



2019 in Athletics and “2020: A Clear Vision Forward” **Paul Knapstein, Assistant Principal and Athletic Director**

Our second year as a varsity athletic program, 2019, was one of great growth and success. Last spring we added two new sports, tennis & track. Our soccer teams both advanced to the final 8 in the state playoffs. Our varsity girls soccer team won the area championship. This was the first area championship in the history of our athletic department. Senior baseball player Blake Peacock was the first St. Michael athlete to sign an athletic scholarship to attend college. Blake committed to Spring Hill College to continue his academic & athletic careers. During the summer of 2019, three of our student athletes represented the school in the AHSAA North-South competitions. Alison Boyd ran in the cross country meet while Sydney Barter and Anthony Lazzari both played in the North/South soccer matches.

In August our fall sports kicked off a new season. We added two more teams: middle school football and middle school cheerleading. Coach Daniel Nolan led the middle school to a 6-2 record in our first season. The team brought together 23 students from Christ the King, St. Benedict, & St. Patrick to compete for St. Michael. This fall also saw our volleyball team make great improvements. The team finished second in the area and advanced to the final 16 in the state playoffs. Our varsity football team also made improvements this fall. Coach Phelps and his assistants and players improved in every statistical category from the previous season. The team won two games, but also scored 14 more points more per game and gave up 6 points fewer per game than they did last year. Our team turned the ball over just 11 times all season.

Our swim/dive teams had a great fall. Our girls team finished 7th in the state. Junior Lucy O'Neill won two state championships. Lucy won the 200 freestyle and the 100 butterfly. Lucy also set the state record for the butterfly (1A-5A). The girls finished 7th in the 200 medley relay. Sarah Kate Sligh also won two events, beating her own times in the 50 para freestyle & the 100 para breaststroke from last year.

Our boys swim team had a great year, finishing up as **second in the state** in the state finals in Auburn. They earned the red “runners up” trophy. Junior Ben Adamski won the state diving championship and Junior Andrew Fouty was the state champion in the 100 butterfly and the 100 backstroke. The boys 200 freestyle relay also got on the podium as the third place finishers.

Our cross country teams, led by Coach Hall, had a record setting fall. Our girls overcame several injuries to finish 4th in the section and 12th in the state. Our boys **won the section** and followed up that performance by **winning the state championship!** This was the first team state championship in the history of our school. Our team placed seven runners in the top 35 at the state meet. We were led by

two all state performances. Seniors Michael Garriz and Jack Phelps both placed in the top ten at the meet to achieve this honor.

“2020: A ‘Clear Vision’ Forward”

We’ve made a good start in our first two years as a varsity program! As we look to the future, we have no intention of resting on our laurels. The next school year will bring several new challenges. Our school is moving from the 3A division to 4A because of our growth in enrollment, and we are joining a region that is very challenging. Our swim teams will likely move into the 6A-7A division, due their success these last two years and the “competitive balance” rule.

Rather than whine about things we cannot control, we have committed to **“2020—A ‘Clear Vision’ Forward”** to take pro-active steps to improve our programs and embrace the competitive challenge in front of us. Here are the 9 priorities of that plan:

- 1) Execute our capital development plan for athletic facilities as quickly as possible, as pledge monies are paid, aiming first at the field house for locker rooms and a first tier weight room, then completing the layout and design for the fields, then finishing the complex with bleachers, lighting, fencing and side-walks, per the plan.*
- 2) Upgrade our strength and conditioning program with a focused emphasis on becoming bigger, faster and stronger. Chart pre-and post-gains, accessible to the athletes. Re-structure summer schedule. Include a nutritionist and other medical professionals to assist students in maximizing muscle growth and (safe) weight gain.*
- 3) Restructure Booster Club to become a more prominent feature of our athletic program, the purpose of which is to raise monies, improve communications, create greater ownership in the program across all constituencies, and serve the needs of a growing athletic program in terms of manpower, service and expertise. To include regular public meetings, a leadership team that works with the A.D., a means to raise monies, a process for committing monies, and a system of organizing volunteer staffing of athletic events, all governed by a set of bylaws approved by the principal.*
- 4) Commit to first tier professional development of our coaching staff, to enhance tools to create schemes that are adaptable to our players’ strengths and weaknesses and incorporate the latest techniques/strategies/philosophies to improve efficiency of practices and the success of our teams.*
- 5) Commit to adding high caliber, experienced coaches to add depth and quality to our coaching staff throughout our entire program, consistent with our mission and within the means of the school.*
- 6) Commit to greater visibility and presence of our coaching staff in CYO programs and Baldwin County youth football games, and greater accessibility of our coaching*

staff to parents and interested parties, including regular venues for coaches and parents to discuss previous games and upcoming strategies.

7) Create better systems of communication across all parties associated with our athletic program, including the hiring of a part-time assistant to the athletic director to answer phone calls, respond to email, communicate changes in schedules and practice times, process routine paperwork, etc.

8) Create processes and systems that maximize exposure for our athletes, both for the purposes of internal recognition (on-going statistics, for example, available to players and families) but also for the purpose of local recognition and recruitment by colleges and universities.

9) Create/update an athletic handbook for players and parents to communicate policies and procedures for all parties.

I invite you to work with us to execute this vision. Get involved! Support our teams with both your attendance at games and your philanthropy. Volunteer with our Booster Club!

We've made a good start. Let's keep moving forward. Go Cardinals!

Paul Knapstein