

The long road to the top

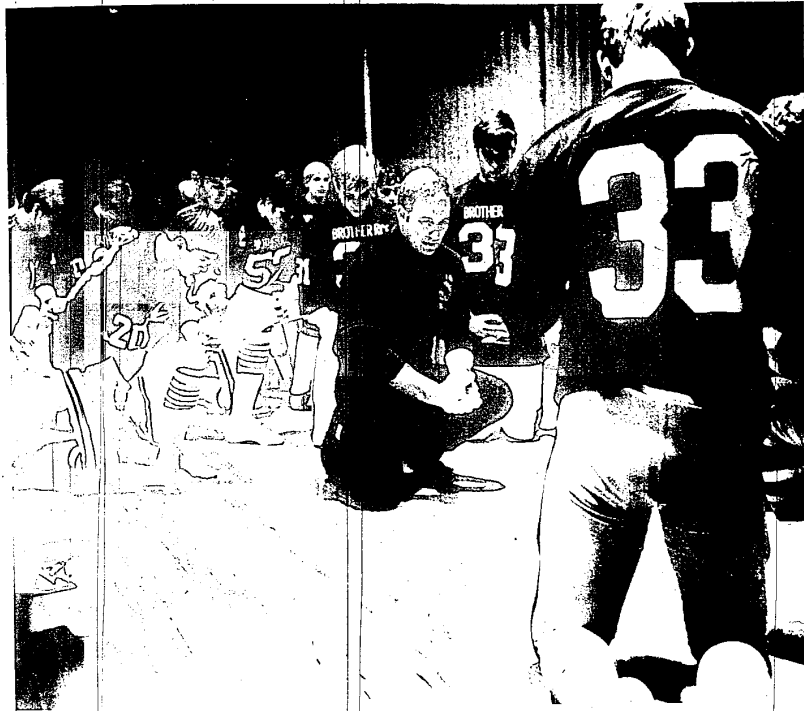
The long road to a state championship is filled with the pratfalls of injuries, bad bounces, teams out to make names for themselves and one thousand other nuisances, major and minor, that will make any but a great team flounder and fail.

For Birmingham Brother Rice, this was a season to remember. Unbeaten and seemingly unbeatable, the Warriors rolled to a championship of the Catholic Central Division, this year's toughest grid league and then swept to a Catholic League championship with convincing wins, 50-15 over Cabrini and 35-0 over Bishop Foley.

In the process, Brother Rice convinced pollsters that they had what it took to be Number 1.

What it took was courage, execution, prayer and a modicum of that elusive element essential to any champion — some good luck.

Observer and Eccentric photographer Doug Bauman followed the Warriors in their drive to the Catholic League and state champion championships and recorded his impressions of the team and their coach, Al Fracassa for posterity.



A quiet moment of meditation before taking the field.

Photographed by Doug Bauman



Fracassa and his team are pensive prior to taking the field for the second half.



Brother Rice head coach Al Fracassa prepared his team with words and gestures prior to the championship game.



To the victors go the spoils. Two Rice players enjoy the fruits of victory.



Fracassa lives out the agony of a coach on the sidelines during the game.