



An Evening in Ontario
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The moment of my time at St. Augustine that is most memorable, the moment that is most significant, is a moment that cannot be narrowed down to one exact instance. It feels as if it is now a figment of my imagination. A dream-like state that when the story is told to my children years down the road when they enroll at St. Augustine, it will seem as if details are merely fabrications of a past that longs to be reunited with the present. It was a moment that cannot be entirely described, a moment that will never be comprehended unless you were there. Unless you smelt the cow manure of Ontario, California – unless you celebrated in the parking lot on March 16, 2013.

This moment is one that dates back years and years, and is a moment that has yet to end. My best-friends (and still, the same best-friends four years later) from elementary school – St. Charles Borromeo Academy – would get to the gym on the St. Augustine campus thirty minutes before tip off. The music blaring would rattle the gym walls. My exact location would slip away as I witnessed the frenzy of it all. The time of the evening was taken over by the shot clock. Bedtime no longer existed on those nights. I saw Saintsmen – seniors who might as well have been in their thirties, running along the baseline in outrageous costumes, greeting their friends and girlfriends and trying not to be greeted by their girlfriends' parents. The starting five was announced, they might as well have been wearing capes draped from their white uniforms, they were super heroes as far as I was concerned. I was twelve years old. I had hardly an idea of what this all meant, I just knew I wanted to be apart of it.

A moment of tribulation cannot be celebrated properly unless the prior moments of trial are of significant pain. Significant pain means being a freshman at Saints, full of hope and full of confidence and the starting cornerback against Cathedral Catholic on their new turf field under the lights of their lavish stadium, and laying on the same turf with the little rubber beads in your mouth, the wind knocked out of your stomach, and the scoreboard reading “Dons 69 Visitors 0 as the final quarter comes to a close. Significant pains means starting at shortstop against the Dons during my freshman year at their immaculate ball park and trailing 4-3 going into the last inning. With the tying run on third, Cathedral's shortstop makes the play of his life – ranging to his left, full extension dive, and throws from his knees to get our fastest player out by a half step. Dons win. Significant pain is showing up to the Holy Bowl a couple hours early to tailgate with your friends, the Saints having the lead at half, and our quarterback uncharacteristically beginning to throw interception after interception and “this cannot be real life.” is the only thing on your mind. I would begin to discuss the Cathedral Buzzer Tragedy of 2010, but the name itself is horrific enough.

Dons win. Dons Win. Dons win.

I had heard it so many times; I thought it was going to echo in the depths of my mind until graduation, and long after that.

Summer nights before my senior year at St. Augustine consisted of hanging out on the beach around the bonfire, talking about prospective colleges, girls, etc... the usual topics of a teenage boy. Among these topics embedded into my colloquial language was the topic of “Senior Year Saints Hoops” – since my freshman year, the late summer of 2009, I had envisioned Saints basketball beating Cathedral, beating everyone, winning state. Not to make any prophetic claims. Don’t compare me to an evangelical, biblical figure, but I saw it. Although I saw glimpses of our team and their success, and pictured a banner hanging in the gym, I had no idea what it would *feel* like. No one did.

Beating Cathedral at Viejas Arena for the CIF Championship became the best day of my life. That is, until we beat them again in the state playoffs. I am utilizing the “royal we” because the purple and gold in the stands is just as important as it is when it is stitched onto the uniforms. That may sound bogus, unless you were there in Ontario, California; the comeback and game of a lifetime. We piled in my friends’ Buick Rendezvous for a rendezvous of the ages. Saints was scheduled to take on Chaminade High School at a neutral site in Ontario. As soon as that was announced, that site became far from neutral. As soon as that was announced, a road trip was subsequently planned. That’s just how students at St. Augustine school think. Chaminade supposedly had this huge student section called “the Cage” that was supposed to outnumber The Pit. Upon my arrival, the sizable gym was already filled to the rafters with Purple and Gold students, teachers, alumni and fans. The third quarter ended, we were down twelve, and the buzzer signaled the start of the fourth quarter and had initiated a new life into everybody in the gym. Members of The Pit began running up and down the baseline, involving the enormous Saints faithful, and evoking a full court press from Coach Haupt – feeding off the crowd’s energy. Mayhem ensued. The frenzy felt like a haze of euphoric confusion. The comeback was completed. In the midst of the mob of a few hundred students who had driven over two hours to watch a basketball game, I had never seen so much collective joy in one setting. Time slowed down, strangers became best friends in the midst of a few seconds. Even then, I knew it was so incessantly timeless. A senior yelled “FINALLY!” at the top of his lungs (that senior may have been me). A group of kids ran onto the football field, waving their sweat-drenched shirts as a souvenir of what they had been through. It defined happiness. It was too picture perfect, it was a movie-script ending.

The Saints went on to win the State Championship in Sacramento the next weekend. I couldn’t make the trip. I had pneumonia and was lying in bed watching the game; all I did was silently fist pump as the team celebrated on the television. I couldn’t help but fill my mind with my earliest memories of Saints basketball. Twelve years old sitting front row with my best friends, with the most pure feelings of hope. True hope that I could devote myself to something bigger than just me. The best part about it all was knowing that everyone associated with St. Augustine High School felt a different feeling of satisfaction that afternoon. Happiness has personal connotations. My definition?

See March 16, 2013 – Ontario, California

“Saints: 61 – Chaminade: 57”