

# “FIVE QUESTIONS WITH MIKE WRIGHT ’56”

## **1. What was your most significant athletic moment at Saint Thomas Academy?**

Each and every time we played DeLaSalle or Cretin was a memorable event – intense competition that we all loved. Both opponents had student bodies much larger than STA; and in fact, DeLaSalle had about 1,800 students in grades 9-12, about four and a half times STA’s enrollment. That fact alone made it so pleasant to beat those teams. To choose one event above all others, I would have to say it was STA’s victory in the State Basketball Championship game in 1953 when Don Pates made a basket in the closing seconds of overtime to win the game and state championship 60-59.

## **2. Who was the most influential person during your Academy days and how did he inspire you?**

The entire faculty and staff at STA during my four years at the school were in one way or another very influential in my development as an athlete and a student. Since you ask that I pick one specific individual, that would be Skip McMahon, long-time STA football coach and teacher. His influence started with his allowing me, as a 14-year-old freshman, to begin the school year at pre-season varsity football practice. Most coaches in that era would not allow freshmen to participate in varsity athletics.

Then, sometime during that first week of practice, Skip finally talked to me and said, “I understand you are Tom Wright’s brother,” to which I replied “Yes!” (My brother Tom was about 5’9”, 150-pound senior, and I was a 6’2”, 180-pound freshman). Skip responded, “Well, you certainly are a lot bigger than your brother, if you prove to be half as tough as Tom you may turn out to be a decent player.”

Clearly, the challenge was issued and I tried very hard for four years not to disappoint Skip. These types of subtle and, at times, not-so-subtle challenges came from Skip throughout my STA years and they played a big role in many of the successes I might have achieved on the gridiron.

Skip also gave me some extremely helpful and sound advice after my sophomore year on the basketball team. I was fortunate enough to have a very good year and lead the Central Catholic Conference in scoring with around a 20 point per game average. Skip commented to me after the season, “Well, congratulations on another fine year, I expect you will be getting a lot of pressure to quit football and concentrate on basketball. However, you should know that you probably are not going to grow much taller. But, when your body finishes growing you will be much bigger and your sport of the future will be football and not basketball.” Skip clearly was right on, and his support and guidance had a great influence on me during those years. He was clearly a mentor and inspiration to me.

## **3. How did the Academy prepare you for your athletic success?**

The tough competition from the opponents in the Central Catholic Conference, combined with the outstanding STA coaches, prepared me very well for college and beyond.

## **4. What does the word “team” mean to you?**

In my view, the word “team” means a group of people who work together to accomplish a common goal. In sports, that goal is usually winning a competition between your team and another. The team is comprised of the players and the supporting cast, such as coaches, medical staff, equipment staff, etc. and all must work together to accomplish the goal of winning. So, in my mind the word team suggests more than the participants themselves. The term also easily applies to business enterprises, schools, train or airplane crews; they all are “teams” of people working to accomplish a common result. I believe that none of the inductees into this Hall of Fame could have achieved this success without the help of a strong supporting cast of teammates, coaches and other support personnel.

## **5. What does it mean to you to be an Academy alumnus?**

I have always been very proud of my graduation from Saint Thomas Academy. I know that I was very lucky to have been able to attend STA. As I grew older, I realized just how much of a financial sacrifice my parents made to provide both my brother and me a great opportunity to attend STA. Believe me, they sacrificed a great deal to give me this opportunity, and thankfully, I know they think they received a great return on their investment.