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Panaggio v. Gaylord
An Historical Analysis of Two Eras in SUNY Brockport Men’s Varsity Basketball (1946-1964 & 1968-1977)

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History 390
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4 April 2012
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Abstract

This paper serves as study in which I will attempt to survey two completely different eras in SUNY Brockport Men’s Varsity Basketball. In one era coach Gaylord sets the foundation for men’s varsity basketball at the college. In the other era Panaggio is able to take inner city talent from Rochester and assemble some of the most talented teams that SUNY Brockport has seen up to that point. However, amidst this success, scandal would ultimately bring it all crashing down. Be that as it may, this literature represents more than a comparison of two men.

In reality this is a revelation of two eras at SUNY Brockport. It is also serves as an interpretation of how the philosophy of these respective time periods has affected the coaches as well as the administration in their decisions. This has ultimately affected the Athletic program and the very nature of the Brockport campus.

Brockport has been forever changed by these two eras. The irony of this study is that the preceding era had undeniable effect on the other. Therefore, it is safe to assume that the philosophy of the 40’s and 50’s caused a schism between the administration and the staff. The evidence is clearly displayed in the Panaggio’s plight with the administration. That very same philosophy also serves as a reason for the lack of knowledge of Gaylord’s coaching tenure.
Change has a considerable psychological impact on the human mind. To the fearful it is threatening because it means that things may get worse. To the hopeful it is encouraging because things may get better. To the confident it is inspiring because the challenge exists to make things better.

King Whitney Jr.

Introduction

This literary work in which I present to you is a study of two men that have shaped the history of Men’s Varsity Basketball at SUNY Brockport. The irony of this investigation is the fact that the students (Mauro Panaggio) brief tenure had a more resounding effect than that of his mentor (Curtiss Gaylord). The question of why and how, is what I intend to answer and present to the reader.

Through the study of these two men lives, I have gained insight into what may have caused Mauro Panaggio to end his illustrious career as a poster child for “corruption gone array”. In comparing Panaggio and Gaylord one will find that an individual can not force an institution to abandon its traditional roots. This is a problem that Panaggio encountered. In contrast, it was that very same tradition that Gaylord choose to embrace as well as endorse.

Academics were embraced by almost an entire generation of coaches at SUNY Brockport during the Gaylord era. It was emphasized in every part of athletics through out the mid 20th century at SUNY Brockport. While this philosophy began to bend, it never broke once Panaggio took the reigns as Men’s Varsity Basketball coach in the late 1960’s. Panaggio “win-win” attitude was too much to bear for administration as Panaggio attempted to over emphasize athletics. Through out his career he laid the path “brick by brick” or
“incident by incident” in which would lead him to his untimely demise as head varsity coach of men’s basketball at SUNY Brockport.

This historical examination of Men’s Varsity Basketball at SUNY Brockport is more than a comparison of two legendary coaches. It is an evolution of two eras in SUNY basketball history, one era ends quietly and another ends in scandal. Nonetheless, both eras of basketball have been a by-product of the philosophy expressed during their respective time periods.

Mauro Panaggio

Mauro Panaggio’s involvement with SUNY Brockport began during the mid to late 1940’s. During this period Panaggio played for Curtiss Gaylord. Throughout his playing career he was one of the leading scores. He set a school record for scoring the most points in a game at 35.¹ After nearly two decades Panaggio returned to his roots as the head coach of men’s varsity basketball program.

In 1968 Mauro Panaggio replaced Bob Barrett as head basketball coach.² This was only four years after Gaylord had stepped down from his position to expand his duties as a professor at the college. One would think that the hiring of Panaggio would be a sure thing for Brockport. For instance Panaggio had history with the institution, and a heralded one at that. He could be considered one the schools greatest all-time players, judging from his play on the court. He was a prolific scorer as well as a team leader (served as team co-captain). His career as a high school coach illustrated his ability to win.

¹ No Title, No Author RG 11/ 19/ 3 FC
² No Title, No Author RG 11/ 19/ 3 FC
Before Panaggio assumed the role of head coach of men’s varsity basketball Brockport, he honed his skills on the high school level. His resume included head coaching positions at Wellsville, Franklin, East High and Rush Henrietta. During his tenure at these various schools his teams amassed an impressive record of 216 wins and 45 losses. During his stint as a head coach he was also able to produce ten league Championships, two sectional titles and three county titles. With the combination of his record as a High School Coach and his history as player with the college, it was an uncomplicated decision for the administration to choose coach Panaggio as the Basketball Coach. However, coach Panaggio would leave SUNY Brockport in scandal.

Panaggio continued his success at SUNY Brockport. Panaggio coached for nearly ten years, from 1968 and 1977(8 seasons). In 1974 through 1977 he was acting athletic director. During his coaching career, The “Golden Eagles” were able to acquire a record of 151 wins and 74 losses, a mark that was diminished by the forfeiture of many games due to the violation of league rules. These scandals included incidents with ineligible players. The final straw came from an incident involving an unclear purchase order for sneakers. The latter of these incidents is what led to the end of coach Panaggio’s coaching career at Brockport. However, I question if this is what truly lead to Panaggio’s dismissal. I for one believe it was for ulterior motives of another sort.

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4 No Author, No Title RG11/19/3
5 David Waltman, “Intercollegiate Athletics at SUNY Brockport 1970-1999”
6 www.brockport.edu/athletics/basketball
Panaggio was a pioneer in more ways than one. Prior to coach Panaggio, there was only one African American on the Varsity team, B. Mann. Once Panaggio took the helm, the make up of the teams’ ethnicity took a drastic change. Men’s varsity basketball rosters went from predominately Caucasian players to an irrefutable majority of African American players. Some of the players hailed from the inner city of Rochester. Nonetheless, these were not the only changes in which Panaggio made.

Panaggio also had an interest in raising the competitive level of teams in which they played. Every year since Panaggio’s inaugural season, less of the teams opponents were from division three. By the 1976 season the schedule only listed 10 Division III opponents. He also increased the number of games in which the teams played each year.  

Panaggio had an undeniable interest in winning at any cost. He wanted to elevate the basketball program as well as athletics as a whole. It seems that his intention was to create an elite athletic program that would be comparable to those in Division I. He wanted to expand the program and place a newly found emphasis on athletics at the expense of academics. In an article in the Stylus, Tim Lynch describes Coach Panaggio in this manner:

"Coach Panaggio wants to win! He wants it so badly he has solicited donations from private business for scholarships for his players. Mauro Panaggio bothers some people but he

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8. McLaughlin
gets things done and he wins. Brockport needs more winning teams and Panaggio is doing his best to get them”.

While this was a fairly accurate statement, many were not ready to go to the lengths that Coach Panaggio was to win. The administration at SUNY Brockport wanted to maintain the image and mystique of the institution created by their predecessors. Coach Greg Kenney had this to say about Panaggio’s fight to win:

“Panaggio put together some of the best basketball teams in the history of the college. However, he had some very questionable ‘students’ on his team. The ethnic makeup of his team did not suit the pristine image Brockport wanted to be notes for. Every coach and team wanted to produce winners. It was a question of what it cost in terms of reputation, real dollars spent, and image of the program to media, the campus, and alumni.”

Panaggio and his fellow coaches struggled to improve their program as well as athletics. It was a constant fight in which the administration wanted to maintain its past tradition while the coaches wanted move forward towards “Big Time Athletics”.

Curtiss Gaylord

Curtiss Gaylord came to Brockport in 1947. He began his career at SUNY as a professor of physical education. He came to Brockport six years after

\[9^{th}\] McLaughlin
\[10^{th}\] Waltman
\[11^{th}\] Stylus, September 21, 1954
finishing his Masters in 1941 at Pennsylvania State College. From 1941 to 1945 he served in the U.S. Navy. During that time he served as an Athletics Officer.\textsuperscript{12} At his arrival he replaced Coach Martin Rogers. He was the 2nd coach that SUNY Brockport had after the ending of program due to WWII.\textsuperscript{13} Nonetheless, in my effort to research the Basketball program I was unable to uncover a miniscule amount of information about coach Gaylord in comparison with Panaggio.

During his stint as coach his teams were fairly successful. Hardly characterized as perennial powers, coach Gaylord was able to produce a record of 183 wins and 129 losses, which equates to a .586 winning percentage.\textsuperscript{14} What makes this mark somewhat impressive is the fact that he was rebuilding a program almost from scratch. He also worked in a climate that was considerably different than that of counterparts in latter years. However, he did have a few bright spots during his reign as head coach. Gaylord was able to coach arguably two of the best players in the program’s history. The first being none other than Coach Mauro Panaggio and later being Dick Kraft who broke Panaggio’s all time scoring record by dropping in 50 points in a single contest.\textsuperscript{15} He also had a few stellar team moments. In 1962 the team placed second at the SUNY tournament.\textsuperscript{16} The SUNYAC conference was created in 1958. It was not designated the SUNYAC until two years later. Brockport was one the founding members.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{12}Stylus, September 8, 1947
\textsuperscript{13}Unknown Author
\textsuperscript{14}Alumni Newsletter VI. April 1968 p.4 (RG 14/1/12)
\textsuperscript{15}Unknown Author
\textsuperscript{16}Alumni Newsletter
\textsuperscript{17}SUNYAC Homepage, “www.sunyac.com”
The players that were on the team were Caucasian. Many were of an Eastern European background. However, that began to change slightly in later years as more players of Italian heritage became apart of the team.\textsuperscript{18} The first African American did not join the team until 1961.\textsuperscript{19}

For the most part the schedule was fairly consistent. There was an increase in the number of games played until 1953.\textsuperscript{20} In 1953 the college joined the Eastern College Athletic Conference and played between 16-18 scheduled games.\textsuperscript{21} This era in which Gaylord coached in was very different than that of Coach Panaggio.

During this era, academics were very important to the school. The administration wanted to present to the world that SUNY Brockport embodied the essence of higher education. Athletics were merely an extension or a tool in which a pupil could be taught new skills by there mentor and perform display what was learned on the playing field. In interviews of Boozer, Whited and Rogers (pioneers that helped to rebuild SUNY Brockport Athletics after WWII) all agreed that potential PE instructors that were hired were characterized as, “a Health & Physical Education instructor who could coach and not a coach how could teach H&PE.”\textsuperscript{22} The administration was looking for educators and not coaches. Athletics was secondary. The main priority was to maintain academic

\textsuperscript{18} The Saga (1951-1964)
\textsuperscript{19} The Saga, (1961) p.128
\textsuperscript{20} The Saga (1951-1964)
\textsuperscript{21} Anthony Carpenter, The Birth of an Athletic Program: Intercollegiate Athletics at SUNY Brockport 1946-1970
\textsuperscript{22} Carpenter
integrity. In Carpenter’s, The Birth of an Athletics Program, Coach Rogers drives this point home by stating:

“Each coach’s primary responsibility was teaching, Rogers believed the faculty’s teaching may be extended to the gymnasium to the athletic field. Though this is a burden for some of the faculty, it serves to stress the educational emphasis of athletics.”

Coach Gaylord embodied this very philosophy. While winning was a desired result it was not the major concern. He was concerned with teaching his players. I am confident in making this statement for a few reasons. The first being the record in which he compiled throughout his career (183-129). His teams had almost as many losses as they did wins. The next and most compelling evidence was the fact that Coach Gaylord left the coaching ranks to take on a heavier load as a Professor. As well as organize special clinics and workshops in the field of PE. Those two facts give authenticity to the claim that he was more inspired by Academics.

Versus

It is blatantly obvious that an indisputable difference exists between Panaggio and Gaylord. They both resided on opposite ends of the spectrum when it came to the question of intercollegiate athletics and academia. However, those undeniable differences led me to question how much of these differences were spurred on by their respective environment. Possibly, a better observation

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23 Carpenter
24 Stylus, November 20, 1964
would be that these two men functioned in two different eras in which the latter suffered from some obvious residual effects of its predecessor.

A great deal of change was occurring on the college campus. At the end of WWII many veterans were returning home. Those returning veterans created an influx of men enrolling on the Brockport campus. These men enjoyed sports in their leisure time during the war. They wanted to continue that at SUNY Brockport. Ultimately these men pushed for many of these changes in the PE department.

During Gaylord’s era academics took a front row seat to athletics. It was no question that Academics came first. This was emphasized from the top down in the athletic program. During the revitalization of athletics at SUNY Brockport (after WWII), the institution decided to become part of the NCAA. In 1953 the college joined the Eastern College Athletic Conference. The College decided to join this conference for a few reasons. Through the conferences rules and regulations would legitimize the administrations intentional effort to maintain academic standards. Some of these rules limited the amount of games, practice time and academic standards for students. The coaches of the period were accepting of that approach to intercollegiate athletics. They understood the role of athletics at Brockport. Coach Boozer makes that quite clear in this statement:

“...that was the basic philosophy of the day, ‘We were not going to emphasize athletics.’ I always said I don’t want to over emphasize, I would like to give it the proper emphasis...”

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25 Carpenter
26 Carpenter
The role of coaches during this period also illustrated the importance of academics. The instructor was supposed to be a professor first and coach second. That is what the administrators looked for in potential candidates. They also did not recruit players. Tuttle the Athletic director from 1937 to 1964 was responsible for creating the philosophical approach in which the College took concerning athletics. He wanted to maintain the amateur status of collegiate sports at SUNY Brockport.\(^{27}\) That philosophy was accepted by his coaches and for most part all followed.\(^{28}\)

Tuttle didn’t feel that intercollegiate sports were as important as physical education. While he enjoyed winning teams, he strongly believed that it should not forfeit the progress and expansion of physical education.\(^{29}\) This was necessary because his main goal was to build a strong PE program. Sports were naturally secondary.

During Panaggio’s era, things began to change. Not only was there a change in coaching philosophy, there also was philosophical change in administration. In essence it was a changing of the guard. The Administration began to neglect the PE and Athletics program. According to Waltman the proof was the lack of upkeep of Athletic facilities.\(^{30}\) Another change was the arrival of Warren Fraleigh. Fraleigh served as Athletic Director during the 1970’s.\(^{31}\) His

\(^{27}\) Carpenter

\(^{28}\) Lisa Louisa Marchionda, *Earnest Harold Tuttle: His Life and Contributions to Physical Education at the State University of New York College at Brockport*, p.52

\(^{29}\) Marchionda, p.31

\(^{30}\) Waltman

\(^{31}\) Waltman
outlook on Athletics and Physical Education was much different than that of Tuttle.

Tuttle believed that an emphasis should be placed on performance. Where as Fraleigh believed theory was more important. While both would agree winning was not of importance, Tuttle understood that it was important for participants to be able to perform the skills. Both agreed that Athletics served as another arena to teach PE aspects. However, Fraleigh believed that athletic teams should “lose as much as they won” and “they would learn from losing”. Unfortunately, the coaches of the time did not agree with this philosophy. Many of them wanted to win at all cost. Panaggio was no different.

When Panaggio arrived on the scene the program was on the decline. In his first season he was able to turn things around by winning his first of many Lincoln Tournaments. However, winning came at a price. Panaggio sacrificed academics in an effort to win. The proof lies in the various incidents involving students and the forfeiture of games due to low academic performance. During this time some Basketball players were allowed entrance into the college on a “special case” basis. This program stipulated that people without a H.S. degree would be allowed to take 24 credits. This didn’t fit in with the image that the Administration wanted to present. They wanted everyone to see Brockport as a “pristine” and “wholesome” institution dedicated to education. That is the reason

32 Waltman
34 McLaughlin
why Brockport choose division III when division play began in 1973. Boozer maintains that they didn’t move up because they wanted to maintain the fundamental idea of a College, provide students with an education. Panaggio’s direct insubordination of that philosophy is what ultimately got him removed. He totally disregarded the interpretation in which the college wanted to present. He wanted to win so badly that he would go to any length to see that his goal was realized.

Conclusion

This document was an investigation of two eras in the history of Brockport men’s varsity basketball. In this survey I compared the Gaylord era and the Panaggio era. Separated only by four years but, still an undeniable link remains between the two. After observing the two, the predecessor has ultimately had an affect on the other.

Giving Brockport its philosophy in regards to the H&PE department, the era of Gaylord is responsible for molding Athletics into what it is today. Opting to focus on academics, the Administration of the late 1940’s chose to set the foundation by choosing to involve the College in institutions that emphasized academics. The foundation created in this era is a tradition that has been hard to break.

The fact that Brockport joined the ECAC was proof enough that the emphasis was on academics. Rules and regulations that limited play on the field was what drew them into the conference. Another example that academics were

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35 www.ncaa.com
36 carpenter
the main focus was the facts that when given the chance administrators choose to join Division III. To illustrate that this tradition is still a vital part of Brockport’s identity is the reason that they have remained in this division even with the ability to move up.

Panaggio recognized that he could turn the basketball program into something special. He was willing to make that belief come true at any cost. The fact that he wanted to change the program and emphasized athletics first was too much for many to swallow. His obsession for “improving” basketball and athletics was ultimately what lead to his dismissal.

Gaylord embodied the philosophy of his era in which coaching was an afterthought to educating. It was that tradition never really faltered at Brockport. During the Panaggio era it was evident that many were not willing to give up that tradition of academics first. These two eras exemplify what Brockport represents. While change is something that is acceptable, at Brockport it would not be at the cost of academics suffering.
Bibliographical Essay

First and foremost I would like to thank Mary Jo the Archivist for all the help she has given me. She has been a true asset in my quest to unlock the history of men’s varsity basketball at SUNY Brockport. Second, I would like to thank Professor Bruce Leslie for giving me the opportunity to partake in this survey of Brockport history. It has been a pleasant challenge in which I have discovered a great deal of knowledge about this profound institution of education, SUNY Brockport. He has also helped me when it seemed that I had reached a dead end in my research. Without the help of these two individuals it would not have been possible to complete my research.

When I began research, I was hard pressed to find a topic of interest. With such a wide variety of issues involving the history of SUNY Brockport, it was hard to choose one. However, I knew that I wanted to do something that had not been done before. A topic that had not been given much attention in the past was what I was searching for. I first decided to research the SUNY system and how it evolved. Unfortunately that appeared to be daunting task from the onset of this assignment (only because of time constraints and location of materials). I came to this conclusion when Mary Jo explained the lack of material at our archives on the subject. I quickly thought that I might have to choose another topic. So I re-evaluated some topics done by previous students and came to the realization that not much had been done on the history of Men’s Varsity Basketball. It was a topic that had a great deal of interest in. Nonetheless, what peaked my curiosity
on the subject was the lack of inquires.

When I began to sift through data on the issue I wasn’t really sure what aspect I wanted to focus on. So, I decide to focus on the time period between 1946 to the end of the 1970’s. This was broad enough so that I wouldn’t get pigeon holed into a topic yet, specific enough to find sufficient information. The first place that I began to look was the Archives. I searched the Intercollegiate Sports files, in the men’s basketball section. In here I found a variety of information, mostly statistical data. However, I did come across a few articles that told the history of the club. One valuable piece was an unsigned and untitled paper that gave an overview of the history. I also looked at the Saga. It gave me insight into the ethnic make up of the teams, schedules, how many players on the roster, record, etc. Afterwards I did a survey of the online site. There I found more statistical data. These sites gave me an overview of the program and the basics but I still didn’t have a specific topic. After this I consulted Professor Leslie. He began to point me in the right direction by ask me to search for characters that he felt were important to this period. Panaggio was one.

After this talk I went back to the Archives and found more information. I looked at clippings books. I also looked through files of team pictures. I then began to narrow done my search to Panaggio and Gaylord. After that was done, I stuck to files that pertained to them. I accessed their Bibliographical files. There I found clippings from the stylus that focused on them. Next I accessed the microfilm, specifically the Democrat & Chronicle. There I found two articles on Panaggio. What began to puzzle me was that I was able to find an abundant
amount of information on Panaggio but not as much on Gaylord. The most helpful resource for this was a paper by Anthony Carpenter *Intercollegiate Athletics at SUNY Brockport* from 1947 to 1970. While it wasn’t specifically based on Gaylord it was helpful in explaining the philosophy of the time.

The one book that I used was by W. Wayne Deadman. His book was on the history of Brockport in early to mid 20th century. In it he gave some attention to the program during the Gaylord Era. It also helped to give me an idea of some of the changes the program was experiencing at the time.

I did not do any interviews. For the most part all of the questions that I would want ask were already answered. Many of the answers I found were in student papers the previously wrote on the topic. I was able to gather many interviews that way.

I feel this topic could be explored in greater detail. I think the most logical topic to focus on is Coach Gaylord. There is very little on his tenure as basketball coach. This is very surprising considering that he held the position for 17 years.
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