroit Country Day next year.

"From an academic standpoint, I love the fact that the teachers go out of their way to help students," Kellen said. "If I don't understand something after class, they come and ask you if you're getting it or do you need to meet with me after school. Almost every day, I try to meet with my teachers during my study hall. Everything here is really challenging. I went to public school, and it's night-and-day different as far as how difficult it is and the speed at which the kids at our school learn."

Contact PERRY A. FARRELL: 313-222-2555 or [pa Farrell@freepress.com](mailto:pa Farrell@freepress.com).