

Regis championship was unforgettable

Written by Mark Dukes

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Sometimes I can't remember what I had for lunch the day before, and other times events of years ago are in clear focus.

I can't recall the name of my kindergarten teacher but I have fond memories in March of that year, when Cedar Rapids Regis' boys' basketball team sent the city into a wild celebration.

I was 6 years old in 1962 when Bob "Red" Jennings coached the Royals to a 76-64 victory over Laurens in the state championship game. The next day, as was customary in most towns, the school held a celebration for the victors.

Only this one wasn't attended just by Regis followers. The whole city seemed to turn out that Sunday afternoon at the school. My dad took me to Regis to watch Jennings and the team at the welcome home event.

I don't recall it all but I can still see Jim Cummins, the star of the team, hoisting the championship trophy while hundreds cheered. Cars were parked up and down Prairie Drive and beyond. It's been nearly 50 years but I can still see it. [\(Read Tom Fruehling's fine piece on the ceremony honoring that team last weekend\).](#)

The Metro area has won 13 more state championships since Regis did it but this was a very big deal in 1962. It was the first boys' basketball title for Cedar Rapids since the Iowa High School Athletic Association started sanctioning the sport in 1923. Old Washington High School had won state tournaments in 1914, 1916 and 1922.

Cedar Rapids perhaps had more of a small-town feel to it in those days. People attended games regularly (actually more than 13,000 watched Regis and Jefferson in a postseason game at the Iowa Field House). With television in its infancy and the Internet a long way off, locals either attended games or listened on the radio.

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Cummins was the team's star who became sort of a local hero, even though Regis had a very good supporting cast. Cummins, who died in 2007, averaged 25.6 points in the three state tournament games with strong inside play. He then went to Northwestern and became a solid reporter for NBC-TV.

Jennings was, and always has been, a character. He could be fiery in the heat of action and quite a conversationalist. And quite a coach, posting a 330-77 record (81 percent) in 18 seasons at Regis and Immaculate Conception. After coaching, he became athletic director at Prairie, where he assembled a strong coaching staff.

Regis is long gone as a high school, closing in 1998 when it and LaSalle merged to form Xavier. The school has produced athletes who have been on the highest stage in Super Bowl MVP Kurt Warner and Masters champion Zach Johnson.

But before them, it was Jennings and Cummins and that historic boys' basketball state championship team. It's the type of memory that sticks with you for years and years.

(Mark Dukes is former sports editor of the Cedar Rapid Gazette. He is co-host of The Gym Class radio show weekdays from 3-4 p.m. on KGYM-AM 1600.)