

**The Holy War: The History, Hype, Impact, and Legacy
of the St. Edward – Saint Ignatius High School Football Rivalry**

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Preface

As a young girl growing up in the West Side suburbs of Cleveland in a Catholic family, my parents valued the idea of private schooling and thus enrolled me in Catholic schools. I attended St. Richard School from kindergarten through sixth grade before transferring to St. Bernadette School for my middle school years. For high school, I knew from the time I was little that I would be attending Magnificat High School, one of the all-girls Catholic high schools in the Cleveland area. While it was known that I would attend a Catholic high school, there were two Catholic high schools on the West Side that I would never attend – St. Edward High School and Saint Ignatius High School. Why? Because St. Edward and Saint Ignatius are all-boys schools. These two all-boys schools not only have strong college-prep curriculums, but also are two athletic powerhouses in the state of Ohio. Many area families enrolled in the Catholic grade schools have ties to one of the two all-boys schools, valuing the private, Catholic education they offer. My eighth grade class had 50 students, of which 46 chose to attend a Catholic high school because of the draw and importance to the families of Catholic secondary education.¹ While I was never a student at either St. Edward or Saint Ignatius, I had a connection to the all-boys schools like many of my male classmates at my co-ed elementary schools. However, I not only have connections to one of the schools, I have connections with both St. Edward and Saint Ignatius.

My dad, Ed Daugherty, was a member of the St. Edward Class of 1992. I grew up attending St. Edward Eagles football games with my family. Although in those days, while I was interested in the football game, I was more interested in the idea of possibly being a cheerleader for St. Edward when I entered high school.² I also had a connection with Saint Ignatius High School. My

¹ Saint Bernadette School. *Faith Unites Us: Saint Bernadette School 2014-2015*. Shutterfly Lifetouch. 2015. Print. Retrieved from the personal collection of the Daugherty Family.

² The St. Edward Cheer Team is comprised of athletes from grades 9-12 from St. Edward High School as well as the West-Side all-girls schools Magnificat High School and St. Joseph Academy.

dad had been a sports reporter and radio broadcaster covering Saint Ignatius football since 2001. I grew up listening to my dad's broadcasts as the main play-by-play broadcaster for the Saint Ignatius Wildcats from 2007 to 2015. He also covered local college athletics at Case Western Reserve University and Cleveland State University.³ In terms of football, I had not yet figured out which school I wanted to support, especially when it came time for the annual rivalry game between St. Edward and Saint Ignatius, affectionately called The Holy War. Some people will talk about a house divided over a rivalry where members of one family attend rival schools. For my family, and especially my dad, it was almost along the lines of a house divided when it came to the high school football season. Indeed, while my dad was the main broadcaster for the Saint Ignatius home radio, he would usually find some way to incorporate the St. Edward green into his game day outfit as a nod to his deep loyalty to his own alma mater.

In 2013, my dad offered me the chance to work with him in the pressbox for some of his football games as his On-Site Producer/Engineer, Spotter, and Statistician.⁴ As a seventh grader, I began working as a member of the Saint Ignatius Radio Broadcasts, but I would not work my first Holy War until 2015 when I was a freshman in high school. For my first three seasons with high school football, we worked exclusively with Saint Ignatius football, until after the 2015 season when the school decided to end the contract with our broadcast company. While I was committed to cheering for the Wildcats during those years, after the contract ended, I switched to cheering for St. Edward, my dad's alma mater and my brother's future secondary school. Beginning with the 2016 season, our broadcast crew moved to a "Game of the Week" format to broadcast the best high

³ E. Daugherty, personal communications via in person conversation, January 10, 2023.

⁴ My role during a broadcast is everything off-air: setting up the equipment, assisting with player identification during plays, research score updates from other games in the area and tracking statistics, and remaining in contact with the radio station to coordinate planned and unplanned commercial breaks and managed unexpected transmission issues.

school football match-ups around the Cleveland area instead of featuring just one team. Yet, no matter what, the first game we would schedule when creating our season's line-up would be the Holy War. Since the 2015 season, I have only missed broadcasting two Holy War games, those being the 2016 and 2022 playoff games, due to other commitments. Because of the hype, the work I did to help prepare for the broadcast and the stories I heard the broadcasters share on the air and in the pressbox, I always looked forward to working the Holy War, but I also felt slightly disconnected from it as I didn't attend either school. I would never know what this game meant to the players. I would never know how a father felt watching his son compete in the game. I would never experience the way an alumni of the program felt watching the next generation carry the torch. I was never a student sitting in the student section or even a student at one of the schools experiencing the hype throughout the week in the school's hallways. For ten years and counting I've always been in the press box working the game. I had my own unique experience of that game, one that very few people could relate to, but I wanted to learn what it was like for those who had a more intimate view of this rivalry.

The Holy War between the St. Edward Eagles and the Saint Ignatius Wildcats is often considered one of the best high school rivalries, not just in Northeast Ohio, or the state of Ohio, but across the nation.⁵ I mean, what other high school rivalry can bring out your city's NFL and NBA head coaches and star players?⁶ There is a reason that this annual football game will sell out swiftly with thousands of fans packing the bleachers and even standing multiple rows deep on the

⁵ Askeland, K. (2018, November 15). *Top 25 Greatest High School Football Rivalries*. MaxPreps. https://www.maxpreps.com/news/5diPGPH_OEaQNDYX6OfVRw/top-25-greatest-high-school-football-rivalries.htm

⁶ Barstool Cleveland [@BS_Cleveland]. (2022, November 11). *Kevin Stafanski on the sidelines at the Holy War; Iggy vs Eds photo by: @NewsPhotoJeff* [Tweet; photo]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/BS_Cleveland/status/1591230354060632067; Goul, M. (2023, February 4). *St. Ignatius hands No. 1 St. Edward first loss, 53-50, in front of Donovan Mitchell, Darius Garland and all-star crowd*. Cleveland.com. <https://www.cleveland.com/highschoolsports/2023/02/st-ignatius-hands-no-1-st-edward-first-loss-53-50-in-front-of-donovan-mitchell-darius-garland-and-all-star-crowd.html>

fences around the field. I wanted to dig deep into that reason. I wanted to know why the Holy War had such a big hype, impact, and legacy on its players, fans, and local media.

That desire to understand the Holy War and its impact led me to this thesis. To find the answers to my questions and to fill in the gaps of the experiences that I could never have, I turned to the men I would consider experts – the current and former players, the broadcasters, the alumni, and media members.⁷ I wanted to expand on the knowledge and experiences I already had but also include what it was like for someone who actually went through the doors at St. Edward and Saint Ignatius. Through a series of interviews with these men, I believe I have come to an answer that I hope to convey to you through this narrative.

In the interest of full disclosure, I want to acknowledge what some may perceive to be an inherent bias. As I mentioned earlier, I started my sports career working for the Saint Ignatius radio broadcasts on the ACP Productions Radio Network and I was a fan of the blue and gold Wildcats. But when the ACP Productions radio broadcasting contract ended with Saint Ignatius and we switched to a Game of the Week format beginning in the 2016 season, I switched to cheering on the St. Edward Eagles. No matter if we are the home radio or the Game of the Week (third party broadcast), our broadcast team balances our broadcasts to be more down the middle, which is always interesting because my dad is the current ACP Productions play-by-play broadcaster and an alumnus of St. Edward (class of 1992) while his primary broadcast partners are both Saint Ignatius football alumni, Bryan Hoffart (class of 1980) and Mike Gibbons (class of 1970).⁸ The friendly rivalry quickly made its way into the pressbox amongst our broadcast team, and it often

⁷ See *List of Interviews for information about who was interviewed as sources*

⁸ Gibbons ran for United States Senate from Ohio in both the 2018 and 2022 election cycles. His campaign website cited the inclusion of navy and gold in his campaign materials as a reference to his connection to his alma mater Saint Ignatius; Popielarz, T. (2022, January 19). *Mike Gibbons' U.S. Senate campaign: Life story and deep pockets*. Spectrum News 1. <https://spectrumnews1.com/oh/columbus/news/2022/01/19/mike-gibbons-u-s--senate-campaign-life-story-deep-pockets>

came up on the air during our radio broadcasts, more than it had when my dad and I were working on the radio broadcasts for only the Saint Ignatius Wildcats.⁹ I soon found myself cheering silently for the St. Edward Eagles on the football field and aligning myself with my dad's alma mater while in the press box. In the fall of 2020, my younger brother, Matt, began his football career at St. Edward, and I quickly found myself being an unabashed Eagles fan when it came to high school football. However, during the research process, I took a step back and looked at the rivalry as a third party. I attempted to keep my interviews balanced and impartial in representation of St. Edward and Saint Ignatius as well as with media members who did not attend either school. Any favoritism evident in this thesis is therefore unintentional.

In this thesis, I mention the ways that football has had a foothold in the United States and Ohio, at both the professional level and the high school level (Chapter 1). I include a brief history of the schools with their religious affiliations in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 covers the history and continuation of this rivalry using the ten components of a rivalry from prior research into the field of rivalry, particularly in sports. A more in-depth version of the history of the rivalry as well as the almost infamous "Rule of 14" are covered in Chapter 4. I also explore why this rivalry game creates so much hype across Northeast Ohio (Chapter 5); the impact of the rivalry on friendships, and on the impact of the education and rivalry on students after graduation (Chapter 6); how alumni mark time by using their senior year Holy War as a marker, and the legacy aspect - its impact on the two schools, the family connections, and an unexpected legacy I learned about during my research (Chapter 7). There is a strong connection between family legacies, the respective football programs, and the schools, since multiple times fathers and sons have attended the same school

⁹ Ed Daugherty works to make all of his Holy War broadcasts balanced and unbiased, as he understands that the audience is much larger than alumni of only one school. Adam Mendoza, the St. Edward High School play-by-play broadcaster, mentioned he also has worked to keep his broadcasts of the Holy War more neutral because he understands how many people will listen to that partial game and broadcast.

and even played under the same coaches at their respective schools. Furthermore, there is the legacy related to the coaching staff, especially since the 2022 season was the final season for Saint Ignatius' 40-year head coach. Legacy also shows up in the recent success of the St. Edward Eagles in the playoffs and the stadiums in which these two teams have faced each other, including the home of the Cleveland Browns, FirstEnergy Stadium in downtown Cleveland, and in their current home fields of Byers Field in Parma and First Federal Lakewood Stadium.¹⁰

Through the multiple sources referenced, including books, interviews, news reports, Twitter and Instagram posts, and the media guides and game notes from both schools, I believe that I have found the answers as to why this rivalry is such a key factor in not only Northeast Ohio history but also a case study into why sports are an important aspect of our popular culture and society.

¹⁰ Saint Ignatius has called Byers Field home since 2001. Byers Field is also the current home for the three Parma public high schools: Parma Senior High School, Normandy High School, and Valley Forge High School. Byers Field has a seating capacity of 11,850. First Federal Lakewood Stadium (home of Lakewood High School rangers, a public school) has been the home of St. Edward Football since 1988 and it holds 8,800 fans. Both stadiums often overflow for the Holy War game, so the number of attendees often exceed the official seating capacities.

Introduction

High school football rivalries are a quintessential part of adolescence and community life, although they are not often the focus of academic scholarship. This paper seeks to fill that void. Rivalries exist throughout the United States, but of focus is one of the most storied rivalries in Ohio between two perennial football state champions: Saint Ignatius High School and St. Edward High School.

Saint Ignatius High School, an all-boy Catholic high school founded in 1886, is located in Cleveland's Ohio City neighborhood. St. Edward High School, situated in the nearby suburb of Lakewood and founded in 1949, is the second all-boys Catholic school in this classic rivalry.

In 1952, the young football program for the St. Edward Eagles faced off against the much more experienced Saint Ignatius Wildcats on the gridiron for the first time. It was the first game in the rivalry – a rivalry that would bring together what could feel like the entire West Side of Cleveland for the yearly match-up. The annual game, played at least once a year every year since 1971, creates an atmosphere of high school football that few other high school football rivalries match. Details and outcomes of the games remain vivid in the memories of players and fans alike for generations, as fathers, sons, nephews, and friends replenish collective memory banks when they take their places on the field or in the bleachers. Alumni from both schools carry their reminiscences everywhere – from local boardrooms to conversations with passers-by in a grocery store.

There is a sense of pride and purpose that continues from generation to generation, and the game, the rivalry, and the storied history spills over into every area of life. The players, the fans, and alumni celebrate each year's victory and vow to avenge any loss when the next match-up is scheduled. Such is the intensity of the competitiveness that exists between the St. Edward Eagles

and the Saint Ignatius Wildcats. And this rivalry is rather even with Saint Ignatius winning thirty-two games and St. Edward winning thirty. There was also one tie in the series in 1983. However, St. Edward has won the last six meetings to close in on the Wildcat lead on the record board.

As demonstrated in interviews with alumni from both institutions, lifelong friendships – often formed in the local pool of Catholic grade schools and neighborhoods – transcend school days, varsity letters, or class reunions...that is until game day. This rivalry represents how high school football is a stronghold in current culture and community relations, including on the West Side of Cleveland, Ohio.

Chapter 1: *An Abbreviated History of Football in America*

Football in America

When the National Football League (NFL) was founded in the early 1920's, the popularity of the sport quickly spread across the country. While radio broadcasts of professional football were popular almost from the start of the sport, television broadcasts were slower to catch on for American football fans. In 1970, Cleveland helped make football history when the Cleveland Browns were the host team for the first ever Monday Night Football game, where the ABC Network broadcast truly turned the game into a spectacle rather than simply a broadcast of a sporting event. Part of the draw was the idea from Roone Arledge to have three commentators in the booth for the Monday Night Football game.¹¹ Promotions for the game focused on Joe Namath, a star quarterback for the New York Jets, but the Browns finished the game with a 31-21 win.

“In modern days, football consumes the country every fall from the middle schoolers learning how to properly tackle to the professionals on the Sunday Night Football specials, impacting not just players, but all the family, friends, and fans of the sport. While football is celebrated and watched by everyone, many people feel it is something that a father passes down to his sons. It may begin with catch in the front yard, to learning about the rules, and going to those local Friday night high school games and possibly playing on the high school varsity team.”¹² The concept of the father-son and even the father-daughter relationship will be discussed later on in this paper.

In 2022, the sports industry was a leading originator of television programming. “The NFL and college football continued to draw the most viewers of any form of programming as viewers

¹¹ Sports History Network. (2021, August 30) *The Story of the First-Ever Monday Night Football Game*. <https://sportshistorynetwork.com/football/nfl/first-ever-monday-night-football-game/>

¹² Daugherty, K. J. (2020). *The annual 'Holy War' between St. Edward High School and St. Ignatius High School on the football field, 1952-1957, 1971-2020*. [Unpublished history class paper]. Malone University.

watched sports in record numbers.” Sporting events accounted for 94 of the 100 most-watched telecasts for the year, down just one from 2021.¹³ Of the 94 sporting events in the top 100, 82 of those games were NFL games, even as the league moved their Thursday Night Football (TNF) broadcast from linear television to Amazon Prime Video. None of those TNF broadcasts via Amazon Prime was in the top 100 whereas in 2021 the Fox/NFL Network TNF broadcasts had six games on the list. The NFL broadcasts held nine of the top ten spots on this broadcast list in 2022.¹⁴

The camaraderie and competitiveness of sports is a key element of popular culture. How both individuals and large groups of people interact with each other in the public realm also informs cultural norms. While the research in this paper focuses on high school football in the Cleveland area, the impact of sports that is identified here applies to communities across the country. According to historian A.R.L. Cayton, “Sports defined public culture in Ohio in the second half of the twentieth century. White or black, suburban or urban, many Ohioans, mainly but not exclusively male, were loyal to [the state’s teams]. Sports was consumerism perfected. Fans bought tickets, pennants, programs, and hot dogs. Seeking a public identity, they wore clothes emblazoned with their teams’ insignia.... [sports] was a source of pleasure and pain for thousands of people who lived vicariously through the exploits of athletes with whom they identified.”¹⁵ Sports is a significant factor in our society’s culture, especially the American sport of football. Football is American-made. In the early years of football in the latter half of the nineteenth century, there were two different versions of the game. One was more of a soccer-style of the game and the other was more similar to a rugby-style of the game. Walter Camp (1859-1925), “Father of

¹³ Karp, A. (2023, January 1). *Games Rule: Sports events account for all but six of the top 100 telecasts of 2022*. Sports Business Journal. <https://www.sportsbusinessjournal.com/Journal/Issues/2023/01/09/Upfront/top-100-telecasts.aspx>

¹⁴ Karp (2023); The only non-sports broadcast that cracked the top-ten was the State of the Union address on March 1, 2022, with 34,646,000 viewers. The top spot was the 2022 Super Bowl with 110,400,000 viewers and second place was the NFC Championship between the Rams and 49ers with half the viewers at 50,225,000.

¹⁵ Cayton, A. R. L. (2002). *Ohio: The History of a People*. The Ohio State University Press.

American Football,” was influential in guiding the rules board of the newly formed Intercollegiate Football Association and is credited with defining the game known today as American football.¹⁶ In 2006 and 2007, 43 percent of American adults picked football as their favorite sport to watch. While that number has dropped to 37 percent in 2017, it still holds the title of the most popular sport, as the second most-popular sport according to the poll, was basketball with eleven percent of Americans identifying that sport as their favorite.¹⁷ “Americans named baseball as the most popular sport in 1948 and 1960, but football claimed the top spot in 1972 and has been the public’s favorite ever since.”¹⁸ Even when taking into account a fan’s age, football is still the favorite sport.¹⁹

Football also provides a welcome escape from daily life. Ray Odierno, an army lieutenant general in command of the multinational forces in Iraq, used football as a distraction from life on the frontlines in America’s war on terror.

Odierno had crammed as many men in his office as he could – nearly four dozen – to watch the Super Bowl. Watching the game, following the story of the season, this is how soldiers keep the pace of their distant lives on schedule with the home front, a way to stay connected – despite the nine-hour time difference. A 1:00 p.m. Sunday afternoon kickoff at Giants Stadium gets under way at 10:00 p.m. in Baghdad...Now, 8,000 miles away, Odierno was cheering, with his men, for a team and a game that somehow was making them all forget the lost lives, the lost limbs,

¹⁶ History Staff. (2021, July 30). *Who Invented Football?* History.com. <https://www.history.com/news/who-invented-football>

¹⁷ Norman, J. (2018, January 4). *Football Still Americans’ Favorite Sport to Watch*. Gallup. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/224864/football-americans-favorite-sport-watch.aspx>

¹⁸ Norman (2018); Gallup first asked the question in 1937.

¹⁹ Broken down by ages, the Gallup poll results include the following percentages identifying football as their favorite sport: 40% of 35 to 54 year olds. 39% of 55 years old and older. And adults who had children under the age of 18 had football as the favorite sport to watch 40% of the time while those without children under the age of 18 answered football 36% of the time.

and the lost time in Iraq. Odierno knows the comparisons between war and football are misguided, but he understands how the game explains the American military culture.²⁰

Professional Football in Cleveland

Football in Ohio has played a key role since the early years of professional football. In 1920, the American Professional Football Association (an earlier version of the National Football League) was founded in Canton, Ohio (about 50 miles south of Cleveland) and created the first professional football league.²¹ Cleveland had been the home of a professional football team, the Cleveland Rams, beginning in 1936 as a part of the newly formed American Football League, but spent only one year with that league before moving to the NFL on February 12, 1937. In 1946, Cleveland's Rams moved to Los Angeles and a new Cleveland team emerged to fill the gap, the Cleveland Browns.²² The Browns would have success and avid fan engagement until owner Art Modell announced in 1995 that he would be moving the team to Baltimore. The last home game before the team left for Baltimore was a moment when the loyal fan base of Cleveland showed their frustration as the fans tossed seats and other pieces of the stadium onto the field.²³ The League soon promised that the team colors, records, and name would remain in Cleveland for an expansion franchise that would play at the new Browns Stadium beginning with the 1999 season.²⁴ Contributing to the rivalry focus of this thesis, the first game for the returning Cleveland Browns

²⁰ Paolantonio, S. (2008). *How Football Explains America*. Triumph Books.

²¹ *Who Invented Football?* (2021)

²² Case Western Reserve University. (2023). Cleveland Rams. In *Encyclopedia of Cleveland History*. <https://case.edu/ech/articles/c/cleveland-rams#:~:text=The%20CLEVELAND%20RAMS%20were%20the,6%2Dteam%20American%20Football%20League>.

²³ Case Western Reserve University. (2023). Cleveland Browns. In *Encyclopedia of Cleveland History*. <https://case.edu/ech/articles/c/cleveland-browns>

²⁴ When the team moved to Baltimore, they became the Baltimore Ravens. All team records and statistics started fresh for the Ravens.

was against their archrival, the Pittsburgh Steelers, but the Browns suffered a horrible 43-0 loss.²⁵ While the team seemed to struggle on the field, the fans carried on the traditions from the old Browns, and the Dawg Pound, located in the east endzone, drew even more diehard enthusiasts in the post-Modell era. Dedicated fans typically begin tailgating as early as five or six in the morning on game day.²⁶

High School Football in America

In 2019, the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) reported that there were 14,247 high schools that sponsored the traditional 11-player football teams.²⁷ Over 150 smaller schools have shifted to 6-player, 8-player, or 9-player football teams to accommodate lower student enrollment. In 2019, Karissa L. Niehoff, Chief Executive Officer at NFHS observed, “These numbers express the desire by high schools to keep alive one of the oldest and most treasured traditions in our nation – Friday Night Football Under the Lights. Although there are many options today for the entertainment dollar, nothing surpasses supporting the local high school football team on Friday nights for a preponderance of Americans. The Number 1 fan base in America? The answer is that number again – 14,247.”²⁸ While the numbers of fans at NFL games are high, with roughly 1.1 million fans attending the 16 games in Week 2 of the 2019 NFL season, the NFHS estimates that approximately 7 million fans are in the bleachers at a high school football

²⁵ The Browns would finish that season 2-14, just a preview of what was to come for Cleveland Browns fans. The Browns would have just two double-digit win seasons from 1999 through the 2022 season, including a winless 2017 season and a one-win season in 2016; *Year by Year Season Results*. (2023). Cleveland Browns. Retrieved March 1, 2023, from <https://www.clevelandbrowns.com/team/history/year-by-year-results>

²⁶ Meyer, A. (2022, September 18). Cleveland Browns induct Joe Thomas as member of 2022 Class of Cleveland Browns Legends. *WKYC Channel 3 – Cleveland*. <https://www.wkyc.com/article/sports/nfl/browns/cleveland-browns-joe-thomas-honored-class-of-cleveland-browns-legends/95-405be4f8-b76c-4790-84d0-cf92fc41d5cd>

²⁷ Niehoff, K. (2019, September 25). The NFHS Voice: High School Football is Thriving, Not Dying. *National Federation of State High School Associations*. <https://www.nfhs.org/articles/the-nfhs-voice-high-school-football-is-thriving-not-dying/>

²⁸ Niehoff (2019).

game every week.²⁹ In an unofficial attendance survey the NFHS conducted in 2011, 165 million fans attended high school football games during the season, which included up to five weeks of playoffs, dwarfing the numbers in attendance for the NFL games in a typical season.³⁰

Often, high school football players can be stars and role models of the community. The high school players will often be involved in youth leagues as volunteer coaches as a way to “pay it forward.” Sports historian Theron Hopkins noted,

“Because as fine a day it is, and as wonderful an opportunity for these youngsters to be running around out here with their gaggle of volunteer coaches [who are high school players] hollering out instructions from the sidelines, and great as it might be to watch their kids play ball, to Coach, these boys and girls on this field mean a whole lot more than that. This is where the fire starts, where these same children out here today are on the other side of the chain-link fence on Friday nights pointing at his guys...and saying, “That’s me.” These kids are his foundation, his future, and the future of this Valentine [High School] program that it is Coach’s dream to build into a Nebraska small-school state powerhouse.³¹

While high school football can be the heart and soul of small towns across the country, high school football also has a significant impact on our popular culture. Numerous movies and television series have been made around the idea of high school football’s role in a community, songs have been written around it, and countless books have been published about specific teams or seasons at the high school level. One of the more popular movies is the 2004 film *Friday Night*

²⁹ NFHS claims, “with approximately 7,123 games every Friday night (14,247 divided by 2), and with a conservative estimate of 1,000 fans per game, there are more than 7 million fans in high school football stadiums every week.”

³⁰ Niehoff (2019).

³¹ Hopkins, T. (2015). *Hometown Heroes: A Cross-Country Road Trip into the Heart of High School Football*. Skyhorse Publishing.

Lights, which is based on a true story and was explored in H. G. Bissinger’s Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *Friday Night Lights: A Town, a Team, and a Dream*.³² The first line in the movie’s trailer shows how much the town lives vicariously through its high school football team, “Gentlemen, the hopes and dreams of an entire town are riding on your shoulders. You may never matter more than you do right now. It’s time.”³³ Kenny Chesney’s country hit “The Boys of Fall”, written by Casey Beathard and Dave Turnbull also plays on the idea of high school football players fulfilling the role of hometown heroes. The lyrics include, “Kings of the school, man, were the boys of fall,” and “In little towns like mine it’s all they got, newspaper clippings fill the coffee shops.”³⁴ And when the songwriter, Casey Beathard was asked where the song’s idea came from, he said “It was not so much about football as much as, we were talking about life. I always coordinate football with life anyway -- leaning on each other and all that stuff you face in life. There's not a small town -- or any town -- in this country that doesn't get it. This is where football came from. I'm surprised there hasn't been a big song about football until now.”³⁵ The books written about high school football are plentiful. A quick search on Amazon.com for “high school football non-fiction books” yields such titles as *High School Football in California: Amazing Stories on the Gridiron from San Diego to the Golden Gate and Everywhere In Between* by Mark Tennis, *High School Football in Texas: Amazing Football Stories From the Greatest Players of Texas* by Jeff Fisher, *Paradise Found: A High School Football Team's Rise from the Ashes* by Bill Plaschke, and *All I Need to Know I Learned From My Texas High School Football Coach: A handbook of wisdom for*

³² See H.G. Bissinger’s *Friday Night Lights: A Town, a Team, and a Dream*. The book and the film, the latter directed by Peter Berg and produced by Imagine Entertainment, was later developed as a television series, *Friday Night Lights*, which ran from 2006-2011. Peter Berg also developed the series, which was produced by Universal Television and Imagine Television and broadcast by the National Broadcast Company (NBC).

³³ Berg, P. (Director). (2004). *Friday Night Lights*. [Film]. Universal Pictures.

³⁴ Kenny Chesney. (2010). The Boys of Fall [Song]. On *Hemingway’s Whiskey* [Album]. BNA Records.

³⁵ Conaway, A. (2017, September 7). *Story Behind the Song: Kenny Chesney, ‘The Boys of Fall’*. The Boot. <https://theboot.com/kenny-chesney-boys-of-fall-lyrics/>

parents, young people and yes, even coaches! by Chris Doelle and Ken Purcell. There are also books used as references for this research, such as *Hometown Heroes: A Cross-Country Road Trip into the Heart of High School Football* by Theron Hopkins and *Northeast Ohio High School Football Rivalries: A History* by Vince McKee which proved to be valuable references for this research essay.

High school football is so prominent and significant that there are national and regional rankings, demonstrating the impact beyond individual communities. MaxPreps' final rankings of the top 25 high school football programs from the 2022 season includes teams from California, Florida, Nevada, Texas, Maryland, Georgia, Tennessee, Ohio, Arizona, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Hawaii.³⁶ *USA Today* also compiles a poll for the top twenty-five high school football teams. Many teams making this list also made the MaxPreps list, but the *USA Today* final rankings of the 2022 season include teams from California, Nevada, Florida, Texas, Maryland, Tennessee, Georgia, Arizona, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and South Carolina.³⁷ Regional rankings will be covered in the section of this paper that covers high school football in Ohio.

Regardless of a team's state or national ranking, one common factor that runs through each high school program is the teamwork and camaraderie between the players. A Sandusky St. Mary Central Catholic High School alumnus was quoted in *Across Many Fields* as saying, "You take 17-, 18-year-old kids, about six-foot, 230 pounds and they hold hands in the huddle. Is that telling you something? What other sport do they do that in?"³⁸ Mike Fell, who served as a head high

³⁶ *High School Football Rankings*. (2022, December 19). MaxPreps. Retrieved January 14, 2023, from <https://www.maxpreps.com/football/rankings/1/>

³⁷ USA Today HSS Staff. (2022, December 20). *USA TODAY Sports Super 25 high school football rankings 2022 Final*. USA Today High School Sports. <https://usatodayhss.com/2022/final-2022-usa-today-sports-super-25-high-school-football-rankings>. The only Ohio team in the MaxPreps top 25 national football teams is St. Edward, which was ranked 17th on their list. St. Edward finished the season as the #18 team on the USA Today poll.

³⁸ Butler, C. & Rothchild, J. (2002). *Across Many Fields: A Season of Ohio High School Football*. Cleveland Landmarks Press.

school football coach, was also quoted in the book, “There’s not a whole lot of things in your normal, everyday life or work where you can get this excited about something. For the last 15 years [as a coach], I’ve lived for the Friday nights. I can’t play anymore, but I can still coach and feel that thrill of competition.”³⁹ Vince McKee begins the introduction of his 2022 book, *Northeast Ohio High School Football Rivalries: A History* with these words, “In high school, there is nothing like the anticipation of a Friday night football game, bringing the whole community together for one night a week. The tailgating, the student sections, and the fall weather (depending on where you live). The big stage. The passion. The true love of the game. There is no feeling quite like a Friday night football game.”⁴⁰

High School Football in Ohio

The legendary Saint Ignatius football Head Coach Chuck Kyle, who recently retired, wrote the foreword in Vince McKee’s *Northeast Ohio High School Football Rivalries: A History*. In that foreword Kyle wrote about what football means to the spectators versus the players. “There is no debate that football is the number one spectator sport in the United States, and statistics clearly verify that. The athleticism, strategy, and drama are interesting to observers of the game. But the ultimate thrill belongs to the players, who display their athleticism, strategy, and drama under the lights for all to see. It takes courage to step forward and play in front of many, risking the chance of failure for the opportunity of success.”⁴¹ Ohio is considered a top state for high school football,

³⁹ Butler & Rothchild (2002).

⁴⁰ McKee, V. (2022). *Northeast Ohio High School Football Rivalries: A History*. The History Press.; In the early 2000s Saint Ignatius High School began the transition to identify the school as Saint Ignatius however previously the school had commonly been referred to as St. Ignatius. Any references to St. Ignatius in book titles and other printed media have been preserved within the context of this paper. There are times that Saint Ignatius is referred to as “Iggy” by the students and alumni. According to the Sports Information Director, Joe Mertens, the school the decision to use “Saint” instead of “St.” so that everything the school produces uses the full word, thus I will be using this as well, but some media still use “St.” when referring to the school.

⁴¹ McKee (2022)

and ranks as the ninth best state for college recruiters to find football players, according to Edwin Weathersby, Assistant Commissioner for the California Interscholastic League in San Francisco. Writing for the Bleacher Report, Weathersby claimed that “Ohio is a pure football state. High School level football is really good around the state, and there seems to be plenty of passion... The game seems like a big deal to players who come from the state.”⁴² Readers who are interested in learning more about high school football in Ohio may enjoy reading *Across Many Fields: A Season of Ohio High School Football* by Christopher Butler & Jennifer Rothchild for more stories about Ohio’s high school football teams. The inside jacket summary of *Across Many Fields* captures how the authors characterize the story of high school football:

Tonight, you have a mission, a personal one. You want to learn why Ohio high school football is, beyond dispute, tops in the country. You want to get at the scratch beneath the contest, to uncover the patterns and motivations that bring us out, faithfully, every weekend, to scream ourselves hoarse, to endure bone-chilling rains and frozen aluminum benches, to donate our time, effort, and money, to freely give our emotions over to the performances of 16- and 17-year-old kids, and to promise to do it all over again next week and next year and the year after that. Yes, you’ve heard arguments on behalf of other states – Pennsylvania, Texas, Florida, California – but you know there’s no state where high school football forms a more vibrant part of its culture. Maybe this sounds crazy to you, and maybe it doesn’t, but one thing is for sure: It’s an Ohio thing; people in the Buckeye state understand; and everyone’s welcome.”⁴³

⁴² Weathersby, E. (2011, August 1). *College Football Recruiting: Ranking the 11 Best States to Land Prospects*. The Bleacher Report. <https://bleacherreport.com/articles/787815-ranking-the-11-best-states-to-land-college-football-recruits>

⁴³ Butler & Rothchild (2002).

Ohio high school football games, no matter the level or the specific match-up, will draw a crowd. In the stands are the family of the players, cheerleaders, and the marching band members. Virtually all schools will have a student section, that will include non-players as well as the freshmen and junior varsity teams watching their varsity teammates. Community members, alumni and their families cram into the bleachers. As sportswriter Christopher Butler observed, “You manage to locate a space on the street about what seems a good half-mile from the stadium...Maybe you won’t get the fifty [yard line], and maybe it’ll be in the seventh row of standing-room-only behind the south end zone, but no matter. It’s Friday night.”⁴⁴ Fans will come together to support their team. Old people, young people, men and women, children, and teens, will show up to the stadium to support their team, and it is no more so than in Ohio. In 2001, Tom Rataiczak, at the time the executive secretary for the Ohio Valley Athletic Conference, said “You go through these stands today, and ask how many people have connections to kids on the field, you will be amazed at the number of people who have no connection whatsoever. They’re here because they support football.”⁴⁵ Ohio high school football stadiums are routinely filled with members of a community that extends beyond just the specific players on the field.

When discussing Ohio high school football rivalries, there are two match-ups that often come to mind first – St. Edward vs Saint Ignatius and Massillon Washington vs Canton McKinley. In 2018, MaxPreps ranked the top twenty-five high school football rivalries in the country. Massillon vs McKinley ranks second on that list and St. Edward vs Saint Ignatius ranks eighth. Ohio is the only state with more than one rivalry represented in the top ten of that ranking.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Butler & Rothchild (2002).

⁴⁵ Butler & Rothchild (2002).

⁴⁶ Askeland (2018); Massillon vs McKinley have played every year since 1894 and the rivalry game is nicknamed “The War of 1894.” Currently, Massillon has a twenty-game lead on the scoreboard. The Holy War rivalry between St. Edward and Saint Ignatius is discussed in depth throughout this research paper.

Indisputably, the national sports industry recognizes the strength and significance of high school football in Ohio.

Ohio’s high school football state championships have been held annually at the beginning of December. Recently, the football championships across all divisional levels have been consolidated into one location over the course of a single weekend. The 2014, 2015, and 2016 state championships were held at the iconic Ohio Stadium, on the campus of The Ohio State University.⁴⁷ In 2017, Tom Benson Hall of Fame Stadium at the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio signed a three-year contract to host the OHSAA football championships. In 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the championships were split between Fortress Obetz in the Columbus area for the Division I game and Massillon’s Paul Brown Stadium for the Division II-VII games to accommodate the health restrictions.⁴⁸ However, in 2021 the championships returned to the birthplace of professional football and the stadium located adjacent to the Pro Football Hall of Fame, which was awarded another three-year contract.⁴⁹

Ohio currently has seven divisions of high school football. Unlike other states, where the big-school division is identified as the highest number, Ohio identifies its big-school division as Division I and the smallest schools currently compete in Division VII. Ohio expanded to seven total divisions ahead of the 2013 season.⁵⁰ From 1972 to 1979, the divisions were classified as “AAA” for the big schools and “AA” and “A” for the smaller schools, but because of the expansion of the number of teams playing the sport OHSAA switched to five divisions, then later six and,

⁴⁷ Ohio Stadium is more commonly known as “The Horseshoe” or “The ‘Shoe”

⁴⁸ *A Look at the 2022 OHSAA State Football Championship Attendance Numbers...That Remain Flat* (2022, December). Stateline Sports Network. [https://statelinesportsnetwork.net/2022/12/02/a-look-at-the-2022-ohsaa-state-football-championship-attendance-numbers/#:~:text=\(12%2D2%2D22\),just%20390%20less%20then%202021](https://statelinesportsnetwork.net/2022/12/02/a-look-at-the-2022-ohsaa-state-football-championship-attendance-numbers/#:~:text=(12%2D2%2D22),just%20390%20less%20then%202021).

⁴⁹ *OHSAA Awards Pro Football Hall of Fame State Football Championships*. (2021). Pro Football Hall of Fame. <https://www.profootballhof.com/news/2021/06/ohsaa-awards-pro-football-hall-of-fame-state-football-championships/>

⁵⁰ *Past Tournament Results – Football*. (2022). Ohio High School Athletic Association. <https://www.ohsaa.org/sports/football/pastresults>

most recently, seven divisions.⁵¹ The primary subjects of this research, St. Edward and Saint Ignatius, have both been members of the big-school division since the OHSAA instituted a competitive post-season championship structure in 1946, replacing the earlier practices of claiming a state title by popular acclaim, or sports writers choosing a state champion.⁵²

While the division classification for Ohio high school football is based on the male population of the school in grades nine through eleven, there is also a competitive balance initiative - this competitive balance factor is an attempt by the OHSAA to offset the open enrollment advantages that private and some public schools have in attracting students. Under this structure, private schools must identify their specific feeder school. According to the Ohio High School Athletic Association, “Feeder Schools, for the purposes of Competitive Balance, are the non-public school or schools (parishes for parochial schools; schools from the same system of education for other private schools) located within a designated or chosen public school district attendance zone. A high school can have multiple feeder schools so long as they are located within the same public school district or public school district attendance zone, and a school(s) can serve as feeder schools for more than one high school simultaneously. If a non-public member high school fails to choose a school district/attendance zone for its feeder school(s), the public school attendance zone in which the non-public school is physically located will be assigned by the OHSAA Office as that school’s selected attendance zone.”⁵³

Football in general is a major part of not only America’s culture, but in Cleveland, Ohio there is a special place for football at both the professional level with the Cleveland Browns and

⁵¹ *Past Tournament Results – Football* (2022)

⁵² The sports writers were responsible for choosing the state champion through the 1971 season. In 1972, the state championship was determined with playoffs.

⁵³ *Competitive Balance Resource Center* (2022). Ohio High School Athletic Association. <https://www.ohsaa.org/School-Resources/Competitive-Balance-Resource-Center>

the high school football scene. The National Football League was created in Ohio, so it has a long history within the state. High school football games on Friday nights are also a significant part of sports culture in the Cleveland area. My research focused on St. Edward High School and Saint Ignatius High School, and part of the context for the rivalry between them is understanding the schools' founding and their religious affiliations.

Chapter 2: *Brief History of the High Schools and Their Religious Affiliations*

Saint Ignatius High School & the Society of Jesus

In January of 1886, Bishop Richard Gilmour and Father Michael Zoeller, Society of Jesus (S.J.) proposed opening a Jesuit school for boys in the heart of Cleveland.⁵⁴ Their school was commissioned later that year by Father Henry Behren, S.J., the Jesuit Superior of Buffalo, New York. Saint Ignatius High School was officially founded on West 30th Street in Cleveland on September 6, 1886, as an all-boys school, with 76 students. It was the twentieth secondary school sponsored by the Jesuits in the United States.⁵⁵ When the school first opened its doors, it was a six-year high school and college, but in 1935 the college portion of the school relocated to the Cleveland suburb of University Heights and was renamed John Carroll University.⁵⁶

The Jesuit Brothers belong to the Society of Jesus, a Roman Catholic missionary organization that was established on September 27, 1540.⁵⁷ However, the Jesuit movement was started six years prior with Spanish soldier turned priest, Ignatius de Loyola, who led his students to take vows of poverty, chastity, and made plans to work to convert Muslims to Catholicism. Because of the Turkish Wars, Loyola's group was unable to travel to Jerusalem, so they travelled to Rome and obtained official permission from Pope Paul III for approval for the new order in

⁵⁴ Richard Gilmour served as the second Bishop of the Diocese of Cleveland from 1872 to 1891. Gilmour Academy is an independent, Catholic, coed, day, and boarding school for grades Kindergarten through 12th grade in Gates Mills, Ohio named in honor of the Bishop and founded by the Brothers of the Holy Cross, same as St. Edward; *History*. (2023). Gilmour Academy. Retrieved January 21, 2023, from <https://www.gilmour.org/about/history#:~:text=They%20oversaw%20its%20rehabilitation%20and,the%20Right%20Reverend%20Richard%20Gilmour>.

⁵⁵ *History*. (2023). Saint Ignatius High School. Retrieved January 20, 2023, from <https://www.ignatius.edu/about>; There are times that Saint Ignatius is referred to as “Iggy” by the students and alumni.

⁵⁶ This explains the “St. Ignatius College” sign carved over the main doors of the Main Building. John Carroll University continued the sponsorship of the Jesuit Order when it was founded and has continued the Jesuit integration; *Saint Ignatius High School Virtual Tour – Main Building*. (2023). Saint Ignatius High School. Retrieved January 20, 2023, from <https://www.ignatius.edu/about>

⁵⁷ *This Day in History: September 27 – Jesuit Order Established*. (2023). History Channel. Retrieved January 20, 2023, from <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/jesuit-order-established#:~:text=The%20Jesuit%20movement%20was%20founded,for%20the%20conversion%20of%20Muslims>.

1540.⁵⁸ The missionary work of the Jesuits quickly grew and at the time of Ignatius de Loyola's death in 1556, there were more than 1,000 Jesuit priests. Jesuits were often the first missionaries to travel to various parts of the world, including India, Brazil, the Congo region, and Ethiopia. The Jesuits' commitment to converting non-Christians to Catholicism raised the ire of those who were hostile towards the Catholic priests, so the Jesuits faced persecution and execution. Due to "the rise of nationalism in the 18th century, most European countries suppressed the Jesuits, and in 1773 Pope Clement XIV dissolved the order under pressure from the Bourbon monarchs. However, in 1814, Pope Pius VII gave in to popular demand and reestablished the Jesuits as an order, and they continue their missionary work to this day."⁵⁹ While Ignatius de Loyola did not originally have a plan to open schools, he soon realized that schools would be an important way of promoting "the betterment of souls" and thus the Jesuit order soon built a reputation as teachers and scholars.⁶⁰ These schools were often established to be available for those that might otherwise not have access to a formal education and Ignatius de Loyola himself fundraised for these schools so that every student who wanted to attend could, regardless of tuition costs.⁶¹

The mission statement of Saint Ignatius High School reflects this Jesuit tradition. "Saint Ignatius High School, with its Catholic tradition rooted in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola, prepares young men for their adult lives by [1] Challenging them to academic excellence and the desire for life-long learning, [2] Nurturing them to be open to growth, intellectually competent, religious, loving, and committed to work for peace and justice, and [3] Inspiring them

⁵⁸ *This Day in History: September 27 - Jesuit Order Established (2023.)*; The Turkish Wars refer to the conflict between the Ottoman Empire and the Hapsburgs of the Holy Roman Empire.

⁵⁹ *This Day in History: September 27 - Jesuit Order Established (2023.)*

⁶⁰ *The Jesuit Mission: Seeking God in All Things.* (2018, November 19). Georgetown University. Retrieved January 20, 2023, from <https://www.georgetown.edu/news/the-jesuit-mission-seeking-god-in-all-things/#:~:text=The%20Jesuits%20are%20an%20apostolic,seek%20God%20in%20all%20things>. Even before Georgetown University was founded in 1789, the Jesuits already had opened and were operating more than 800 universities, seminaries, and secondary schools around the world.

⁶¹ *The Jesuit Mission: Seeking God in All Things.* (2018).

to know, love, and serve Jesus Christ..”⁶² Saint Ignatius High School also applies the principle of *cura personalis* into their curriculum. The phrase means “care for the whole person, describes the respect we have for each student’s intellectual, physical, and spiritual well-being”, and it is lived out in part by having Jesuit priests, brothers, and Jesuits-in-training live and work on the campus of the school.⁶³

Today, Saint Ignatius High School remains at the West 30th Street location within the Ohio City neighborhood of Cleveland, across the Cuyahoga River from the Gateway District of Cleveland’s downtown area. The high school campus resembles a college with nineteen buildings and three athletic fields on twenty-three acres. Ignatius de Loyola’s mission of making education available for all students is incorporated into Saint Ignatius High School as nearly 50% of the students at the school receive some form of tuition assistance. The academic element of the Jesuit mission is also evident as Saint Ignatius “is a regional and state leader in National Merit finalists and Advanced Placement scholars” and nearly all of their graduates have gone on to four-year education at colleges and universities across the U.S. and the world.⁶⁴ “Saint Ignatius High School remains vibrant by being open to a changing world with its problems as well as its opportunities, yet faithful to its academic traditions, the gospel message upon which it was established, and its motto: ‘Men for Others,’ after the Man-for-Others, Jesus Christ.”⁶⁵ More than 1,500 young men who live in ninety-eight cities within an eight-country region attend the school in 2023.⁶⁶ In March of 2023, the school had the grand opening of the Health Sciences Simulation Lab. In the public

⁶² *Jesuit Identity* (2023). Saint Ignatius High School. Retrieved January 20, 2023, from <https://www.ignatius.edu/about/jesuit-identity>

⁶³ *Jesuit Identity*. (2023).

⁶⁴ *Saint Ignatius Today*. (2023). Saint Ignatius High School. Retrieved January 20, 2023, from <https://www.ignatius.edu/about>

⁶⁵ *History*. Saint Ignatius High School.

⁶⁶ *Media Information*. (2023). Saint Ignatius Wildcats Athletics. Retrieved January 24, 2023, from <https://www.ignatiuswildcats.com/media>

announcement of the lab’s opening, the school stated their intentions of helping students with an interest in the medical field, “this state-of-the-art-lab will enable those students interested in the field of healthcare to gain exposure to and practice skills using a wide array of medical devices and equipment. They will be able to practice hand-eye coordination using the laparoscopy surgical training box and the knot tying and suturing boards. Learn how to properly intubate and perform CPR on manikins. And enhance their understanding of the human body using the Anatomage, a 3D dissecting table.”⁶⁷

While there are sixteen varsity sports offered at Saint Ignatius, the focus of this research centers on the storied Wildcats football team, which had humble beginnings. “Although the records survive, either at the school or in the local papers, are incomplete, [Saint] Ignatius was apparently playing football as early as 1911.”⁶⁸ The “varsity team” for the 1911 to 1916 seasons was played by the Saint Ignatius College team, but those eight games in the first few seasons are counted for the total records for the Saint Ignatius football program.⁶⁹ Consequently, the first football game credited to Saint Ignatius was played on November 8, 1911 (as the college) but it wasn’t until 1917 that they competed as Saint Ignatius High School, the same year college-age men were being drafted into service for World War I. Local historian Timothy Hudak found the following quote in the October 12, 1917, edition of *Catholic Universe* (the Cleveland Diocesan newspaper): “In such a state of affairs it was deemed best to disband the (College) team and direct every effort toward the building up of a good high school team with the twofold purpose of developing that branch of [Saint] Ignatius athletic activities and of preparing material for next year’s varsity (i.e., college)

⁶⁷ *Simulation Lab Grand Opening*. (2023)

⁶⁸ Hudak, T. L. (1996). *Wildcats! A History of St. Ignatius High School Football* (Volume I – The Earliest Years, to 1945). Sports Heritage Publications.

⁶⁹ Hudak (1996); Mertens, J. (2022). *2022 Saint Ignatius Football Media Guide*. Saint Ignatius Athletics Department.

team.”⁷⁰ For the first several of decades Saint Ignatius would compete as the Golden Tornados, but in October of 1939, sophomore Jack Cleary and freshman Robert Garry submitted the nickname “Wildcats” to replace the Golden Tornado moniker. The name was changed in the middle of the 1939 season and their first win as the Wildcats was on October 28, 1939, a 2-0 victory over the Rhodes High School Rams.⁷¹

The Wildcats football program has always drawn a crowd. During the 1945 season, 101,000 fans passed through the gates to watch the team play, despite the nation still reeling from World War II.⁷² Twenty seasons later, the 1964 City Championship Charity Game at Cleveland’s old Municipal Stadium on Thanksgiving Day saw 41,183 fans witness the Wildcats defeat the Bengals of Benedictine High School.⁷³ In 1988, a big year for Saint Ignatius football specifically, and the athletic department as a whole, the Wildcats won their first football State Championship (and the first in school history in any sport) in front of more than 15,000 Saint Ignatius fans at Ohio State University’s Ohio Stadium.⁷⁴ The Wildcats football team was recognized by Sports Illustrated in 2005 as the #1 Athletic Program in Ohio and the #18 Athletic Program in the country.⁷⁵ The 1988 season kicked off the most significant stretch of dominance Saint Ignatius had over not just their rival St. Edward but also over every other team in the state and nation. According to Hudak’s third volume of the history of Saint Ignatius football, “from 1988 [through] 2001 the

⁷⁰ Hudak (1996)

⁷¹ Saint Ignatius would use the nickname the “Golden Tornado” and sometimes the nickname “Saints” until the school paper THE EYE published their September 28, 1939 edition announcing a contest to pick a new nickname for the school and the nickname “Wildcats” has been used since; Hudak (1996); On October 21, 1939, the team competed as the “Wildcats” but lost to West Tech 14-0.

⁷² Hudak (1996)

⁷³ Hudak, T. L. (2002). *The Charity Game: The Story of Cleveland’s Thanksgiving Day High School Football Classic*. Sports Heritage Publication; Dwyer, E. (2016). *Football History: A History of Wildcats Football*. Saint Ignatius Wildcats Athletics. <https://www.ignatiuswildcats.com/footballhistory>

⁷⁴ Hudak, T. L. (1997). *Wildcats! A History of St. Ignatius High School Football* (Volume II – The Tradition, 1946-1996) Sports Heritage Publications

⁷⁵ *Athletic Achievements: Championships and Achievements of Saint Ignatius Athletics*. (2023). Saint Ignatius Wildcats Athletics. Retrieved January 24, 2023, from <https://www.ignatiuswildcats.com/athleticachievements>

[Saint] Ignatius Wildcats of head coach Chuck Kyle enjoyed one of the greatest and most successful eras on the gridiron in both Ohio and national high school football history.”⁷⁶ Large crowds continue to come to support the Wildcats, as the 2022 regular season Holy War saw a sell-out crowd at Byers Field and thousands of fans came to the diminutive Wasmer Field on the campus of Saint Ignatius High School to celebrate Head Coach Chuck Kyle’s final regular season game as the Head Coach for the Wildcats.⁷⁷

St. Edward High School & the Congregation of Holy Cross

On the other side of the Holy War rivalry is St. Edward High School. Holy Cross Brothers from Notre Dame, Indiana founded St. Edward High School in 1949 to serve the families in the working-class, blue-collar community of Lakewood, an inner-ring suburb of Cleveland.⁷⁸ St. Edward High School was the second high school in Ohio sponsored by the Congregation of Holy Cross. The first one, Gilmour Academy in Gates Mills, had opened just three years prior in 1946. Archbishop Edward F. Hoban was behind the initiative to not only open St. Edward High School, but also the founding of Archbishop Hoban High School in Akron.⁷⁹ On September 6, 1949, St. Edward High School opened its doors to its first class of 100 freshman boys, but construction of the school building was not yet complete. The closed St. Theresa’s Academy was located three blocks west of the permanent location and would serve as the temporary location for

⁷⁶ Hudak, T. L. & Kyle, C. M. (2008). *Wildcats! A History of St. Ignatius High School Football* (Volume III – Chico’s Team, 1997-2008) Sports Heritage Publications.

⁷⁷ Daugherty, E. & Hoffart, B. (2022, October 1). The ACP Productions Presents the 62nd Holy War Football Game [Radio broadcast]. WHK-AM 1420 Cleveland. Retrieved from the personal collection of Ed Daugherty October 11, 2022; Saint Ignatius High School Athletics [@SIHSSports]. (2022, October 27). *FB: A night we will never forget on the campus of Saint Ignatius High School as we celebrated Head Football...* [Tweet - video]. Twitter.com. <https://twitter.com/SIHSSports/status/1585658914326077440>

⁷⁸ St. Edward High School is often referred to as “St. Ed’s” by students, alumni, and media personnel.

⁷⁹ Archbishop Hoban High School opened in 1953, and since then have also become a major football powerhouse at the Division II level of OHSAA football; *Hoban History*. (2023). Archbishop Hoban High School. Retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://www.hoban.org/about-hoban/history>

St. Edward High School. Two years later, “more than 750 students and 22 faculty members moved into the school’s permanent location at 13500 Detroit Avenue.”⁸⁰ For the first fifty years of the school, St. Edward was considered a comprehensive school. In the 1990s, the institution began the process of transitioning into a college preparatory school to help students prepare for studies at the university level. As a reflection of how well St. Edward prepares its graduates for education following high school graduation, 98% of students go to college after graduation and the other 2% enlist in the military or are employed.⁸¹

St. Edward’s sponsoring order, the Congregation of Holy Cross, was founded by Basile Moreau as he combined his group of auxiliary priests with the Brothers of St. Joseph, which had been organized by Rev. Jacques Du Dujarié in 1820 but had been led by Moreau since 1835 when Dujarié handed over leadership to him. In March of 1837, these two groups combined and established the Association of Holy Cross, but Moreau did not complete his vision for his order until 1841 when he founded a group of nuns to work with the brothers and the priests, to comprise one holy order in imitation of the Holy Family. Father Dujarié originally worked to provide the young men with rudimentary training and then sent them out to rural parishes to teach during the French Revolution, as many schools were closing because of the expulsion and execution of those in the religious communities.⁸² The Congregation of Holy Cross was officially approved by Pope Pius IX in May of 1857, but the Vatican required that the nuns be in a separate congregation from the priests and the brothers. The Congregation’s mission was to “make God known, loved, and served, and thus save souls” and they primarily worked to evangelize through education. While

⁸⁰ *Our History*. (2023). St. Edward High School. Retrieved January 24, 2023, from <https://www.sehs.net/history>

⁸¹ *The St. Ed’s Story*. (2023). St. Edward High School. Retrieved February 2, 2023, from <https://www.sehs.net/st-eds-story>

⁸² *History*. (2023). Congregation of Holy Cross. Retrieved February 2, 2023, from <https://holycrosscongregation.org/about-us/history/>

the Congregation of Holy Cross was originally headquartered in France, as of today they have expanded into sixteen different countries on five continents around the world. Members of the order have followed in Moreau’s command to be educators in the faith.⁸³ In the United States, the Holy Cross sponsors six colleges and universities as well as seventeen secondary and middle schools; St. Edward High School is one of those schools.⁸⁴ The Congregation also sponsors numerous schools around the world.⁸⁵

St. Edward High School has remained at the Detroit Avenue location in Lakewood, Ohio since the move in 1951. The school’s hometown “is an inner-ring suburb located on the western border of Cleveland in northeast Ohio. [Lakewood] occupies 5.6 square miles on the southern shore of Lake Erie.”⁸⁶ Since the initial building was finished, the school has made multiple additions to the school building to “meet curriculum needs and fulfill the Holy Cross Mission of offering a well-rounded, innovative education that develops the minds and hearts of every student.”⁸⁷ These capital improvements include additions in the Student Activity Center with a gym, weight room, indoor track; an outdoor all-weather athletic field and track; and the Kahl Student Life & Leadership Center.⁸⁸ With the establishment of the pre-engineering program in 2001 and its growing popularity, the school constructed the Joseph & Helen Lowe Pre-Engineering & Technology Center in 2008.⁸⁹ That same year, the Holy Family Chapel was dedicated, and with its golden dome the campus chapel symbolizes both St. Edward High School’s faith-based

⁸³ *Mission*. (2023). Congregation of Holy Cross. Retrieved February 2, 2023, from <https://holycrosscongregation.org/about-us/mission/>

⁸⁴ One of the most well-known universities sponsored by the Holy Cross is the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana (United States).

⁸⁵ *Education*. (2023). Congregation of Holy Cross. Retrieved February 2, 2023, from <https://holycrosscongregation.org/about-us/ministries/education/>

⁸⁶ Becker, T. G. (2003). *Images of America: Lakewood*. Arcadia Publishing.

⁸⁷ *Our History*. St. Edward High School

⁸⁸ The outdoor field is now named the Brother James Everett CSC Stadium and is the home field for the freshman and JV football games, as well as other athletic competitions. It is also the practice field for the varsity football team.

⁸⁹ In 2008, approximately one-third of the student body at St. Edward was involved in the pre-engineering program.

education and its close ties to another Holy Cross institution, the University of Notre Dame (South Bend, Indiana). Just in time for the 2020-21 school year, St. Edward opened the newly constructed Marilyn and David Palisin '64 Commons.

The St. Edward football program commenced soon after the school made the move to its permanent home.⁹⁰ The school colors are green and gold, and the school mascot was announced the year before the move to Detroit Avenue. Hudak writes, “In early 1950, during the spring of that first school year, another piece of housekeeping business was taken care of. St. Edward’s fledgling newspaper, *We The Students*, decided that the school and its athletics teams needed a real nickname. They were already tired of being called the ‘Irish’ or the ‘Saints,’ ... a vote of the student body was taken on April 15, 1950, and the results were announced in the school paper three days later. The winner: the St. Edward Eagles.”⁹¹

The football team has had successful teams at various times in its history, but it was only recently that the school won its six football State Championships and gained recognition as a top football team within the nation. The St. Edward Eagles have made the OHSAA football playoffs twenty-eight times and marked their thirteenth consecutive appearance in 2022. In 1975, 1986, and 2003, the Eagles made it to the State Championship game, but they would lose their first three attempts at the state title. The Eagles won their first football State Championship in 2010 and won a State Title each of the five times they have reached the title game since then.⁹² Beginning in

⁹⁰ In total, St. Edward offers the following athletic teams at the varsity level (most of the teams also have JV and/or freshman team(s): baseball, basketball, bowling, cheer team (in cooperation with local all-girls schools), cross country, football, golf, ice hockey, lacrosse, crew/rowing, rugby, soccer, swimming & diving, tennis, track & field, volleyball, and wrestling

⁹¹ Hudak, T. L. (2005) *The Game of the Year: The Complete Story of the Intense Rivalry that is St. Ignatius – St. Edward Football*. Sports Heritage Publications

⁹² Mendoza, A. (2022). *St. Edward Eagles 2022 Game Notes – Week 16 vs Springfield*. St. Edward High School Athletic Department, Retrieved from the personal collection of Ed Daugherty on December 10, 2022; St. Edward appeared in the OHSAA State Football Championship game in 1975, 1986, 2003, 2010, 2014, 2015, 2018, 2021, and 2022. They have won the State Championship in 2010, 2014, 2015, 2018, 2021, and 2022.

2010, the Eagles have won forty-two games in the postseason and have lost only seven.⁹³ Overall in athletics, the Eagles have won over seventy State Championships, spread across nine of their sixteen varsity sports. The wrestling team has the most state titles, with forty-four since 1978.⁹⁴

Saint Ignatius High School was founded with Jesuit principles in 1886 in the Ohio City neighborhood of Cleveland while St. Edward High School was founded by the Congregation of Holy Cross in the nearby suburb of Lakewood in 1949. Over the decades since the schools have opened their doors, they have educated young men in the Cleveland area and have continued to improve their campuses to offer more opportunities to their students.

⁹³ “Those losses came at the hands of Saint Ignatius in 2011 and 2016, to Mentor [High School] in 2012, 2013, 2017, and 2019, to Medina [High School] in 2020.” As reported by Adam Mendoza in *St. Edward Eagles 2022 Game Notes – Week 16 vs Springfield*

⁹⁴ *Wrestling*. (2023) St. Edward High School Athletics. Retrieved March 12, 2023, from <https://www.stedwardeagles.com/wrestling>

Chapter 3: *Foundation of a Rivalry*

What makes a rivalry? According to the Oxford Dictionary, a rivalry is defined as “a state in which two people, companies, etc. are competing for the same thing.”⁹⁵ This definition, as simplistic as it seems, will be used as the foundation for this paper. My research will further demonstrate that a rivalry is not a simple relationship between two parties, but instead a multi-faceted, intricate relationship between two related but opposing entities. Going beyond the formal definition of a rivalry, ten elements of a rivalry have been identified and described by social science researchers. This paper will examine the Holy War rivalry against that complex matrix. While colloquially the moniker "The Holy War" refers to the complete body of the rivalry between St. Edward High School and Saint Ignatius High School, this paper focuses on the football rivalry known as the Holy War.⁹⁶

Ten Components of a Rivalry

David Tyler, Joe Cobbs, and Yasmine Xantos researched and defined the ten elements that every rivalry has, albeit in different volumes and intensities. Their findings were combined in the chapter entitled “The Roots of Rivalry: Elements and Core Characteristics of Sport Rivalry” published in *Understanding Rivalry and It’s Influence on Sports Fans* edited by Cody T. Havard.⁹⁷ These ten elements are leveraged as a foundation for the research on the Holy War throughout this

⁹⁵ Oxford University Press. (2023). Rivalry. In *Oxford Online Learner’s Dictionary*.
<https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/definition/english/rivalry>

⁹⁶ Throughout the year, there are other athletic match-ups that use the title The Holy War, including the Basketball Holy War, Hockey Holy War, and even the “Bowly War.” However, when most people say "The Holy War" they are referring to the annual football match-up.

⁹⁷ Tyler, B. D., Cobbs, J. & Xantos, Y. K. (2019). The Roots of Rivalry: Elements and Core Characteristics of Sport Rivalry. In C. T. Havard (Ed.), *Understanding Rivalry and It’s Influence on Sports Fans* (pp. 1-37).; David Tyler is from Western Carolina University (USA); Joe Cobbs and Yasmine Xantos are from Northern Kentucky University (USA)

study. Tyler, Cobbs, and Xantos separated these ten elements into three dimensions to summarize these elements collectively (see Appendix D: Table 1).

The First Dimension - Conflict

The first dimension is Conflict. Conflict is defined as when two groups have mutually exclusive interests or desired achievements. Tyler, et al., identify conflict as encompassing four elements of a rivalry: *parity (recent/historic), frequency of competition, defining moments, and star power.*

Parity refers to the amount of competitiveness between two teams when they face each other. Parity is a desired aspect of rivalry by fans because they want the game to have an uncertain outcome. It refers to the idea of both teams being equal in status, both historically and currently.

Frequency of competition is the second element and refers to how often a competition takes place. Tyler, et al. state that the more frequently the competitions between rivals take place the more the opponent is seen as an “acute” threat. However, I will discuss later on why the Holy War may be an exception to this rule.

The last two elements of the Conflict dimension are the defining moments and the star power within the rivalry. These can be positive or negative attributes of a moment or person that help to tell the story of the individuals, the teams, the coaches, the schools, and the rivalry as a whole.

1. Parity

The first element is parity. The uncertainty of who will win has been a constant in

the Holy War rivalry since its inception. However, in the first several games of the rivalry from 1952 to 1957, the Wildcats were almost guaranteed a win because they were truly just the more experienced program and team. In those first six games, Saint Ignatius won five of the games, with St. Edward winning only in 1955 (by a score of 34-12). In those early years, the Wildcats outscored the Eagles 194-78 and were the predominant favorite in each of those games. After the 1958-1970 hiatus – which will be discussed when reviewing the frequency element – the two teams have perfectly defined the idea of parity as the Holy War is almost always a competitive game. However, whether one team is considered a slight or heavy favorite does not accurately predict a win.

As Bryan Hoffart, a former player for Saint Ignatius and a current high school football broadcaster, put it, “there have been times now as you look over the more than 50 times these team have played since 1971, including playoff games, where the team that was expected to win did not.” He brought up the example of the 2002 St. Edward team, a team that was considered by many to be the best team the Eagles had ever fielded. Many local observers and fans believed the 2002 team would win the school’s first Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) football state championship. That momentum of being heralded as the school’s greatest team carried the team through the first seven weeks of the football season, outscoring their opponents 280-60 (with the Eagles averaging 40 points per game). Hopes were high among Eagles fans coming into the week eight 2002 Holy War. Saint Ignatius, however, quickly stopped the St. Edward advance with the Wildcats coming out on top 25-2 on October 12, 2002. The favorite and underdog roles have shifted over the years, but each match-up between these two schools reminds fans that the final score isn’t decided solely based on the prognostications of which title – favorite or underdog – each school holds before kickoff.

When discussing parity in the Holy War, it cannot be ignored that St. Edward and Saint Ignatius have been powerhouse football teams for the last several decades. In the last thirty-five Region I Championships (since the 1988 season) thirty of the titles have been won by either St. Edward, Saint Ignatius, or Mentor High School (Mentor, Ohio).⁹⁸ Saint Ignatius has claimed fifteen Regional Championships and St. Edward has claimed eight. If another team from Region I in Division I strives to win the state championship, they are almost guaranteed to have to play either St. Edward, Saint Ignatius, or both during the playoffs. In Ohio, winning the Regional Championship only advances a team to the State Semifinals, not the Finals. The element of parity is important within the rivalry between St. Edward and Saint Ignatius because the two powerhouses will have a competitive game and either can win.

2. Frequency of Competition

When analyzing the frequency element of conflict, rivalry games typically occur annually because two teams may be in the same league, division, or conference. For St. Edward and Saint Ignatius, frequency of their match-ups is not regulated by a conference or league, thus heightening the importance of the yearly game between the Wildcats and Eagles. Both teams compete on an independent schedule; they have no requirements to play any particular team during the ten-week season. Each school thus has the responsibility for securing opponents for all of their weeks, whereas football teams that compete in a specific conference typically have the last five to seven weeks of the season automatically filled with required conference games. Unfortunately, Saint

⁹⁸ Division I is the large school division (schools with male enrollment of 606 or more in grades 9-11) for the state of Ohio. In 2022, there were 71 Ohio high school football teams competing in eleven-man football at the Division I level. There are four regions in each of Ohio's seven divisions. Division I has Regions I-IV. Region I is comprised of seventeen schools in the northeast sector of the state. Regions II-IV each have eighteen schools. Region II covers the west-side of the state, Region III is the central and southeast sector of the state, Region IV is the southwest portion of the state; *Football 2022: 2022 OHSAA Football Season Information*. (2022). Ohio High School Athletic Association. Retrieved February 18, 2023, from <https://www.ohsaa.org/Sports-Tournaments/Football/Football-2022>

Ignatius and St. Edward have not had the advantage of guaranteed games after they left their respective conferences after the 1978 and 1979 seasons.⁹⁹ Since then, both schools have been competing as “independents.” St. Edward and Saint Ignatius have played a yearly match-up since the rivalry was revitalized in 1971, signifying the importance of the annual renewal of the rivalry. It is widely considered *the game* in Northeast Ohio.

According to Tyler et al., when teams play each other more than once in a season, it boosts the intensity of the rivalry because there are more chances to face the opposition. The structure of a football season means that opponents will only face each other only once during the regular season and it is only a possibility that they will meet again in the post-season. Regardless of whether the teams meet in post-season play or not, my research found that players, fans, and media members involved with the Holy War agreed that this singularly annual faceoff during the regular season makes the game more intense for each team in part, as Vince McKee stated, they may only meet once per year [a second match-up is not guaranteed or even likely]. McKee contrasted the annual Holy War game with the structure of Major League Baseball, in which divisional rivals face each other up to nineteen times a year, and most often in three to four game stretches. If a team loses one game, while it is disappointing, they have another shot at their rival the next day, and thus, argues McKee, a bit of the “special rivalry feeling” is lost.¹⁰⁰ For the St. Edward – Saint Ignatius rivalry, the loser will suffer the results of that game for the next year, at minimum. If either the Wildcats or the Eagles are subjected to a losing streak against their rival, this suffering could be longer than just the fifty-two weeks before the next scheduled match-up. McKee

⁹⁹ Saint Ignatius left the Cleveland Senate – West Division after the 1978 season as the league began to fade out. The West Senate consisted of at-the-time powerhouses Holy Name, Benedictine, and Cathedral Latin (see Hudak, 2005, page 48). St. Edward had competed in the Crown Conference. The Crown Conference was comprised of all Catholic schools that also included Padua and St. Joseph. The league disbanded after the 1979-80 school year and St. Edward decided to play an independent schedule (see “A brief history on the extinct Crown Conference: Hey Tim!”, 2011)

¹⁰⁰ V. McKee, personal communication via Zoom, December 20, 2022.

compared it to a family reunion. “It’s like if you see a relative once a year on Christmas. [You] see this person once a year and you guys always have a three-point shootout or you play Trivial Pursuit, and you know that you need to win that game because you know for a year if you don’t, he’s gonna have bragging rights.” These bragging rights are instrumental to the Holy War rivalry. After defeating Saint Ignatius in the 2021 Holy War, the St. Edward Football team Instagram account posted a graphic with “1,072 and counting” and captioned “IF YOU KNOW... YOU KNOW. The Streak continues”, tallying the number of days it had been since Saint Ignatius had beat the Eagles.¹⁰¹

In discussing the frequency of games, which are typically only once per year, it should be acknowledged that St. Edward and Saint Ignatius can face each other twice in the same season for football. The explanation behind this second possible game is based on the OHSAA football playoff system and single elimination bracket.

Both St. Edward and Saint Ignatius are assigned to Region 1 within Division I by the OHSAA. The two teams are in the same sixteen-team, Northeast Ohio post-season bracket. If the final regular season rankings align with post-season assignments, the teams potentially could play each other in the playoffs. To date, this has happened only five times, in 2008, 2011, 2016, 2018, and 2022.

In 2008 and 2011, Saint Ignatius beat St. Edward in the OHSAA playoffs to end the Eagles’ season as the Wildcats went on to win the OHSAA Division I State Championship. In 2016, Saint Ignatius also won the playoff edition of the Holy War, but the team was defeated in the State Championship game by St. Xavier High School out of the Cincinnati area.

¹⁰¹ St. Edward H.S. Football [@sehs_football]. (2021, October 2). IF YOU KNOW... YOU KNOW. The Streak continues #EDSUP #BUILTDIFFERENT [Instagram graphic]. Retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/p/CUjMcc2tE74/?hl=en>

There continues to be rivalry debate surrounding the 2016 playoff game because St. Edward was the higher seed, favored to win, and, many believed, had the better talent in that season. However, a severe leg injury to the St. Edward quarterback in the fourth quarter allowed Saint Ignatius to tie the game, forcing overtime before the Wildcats ultimately won and advanced in the playoffs. This leads to the argument of whether the better team won.

The 2018 playoff game was special and had a lasting impact on the rivalry beyond just a win for one team. In the 2018 season, the regular season Holy War was played on October 26th at FirstEnergy Stadium in downtown Cleveland. Saint Ignatius won the game 21-7, securing the number two seed and home field advantage for the playoffs that began the following week. With the loss in the regular season finale, St. Edward would drop to the seven seed and as fate would have it, the Eagles faced their rival in the opening round of the postseason.

A week after the 2018 regular season Holy War, the teams had a rematch, but this time it was a win or go home, playoff edition. On enemy turf (at Byers Field, the home field of Saint Ignatius), St. Edward pulled off the 21-19 upset victory, and would go on to win the 2018 Division I State Championship over Cincinnati Colerain High School.

After experiencing back-to-back weeks of the Holy War for the second time in the rivalry's history, the two schools decided to move the regular season game to Week 7 of their schedule so that they would not have a repeat of the 2008 or 2018 seasons with back-to-back games against each other.

This past season (2022) saw the two teams meet in the Division I, Region I Semifinals. St. Edward entered the post-season game as the favorite in the minds of the fans, alumni, and local media, having beaten Saint Ignatius 48-6 in the regular season match-up. A second Holy War in 2022 was not on the schedule until the final moments of the Saint Ignatius versus Cleveland

Heights High School Regional Quarterfinal game, as the Wildcats pulled off the largest football comeback in school history in their 50-49 upset victory over the higher ranked Cleveland Heights Tigers. Both the St. Edward and Saint Ignatius communities seemed excited about the rematch of the rivals. Ultimately, St. Edward cruised to a 28-7 victory on the foggy and rainy November 11th evening, springboarding the Eagles to an OHSAA State Championship three weeks later and marking the second consecutive year in which the Eagles had captured the State Title.

The intensity of the rivalry is enhanced by the fact that it is a once-a-year scheduled occurrence (outside of the five playoff games) and it is then talked about the other fifty-two weeks of the year until the next chapter in the storied rivalry unfolds.

3. Defining Moments

Every rivalry has its defining moments which are the moments that link the competitors with a shared narrative with specific positive or negative moments. Many of the media members interviewed for this research shared the common belief that there are three significant turning points in the Holy War rivalry – 1952, 1971, and 1999.

The 1952 game, as discussed earlier, was the first game in the rivalry and is defined as the jumping off point in establishing the rivalry, even if the rivalry at the time was not fully established. The Wildcats won five of the first six games played in the series. After the 1957 season, the rivalry stopped, but not because Saint Ignatius won five times in that span. There is speculation that fans and players were getting too heated, and the schools mutually agreed to put a pause on the rivalry.¹⁰²

¹⁰² Hudak (2005)

In 1971, the rivalry resumed, marking the second turning point in the rivalry, but with St. Edward now having the advantage for several decades. From 1971 to 1999, the rivalry experienced momentous swings of dominance. St. Edward won eight consecutive games (1971-1978). Then after losing the 1979 contest, the Eagles were victorious in three consecutive games (1980-1982) and posted a 5-0-1 record against the Wildcats between 1980-1985. During this era, St. Edward was the constant favorite in the yearly game. In 1983, the two teams played to a 14-14 tie, and statistically the St. Edward Eagles posted an impressive 13-1-1 record against Saint Ignatius between 1971-1985, losing only the 1979 game.

However, beginning in 1987, there was a sudden shift in the power of the rivalry as the advantage shifted to the school located in Ohio City, as Saint Ignatius won twelve of the next fifteen games in the annual match-up. During that time, Saint Ignatius won the Ohio High School Division I Championships in 1988, 1989, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, and 1999 and was declared National Champions in 1989, 1993, and 1995.¹⁰³ The five consecutive state championships between 1991 and 1995 is a record for Division I in the history of the Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA).

In 1999, John Gibbons was hired as the head coach for the St. Edward Eagles, and many consider him to be the dynamic that shifted the annual rivalry into a competitive one once again. Since 2001, the two schools have been competitive with each other and there had not been the same type of one-sided dominance favoring one team over the other as seen in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Only recently has St. Edward swung the advantage once again to their side; beginning

¹⁰³ National Championship is a title bestowed by USA Today. According to the *2022 Saint Ignatius Football Media Guide*, MaxPreps retroactively named the Wildcats the 2008 National Champs after changing its ranking system in 2017.

in 2018 with their playoff victory over the Wildcats, the Eagles have won six consecutive games against Saint Ignatius and captured three State Championships in just five seasons.

Another pivotal game that many turn to in the rivalry would be the 1993 edition of the Holy War. At the time, it had been mistakenly promoted as the 30th anniversary game, but as many news outlets were counting the 1950 junior varsity match-up in that count, the 1993 game was actually the 29th meeting (and has been acknowledged as the 29th since 2005).

Cleveland Magazine published its October 1993 edition with the Holy War as the cover feature story. The first three quarters of the game were rather mundane and forgettable, and many fans that left early to avoid post-game traffic ended up missing the best part of the game (and one of the greatest games in the rivalry) as a late fourth quarter comeback by the Eagles forced the game into overtime. The game eventually went into triple overtime before a missed extra point cost St. Edward the opportunity to force a fourth overtime, and the final score was 35-34 favoring the Saint Ignatius Wildcats. In his 2018 book, *The Best of the Wildcats: The 25 Greatest Football Games Ever Played by the Saint Ignatius Wildcats*, Timothy Hudak lists the 1993 Holy War game as the best game by Saint Ignatius in their 100-plus seasons.¹⁰⁴ Later that season, the 1993 Holy War would be named the National High School Football Game of the Year by USA Today.¹⁰⁵

The Holy War has multiple defining moments throughout the sixty-three meetings, but probably the most defining moments were the start of the rivalry in 1952, the renewal of the rivalry in 1971, and in 1999 when the two power levels of St. Edward and Saint Ignatius began to even out and revive the sense of a balanced rivalry.

¹⁰⁴ Hudak, T. L. (2018). *Best of the Wildcats: The 25 Greatest Football Games Ever Played by the Saint Ignatius Wildcats*. Sports Heritage Specialty Publications.

¹⁰⁵ The award of National High School Football Game of the Year is bestowed by USA Today. The award for this game is mentioned in this article; Kasler, J. (2014, November 7). *The Legendary "Holy War" of 1993: A WFNY Oral History*. Waiting for Next Year. <https://waitingfornextyear.com/2014/11/wfny-oral-history-1993-holy-war/>

4. Star Power

As identified by Tyler, et al., each rivalry is composed of a different balance or combination of the ten elements of a rivalry. Arguably, one of the less significant elements for the Holy War would be the star power element. While there are star players in individual moments, games, or seasons, those individuals are not usually the focus of this rivalry, in part because these players typically have only two, possibly three years on the varsity team, and because any individual star may see limited playing time due to the sheer volume of talent on each roster. Additionally, unlike smaller schools or programs, few players for either team play both offense and defense on a consistent basis. It can be argued that coaches have a higher level of star power and recognition within this rivalry than the players.

Legendary Wildcats head coach Chuck Kyle attended Saint Ignatius from 1965 to 1969 and was a member of the football team. As a student, Kyle never participated in a Holy War game because of the “Lost Years” during which the rivalry was halted. Kyle began coaching on a volunteer basis in 1972 as a senior at John Carroll University before being hired as an assistant coach for football, head coach for track and field, and an English teacher at Saint Ignatius in the summer of 1973. He took over the head football coach position leading into the 1983 season and remained as the face and leader of Saint Ignatius football until he retired following the 2022 season. His career spanned a total of 51 years on the sidelines as a coach, 40 as the head coach for the football Wildcats, as well as a 50-year career as the track & field coach where he led his team to two additional State Championships. He has won multiple coaching and personal awards throughout his career, including being inducted into the Greater Cleveland Sports Hall of Fame in

2013. In 2018 MaxPreps (a national recruiting data service and high school sports website) named Chuck Kyle the sixth greatest American high school football coach of all time.¹⁰⁶

On the other hand, the St. Edward Eagles have had multiple coaches that could be candidates for “star power.” John Gibbons was hired as St. Edward’s fifteenth football coach prior to the 1999 season. Gibbons had already made a name for himself in the local area as the head coach of the Lake Catholic Cougars (Mentor, Ohio) for the previous fourteen years and had led the Cougars to back-to-back Division III state championships in 1992 and 1993. His goal was to return the football program at St. Edward to one of glory and is considered by many to have revitalized the rivalry with Saint Ignatius after the previous rough decade for Eagles fans.

Ed Daugherty, a member of the St. Edward class of 1992 and current Cleveland area sports broadcaster, commented on Gibbons’ impact, “After living through some really bad teams in the late 80s and the 90s, I thought, ‘Are we [St. Edward] ever gonna get back in the playoffs?’ But then the momentum started to change in 1999 when John Gibbons came on board...That's when the rivalry seemed to be really reborn. [Saint] Ignatius owned it for 10 or 12 years, but they owned everything for 10 or 12 years. And since 2001, [the rivalry] has been pretty competitive games back and forth.”

In 2015, after then head coach Rick Finotti led the team to their State Championship in 2014, Tom Lombardo was hired to head the Eagles.¹⁰⁷ Lombardo’s presence contributed to the

¹⁰⁶ *Legendary Teacher and Coach Chuck Kyle '69 Plans to Retire.* (2021, December). Saint Ignatius High School. Retrieved from <https://www.ignatius.edu/news/december-2021/legendary-teacher-and-coach-chuck-kyle-69-plans-t>

¹⁰⁷ John Gibbons was the head coach for the 1999-2006 seasons. Scott Niedzwiecki served as the head coach for the 2007 and 2008 seasons. Rick Finotti was at the helm for the Eagles beginning for the 2009 season; he won two State Championships with St. Edward before leaving to serve as the Director of Football Operations at the University of Michigan. Tom Lombardo was hired early in the 2015 calendar year and has held the position since. Lombardo also served as an assistant coach under his father-in-law John Gibbons during his time as the Eagles head coach.; *Rick Finotti leaving job as St. Edward football coach to become Michigan’s director of football operations.* (2015, March 13) Cleveland.com. <https://www.cleveland.com/highschoolsports/article/st-edward-football-coach-rick-finotti-to-become-director-of-football-operartions-at-michigan/>

common tradition of family legacy at the schools; even though Lombardo is not an alumnus, he is Gibbons' son-in-law. Since taking over the program ahead of the 2015 season, Lombardo has won a total of four state championship titles with the Eagles. Perhaps more important for St. Edward fans though, is that Lombardo has led his team to six straight victories over their rival.

The star power element in the Holy War rivalry is definitely present but may not be the strongest element within the rivalry because the focus on star power is more on the coaches rather than the numerous players that have had the privilege of playing in the game. This is partly due to the fact that the players will maybe be on the varsity roster for two or three years and only a limited number of players will actually have playing time. The coaches are more of a fixture for the game, but even then, their star power is limited since many do not have a storied presence, similar to Saint Ignatius coach Chuck Kyle.

The Second Dimension - Peer

Moving into the second dimension of rivalry is the "Peer" dimension. This dimension contains the elements of *geography*, *cultural similarity*, and *the competition for personnel*. This dimension may be one of the most important when analyzing the Holy War.

5. Geography

St. Edward and Saint Ignatius, while located in two separate cities, are just four miles apart as the crow flies. The fastest route from one school to the other is less than a fifteen-minute drive. They are that close. They are both located in the area that is regionally referred to as the West Side of the Cleveland, Ohio area. Similar to the regional identities associated with Chicago's North Side or New York City's boroughs, in Cleveland, it is culturally important whether something (or

someone) is West Side or East Side. However, the concentration of the players' hometowns on the west side of the Cuyahoga River and the close proximity of the schools means that the rivalry impacts a significant portion of Catholic school students, parents, alumni, and fans of the West Side of Cleveland. At one time there was an upscale sports bar named Eddy & Iggy's that celebrated the rivalry with its decorations of jerseys and banners from both schools lining the walls. The locale was founded by two Saint Ignatius graduates but the owners invited members of both sides of the rivalry to come together at their restaurant, located in St. Edward's home of Lakewood. During rivalry week, they would even keep track which of their microbrews – the Eagle Ale or the Wildcat Lager – would sell more to the patrons that consisted of alumni and fans of both schools.¹⁰⁸

The element of geography is a strong factor in the Holy War rivalry, with the schools situated just four miles apart and the community engagement with the rivalry that comes with the close proximity. I would even argue that the geography element is one of the strongest elements of the rivalry because it creates an environment for the Holy War rivalry, and more specifically the football rivalry, to enter other areas of life outside of the school community.

6. Cultural Similarity

When two competing rivals share a close proximity, they often also share values and culture. Both St. Edward and Saint Ignatius are located on the West Side, both are all-boys college-preparatory Catholic schools, and both have strong athletics programs. A consideration of these similarities is important when discussing this rivalry. “Yet, it is difficult for fans to recognize

¹⁰⁸ Eddy & Iggy's closed around 2013-2014. By August of 2014, a new bar had taken its place on Detroit Avenue in Lakewood called The Side Quest which closed its doors in January 2022 as a result of the COVID pandemic and economic downturn; Stewart, D. (2022, January 3). *The Side Quest Bar in Lakewood to Close at the End of January*. Cleveland Magazine. <https://clevelandmagazine.com/food-drink/articles/the-side-quest-bar-in-lakewood-to-close-at-the-end-of-january>

cultural similarity as a contributor to rivalry. As part of humans' natural desire for optimal distinctiveness, group members seek to create metacontrast with others by emphasizing traits that minimize social distance within their group (characteristics that increase homogeneity) while maximizing social distance between the ingroup and relevant outgroups."¹⁰⁹ The cultural similarity portion will be discussed further when contrasting it with the cultural differences element.

7. Competition for Personnel

The competition for personnel element of a rivalry is a close companion to the proximity element when evaluating the Holy War. While both schools are private, they are bound by the rules set forth by the OHSAA. Young men from any city, town, or region are permitted to attend either school, but the students must not be recruited by athletic coaches and must not be given athletic scholarships to help cover the cost of attendance.¹¹⁰ The majority of the young men attending St. Edward or Saint Ignatius come from Cleveland's West Side or the West Side suburbs and many attended one of the Catholic grade schools on the West-Side.¹¹¹ The competition between the schools is not just on the football field, but also in admissions and encouraging students to enroll in their school. This fits the definition of competition for personnel defined by Tyler et al. to a tee. "When organizations share a similar culture, style of play, specialization, or simply aim to accomplish the same objective, they often compete for the same human capital."¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Tyler, et al.

¹¹⁰ For the 2022-2023 school year, tuition at St. Edward was \$18,750 per student per year and a \$250 technology fee per family per year. Saint Ignatius tuition for the same school year was \$19,000 per student per year. Both schools do offer financial aid to both athletes and non-athletes in the form of grants, academic scholarship, and service based scholarship.

¹¹¹ These grade schools include Holy Trinity (Avon), Our Lady of Angels (Cleveland), St. Angela Merici (Fairview), St. Bernadette (Westlake), St. Brendan (North Olmsted), St. Christopher (Rocky River), St. Joseph (Avon Lake), St. Mark (Cleveland), St. Mary of the Falls (Olmsted Falls), St. Raphael (Bay Village), and others.

¹¹² Tyler, et al.; Tyler, B.D. & Cobbs, J. B. (2015). Rival conceptions of rivalry: why some competitions mean more than others. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 15(2), 227-248.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2015.1010558>

These grade school teammates and friendships may be split between the classrooms and football fields of St. Edward and Saint Ignatius, but the friendships can, and often do, remain beyond the school building and the athletic teams. These friendships are one of the primary factors that make the Holy War such a community event.

The Third Dimension - Bias

The final dimension in the Tyler, Cobbs, and Xantos rubric is “Bias” which holds the elements of *relative dominance*, *cultural differences*, and *unfairness*. This dimension of a rivalry has a focus on the natural human tendencies to create an “us versus them” mindset or the perception of an ingroup and an outgroup. More specifically, this dimension considers how individuals tend to favor their own ingroup while disparaging the outgroup. Individuals also have a propensity to focus on the specific differences between the two teams while seeing their group in a more positive light.

8. Relative Dominance

Often in a rivalry, one team demonstrates dominance, creating a one-sided trend of victories, as the other team struggles. In this dominance, the less successful team is deemed the "underdog" and is not perceived as a threat to the higher achieving team. Ed Daugherty and Vince McKee agree that some rivalries within football, especially some that are known in Northeast Ohio high school football, can feel like a “big brother-little brother situation” when there is a consistent underdog that regardless of how hard they fight, they can never overcome their more accomplished rival.¹¹³

¹¹³ Daugherty described the early years of the rivalry (1952-1957) as a “big brother – little brother” situation but says that now the Holy War rivalry is more like “Can we be better than them? And sometimes it’s the little brother

However, the St. Edward-Saint Ignatius rivalry once again challenges Tyler et al.'s definition of a rivalry in this category. Carmen Angelo, a member of the St. Edward Eagles Sports Network broadcast team described the rivalry as cyclical in nature, with the teams shifting position as the favorite and the underdog. McKee also commented on the rather balanced, but cyclical dominance of the two teams within the Holy War in his August 2022 book. "Despite the recent success of St. Edward in this rivalry," McKee observed, "this series is about as even as it gets. The Eagles dominated for stretches in the 1970s and '80s, winning 13 [Holy War] games between 1971 and 1986. St. Ignatius began to take things over [in the rivalry] in 1988, winning 25 times between 1988 and 2018."¹¹⁴ St. Edward's recent success began in the second match-up between the two teams in the 2018 season during the first week of the playoffs. Since then, the Eagles have won six straight games against their rival and have shown their (current) dominance as they have outscored the Wildcats 119-30 in the last five games. But despite the cyclical nature of the dominance between the teams, almost every person interviewed for this research said that while there is a favorite and an underdog each year, it's impossible to know what will happen when they face each other on the football field.

9. Cultural Difference

The second element of "Bias" is that of cultural difference. As Tyler et al. describe it, "in the peer dimension, it was discussed how cultural similarity can intensify a rivalry. Salient cultural differences can also contribute to perceptions of rivalry through bias toward one's ingroup, with

and big brother situation. Right now, it's more like two twins at this point. In terms of the schools, the academics, athletics in different places, certain sports right now lean one way or the other." Examples of the leaning one way or the other is the fact that St. Edward recently won its 44th wrestling state championship and fifth in a row while Saint Ignatius won the 2022 soccer state championship, their fourth in a row. McKee agrees that currently the rivalry more closely resembles a twin sibling relationship and rivalry.

¹¹⁴ McKee (2022).

its culture and associated values, and against a disparate culture and its associated set of values.”¹¹⁵

With regards to the Holy War, the element of cultural difference is present, but it became apparent during this research that the cultural similarities outweigh the cultural differences between the two all-boys Catholic college-preparatory atmospheres of both schools. Both of the schools aim to educate young men to be active within their Catholic faith to bring about justice, equality, and to transform the world as both have a high emphasis on community involvement and service outside of the classroom.

While family loyalty is common for both the Eagles and the Wildcats, an important cultural difference can be seen even from a very young age as children can be raised with specific allegiance to one school over the other. Additionally, the coaching career of Chuck Kyle at Saint Ignatius spanned multiple generations, creating occurrences of both fathers and sons playing for Coach Kyle. St. Edward has not had the same type of longevity with a head coach but can also list many sets of fathers and sons both playing for the Eagles. Add in uncles, older brothers, and cousins and the lists for both schools grow. Even young boys without a legacy at the schools can find themselves associating with one school or the other from an early age when they move into the local community.

The *Cleveland Plain Dealer* opened the recap of the 1973 Holy War by noting, “Twice each year it is that West Side Irishmen get together to punish themselves for their transgressions of the previous six months. One occasion for self-flagellation is of course, St. Patrick’s Day. Another occurred Friday night when St. Ignatius, your Old Irish, took on St. Edward High – the ‘new wave’ of the West Side Irish citizenry.”¹¹⁶ While both schools have large Irish populations, they both incorporate many different cultural and ethnic groups in their student body. A cultural

¹¹⁵ Tyler, et al.

¹¹⁶ Hudak (2005).

difference exists in the history of the program, with the Wildcats fielding a football team more than forty years before St. Edward, but as both schools have graduated generations of football alumni since the mid-1950s, the age of the programs have become less relevant to today's athletes and more a thing of the past. And while there are cultural similarities and differences, both are captured in the essence of someone who either is a Wildcat or an Eagle. It's just part of a person's existence. It's different because you either bleed blue and gold or green and gold, but the same because both schools create that kind of group identity that's so deeply ingrained. Michael Kilbane, a football player in the St. Edward class of 2023, stated that both schools are great schools academically and that they both offer their own cultures surrounding them that connects and fosters the community in "a spiritual way." The two schools have common ground in that their all-boys student body and Catholic affiliation, but there are still differences in the cultures within the two organizations, however those differences are pretty much overshadowed by the similarities, including the emphasis of education and service within the greater community.

10. Unfairness

The final element of a rivalry is the element of unfairness. This is when there is an impression or perception of preferential treatment to a certain team by authorities such as league officials or game officials. Often, this will come up more in mismatched competitions where the fans, teams, and community members believe the favorite team is given more favor than the underdog. From the outside, one could expect that unfairness would be a pertinent element of the Holy War rivalry. However, when unfairness between the teams was brought up in the interviews, many of the interviewees mentioned it in passing and there were only a few instances of an interviewee mentioning unfairness with any significant detail. When unfairness was mentioned, it

was primarily from an interviewee who had experienced a long period of losing the annual match-up. Current high school juniors and good friends, Matt Daugherty (St. Edward) and Christopher Gibel (Saint Ignatius) even had a slight argument about this element at the beginning of their combined interview.¹¹⁷ Gibel said, “The refs screwed us [in the 2021 game]” to which Daugherty replied, “The refs did not. [The player’s] body was behind the line of scrimmage. This is what I’m talking about. You always claim that you should have won.” When asked for clarification about how they handle the rivalry within the context of their friendship, Gibel stated, “It’s gotten a little better. Freshman year was pretty bad but now I’m a little more mature and accepted the fact that we suck at football right now.” While the two boys sparred about the element of unfairness, it was truly all in fun, and often when other interviewees were asked about the idea of unfairness, they would respond with a few thoughts and then move on to other topics. Almost everyone interviewed mentioned that this game is typically a good game, with fairness from the officials and the crowd as a whole. Perhaps unfairness relates to the Holy War more in an “in the moment” way, where the perceived transgressions are frustrating at the time of the “bad call” or loss, but the indignation of the unfairness fades with time. This leads me to conclude that this may not be one of the strongest elements present for the Holy War, but it is still a small part of what makes the Holy War a vibrant rivalry, as defined by Tyler et al.

In-Group & Out-Group Perceptions

Another aspect of rivalry to consider is the idea of in-group versus out-group and the mindsets that come with those labels. Chapter 3 of *Understanding Rivalry and Its Influence on Sports Fans*, focuses on the in-group and out-group treatment in the context of sports rivalries,

¹¹⁷ M. Daugherty and C. Gibel, personal communications via in person conversation, January 22, 2023.

specifically at the collegiate level.¹¹⁸ An in-group is any group that one considers an “us”, a group that one identifies with and shows favoritism for while an out-group is “them” meaning any group that is not “us.” “While there can be many different out-groups, i.e., different opponents but certain opponents can be highly salient or most top of mind [meaning our rival]”¹¹⁹ Tyler and Cobbs define the rival as a specific out-group that poses an acute threat and enhancement to in-group identity and/or esteem, meaning the threat of the rival can enhance the in-group identity when the rival is defeated, or even just in existence as a rival.¹²⁰ When applying this to the Holy War the two groups are the St. Edward community and the Saint Ignatius community, with each community considering themselves to be the in-group and the other to be the out-group. For example, when the school’s athletic teams experience success, students will demonstrate their affiliation with the victory. However, some fans choose to distance themselves from a team that experiences competitive failure, and others may point to perceived unfairness to justify their team’s failure.¹²¹

In the study discussed in the chapter entitled “Out-Group Treatment in Higher Education: Using Rivalry to Allow Student Comparison of In-Group and Out-Group Members in NCAA Competition Divisions”, the authors describe how members of a specific in-group will treat or perceive a particular out-group – specifically, their rival athletic team. For the first element of out-group experiences – the “out-group indirect competition” – they found that “fans can experience similar amounts of happiness when their rival team loses as when their favorite team wins.”¹²² For

¹¹⁸ Havard, C. T., Ryan, T. T., & Workman, S. S. (2019). Out-Group Treatment in Higher Education: Using Rivalry to Allow Student Comparison of In-Group and Out-Group Members in NCAA Competition Divisions. In C. T. Havard (Ed.), *Understanding Rivalry and Its Influence on Sports Fans* (pp. 65-86).

¹¹⁹ Karl, P. (Writer & Director). (2022, November 5). Ohio State – Michigan (Episode 1) [TV docuseries]. In L. J. Wertheim, K. Solomon, M. Hughes, & G.C. Lake (Executive Producers), *RIVALRS*. Sinclair Broadcast Group, Inc.

¹²⁰ Karl (2022)

¹²¹ Havard, et al (2019).; This also demonstrates how one of the elements of rivalry, unfairness, can be evident with the fans within the rivalry. Fans can also be inclined to attribute a loss to poor officiating or their competitor cheating.

¹²² Havard, et al. (2019)

the Holy War, this means that some fans of St. Edward would be just as happy to see Saint Ignatius lose a game that is not the Holy War as they would be to see St. Edward win a game outside of the rivalry. For example, it could be a rival's loss during the regular season, playoff games, or even a championship. This joy of the rival's defeat can go both ways. The second element that they studied was the "sense of satisfaction" when the team defeated their rival in a direct competition, meaning the satisfaction of fans when their team wins the Holy War.

Another area where Havard et al. asked students to evaluate their rival was the off-the-field characteristics including the academic prestige of the other group. St. Edward and Saint Ignatius are both considered challenging college-preparatory high schools, but the idea of comparing the schools off of the football field is also common. Matt Daugherty said that identifying the two schools was as easy as a character trait – "it's just either Ed's or Iggy."¹²³ The final facet that was studied by Havard et al. for the behavior of in-group members toward the out-group members is the perceptions of behavior of the out-group members. The in-group members often believe that the fans of their rival team act and behave more negatively than the fans of their own team, even if there is no evidence to support this belief.

When we can identify an out-group that is different than us, the first indication of identification is usually based on appearances. St. Edward is the green and gold Eagles while Saint Ignatius is the blue and gold Wildcats. I myself have even had instances where I will be wearing some of my St. Edward gear and I'll have strangers call out "Go Eagles" to me but I've also experienced Saint Ignatius fans tell me to change colors or that I'm rooting for the wrong side. This happens at places beyond the football stadium; it could be at the grocery store, a farmer's market, the park, or even out of state on vacation. This visual manifestation of out-group mentality

¹²³ M. Daugherty, personal communication via in person conversation, January 22, 2023.

is backed up by neuroscience. “Humans are very visual; our visual sense is our dominant sense. When we see the colors of a rival fan, we may see a response in the brain region called the amygdala.”¹²⁴ The amygdala is the area of the brain that controls emotions such as fear, anxiety, and aggression, so seeing someone who could be seen as a rival and acute threat, even in sporting events is noticeable in research studies. When I told Adam and Chris Mendoza that I used to have blue and gold Saint Ignatius gear from when I was involved with the Saint Ignatius broadcasts, their response was “Oh, don’t tell anybody that, okay?”¹²⁵

These in-group and out-group connections and disconnects, even with strangers who support the same or different teams, can impact our empathy for others. In the RIVALS docuseries, published researcher Grit Hein discussed the neuroscience behind a visceral reaction to seeing a rival's colors. She also focused on the area of the brain that is responsible for the emotions of reward, motivation, and pleasure - the nucleus accumbens. Her study was conducted using fMRI scans when a person received small electrical shocks while watching an in-group member or an out-group member also receive a shock. The neurological results showed that there was more empathy shown when the in-group member was shocked rather than the out-group member, simply because the out-group member was wearing the wristband with the colors and logos of a rival soccer team.¹²⁶ Hein’s research showed that when a subject was watching a rival fan (out-group) experience pain, the subject was more likely to watch the suffering. When witnessing a fellow fan of the same team (in-group) experience pain, the subject would help his or her fellow in-group fan. They were more empathic and helpful towards those that were loyal to the same team. Hein

¹²⁴ Karl (2022)

¹²⁵ A. Mendoza and C. Mendoza, personal communication via Zoom, March 2, 2023.

¹²⁶ Hein, G., Silani, G., Preuschoff, K., Batson, C. D., & Singer, T. (2010). Neural Responses to Ingroup and Outgroup Members’ Suffering Predict Individual Differences in Costly Helping. *Neuron* 68(1), 149-160. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuron.2010.09.003>

described these results as “the essences of schadenfreude.”¹²⁷ Schadenfreude, which means harm-joy in German, plays a significant role in the idea of rivalries in general and within the Holy War specifically. A great example of schadenfreude within the rivalry is the following conversation from the post-game radio show from the radio broadcast of the 2022 regular season Holy War between Ed Daugherty and Bryan Hoffart.¹²⁸ The 2022 game ended with an Eagles victory, 48-8 over the Wildcats.

Daugherty [gloating]: It is going to be a very, very short ride home for my family, I don't know how long it'll be for your ride home out to Lake County...I am a 1992 graduate of St. Ed's. Bryan, 1980 grad of Saint Ignatius. So it's always fun to do these games together.

Hoffart (gloomily): Oh, I love doing these games with you.

Daugherty: It's always fun. And like I said, I've been on the sideline for 47-0 watching friends of mine get beat when I was in high school. Bryan, you had a tough loss to St. Ed's...

Hoffart: When I was a junior.

Daugherty: And then as a senior you had a great game comeback. Had an interception for a touchdown, correct?

Hoffart: Yes

Daugherty: As a senior against St. Ed's.

Also demonstrating the principles of schadenfreude, current senior Michael Kilbane put the idea of the rivalry week (leading into the Holy War game) in terms of his friends who come from both schools. “The rivalry week, it’s like a war almost, because all week we’re just trying to

¹²⁷ Karl (2022)

¹²⁸ Daugherty, E. & Hoffart, B. (2022) [Radio broadcast]

speculate who [will] win, arguing and everything. And then St. Ed's wins and we'd all be bragging but then [the kids from Saint Ignatius] don't want to hear it or vice versa if Ignatius wins." He went on to describe how the Eagles team thought about Saint Ignatius after they found out they would play them in the playoffs after already beating them in the regular season. "So, we'd beat [the Wildcats] 48-6 the first time [in the regular season] and I remember kids kind of making fun of them. But I always had a feeling that they were going to make it far enough in the playoffs to face us. I was telling everyone not to talk smack or anything because I had a feeling, and I didn't want it to come back to bite us."¹²⁹

Overall, the ten elements of a rivalry and the in-group vs out-group concepts are a foundation of a rivalry and will be beneficial when analyzing the rivalry between St. Edward High School and Saint Ignatius High School football teams.

¹²⁹ M. Kilbane, personal communication via Zoom, January 9, 2023.

Chapter 4: *Brief History of the Holy War Rivalry*

The Beginning of the Football Programs

When St. Edward opened its doors in 1949 as the second all-boys Catholic high school on the West Side of Cleveland, many could predict some rivalry with Saint Ignatius, but I doubt if anyone would guess just how that rivalry would mold the West Side in the following decades. However, for these early days for St. Edward, they were very much acting as the little brother to the well-established Saint Ignatius school and football program. When St. Edward played their first football game against the Wildcats of Saint Ignatius in 1950 at the freshman level, the older school had already been competing on the football field for 40 years.¹³⁰ While both the junior varsity and freshmen teams played each other in those early years, these games would cause confusion for the historical account of the Holy War, partly because the freshman team was the only team that St. Edward was able to field in their first year of the program. Eventually, it would be accepted that these early meetings would not be counted because they were not varsity level contests. Similarly, only the varsity games are counted within the records even though the freshmen and JV teams also face each other each year. Decades later, the 1951 game would also be examined and reevaluated. In that year, St. Edward technically had a varsity team, but it was comprised of sophomores and juniors and considered more of a JV team.¹³¹ This misalignment of the 1951 match-up impacted the 1993 match-up, when local news outlets widely misidentified the game as the 30th anniversary rivalry game. But both schools agreed in the early 2000s that the 1951 game was not actually a varsity game and thus should not be counted in records; both schools'

¹³⁰ Timothy Hudak referenced the 1950 Saint Ignatius school yearbook in his *The Game of Year* book, "The Wildkittens played St. Edward's of Lakewood twice and blanked them twice."; Hudak (2005)

¹³¹ Hudak (2005).

athletic departments and the local news stations are now on the same page when discussing the respective records within the Holy War.

The Early Days of the Holy War

It was not until the fall of 1952 that the Eagles and Wildcats would play each other in an actual varsity football game. While it was a decidedly lopsided win (41-12) for Saint Ignatius on October 17, it would go down in history as the first official Holy War and the start of the rivalry.¹³² The young rivalry would be played annually from 1952 to 1957 with the more experienced Saint Ignatius Wildcats winning five of those six early meetings, with St. Edward winning only the 1955 game. However, by just the third Holy War, in 1954, the Cleveland area newspapers were already reporting a “fierce rivalry”, and the rivalry soon took shape both on and off the field with many fights during the games on the field among players and in the stands among fans. After a few years, the schools felt they could no longer control the rising tempers on both sides of the rivalry and it was decided that the games needed to stop.¹³³

The Hiatus

After the 1957 meeting, the rivalry was halted. Locally, there is some mystery about the hiatus; if anyone knows the full and accurate reason behind it, he has apparently never told the story. Hudak states in his 2005 book *The Game of the Year: The Complete Story of the Intense Rivalry that is St. Ignatius – St. Edward Football*, “Maybe it was the relative nearness of the two west side schools, or the fact that many of the students had grown up together, not going their

¹³² Mertens, J. (2022, September 29). *Saint Ignatius Football 2022 Game Notes Game Seven: St. Edward*. Saint Ignatius High School Athletics. Retrieved from the personal collection of Ed Daugherty on October 3, 2022.

¹³³ Hudak (2005).

separate ways until their high school days. Perhaps it was a misguided over-zealousness by some of the boys for their own team. Maybe that Eagles' fans were just tired of seeing their team get pummeled by the Wildcats almost every year. Whatever it was, it personified itself in a most unfortunate mode of behavior, one that was certainly not in keeping with the tenets of the outstanding religious orders that ran these two fine Catholic schools.”¹³⁴

While the teams did not play each other on the football field for thirteen seasons, the two teams came back together as very different football programs and the intensity of the rivalry continued to bubble under the surface.¹³⁵ The official announcement that the rivalry would be resumed on the football field came in late 1970. Hudak reported

Unfortunately, something just never changes, good or bad. A couple of weeks after the announcement, students and players from both schools found themselves attending a dance over at Magnificat High School in Rocky River. It did not take long for the “trash talking” to escalate into the fisticuffs that had caused the cancellation of the game 14 years earlier. Officers from the Rocky River Police Department...quickly got the situation in hand and sent many of “gentlemen” home.¹³⁶

The reasoning behind the hiatus may not be fully known, but it was probably needed if the fans and players were getting too out-of-hand during and after the football rivalry games. While the fans may always “love to hate” the other side, the fistfights seem to have been left in the 1950s

¹³⁴ Hudak (2005)

¹³⁵ During the Hiatus of the football Holy War, the two schools did compete in other sporting events and academic competitions, but the rivalry never seemed to get as heated as it had with the football rivalry.

¹³⁶ Magnificat High School is one of the all-girls schools on the west side of Cleveland that many of the female relatives of St. Edward or Saint Ignatius students attend. The Rocky River Police Department is located just across the street from Magnificat accounting for the quick response, as well as the fact that there most likely were a few officers already present at the dance for safety. The story is recounted in Hudak's 2005 *The Game of the Year*.

since now, even as the rivalry can get heated at times, no one in the two school communities can seem to recall a physical fight at the stadium since the rivalry was renewed.

The Holy War Resumes & the Cyclical Nature

The 1971 season finale would feature the new beginning of the Holy War. On November 13, 1971, the wait was over for fans as the Eagles faced off against the Wildcats. The revival of the rivalry was first marked by a stretch of St. Edward dominance, as St. Edward would win the first eight match-ups once the rivalry was renewed. Bryan Hoffart was a junior on the Saint Ignatius team for the 38-9 defeat on September 15, 1978, and recalled “They had won every time. They had beat us every year. They had beat us as freshmen. They had beat us as JVs and they had beat us badly when we were juniors, so going into my senior year, everybody was like well that’s great. Well, we still all know what happens when you play Ed’s.”¹³⁷ It was Hoffart’s senior year, and a single play would become memorable play for him during the game played at Baldwin-Wallace College on October 20, 1979.¹³⁸ A late game interception returned for a touchdown put Hoffart into the record books at Saint Ignatius as they finally beat St. Edward.¹³⁹ But it was a short-lived victory as St. Edward would win in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1984, and 1985. The only year that the Eagles didn’t win was the only tied game in the series. It was 1983 and Chuck Kyle’s first Holy War game as the Head Coach.¹⁴⁰

Momentum on the football field, however, began to swing towards the team from Ohio City. Saint Ignatius became a dominant force, winning 15 of the next 19 Holy Wars, but only

¹³⁷ B. Hoffart, personal communication via Zoom, January 20, 2023.

¹³⁸ Baldwin-Wallace College changed its name to Baldwin Wallace University in 2012.

¹³⁹ Bryan Hoffart was inducted into the Great American Rivalry Series Hall of Fame as a representative from Saint Ignatius for the Hall of Fame Class of 2018, specifically because the Saint Ignatius school community, football program, coaches, and alumni still talk about his interception in the 1979 game.

¹⁴⁰ Mertens, J. 2022 *Saint Ignatius Football Media Guide*.

winning at most four in a row against the Eagles. During the late 1980s and 1990s, under the direction of head coach Chuck Kyle, the Wildcats won the Ohio High School Athletic Association big school division state championship nine times.¹⁴¹ They appeared in six straight state championship games from 1991 to 1996 and would win the National High School football championship three times in that span.

The early 2000s saw the transition as the power began to shift towards the school in Lakewood but Saint Ignatius still won eight of the eleven match-ups between the 2000 season and the 2009 season. Often times, people consider the hiring of John Gibbons as the St. Edward head coach ahead of the 1999 season to be a turning point in the rivalry and reinvigorate the competitiveness between the Eagles and the Wildcats. In 2008, for the first time, the Holy War was played twice in the same season, as the teams met in the playoffs due to the structure of the OHSAA playoff bracket. Saint Ignatius won both the regular season match-up and the postseason game en route to their tenth state championship. 2010 saw St. Edward defeat the Wildcats 33-10 in the regular season as the Eagles went on to win their first football state championship. The following season, St. Edward came in as the defending state champion, but Saint Ignatius bested them in both the regular season and the postseason as the Wildcats went on to capture the 2011 state championship.¹⁴²

Since the two teams combined as the back-to-back state champions in 2010 and 2011, the dominance has settled more in Lakewood. In the last fourteen games, Saint Ignatius has only won five of them – in 2013, both games in 2016, and the regular season games in 2017 and 2018. (As

¹⁴¹ Saint Ignatius would win the OHSAA State Championship in 1988, 1989, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1999, and 2001. Later they would win the 2008 and 2011 titles as well. The Saint Ignatius national championships came in 1989, 1993, 1995, and then also in 2008

¹⁴² As of this time, Saint Ignatius has yet to win another state championship. They did appear in the 2016 state title game but lost to St. Xavier out of the Cincinnati area in double overtime.

of the time this paper was written, St. Edward has won the last six Holy Wars.) However, 2018 was another pivotal point for the rivalry. The regular season game was played in Week 10, the final week of the regular season at FirstEnergy Stadium in downtown Cleveland. Saint Ignatius handed St. Edward a 21-7 defeat and secured home-field advantage for the playoffs starting the following week. Saint Ignatius would be the favorites coming into the Week 11 game as the number two seed hosting the number seven St. Edward Eagles at Byers Field in Parma, Ohio. However, in the win or go home situation of the playoffs, St. Edward was able to come away with the 21-19 victory in a game that even though it was the first of five games needed to win a state championship and there was still a month remaining in the playoffs, many believe that the impact that this game had decided the state championship game.¹⁴³ The 2018 playoff edition of the Holy War was the first win for St. Edward in their new dominant stretch. In the five games since, the Eagles defense has allowed Saint Ignatius' offense to score just thirty total points and St. Edward would go on to win back-to-back state titles in 2021 and 2022, including defeating Saint Ignatius in the playoffs in 2022.¹⁴⁴

Overall, Saint Ignatius boasts thirty-two wins in the Holy War compared to St. Edward's thirty victories; as a whole, the rivalry is relatively even on paper even with the dominant stretches by both teams.¹⁴⁵ Many of the men that were interviewed for this research described the rivalry as cyclical in nature. When asked to describe the cyclical nature of the rivalry and what it means for the teams, St. Edward graduate Carmen Angelo said, "The history shows that it's been cyclical...I can't explain it. Who knows? I mean, we're on top of the mountain now. It's easier to get there

¹⁴³ St. Edward would go on to win the 2018 state championship game.

¹⁴⁴ Coming into the 2022 playoff game, while St. Edward was the favorite, Saint Ignatius was coming off the biggest comeback victory in school history, in an upset win over Cleveland Heights. It was also the final season for 40-year head coach Chuck Kyle, and many of the players, coaches, alumni, and fans wanted to see him win a state championship in his final season.

¹⁴⁵ These totals do not reflect the one tied game in 1983.

but it's a hell of a lot harder to stay there. Once you're on top of the mountain and you're getting your best shot from everybody, you got targets on your chest and your back."¹⁴⁶ Bryan Hoffart had thoughts as an alumnus of Saint Ignatius, "It just tended to be cyclical, these things tend to build off each other. It's not like a public school where you don't really know year by year by year, sometimes who's going to be showing up because it's just kids from that one district or that one neighborhood. Whereas with Ignatius and Ed's you can have legacy families and you can see things. You can almost see through the CYO, how waves of kids are going to start going to a certain school. How the kids gravitate with each other towards who they view is maybe the hot school at that time."¹⁴⁷

While there have been cyclical power swings for the football teams, the record on paper is now fairly even with Saint Ignatius holding a slight lead overall with 32 wins. St. Edward has 30 wins over their rival, including winning the last six games against the Wildcats. There was also one tie in the series in 1983.

The Rule of 14

An interesting component that can come up when discussing the results of the Holy War is the seemingly mystical – but real – “Rule of 14.” Ed Daugherty was the first to discover and define the Rule of 14, around 2007. “When I started doing the games on radio, in order to prepare for the game, I made sure that I looked at and documented all of the games played [by each team]...and put it into a database and pulled out all the Ignatius versus Ed's games. You're looking at them and

¹⁴⁶ C. Angelo, personal communication via phone call, December 18, 2022.

¹⁴⁷ B. Hoffart, personal communication via Zoom, January 20, 2023.; CYO stands for Catholic Youth Organization, which is the organization that the Catholic grade schools compete in. The CYO aims to inspire young people to know God, to love God, and to serve God through athletics. In Northeast Ohio alone, they support over eight counties and have had more than 20,000 youth athletes and over 5,000 adults serve as coaches and support. Source: Diocese of Cleveland. (2023, March). *CYO Athletics*. Catholic Charities Diocese of Cleveland. <https://www.ccdocle.org/service-areas/cyo-athletics>

you're seeing the wins and the losses then when you start separating by points, you start to notice that the wins and losses add up. And ultimately, what it comes down to is Saint Ignatius scoring, or St. Ed's preventing scoring from the Wildcats, depending on how you want to look at it.”¹⁴⁸

The Rule of 14 has since been published in both the St. Edward and Saint Ignatius Game Notes for the annual Holy War, Hudak referenced it in his 2022 supplement to *The Game of the Year*, and it is known by media members who cover the game.¹⁴⁹

The Rule of 14 is as follows:

When Saint Ignatius scores **thirteen or fewer points**, the Wildcats are winless against the St. Edward Eagles

(St. Edward is 25-0 when Saint Ignatius scores thirteen points or less)

When Saint Ignatius scores **fifteen or more points**, the Wildcats have won thirty of the thirty-three meetings

(St. Edward is 3-30 when Saint Ignatius scores fifteen or more points)¹⁵⁰

When Saint Ignatius scores **exactly fourteen points**, the series is completely tied with the Wildcats winning twice, the Eagles winning twice, and the game that ended in a tie in 1983

The Rule of 14 is an intriguing statistic, and it presents an interesting dimension to the rivalry, as during each Holy War game, Saint Ignatius fans are waiting for the fifteenth point to (they believe)

¹⁴⁸ E. Daugherty, personal communications via in person conversation, January 10, 2023.

¹⁴⁹ Mertens, J. (2022). *2022 Game Notes Game Seven: St. Edward*; Mendoza, A. (2022). *St. Edward Eagles 2022 Game Notes – Week 7 vs St. Ignatius*. St. Edward High School Athletic Department. Retrieved from the personal collection of Ed Daugherty on October 3, 2022.; Hudak, T. L. (2022). *The Game of the Year: The Complete Story of the Intense Rivalry that is St. Ignatius – St. Edward Football Supplement 2005-2022*. Sports Heritage Publications.

¹⁵⁰ The Eagles' three wins have come in 2001 (a 44-41 win in overtime); 2015 (St. Edward was up 35-14 midway through the 4th quarter; the final score was 35-28); and the 2018 playoff game (the Eagles stopped a 2-point conversion with under a minute to play, with a final score of 21-19).

almost guarantee the victory, while the fans on the St. Edward side are holding their breath hoping their defense can hold the Wildcats to thirteen or less to bring an Eagle victory.

During the October 1, 2022, radio broadcast of the Holy War, Ed Daugherty and Bryan Hoffart included the Rule of 14 as one of their pregame keys to the game alongside the turnover battle and the performance with the windy weather. After St. Edward won 48-6 on that Saturday evening, Hoffart summed up both men's feelings as not only the broadcasters but also as fans of the two teams, "Ed Daugherty, Class of 1992 St. Ed's and Bryan Hoffart Class of '80 Saint Ignatius. I think you know how this went for both of us" and Daugherty responded with "I also have a [son in the] class of 2024 at St. Ed's who played the whole fourth quarter."¹⁵¹ They interacted with each other throughout the broadcast like the fans who held their breaths and waited to make sure the Rule of 14 would still reign true. A few weeks after the 2022 regular season Holy War, the two teams met again for the playoff edition of the Holy War in which St. Edward again beat Saint Ignatius 28-7, in keeping with The Rule of 14.¹⁵² While Daugherty and Hoffart actively discuss the Rule of 14 on the air, Adam Mendoza includes the Rule in his game notes, but "I try to not say anything during the game because of the announcer's jinx but it's an amazing stat...And I don't know if a lot of people pay attention to it, we in the media do."¹⁵³ While the principles of favorites versus underdogs and the Rule of 14 are almost always reflected in the Holy War, many of those interviewed agreed that when the two teams meet on the gridiron, the records all go out the window and those watching don't know how the game will play out. Many also agreed that all these factors make it such a great rivalry and continue to bring the hype for the game.

¹⁵¹ Daugherty, E. & Hoffart, B. (2022) [Radio broadcast]

¹⁵² St. Edward beat Saint Ignatius in the 2022 playoffs on their way to a back-to-back State Championship.

¹⁵³ A. Mendoza, personal communication via Zoom, March 2, 2023.

While the Holy War is by no means the longest standing high school football rivalry in the state of Ohio, it truly has its own storied history with power swings from one school to the other. Not only is there a certain level of history that the game has behind it, but there is also the Rule of 14 that can predict, with almost perfect accuracy, which team won based on the final score that brings fans back every year as the next chapter is written in the history of the Holy War. Beyond just the long-standing history, I believed there had to be more that brings the hype and anticipation every year for the tens of thousands of fans of the Eagles and the Wildcats, the answers to which are answered in the following chapter.

Chapter 5: *Hype of the Rivalry*

“Circle the Date”

“If you’re a young man growing up on the West Side, this is one that you circle each and every year,” Carmen Angelo stated on the Eagles Sports Network broadcast of the October 1, 2022 Holy War. That sentiment summarizes the essence of the hype around this rivalry; it is *the* game of the year in terms of Northeast Ohio high school football.¹⁵⁴ On that same night just a few seats over in the press box at the top of the bleachers at Byers Field in Parma, Ed Daugherty opened his radio broadcast on WHK-AM 1420 with “This is *the* game. There is nothing else that these kids really look forward to in the regular season more than this game. St. Ed’s – Saint Ignatius. The alumni, the players, the coaches, the fans. It’s all here and it’s all about *this* game.”¹⁵⁵ Daugherty later compared the rivalry between the two schools, even beyond the football team, as two fraternity houses that share a driveway. As he put it, they will compete in intramurals and want to beat the other in every competition, they will pull pranks on their neighbor, but still they still want to be invited to the party at each other’s houses.¹⁵⁶

Beyond the Eagles Sports Network and the WHK-AM 1420 radio broadcasts of the regular season game between St. Edward and Saint Ignatius, there were numerous print news outlets at the 2022 game, as well as a third radio broadcast team covering the game – the students of the Saint Ignatius Broadcast Network. One of the print outlets present at the game in early October was Kee On Sports Media Group, a company founded and owned by Vince McKee. When interviewed for this thesis, McKee had this opinion about media coverage of local sports, “[The Holy War] is the only game I use my ‘Do you know who I am card?’ with the other reporters on

¹⁵⁴ St. Edward H.S. Football [@SEHS_Football]. (2022, October 2). [Game Video Recap]. Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CjPCskOg-8L/>

¹⁵⁵ Daugherty, E. & Hoffart, B. (2022) [Radio broadcast]

¹⁵⁶ E. Daugherty, personal communications via in person interview, January 10, 2023.

the Kee On Sports staff when I make the schedule [of who covers the different games for Kee On Sports].”¹⁵⁷ In August of 2022, McKee published his eleventh book, *Northeast Ohio High School Football Rivalries: A History*, in which he highlighted seven rivalries. As a member of the media, and in a radio interview McKee stated that he tried to be at every rivalry that he wrote about to personally cover the game for his media company and also attend additional rivalries that didn’t make it in the “first version of the book.”¹⁵⁸ He stated the only rivalry in his book that he really hasn’t been able to cover himself is the Massillon-McKinley rivalry because of the drive. Regarding the Holy War, McKee says he will never miss it, even if he has a friend’s wedding the night before. “[My team members] know I’m covering the Holy War unless God comes down from Heaven and Satan comes up from Hell and there’s a war in the middle of the field because there’s nothing else that I’m going to cover.”¹⁵⁹

Ed Daugherty also spoke about the fact that there is actually a clause in his contract with the ACP Productions Radio Network and WHK-AM 1420 that shows how the hype of this rivalry is a cornerstone to the entire broadcast season of high school football games of the week.

But we’ll do the regional games week one through week eleven with a doubleheader weekend being the Holy War on a Saturday in that grouping, and that’s been the standard since 2015. If, and only if, Saint Ignatius and St. Ed’s were to play at some point beyond that in the playoffs, we would cover that game only because we know that the audience is there, and people will listen. It’s the only playoff game outside

¹⁵⁷ V. McKee, personal communication via Zoom, December 20, 2022.

¹⁵⁸ McKee’s book highlights Massillon Washington vs Canton McKinley, Saint Ignatius vs St. Edward, Avon vs Avon Lake, Massillon vs Archbishop Hoban (Akron), Olmsted Falls vs Berea-Midpark, Archbishop Hoban (Akron) vs Avon, and Rocky River vs Bay Village. In a radio interview on the ACP Productions radio broadcast during halftime of the 2022 regular season Holy War, McKee said that he felt that version two of the *Northeast Ohio High School Football Rivalries* needs to happen at some point to cover Padua Franciscan (Parma) vs Holy Name (Parma Heights), Eastlake North vs Willoughby South, and other rivalries in the area.

¹⁵⁹ V. McKee, personal communication via Zoom, December 20, 2022.

of the first round that we can contractually make a reasonable case to broadcast. It doesn't matter. I mean that tells you something about the rivalry... It's not Mentor-St. Ed's. It's not Mentor-Saint Ignatius. It's not Solon-Saint Ignatius. It's not Glenville-St. Ed's. Nothing. It's only those two teams [playing in the playoffs] in November that is the only reason they want [that extra playoff game]. The contract basically states 'Anything else, forget it your season's over after the first round of the playoffs' because they don't want to give up the airtime [for a different game]. But they'll give it up for this game [a playoff Holy War].”¹⁶⁰

The Holy War is not only considered one of the best rivalries in Northeast Ohio, but also one of the best in the country. In 2015 Cleveland Magazine published a list of “50 Things Every Clevelander Must Do”, and “Cheer from the stands at a St. Edward-Saint Ignatius Football Game” was number fifteen.¹⁶¹ It was one of only four sports related things on the list, and the other three involved Cleveland’s professional sports teams, the Browns, the Cavaliers, and the Indians.¹⁶² Nationally, the Holy War is recognized among the top ten of high school football rivalries, as MaxPreps ranked them eighth on their 2018 “Top 25 Greatest High School Football Rivalries.” Ohio is the only state to have two rivalries represented in the top 10 of this list, with Massillon Washington – Canton McKinley taking the number two overall spot.¹⁶³

“In 2004, the Great American Rivalry Series was created to celebrate this uniquely American sport and the cultural phenomenon of ‘Friday Night in America.’ The Great American Rivalry Series shines the spotlight on top high school football rivalries across the nation, where

¹⁶⁰ E. Daugherty, personal communications via in person interview, January 10, 2023.

¹⁶¹ Cleveland Magazine Staff. (2015, March 24). *50 Things Every Clevelander Must Do – Transplant – 15. St. Edward-St. Ignatius Football*. Cleveland Magazine. <https://clevelandmagazine.com/in-the-cle/articles/50-things-every-clevelander-must-do---transplant---15-st-edward-st-ignatius-football>

¹⁶² In 2021 the Cleveland Indians baseball team announced they would be changing their name to the Cleveland Guardians effective for the 2022 season.

¹⁶³ Askeland (2018).

long-standing traditions are valued, expectations are sky high, and followers are passionate and loyal.”¹⁶⁴ According to the President & CEO of the Great American Rivalry Series, Rick Ford, “The Saint Ignatius vs St. Edward game exemplifies the very concept of the series and ranks high among the over 1,000 games featured since its inception in 2004.”¹⁶⁵ Kimber Roberts, who serves as the Rivalry Series Executive Director, expanded on why Ford identified the Holy War as one of their favorite to cover in the Series and why it has been featured in the Series six times, by stating, “When we look for Rivalry games to put in our series we are looking for multiple qualifications. Some of those being traditions, competitiveness, and community involvement. All of these things are represented well in the Saint Ignatius vs St. Edward game.”¹⁶⁶ Each year the game has been featured also marked the induction of one member from the St. Edward football program and one member of the Saint Ignatius football program into the Great American Rivalry Series Hall of Fame (see Appendix D Table 4: Great American Rivalry Series Hall of Famers).¹⁶⁷

School Pep Rallies & School Spirit

In the week leading up to the Saturday football game, a palpable buzz of energy exists in the halls and classrooms of the two schools, with students asking each other if they are going to the game, especially since tickets for the public will go on sale on Monday and often the game will sell out within hours. Christopher Gibel is a current junior at Saint Ignatius and says that during the week there will be multiple announcements and emails hyping up the game. Gibel is good friends with Matt Daugherty, a junior at St. Edward. Both young men stated that the Friday before

¹⁶⁴ *What is the Great American Rivalry Series?* Great American Rivalry Series. Retrieved February 18, 2023, from <https://greatamericanrivalry.com/about/>

¹⁶⁵ R. Ford, personal communication via email, February 5, 2023.

¹⁶⁶ K. Roberts, personal communication via email, February 7, 2023.

¹⁶⁷ The six years that the Holy War has been featured in the Series are 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2017, and 2018.

the game, the schools have a dress down day to celebrate the rivalry.¹⁶⁸ Daugherty also told a story about the school’s pep rally on the Friday before the game. “Our coach, Coach Lombardo, would come down to the middle of the [gym] floor and say ‘I want everyone silent’ so we would all go silent. And then he goes ‘Swarm! Swarm! Swarm!’ and everyone rushes in [to a mob pit in the middle of the gym]. Yeah, it gets a little rough and we love that.”¹⁶⁹ That part about things getting “a little rough” is another layer of the hype that is displayed in the rivalry.

Daugherty experienced a minor injury during the pep rally in September 2022. He got caught in the excitement of the swarm and ended up with a bloody nose from an over-excited classmate. He recounted that one of his teammates treated it like a situation in which a soldier would treat a fallen comrade, by shaking him and saying “you gotta get up and keep moving!”¹⁷⁰ Gibel mentioned that the Saint Ignatius principal usually tries to remind the students not to do anything too crazy in terms of the game and rivalry, and especially not to trash talk St. Edward and try to stay civil. This comment sparked a conversation between Daugherty and Gibel in their combined interview, saying that while the teachers and administrators say these things at both schools, the boys feel like the students don’t always listen to them, as the student leaders of the respective student sections encourage student fans to go crazy while cheering on their respective team.

¹⁶⁸ Gibel and Daugherty’s friendship is discussed more under the “Friendships Over School Lines” subsection of the “Impact of the Rivalry” section. Additionally, both schools have a dress code that the young men must wear dress shirts and ties or school polos and slacks or khakis to school each day, but a dress down day or spirit day means that the Saint Ignatius men may wear school-spirit promoting Saint Ignatius attire with jeans, on the other hand St. Edward has a similar dress code because permits its students to wear St. Edward gear or solid shirts of the school colors with small company logos and with jeans or athletic shorts; St. Edward High School (2016). *Student & Parent/Guardian Handbook*. St. Edward High School.
https://www.sehs.net/_files/ugd/bde749_223b99a4ee9d4425bd6e4c357802604d.pdf; Saint Ignatius High School (2022). *Student Dress Code*. Saint Ignatius High School.
https://www.ignatius.edu/SaintIgnatius/media/SaintIgnatiusMedia/Content/Files/Dress-Code_2.pdf?ext=.pdf

¹⁶⁹ M. Daugherty and C. Gibel, personal communications via in person interview, January 22, 2023.

¹⁷⁰ M. Daugherty and C. Gibel, personal communications via in person interview, January 22, 2023.

Michael Kilbane is a member of the Class of 2023 at St. Edward and had this to say about the school spirit during rivalry week, “I feel like it’s just the intensity that ramps up. As a school we always do a rally...so it’s really cool to be a part of that and get to see the whole school come together. But we really just treat it like a football game as it is, but the intensity is a lot more up in the school. We come together more, I feel.”¹⁷¹ Over the course of the interviews for this thesis, several interviewees made mention of a similar type of tradition that happens on the college campuses leading up to the Ohio State – Michigan rivalry football game. On the Ohio State campus, all of the “M’s” are crossed out with red X’s, even on social media. Members of the St. Edward school community will cross out the “I’s” on campus with red X’s while Saint Ignatius fans will cross out the “E’s.” It happens to work well since the two letters don’t appear in the other school’s name or nickname – Saint Ignatius Wildcats and St. Edward Eagles.

But while St. Edward has won the last six Holy Wars, the Saint Ignatius student section has shown they are not demoralized as they will still show up in big numbers, often cheering so loud that they act as the “12th man” for the Wildcats to feed off the energy of their classmates in the stands. The student section has the unspoken rule that Seniors get to sit (or rather, stand) in the front of the section and the freshmen have the rows in the back of the section. At times, seniors will scold freshmen if they aren’t cheering loudly enough or are not sufficiently attentive to the game to keep the morale for their team as high as they can get it. Matt Daugherty described the hype of the Holy War and how the schools pull their identity from the team this way, “I would say it’s almost like a character trait. It’s just Ed’s or Iggy.”¹⁷² From interviews, it appears that is how the hype (and the game itself) are treated – you’re either with “us”, or against “us” (in other words, a fan of “them”).

¹⁷¹ M. Kilbane, personal communications via Zoom, January 9, 2023.

¹⁷² M. Daugherty and C. Gibel, personal communications via in person interview, January 22, 2023.

Alex Lambrinides is a member of the class of 2005 from Saint Ignatius High School and was a member of the Wildcats football team. One of his favorite memories of playing high school football was playing in the St. Edward – Saint Ignatius rivalry. “Some of the memories that stick out the most are just due to the hype around that game. Those are the ones where there were just rows and levels of fans, so you felt more special than when you played other games...So those typically stand out just because you’re playing against buddies that you knew in grade school and sometimes that rivalry goes a little bit deeper than just high school. It’s kids that you knew from growing up and that obviously kind of brings in the whole city of Cleveland.”¹⁷³ Lambrinides’ senior year Holy War was played in front of a sold-out standing room crowd of 13,100 at Byers Field. The added energy of having people standing several rows deep was very true that night, even with pre-game rain and wind gusts of around 35 miles per hour.¹⁷⁴

The Pregame Locker Room

There are certain games that coaches at the helm of certain football programs need to win, and at times those certain games can seem more important than even the outcome of the post-season. Coaches’ entire seasons and even careers can be judged based on just one rivalry game. This is not unique to the Holy War rivalry. Michigan football coach Jim Harbaugh responded to the media on November 19, 2018, answering the question of what the rivalry with Ohio State means, “It’s the same as it has always meant, does mean now, and always will. The big game.”¹⁷⁵ And years earlier as a senior on the Michigan football team, Harbaugh stated in an interview, “The

¹⁷³ A. Lambrinides, personal communications via phone conversation, March 1, 2023.

¹⁷⁴ Hudak (2005); The game ended with a Wildcats victory, 26-10.

¹⁷⁵ Sang, O. (2018, November 19). *Michigan’s Jim Harbaugh once guaranteed win over Ohio State – in 1986*. Detroit Free Press. <https://www.freep.com/story/sports/college/university-michigan/wolverines/2018/11/19/michigan-football-jim-harbaugh-ohio-state-guarantee-1986/2060338002/>

last 10 games we played mean nothing to us right now. It's down to a one-game season. Ohio State is our season. If we win this game, then it's a successful season. If not, then it's not a successful season."¹⁷⁶ Substitute St. Edward and Saint Ignatius for Ohio State and Michigan, and Harbaugh's sentiment still aligns. "Shortly after the end of the 1998 season, Jim McQuade resigned as the St. Ed's head football coach after having served in that capacity from 1990-1998. During that time McQuade's teams had won 54 games, while losing only 34. However, his teams had only reached the Division I state playoffs one time, losing their only game to Hudson in 1996, 13-6. Against the St. Ignatius Wildcats his teams had managed just two victories in nine tries."¹⁷⁷ If you can't beat the rival, it often doesn't matter what the other results are.

Bryan Hoffart was a member of the Saint Ignatius football team from 1976-1979. He was a defensive captain for the Wildcats in his senior season and the bus ride over to George Finnie Stadium on the campus of Baldwin-Wallace College for the Holy War was somber. There was the sense that Saint Ignatius could never beat their then-dominant rival, especially after the embarrassing 38-9 loss they suffered in Hoffart's junior year.¹⁷⁸ However, Hoffart shared a specific story he remembers from that bus ride over to the 1979 edition of the Holy War.

The coaches at Saint Ignatius always wanted me, and I kind of told them as one of the team captains, I want to talk to the team on the bus when we're headed over to the stadium and I pretty much did that every game. But I remember the things that I said to our team as we were headed over to Baldwin Wallace [to face St. Edward], and that is "no one believes we can win this game. No one. Our friends in the

¹⁷⁶ Sang (2018).

¹⁷⁷ Hudak (2005).

¹⁷⁸ Part of the contributing factor to that somber feeling was the fact that Saint Ignatius had not beaten St. Edward since the rivalry had been renewed in 1971, so the Wildcat's last victory over the Eagles had come in 1957, before the hiatus.

student body don't. The faculty doesn't. I doubt the alumni do...But I remember I walked around to almost every individual player that I knew was a starter. And I knew what his challenge was going to be that night and I told him, "We need your best game." And I walked up and down that row in the bus, talking to each guy saying, "You need to make more tackles than you've ever made before." "You need to run harder than you've ever run before." "You need to make better decisions as our quarterback than you've ever made," And I went up and down the rows in the bus until we got to Baldwin-Wallace before that game, because no one believed we would win that game... We ended up beating [the Eagles], 17 to 6 and I remember the headlines in the paper the next day saying "Shocker" and "Eureka! Saint Ignatius beat St. Ed's."¹⁷⁹

Matt Daugherty was a reserve offensive guard for St. Edward during the 2022 season, and for his interview, he brought with him a piece of a broken plastic folding chair. While it may seem like trash to anyone else, Daugherty views that broken chair as a treasured memento and symbol of how the coaches and the team prepare for the rivalry game as they are gathered in the locker room. Daugherty tells the story of the broken chair, and what it meant in the pregame locker room of the 2022 playoff edition of the Holy War as follows:

This [the 2022 Playoff Holy War game on November 11, 2022] was Coach Kyle's [the Saint Ignatius head coach] last football game that he ever was the coach. Everyone was going nuts. [Saint Ignatius] had just gone for two to win the game in the final seconds in the week prior, which Coach Kyle never does. So we are all fired up, and this game is being played at Euclid [High School], it's far away for

¹⁷⁹ B. Hoffart, personal communication via Zoom, January 20, 2023.

both of us. Neither team wanted to be [at that location]... It was raining. It's cold. There's fog at ground level. We're waiting in the locker room and Coach Pappas, our Defensive Coordinator, looks like he's about to punch someone and Coach Lombardo comes into the locker room and gives a speech and says, "Whose time is it? It's our time! They had their time back in the 90s." And then Coach Lombardo turns to Coach Pappas and says, "You know what to do." So Coach Pappas takes an Ignatius helmet, puts it on a water cooler, and takes a chair and smashes the helmet with it. He broke the chair. He broke the helmet. He broke the cooler. And I actually have part of that chair that he broke. So that's probably one of the best memories I have with the Holy War.¹⁸⁰

The St. Edward Eagles went on to defeat the Saint Ignatius Wildcats 28-7.

Adam Mendoza did not attend St. Edward as a student but has been welcomed into the St. Edward community. He is the primary play-by-play broadcaster for the Eagles Sports Network and also serves as the Head Freshman Team Baseball Coach. However, due to the Ohio spring weather in 2022, his team's first baseball game against their Wildcat rivals was cancelled. Mendoza spoke about the anticipation of opening the 2023 season against the Wildcats and what he will tell his young players, "Enjoy it. Play to your ability. It's a big moment but don't let it overwhelm you. Keep yourself in check and play the game. Everybody else is going to think of it as life and death. We just have to think of it as it's just another baseball game. Just play baseball."¹⁸¹ The consensus was that while this is a significant game for the teams – and there is an almost jittery excitement that swirls in the locker rooms – players and coaches have to remember to just play the same type

¹⁸⁰ M. Daugherty and C. Gibel, personal communications via in person interview, January 22, 2023.

¹⁸¹ A. Mendoza, personal communications via Zoom, March 2, 2023.

of game that they have practiced all season even though the entire season may very well be judged on just the one game.

The Crowd

As mentioned briefly before, this rivalry brings out a crowd. While the varsity football games will bring out over 10,000 fans each year, it is not the only level for which the fan base shows up. The freshmen and junior varsity games between St. Edward and Saint Ignatius will each have about 3,000 fans in the bleachers. The lower level Saint Ignatius football teams currently play their home games at Wasmer Field on the campus of Saint Ignatius. St. Edward's freshmen and junior varsity teams play their home games play at Brother James Everett CSC Stadium on the north part of the St. Edward campus, commonly referred to as The Backyard. Adam Mendoza commented on the draw that St. Edward and Saint Ignatius bring. "Everybody comes out of the woodwork. You can put the two schools on a basketball court and play ping pong. They did a couple years ago. They had 2,000 people watching a ping pong match. You could have them play tiddlywinks, and they're gonna get 2,000 people to pay to watch them play tiddlywinks. They will come out of the woodwork."¹⁸²

Hudak mentions the idea of the large crowds in the introduction of his 2005 book, *The Game of the Year*. "By the time game night rolls around you can be assured of a few things. For one, the game was probably a sellout within a few hours of the tickets going on sale the Monday before the game... For another, even if you have a ticket, you might just find yourself standing along the fence around the playing field, and standing seven or eight deep at that, for a ticket does not necessarily guarantee a seat at this game. And the reason that the stadium is so packed, and

¹⁸² A. Mendoza, personal communications via Zoom, March 2, 2023.

packed a good hour and a half before kickoff, is because those lucky enough to be in attendance know that they will be seeing one of the best games of the season.”¹⁸³

There is a reason that attending this football rivalry game was listed on Cleveland Magazine’s list of 50 Things Every Clevelander Must Do in 2015.¹⁸⁴ It describes the Holy War in just a few short sentences, “Bred at family gatherings and on grade school playgrounds, the annual rivalry divides cousins, friends and even brothers.” The draw of the Holy War appeals to local professional athletes and coaches. Browns Head Coach, Kevin Stefanski, was spotted standing on the sidelines, watching the November 11, 2022 playoff game between the Eagles and the Wildcats, enduring the rain and cold to watch one of the top games in the state, even though he did not have a son involved in the game.¹⁸⁵ The February 3, 2023 basketball Holy War was played at Saint Ignatius, and the Wildcats ruined the Eagles’ perfect season in front of Cleveland Cavalier stars Donovan Mitchell and Darius Garland, the Cavaliers’ associate head coach Greg Buckner (whose son plays on the Saint Ignatius basketball team), Cavaliers head coach J.B. Bickerstaff, and Browns head coach Kevin Stefanski. It’s not commonplace among high school rivalries anywhere in the country to say it is normal to have the city’s professional athletes and head coaches in attendance.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ Hudak (2005)

¹⁸⁴ Cleveland Magazine Staff. *50 Things Every Clevelander Must Do* (2015).

¹⁸⁵ Barstool Cleveland (2022). [Tweet].

¹⁸⁶ Goul (2023)

Chapter 6: *Impact of the Rivalry*

First Taste of the Rivalry

For many people, their first interaction with the Holy War rivalry is as a grade school kid. It could be from growing up with a dad who attended one of the schools or going with friends to enjoy the game, if you were lucky enough to get tickets. There is usually a Holy War game from childhood that is a memory to be shared for years to come. For me personally, I grew up attending the Holy War but my most memorable experience was the 2015 game. I had experienced both St. Edward and Saint Ignatius football games prior to that point, but before 2015 they had simply been exciting games...until that Halloween day at First Federal Lakewood Stadium. I was in my first full season of working with my dad on the ACP Productions radio broadcasts. Before we arrived at the stadium for the afternoon kickoff, my dad, his broadcast partner (Bryan Hoffart), Bryan's son (Matt), and I went out to eat. That was when I realized just how many "war stories" my dad and Bryan could tell about the Holy War. Sitting up in the press box, I realized how extensive interest in the game was as the press box was filled to capacity and beyond with all the media members crowded in to cover the game. However, while I was excited and enthralled with working my first Holy War, Bryan Hoffart tells a different story of that Holy War. In the fourth quarter, Hoffart got a text that a friend of his had passed away. "He was a very lifelong friend of mine from Saint Ignatius. I had met him as a freshman in 1976. And I knew he wasn't doing well with leukemia. I got a text message that said he passed away during the fourth quarter and I'm just glad [Ed Daugherty] was able to pick up the ball for quite a while on our broadcast...I remember during his funeral, his brother said that the last thing Mike did was listen to the Ed's – Ignatius game on the radio."¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁷ B. Hoffart, personal communication via Zoom, January 20, 2023

During the ACP Productions radio broadcast of the regular season game in 2022, Daugherty and Hoffart discussed their first memories of the Holy War. Daugherty said his first memory of going to the St. Edward – Saint Ignatius game would have been with his dad during the 1985 season, when he was in middle school. Hoffart brought up the game ten years earlier as his first memory. The 1975 match-up, when Hoffart was in eighth grade. During that game, he remembers thinking “that Ed’s team was a machine. They pounded Ignatius.”¹⁸⁸

Vince McKee recalled his first experience with the Holy War when I interviewed him. “So it’s a story of excitement and disappointment all in one. I did not know my cousins didn’t play football. My mom comes in the house on a Friday night in 1988. I was six. My mom says ‘Hey, we’re going to see cousin Tony play tonight.’ I’m like ‘okay’ thinking that he’s playing football. He’s going to be a linebacker or running back. We show up at the game. It’s Ignatius vs Ed’s. It’s my first taste of high school football. I’m immediately hooked. And there’s cousin Tony...in the band. So yeah, I was a little disappointed in that moment... And like I said, at six years old in 1988, I was hooked.”¹⁸⁹

Friendships Over School Lines

Friendships are fostered at a young age at the multitude of Catholic grade schools, particularly on the West Side of Cleveland. The elementary school playground is a great place to start facing off against your friends over a friendly game of touch football, dodgeball, or kickball. But the Catholic schools also provide the opportunity to compete in the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) sports leagues, playing football, basketball, baseball, and other organized

¹⁸⁸ Daugherty, E. & Hoffart, B. (2022) [Radio broadcast]; The two men also talked about several other key games that they remembered watching or broadcasting, including the 1991 game (Daugherty’s senior year) and the 1993 game (considered the best game in the rivalry as it went to triple overtime).

¹⁸⁹ V. McKee, personal communications via Zoom, December 20, 2023.

sports. When young men choose to attend either St. Edward High School or Saint Ignatius High School, the friendships built in the eight or nine years of grade school may fall on different sides of the rivalry. These types of friendships across school lines are common. This portion of the thesis will focus on two sets of friends: the pair of Caden Kolesar (St. Edward '19) and Tommy Eichenberg (Saint Ignatius '19) and Matt Daugherty (St. Edward '24) and Christopher Gibel (Saint Ignatius '24).

Kolesar and Eichenberg had their first shared football experience during recess at Dover Elementary School in Westlake as Eichenberg played quarterback and Kolesar played defense in a playground game of football, but they also grew up playing travel baseball and youth football together.¹⁹⁰ Heading into the week ten 2018 Holy War, which was played at FirstEnergy Stadium in downtown Cleveland, the pair of seniors at the time were featured in a Cleveland.com article about how they had a friendship across the school lines. The two of them would both play on the defensive side of the ball in their high school years. Kolesar spoke to Cleveland.com reporter Matt Goul on the Monday prior to their week ten match-up, stating “It’s a little awkward. We don’t know how to talk to each other this week,” and Eichenberg confirmed the hesitance saying that they would usually call or text each other during the other weeks of the football season and that the rivalry week dynamic is “kind of weird.”¹⁹¹ However Kolesar also stated, “It’s just kind of weird seeing him in that different uniform, but it’s also fun because you get to have those bragging rights.”¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ Prior to the recess pick-up game, Kolesar had preferred to play soccer before changing to the game of football.

¹⁹¹ Goul, M. (2018, October 24). *Caden Kolesar and Tommy Eichenberg: a lifelong friendship woven into the St. Edward – St. Ignatius football rivalry*. Cleveland.com. <https://www.cleveland.com/highschoolsports/article/caden-kolesar-and-tommy-eichenberg-a-lifelong-friendship-woven-into-the-st-edward-st-ignatius-football-rivalry/>

¹⁹² Goul (2018).

The rivalry hype and their friendship were certainly a story worth reporting for the week ten finale of the 2018 regular season, but the two players would meet again just one week later for the first week of the playoffs. While Saint Ignatius got the win at FirstEnergy Stadium in the week ten game, St. Edward would win the playoff game a week later to advance, and eventually went on to win the 2018 state championship. While the two young men had the two sides of the Holy War rivalry covered, the idea of facing each other in a rivalry did not end when they graduated high school. They would both go on to play football in college in another legendary rivalry, with Eichenberg attending The Ohio State University as a Buckeye and Kolesar becoming a Wolverine for the University of Michigan.¹⁹³

Profiling another story of friendship that crosses the boundaries of the Holy War rivalry, St. Edward junior Matt Daugherty and Saint Ignatius junior Christopher Gibel have been friends since first grade, where they both attended one of the West Side Catholic grade schools. Prior to sitting down for a formal interview, the two young men shared stories of how they would ride together to Holy War athletic events (for any of the sports, not just football), would walk into the arena together, sit on their respective sides of the game, ride home together with one bragging over the other depending on the win, and then go out to play a few friendly holes of golf together. The rivalry will even make its way onto the golf course with the one who out drove the other bragging that his school is better simply because his golf ball landed a few yards ahead.

To better understand the ways that the rivalry plays a part in their friendship, I wanted to interview Daugherty and Gibel together to be able to observe how they interacted with each other when discussing the rivalry. The two grew up playing baseball and flag football together at St.

¹⁹³ *Tommy Eichenberg*. (2022) The Ohio State University Athletics. <https://ohiostatebuckeyes.com/sports/m-footbl/roster/season/2023-spring/tommy-eichenberg/>; *Caden Kolesar*. (2022) University of Michigan Athletics. <https://mgoblue.com/sports/football/roster/caden-kolesar/24374>

Bernadette grade school. Throughout the more than thirty minutes of conversation with the two, there were constant little smirks and remarks about how “I go to the better school” and other good-natured ribbing about the rivalry.¹⁹⁴ There were even moments that Daugherty and Gibel argued over specific play calls and coaching decisions from games in years past. Both grew up surrounded by the rivalry. Daugherty grew up the son of a St. Edward alumnus who had previously done radio broadcasting for Saint Ignatius, so Daugherty grew up seeing both sides, but always knowing that he would be an Eagle. Gibel had multiple family members attend Saint Ignatius, including his father and older brother, Daniel, and he felt as though he had insider knowledge of the school and athletics before he was even a student. Gibel stated, “But it’s all healthy debate. Even most of Ignatius will say they hate Ed’s during Holy War week, but we don’t actually hate them. It’s just all a part of the fun.” When Daugherty responded, “Obviously I’d rather be at Ed’s than Ignatius,” they returned to the good-natured trash talking between the schools.¹⁹⁵

Impact Beyond the Education

Almost every alumnus that I interviewed brought up the idea that it is a choice to attend either St. Edward or Saint Ignatius. Many agreed that for a young man who chooses to join one of the two communities, there will be a certain expectation of academic rigor but also the culture and brotherhood that will last long beyond graduation. With each alumnus I asked the rather open ended question of “What do you value most from your time at St. Edward or Saint Ignatius now as an alumnus of the school? Do you think you learned any life lessons or ‘got a tool in your toolbox’ that you have used in your adult or professional career that was first introduced to you

¹⁹⁴ M. Daugherty & C. Gibel, personal communications via in person conversation, January 23, 2023.

¹⁹⁵ M. Daugherty & C. Gibel, personal communications via in person conversation, January 23, 2023.

during your high school years?” I got varying responses but all of the interviewees had something to say about how St. Edward or Saint Ignatius had prepared them for life.

Timothy Hudak told me that what impacted him the most was actually from his first day at Saint Ignatius in the fall of 1960, “The first day we were at school, they gave us this little pamphlet that said ‘Do It Right’ and I think that pretty much sums up what the experience meant to me. I’ve been an umpire for softball...and sometimes umpires will fudge the rules. And I’m thinking, well how can you do that because then you have to balance it out the other way. You just play by the rules. And the same thing when I’m writing my history books...So I think just that attitude of doing it right was one key thing that I got from my time at Ignatius, and it has just stuck with me.”¹⁹⁶

A Saint Ignatius graduate from the class of 1981, Eric Pfaff, responded with a more cultural aspect of going to the school. “What really sets them apart – what did back then, what does today, and what really helped me out – was just getting down there in that atmosphere and meeting kids from seven different counties, and then being able to go in there with a core group of friends from your grade school, but you come out with tons more friends all over the city. And I think that’s what’s helped me most as I’ve grown up, not just that I’ve got friends from all over the place, but that I learned how to get out of my comfort zone and meet others. I think both of my two kids, the one that has graduated and the one that is still there, they say that all the time. The easy part is hanging with your friends from grade school, that’s the comfortable part, but I think by reaching out and branching out, that’s what changed me and that’s the difference-maker for me.”¹⁹⁷

Ed Daugherty, St. Edward class of 1992, also talked about the connections made during his time at St. Edward but more impactful for him was the wide connection with an alumni base from

¹⁹⁶ T. Hudak, personal communication via phone call, January 13, 2023.

¹⁹⁷ E. Pfaff, personal communication via phone call, February 17, 2023.

both schools. “I think just having the foundation of that school to be able to say that I attended that school, gives you a step up in this area. The idea that you went to St. Ed’s or you went to Saint Ignatius, there’s a little bit of lift to that. You keep it on your resume, because there’s a chance you may have a conversation starter with it. It does generate – if you’re trying to network – the network availability is huge. The schools offer that, so if you’re looking for a roofer, if your need a new job, if you’re looking to reconnect, the Alumni Association offers a lot of stuff and that’s the kind of thing you don’t get in the public schools. But the network and the conversation starters from the name of the school and then the instant connection [even] to your “enemy” also drives a lot of that.”¹⁹⁸

However, there was one response that really caught my attention. Carmen Angelo is a member of the St. Edward class of 1986 and his response to this question went much deeper. He discussed how he is in recovery with a sobriety date of June 27, 1993, and he says it is due to his time at St. Edward that he is still alive. Interestingly enough, Carmen talked about how the school taught him to do things the right way, similar to what Hudak mentioned even though they went to opposite schools and in different decades.

I mentioned earlier in this interview that I'm in recovery [currently]. When I was at St. Ed’s, I wasn't the best student. I wanted to have fun... and things got a little out of hand with me toward the end of my high school years and early in my college years. But St. Ed’s planted a seed in me that I didn’t realize at the time but I ended up surrendering to the Lord, asked Him for His help and putting down the booze. I had a lot of problems when I was at St. Ed’s all of which were self-inflicted. And I thought the people that were [at St. Edward], were just being idiots to me and

¹⁹⁸ E. Daugherty, personal communications via in person interview, January 10, 2023.

mistreating me. Little did I know that those people were the ones who loved me the most and that seed that St. Ed's had planted in me ultimately sprouted and the place, you know, ended up saving my life. And everything that I didn't realize I was learning at St. Ed's during my four years there. On June 27, 1993, [my sobriety date] it started to really come into play with how I've lived my life [since]. And it's because of St. Ed's that I'm sitting here talking to you, otherwise, six of my classmates would have been my pallbearers that dropped me in the ground if I hadn't chosen to make a seismic lifestyle change. But the athletics, the football, the hockey, the wrestling, the baseball, the basketball, that's all great, but at the end of the day when we get out of there, typically we got another forty-five years of life to live, and we got to do it the right way. Everything that I didn't realize I was learning at St. Ed's at the time ultimately came to the forefront and allowed me to live a sober life, ultimately get married, and have four beautiful children. And I would like to think it made me somewhat of a decent guy. St. Ed's put me in a position to live. I can be no clearer.¹⁹⁹

Regardless of whether a young man played on the football team, or any other sports team, or did not play any sport at all at either St. Edward or Saint Ignatius, the education and community connections have an impact on the lives of the young men even well after they are handed their diploma and walk across the stage at graduation. It seems to truly be a lifelong connection and one that is valued much more than many other adults feel toward their high school alma mater.

¹⁹⁹ C. Angelo, personal communications via phone call, December 18, 2022.

Chapter 7: *Legacy of the Rivalry*

“Your Senior Year”

Senior year of high school has many memorable events and emotions, but for St. Edward and Saint Ignatius graduates, the Holy War of their senior year is a topic that comes up anytime alumni are gathered, whether the alumnus played football or simply followed the team closely. The significance that gets attributed to the senior year Holy War can even impact students from other schools, students like me.²⁰⁰ I was enthralled with the St. Edward football team my senior year of high school, as a fan and as a member of the local sports media. I remember how in the fall of 2018, the teams met at FirstEnergy stadium to close the regular season and then the underdog Eagles won just a week later in the playoff version of the Holy War. The St. Edward team would go on to win the State Championship, but the feeling and memory of that year’s two Holy War games will always stick with me.

Saint Ignatius class of 1980 alumnus Bryan Hoffart describes why he thinks the Holy War in one’s senior year can be referred to so often among the graduates of the program, “It always is a way to mark time and a lot of it is because when you go through the years, as you become an adult, and meet other guys that played there, one measurement stick will always be ‘Well, how’d you guys do against Ed’s?’ and I’m sure at Ed’s it’s ‘How’d you guys do against Ignatius?’ But marking time by [saying something like] ‘I remember your year. You guys were the ones that won [the State Championship], but you didn’t beat them’.”²⁰¹

Other interviewees I spoke with about the notion of telling time based on their senior year and the legacy of the program mentioned how often it comes up within the collective alumni

²⁰⁰ I graduated from Magnificat High School, an all-girls Catholic college-preparatory high school in Rocky River, Ohio, class of 2019.

²⁰¹ B. Hoffart, personal communication via Zoom, January 20, 2023

community. Adam Mendoza framed it as “By class, the legacy is, how many times did you beat Saint Ignatius? Were you a class that beat them your freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior year? That’s how each of these classes look at legacy.”²⁰² A current Eagle senior, Michael Kilbane, discussed how he believes his class will look back on their senior year. The Class of 2023 on the St. Edward football team went 30-2 in their junior and senior years combined, won two state championships, and beat Saint Ignatius all three times they faced them. Kilbane describes his fellow seniors as being the class to really get the ball rolling for the Eagles’ big winning streak and being one of the most dominant groups they have ever had. He fondly reminisced about discussing the concept of the senior class legacy on the bus ride to the 2022 state championship game with Defensive Coordinator Coach Pete Pappas.²⁰³

My conclusion is that what the team does in your senior year is a legacy aspect that will stick with you for the remainder of your life. It can also be a measuring point when meeting other alumni, no matter which school, because of the connection to different generations of the game. When you see a stranger in the grocery store or at work wearing a piece of school gear, no matter if it is the same as yours, you will bring up your senior year and the Holy War. It is a legacy that goes into the record books of the community on the West Side of Cleveland.

Legacy of the Coaches & Programs

The 2022 season provided additional stories beyond what happened on the field and during the games, as both head coaches played an extra role in the legacy of their respective programs. The 2022 season held special meaning for the Saint Ignatius football community as it was announced that Head Coach Chuck (‘Chico’) Kyle would retire at the end of the season after

²⁰² A. Mendoza, personal communication via Zoom, March 2, 2023.

²⁰³ M. Kilbane, personal communication via Zoom, January 9, 2023.

serving in that position since 1983. Kyle played as a Wildcat for Saint Ignatius from 1965 to 1968 (graduating in 1969) but because of the hiatus in the series, he never played against St. Edward. In the December 2021 press release announcing Kyle’s upcoming retirement, the school offered some legendary statistics for their legendary coach, “Under his leadership, the Wildcats have won a record 11 OHSAA State Championships, four national titles, and [377] wins. “Chico” was named Nike National Coach of the Year in 2001, Schutt National Coach of the Year in 2008, Ohio Associated Press Coach of the Year four different times and was inducted into the Greater Cleveland Sports Hall of Fame in 2013. MaxPreps named him the sixth greatest high school football coach of all time in 2018. What’s more, he has guided the Track & Field program for nearly 50 years, collecting two state titles along the way. Kyle also received the *Magis* Award, the school’s highest honor, in 2012.”²⁰⁴

Saint Ignatius football has had a long, storied history and a large portion of the Holy War history since its resumption has involved Chuck Kyle – in just the second year after the renewal (1972), Kyle joined the coaching staff as an assistant coach, so he has been on the sidelines for eleven Holy Wars as an assistant coach and forty-five Holy Wars as the Head Coach.²⁰⁵ There is often talk that while the Holy War will continue, many people will find it slightly odd that Kyle will not be on the sidelines leading the Wildcats. In the ten seasons between 1988 and 1997, Kyle led his team to 125 wins and only nine losses – in that time frame, he had five undefeated seasons, seven State Championships, a State Runner Up Title, finished six seasons ranked number one in the National Associated Press Poll, and three National Championships.²⁰⁶ The Ohio High School

²⁰⁴ *Legendary Teacher and Coach Chuck Kyle '69 Plans to Retire.* (2021); the total number of wins for Chuck Kyle’s football program has been updated for the purposes of this paper from when the article was published to include his final season wins as well.

²⁰⁵ Mertens, J. 2022 *Saint Ignatius Football Media Guide.*

²⁰⁶ Mertens, J. 2022 *Saint Ignatius Football Media Guide.*

Athletic Association keeps record of Most Coaching Wins, All-Time in the state; Chuck Kyle ranks fourth on the list with his 377 total wins.²⁰⁷

On the other side of the 2022 rivalry, is Head Coach Tom Lombardo, who was hired to lead the Eagles ahead of the 2015 season. Not only was there the predictable pressure of succeeding as a new coach, but St. Edward was also the defending Division I Football State Champion (winning the title in 2014). Lombardo had previous experience coaching high school football in Ohio. From 1999-2001 he was the Head Coach at Lake Catholic High School (Mentor, Ohio), and that included winning the Division III State Championship in his last year there. Over the next five seasons, he transitioned to being an assistant coach at area high schools. From 2007 through 2014, Lombardo was the head coach for the Medina (Ohio) Highland Hornets. Since taking the helm for the Eagles, he has won eighty-nine games and lost only fifteen.²⁰⁸ In his eight seasons at St. Edward, he has won four state titles at the Division I level, and three of those championships seasons had just one loss per season. In context of the rivalry, Lombardo has won seven of the eleven games against the Wildcats. While his coaching career at St. Edward pales in comparison in length to Kyle's, Tom Lombardo has already seen immense success with the Eagles.

However, the other aspect of the coaches is the general legacy of the coaches over the years. As Adam Mendoza put it, "As I look at the legacy of these coaches, [I ask] what have they done and what is their mark on the program, either at St. Edward or Saint Ignatius? Where is this going

²⁰⁷ *Football State Records*. (2021). OHSAA. Retrieved February 24, 2023, from <https://www.ohsaa.org/sports/staterecords/football#coaching>; Suter, R. (2022, August 21). *Steubenville's Saccoccia sets Ohio high school record with opening win*. USA Today. <https://usatodayhss.com/2022/steubenvilles-saccoccia-sets-ohio-high-school-record-with-402-wins>; Carey, T. (2022, November 11). *Iconic Saint Ignatius football coach Chuck Kyle's career ends with 28-7 loss to rival St. Edward in regional semifinals*. WKYC Studios. <https://www.wkyc.com/article/sports/high-school/hs-football/saint-ignatius-football-coach-chuck-kyle-career-ends-28-7-loss-st-edward-regional-semifinals/95-603aa0b4-9f4a-464f-a612-297c348d5952>

²⁰⁸ In Lombardo's total head coaching career, he has an overall record of 178-53. At Lake Catholic High School (Mentor, Ohio), Lombardo won twenty-eight of his thirty-seven games. At Medina Highland High School (Medina, Ohio), he coached the Hornets to sixty-one wins and just twenty-nine losses.

to go into the future, is it going to be a continued run for St. Ed's or will Saint Ignatius finally have that opportunity to knock us off our pedestal? And you have to keep that energy and you got to keep up that level of excellence at such a high rate and it goes for all the programs, doesn't matter what sport it is. You want to beat them." Mendoza has a unique perspective of the legacy of the rivalry because he not only sees it as a member of the media for the majority of the Eagles athletic teams but he is also a coach for the freshman baseball team at St. Edward. From a coaching perspective he added, "If you're going to [play for] St. Ed's, the coach will say 'What are your goals?' well you want to win a state championship, but one of the top two or three [responses] is 'beat Saint Ignatius' and it doesn't matter what program it is. That's what I'll tell my kids on the freshman team, 'What's our goal? Beat Saint Ignatius'."209

The coaches, especially after the 2022 season, have left their own legacy on the programs with their wins and state championships, but also on the players through their attitudes and personal characteristics. These young men look to the coaches to not only guide the team in skill, but also how to behave for their rivalry game(s). The lessons learned on the football field from the coaches will often stick with players long after their playing days are over and they have graduated from their respective high schools.

Family Legacy at the Schools

While almost any school could have students who had parent(s) also attend the same school, at St. Edward and Saint Ignatius High Schools' family legacy is a significant facet of not only the schools but also the football programs. In researching how many students currently enrolled in each school represent the 'legacy' population, it's important to note that the two schools

²⁰⁹ A. Mendoza, personal communication via Zoom, March 2, 2023.

calculate legacy differently. St. Edward’s Director of Development, Traci Zahn, explained that for the classes of 2023, 2024, 2025, and 2026 (the current student body) twenty-two percent are considered legacy students, using the St. Edward High School definition for legacy students as those who had a father, grandfather, or great-grandfather graduate from the school.²¹⁰ Saint Ignatius’ Admissions Director Pat O’Rourke (Saint Ignatius class of 1990) stated that Saint Ignatius identifies forty-four percent of their current student population as legacy students, however their definition is slightly different.²¹¹ Saint Ignatius High School defines a legacy student not only as a student with a father, grandfather, or great-grandfather who attended, but also an uncle, cousin, or older brother who has already graduated from the school. It is worth noting when comparing these numbers that Saint Ignatius was founded in 1886 and St. Edward in 1949, meaning that there could be five or even six generations of a family to have attended Saint Ignatius, but St. Edward may only have three, possibly four generations attend the school to date.

“There is a sense of generational legacy, not only for the football program, but for the students attending these schools. The sense of rivalry, and the house divided aspect of ‘this is an Eagle household only’ or ‘there are only Wildcats in our family,’ shares similarities to the big college football rivalry between The Ohio State University and The University of Michigan.”²¹² When examining the all-time rosters of both the Wildcats and the Eagles, there are family names that will consistently show up, showing the family legacy within the programs as well. Gibbons, Haddad, and Pfaff are names that have multiple generations for the Wildcats, and they also had father, son, uncle, cousin, and brothers play for the same coach – Chuck Kyle. Kilbane, Kennedy, and the Andrews families are multi-generational Eagles that have played on the gridiron for the

²¹⁰ T. Zahn, personal communication via email, February 21-22, 2023.

²¹¹ P. O’Rourke, personal communication via phone call, February 22, 2023.

²¹² Daugherty (2020).

green and gold. The family legacy impact is not always felt as much by the players on the field as it is by their families in the stands. While Eric Pfaff played for the blue and gold Wildcats, beating their rival in his junior year, he talked about the chances he had to sit and watch the younger generations as an alumni and a family member, “[Those games were] more fun to watch, but it was more nerve wracking watching when my nephew [Alex Lambrinides ‘05] and my son [Joey Pfaff ‘22], play for Saint Ignatius. It is more nerve wracking when you’re up in the stands [than on the field as a player].”²¹³

Ed Daugherty also recounted what he has heard others say about watching their own sons play and he has now experienced it firsthand.

I saw it with my [broadcast] partner, Mike Gibbons. For a long time, we were at games, [broadcasting], in which Mike’s three sons, Ryan, Connor, and Mikey, all played. It was a unique experience for Mike. He was a player, then to get to see his kids play. That was a cool thing for him. So now, this year was my chance to get to see that, to see [my own son] Matt dress, run on the field, be part of the roster, have him on my spotting charts [a reference document used by broadcasters]. It was something I didn’t do [myself]. I didn’t play at Ed’s because of injuries in grade school...but it is kind of cool to see Matt go through the process, get the jersey, go to his games as a freshman, go to his JV games, and now have him on the official [varsity] roster, broadcast his games, but also go to the playoff games as a parent and watching him play [has been] a different but rewarding experience. But for next year, his senior year, I am going to pass off [some of my own] play-by-play work with the broadcast so that I can be at all of his games, but still be able to call some

²¹³ E. Pfaff, personal communication via phone call, February 17, 2023.

of his games on the radio that fall into our broadcast schedule [including the Holy War].”²¹⁴

Respect Between Rivals

The *RIVALS* docuseries focuses on the rivalry between Ohio State and Michigan on the football field. Breaking down the ten components of a rivalry consumes nearly two hours of the production, after which the producers of the docuseries ask the contributors what the difference is between a rival and an enemy. Fox Sports football analyst Joe Klatt answered, “An enemy – I want them destroyed. A rival – deep down I know I need them.”²¹⁵ Archie Griffin, who is the only college football player to win two Heisman Trophies, spoke as a former Buckeye, “I don’t hate That Team Up North, but I don’t want them to ever beat us.”²¹⁶ In speaking with a dozen people about the Holy War for this research, I believe that both of these statements, while specifically made in reference to the Ohio State – Michigan football game and rivalry, apply equally to the rivalry between St. Edward and Saint Ignatius.

Part of having a rival, a worthy opponent, or a necessary adversary, is having respect for them. There have been several significant displays of respect between the Eagles and the Wildcats over the years, two of which were repeatedly brought up in interviews with players, alumni, and media members. One was in the final hour prior to the 2018 playoff game between St. Edward and Saint Ignatius, showing the respect Saint Ignatius’ Chuck Kyle had for St. Edward Head Coach Tom Lombardo and the idea that a worthy rival is worthy of fair play within the game. “Prior to the game starting, the St. Edward coaches noticed that their radios used to communicate with the

²¹⁴ E. Daugherty, personal communication via in person conversation, January 10, 2023.

²¹⁵ Karl (2022).

²¹⁶ Karl (2022).

coaches' press box wasn't working. Per OHSAA rules, Saint Ignatius was under no obligation to remove their own headsets and radio equipment. This would have given them a sizable advantage. Chuck Kyle chose to not use their equipment either, deciding it was the right thing to do. It was a classy move by Kyle that only strengthens his legacy.”²¹⁷ The Eagles won that game, and there is a big “what if” in the annals of history – what if Chuck Kyle had chosen to still use his team’s radio headsets. The history that is reflected in the record books is that the values of respect and fairness was more important. A few weeks after the 2018 playoff game, Lombardo sent a letter to the Saint Ignatius Athletics Department thanking Kyle for committing to respect and fair play with his classy move. (See Appendix C: Lombardo’s Letter for full letter)²¹⁸

Another show of respect came from the St. Edward side towards the Saint Ignatius side. Again, the two teams met in the playoffs, this time four years later, in the 2022 playoff game at Euclid Community Stadium. “This was the way Chuck Kyle would’ve wanted to go out: Battling his bitter (but respected) rival one more time.”²¹⁹ St. Edward would come out victorious 28-7, and again would go on to win the State Championship like they had done in 2018. The loss meant that Chuck Kyle’s 40-year career as the Head Coach for the Wildcats came to an end. When the clock hit zero and the players shook hands on the midfield line, Lombardo and Kyle would meet and share an embrace. The St. Edward team then came over to pay their respects to the venerable coach. Even as retirement was upon him, Kyle encouraged the Eagles to go win the state tournament and Lombardo congratulated the coach and thanked him for being a role model in the sport.²²⁰ “I feel that there was respect for what I tried to do in my career – [I actually] don’t call it a career, [I call

²¹⁷ McKee, V. (2022) *Northeast Ohio High School Football Rivalries: A History*. The History Press.

²¹⁸ Hudak (2022).

²¹⁹ Carey (2022).

²²⁰ SIHS Sports [@SIHSSports] (2022, November 11). *FB: A great showing by @SEHS_FOOTBALL as they show their respect to Head Football Coach Chuck Kyle! #GoCats #AMDG* [tweet and video]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/SIHSSports/status/1591265310589718530>

it] my vocation, because that's what it was for me," were Kyle's words to television reporters after the game.²²¹

Both coaches have shown respect throughout their careers and the respect between the two schools have been consistent since the rivalry was revitalized in 1971 as even the fans are considered to be respectful of each other, no matter the results on the field. Respect is needed to continue to have a healthy and friendly rivalry, even beyond the Holy War football rivalry.

An Expected Connection & An Unexpected Legacy

Coming into this research, I had an idea of what type of answers I might hear and uncover for my research questions and interview questions, as I have grown up in a family, community, and work environment where this rivalry was part of the landscape. If I had not been involved in this rivalry with my dad and from such a young age, I don't know if I would have considered a career in sports as early in my life as I did, when I began to explore potential careers in my sophomore and junior years of high school. Without the Holy War, and all the elements of a rivalry that it encompasses, I don't know if I would have thought about working in the sports industry until perhaps my sophomore or junior year of college.

In my *Preface*, I made mention that I believe very few people could probably understand my view of high school football and my experience of working the high school football games while being a student. Someone who can share a similar view is Chris Mendoza, who I've gotten to know better as I worked through my past year of research, even though we first met many years ago. I was reminded that I have this connection with Chris when I began to discuss my research and the reason behind it with him in the press box during the 2022 football season. While he's

²²¹ WKYC Channel 3. (2022, November 11). *Career of Saint Ignatius football coach Chuck Kyle ends with 28-7 loss to rival St. Edward*. [video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=acZNPJr_iFg

currently a high school sophomore, Chris has grown up knowing St. Edward football because his dad did the broadcasts, similar to how I had grown up with insider knowledge of the press box and local high school football. In 2018, Chris started working the football games for St. Edward because of that family connection. For the 2022 season, Chris served as the official statistician for the St. Edward football team.

Since both Chris and I worked a majority of the games while we were high schoolers, we rarely had a chance to sit in the student section, but Chris brought up how he tries to get that perspective every so often, “I always want to go to the student section because I’m always in the [press] box, whether it’s football, basketball, hockey, sometimes wrestling, so anytime I do get the chance to go into the student section, I always take full advantage of it.”²²² For me, whenever I’m sitting in the stands instead of the press box during a game, I’m fidgety...I want updates on the game stats, I feel like I should be doing something – adjusting the sound quality, talking to the station, spotting which player had the tackle or is being examined by the trainer. I enjoy watching my brother play but for games where I’m just another fan in the stands, I’m not quite sure what to do with myself.

While I interviewed sportswriter Vince McKee, he shared a story with me that was completely unexpected, but also proves one of the research hypotheses I had at the beginning of this research. I knew part of what I wanted to explore in my research was the legacy aspect of the schools, especially with so many stories of fathers and sons playing for the same team during their high school years. Something else I wanted to try and prove along with the father-son relationship is that it is a family relationship that goes beyond player legacy. For a while, I felt as though the only evidence I had for that hypothesis was my own experience, which is rather rare and unique

²²² C. Mendoza, personal communication via Zoom, March 2, 2023.

within the rivalry. I had almost thought about just ignoring that angle of research, but then I opened up the interview with McKee to any questions that he had for me or any comments that he felt I needed to know that had been missed in our conversation. He shared with me information about an unexpected legacy that I apparently had a hand in.

On a personal note, I think it's awesome that a female has put this much attention into high school sports and football. Thank you. It's a positive message for my daughters...I started bringing [nine-year-old] Maggie with me to games a couple of years ago and now she's going to almost every game with me. And you are the reason why, I swear to you, because when I met your dad years ago, and I saw you [working with him in sports] – and you might have been in eighth grade, you were young. And I had just had a daughter, our first kid. Everyone was like, Vince, don't you want a son? And sure, I would love to have a son, but I remember seeing you, I mean this with all my heart. I remember seeing that and that's awesome. Like that could be me one day. So as the years have gone on, every time somebody sees Maggie with me at a game, I mention you and your dad and say I've seen this for years. That's the relationship I want with my daughter. It's been incredible.²²³

I would never have thought that I was creating a legacy for others to follow with my work with my dad and our broadcasts, but yet here is the proof I was looking for that the Holy War legacy is not just formed by father-son relationships. It brings other family members into the rivalry...and into the world of high school sports. Having the Holy War be at the center of this unexpected legacy is just further proof that it is a West Side community affair, especially when considering

²²³ V. McKee, personal communication via Zoom, January 12, 2023.

that McKee did not attend either St. Edward or Saint Ignatius, and his two daughters will also not be students at the schools.

Conclusion

Overall, this research enhances the existing history of high school sports in Cleveland as it examines not only individuals' personal connections to the schools, but also the lasting impacts and legacies that the Holy War rivalry brings. While I had prior knowledge of the rivalry and some of its infinite stories, I have been pleasantly surprised at how much the men I interviewed and researched have contributed to my knowledge of this rivalry, especially considering that I have approached this with the perspective of an (associated) outsider because I will never have the opportunity to play football or walk the halls of St. Edward and Saint Ignatius as a member of the rivalry.

As an outsider, I have been able to witness the lasting and widespread impact of this rivalry firsthand through my research. Whether I had known the interviewee prior to the interview request or not, they were excited and willing to share their experiences and memories of the Holy War. Their recollection of the lessons learned whether they were a student watching from the stands or a player watching from the sidelines is evidence of the permanent nature of this rivalry. The Holy War has solidified its place in Cleveland and Ohio sports history. This rivalry is special for the community, whether you are a little kid looking up to the players, a high schooler trying to beat his lifelong friend in the biggest game of the year, a parent watching your son play, or a retiree reflecting on the generations of stories that have come from the one game every year. The school names and logos are conversation starters around Northeast Ohio, weaving an even more interconnected story.

I believe there is a reason that sports rivalries should be studied, but one of the best ways I found to describe the reason why sports rivalries (at any level) are important to our society as a

whole comes from the *RIVALS* docuseries on the Ohio State – Michigan college football rivalry, in the ending monologue narrated by J.K. Simmons:

So, what have we learned from this rivalry? Well, we know we love to fight over borders and bad calls, recruits and Rose Bowls. But the more we fight, the better our story gets. And man, do we love a good story. But the stories are written by the winners. So, our rivals, they push us to perform like we never knew we could. We see ourselves in our rivals and that forces us to be different, to define ourselves, and to realize that not all rivals are enemies. Rivalries are all around us. So many in-groups, out-groups. Us vs them. Thankfully sports provide an endless number of them. And each one is a chance to examine not only who we are but who they are. Because the more we understand how we fight in here, maybe the less we will fight out there.²²⁴

²²⁴ Karl (2022).

Appendices

Appendix A: List of Interviews (listed in alphabetical order by last name)

Carmen Angelo – St. Edward Class of 1987; Safety and Linebacker for St. Edward football team for 1983-1985 seasons; current producer and broadcaster for WTAM 1100 in Cleveland and broadcaster for St. Edward Athletics on the Eagles Sports Network

Ed Daugherty – St. Edward Class of 1992; current broadcaster for local Cleveland high school football radio broadcasts on WHK-1420 (broadcaster for high school football since 2001); parent of a current St. Edward football and rugby player

Matt Daugherty – St. Edward Class of 2024; Offensive Lineman for the St. Edward football team for 2020-2023 seasons; legacy student as his dad attended the school (but did not play football); good friends with Christopher Gibel

Christopher Gibel – Saint Ignatius Class of 2024; legacy student as his dad and older brother attended the school as well; good friends with Matt Daugherty

Bryan Hoffart – Saint Ignatius Class of 1980; Defensive Back, Corner, and Safety on Saint Ignatius football team for 1976-1979 seasons; current broadcaster for local Cleveland high school football radio broadcasts on WHK-1420; member of The Great American Rivalry Series Hall of Fame Class of 2018

Timothy Hudak – Saint Ignatius Class of 1964; Cleveland area historian and author of multiple books on the history of the St. Edward – Saint Ignatius rivalry and school histories; also produces historical accounts for the Ohio High School Athletic Association

Michael Kilbane – St. Edward Class of 2023; Defensive End, Defensive Tackle, and Linebacker for St. Edward football team for 2019-2022 seasons; legacy player as both dad and older brother played on the team (as well as other family members)

Alex Lambrinides – Saint Ignatius Class of 2005; Middle linebacker for Saint Ignatius football team for 2001-2004 seasons; legacy student as grandfather and uncles attended the school

Vince McKee – North Olmsted High School Class of 2000; CEO & Founder of Kee On Sports Media Group covering multiple sports across Ohio; eleven-time published author, including his 2022 publication of *Northeast Ohio High School Football Rivalries* that highlights the Holy War

Adam Mendoza – Cleveland Central Catholic High School Class of 1983; Current broadcaster for St. Edward Athletics on the Eagles Sports Network; Acting Sports Information Director for St. Edward; Head Coach for St. Edward Freshman Baseball team; parent of current St. Edward baseball player

Chris Mendoza – St. Edward Class of 2025; Pitcher, Catcher, and Infielder for St. Edward baseball team; play-by-play broadcaster for St. Edward JV Sports on the Eagles Sports Network

Eric Pfaff – Saint Ignatius Class of 1981; Linebacker for the Saint Ignatius football team for 1979-1980 seasons; member of the Saint Ignatius Athletic Hall of Fame Class of 2020

Appendix B: Media Consent Forms & Releases

Media Consent Forms & Releases removed from version that has been prepared for public distribution

Contact author for additional information

Appendix C: Lombardo's Letter

(as published in *The Game of the Year: The Complete Story of the Intense Rivalry that is St. Ignatius – St. Edward Football: Supplement 2005-2022*)

Good morning,

On November 2, St. Ignatius played St. Ed's in round 1 of the OHSAA playoffs. About thirty minutes before the game, one of our assistant coaches, TJ Gallagher, informed me that our phones for communicating from the sideline to the press box were not working. To say the least, I was frantic. I really did not know proper protocol on that, as it has not happened to me in a long time, if ever. I knew the old rule was that if one team's phones went out, the other team was obliged to turn their headsets off. However, with the new wireless system and teams providing their own phones, I was not sure if that rule was in effect anymore. So, I just assumed that we would be without phones, while St. Ignatius would use their phones. As a last alternative, I told TJ to go over to Coach Kyle and explain what happened (mostly because I was too embarrassed to say anything).

When TJ came back over to me, he said St. Ignatius would not use their phones! TJ told me Coach Kyle DID NOT HESITATE in his response. Later in pre-game, I talked to Rory, and he confirmed.

As I had time to reflect and tell the story to other coaching colleagues, twice I heard the same thing happened and the opposing coaches did not do the same thing. They used their phone, while the opponent went without phones, which I guess is the proper ruling now.

Whether Coach Kyle's decision made a difference in the outcome of the game is debatable and frankly irrelevant. I just want to pass along the story because he may not have said anything. I'm not sure if it was the "right" thing to do by rule, but it was the HONORABLE thing to do, and taught me a valuable coaching lesson.

I've told anyone who would listen, that it was the classiest thing I ever witnessed in sports. I can't think of a better example of sportsmanship, especially with the high stakes of the playoffs on the line and how much the rivalry means to the alumni base of both schools.

As I reflect, I've learned something more valuable than any win or state championship. Now, I know what to do in the future if the shoe is on the other foot against any other opponent. Thank you coach for being a model for other coaches.

Have a blessed Christmas!

Tom Lombardo

Head Football Coach

St. Edward High School

Appendix D: Tables

Table 1: The three dimensions of rivalry and associated elements

Conflict	Peer	Bias
Parity (recent/historic)	Geography	Relative Dominance
Frequency of competition	Cultural similarity	Cultural difference
Defining moments	Competition for personnel	Unfairness
Star power		

Source: Tyler, B. D., Cobbs, J. & Xantos, Y. K. (2019). The Roots of Rivalry: Elements and Core Characteristics of Sport Rivalry. In C. T. Havard (Ed.), *Understanding Rivalry and It's Influence on Sports Fans* (pp. 1-37).

Table 2: All Holy War Results Through 2022 (winning team's score is bolded)

Date	St. Edward Score	Saint Ignatius Score	Location	Notes
10/17/52	12	41	West Tech Field	First Meeting
10/18/53	7	41	Eagles Stadium	
10/17/54	12	27	Eagles Stadium	
9/24/55	34	12	Eagles Stadium	Eagles' 1 st Win
9/22/56	6	33	West Tech Field	
9/20/57	7	40	Eagles Stadium	Rivalry is Paused
11/13/71	24	0	George Finnie Stadium	Rivalry is Renewed
9/15/72	14	7	Eagles Stadium	
9/14/73	14	13	John Marshall Field	
9/13/74	7	3	Eagles Stadium	
9/12/75	35	14	John Marshall Field	
9/17/76	2	0	Eagles Stadium	
9/16/77	23	11	John Marshall Field	
9/15/78	38	9	Fairview High School	
10/21/79	6	17	George Finnie Stadium	
10/11/80	11	0	Cleveland Municipal Stadium	
10/17/81	7	3	George Finnie Stadium	
10/16/82	26	7	George Finnie Stadium	
10/19/83	14	14	George Finnie Stadium	Only Tie in the Series
10/13/84	10	0	George Finnie Stadium	
10/12/85	12	0	First Federal Lakewood Stadium	

Date	St. Edward Score	Saint Ignatius Score	Location	Notes
10/11/86	5	14	George Finnie Stadium	
10/24/87	13	10	First Federal Lakewood Stadium	
10/22/88	7	14	First Federal Lakewood Stadium	
10/13/89	0	21	First Federal Lakewood Stadium	
10/13/90	0	47	First Federal Lakewood Stadium	
10/18/91	14	10	First Federal Lakewood Stadium	
10/24/92	0	28	First Federal Lakewood Stadium	
10/23/93	34	35	First Federal Lakewood Stadium	Triple Overtime
10/22/94	10	22	First Federal Lakewood Stadium	
10/20/95	10	27	First Federal Lakewood Stadium	
10/19/96	12	9	First Federal Lakewood Stadium	Overtime
10/17/97	6	34	First Federal Lakewood Stadium	
10/23/98	7	38	First Federal Lakewood Stadium	
10/16/99	15	43	First Federal Lakewood Stadium	
10/13/00	0	37	First Federal Lakewood Stadium	
10/13/01	44	41	First Federal Lakewood Stadium	Overtime
10/12/02	2	25	Byers Field	
10/11/03	17	20	First Federal Lakewood Stadium	
10/16/04	10	26	Byers Field	
10/15/05	10	7	First Federal Lakewood Stadium	
10/14/06	21	13	Byers Field	

Date	St. Edward Score	Saint Ignatius Score	Location	Notes
10/26/07	14	19	First Federal Lakewood Stadium	
10/25/08	12	34	Byers Field	
11/1/08	0	37	Byers Field	Playoff Game
10/31/09	0	28	First Federal Lakewood Stadium	
10/30/10	33	10	Byers Field	
10/29/11	17	20	First Federal Lakewood Stadium	
11/12/11	17	20	Brunswick Judy Kirsch Field	Playoff Game
10/27/12	20	13	Byers Field	
10/19/13	17	23	First Federal Lakewood Stadium	
11/1/14	41	10	Byers Field	
10/31/15	35	28	First Federal Lakewood Stadium	
10/29/16	7	34	FirstEnergy Stadium	
11/18/16	31	38	Bedford Bearcat Stadium	Playoff Game, Overtime
10/28/17	17	20	First Federal Lakewood Stadium	
10/26/18	7	21	FirstEnergy Stadium	
11/2/18	21	19	Byers Field	Playoff Game
10/12/19	7	3	First Federal Lakewood Stadium	
9/19/20	17	0	FirstEnergy Stadium	
10/2/21	19	14	First Federal Lakewood Stadium	
10/1/22	48	6	Byers Field	
11/11/22	28	7	Euclid Community Stadium	Playoff Game

Table 3: Location of Holy War Stadiums

Stadium Name(s)	Stadium Address	No. of Games Played at Site	Stadium Notes
West Tech Field	2201 West 93 rd St., Cleveland, OH	2	West Tech High School closed after the 1994-95 school year. The school was repurposed into loft apartments. The field has been replaced by in-fill neighborhood housing
Eagles Stadium Br. James Everett CSC Stadium (Commonly referred to as The Backyard)	13500 Detroit Ave., Lakewood, OH	7	Located on the campus of St. Edward High School, Current home field for Freshman & JV football teams, as well as soccer, lacrosse, and rugby teams
George Finnie Stadium at Tressel Field	141 E Bagley Rd., Berea, OH	7	Located on the campus of Baldwin Wallace University
John Marshall Field	3952 West 140 th St., Cleveland, OH	3	Located on the campus of John Marshall High School, full field renovation completed in 2017 (Stadium structure was demolished)
Fairview High School Stadium James B. Daley Stadium	4507 West 213 th St., Fairview Park, OH	1	Located on the campus of Fairview High School. Stadium was renovated in 2006 (and named for team physician and school board member, James Daley) and again in 2014
Cleveland Municipal Stadium	1085 West 3 rd St., Cleveland, OH	1	Home of the Cleveland Browns & Cleveland Indians, closed in 1995, demolished in 1996

Stadium Name(s)	Stadium Address	No. of Games Played at Site	Stadium Notes
Lakewood Stadium First Federal Lakewood Stadium	1816 Bunts Rd., Lakewood, OH	26	Located on the campus of Lakewood High School, current home field of the St. Edward varsity football team, also home field for Lakewood High School. First Federal Lakewood Bank agreed to naming rights in December 2012
Byers Field at Robert Boulton Stadium	7600 Day Dr., Parma, OH	10	Current home field of the Saint Ignatius varsity football team, also home field for the three Parma public high schools Renovations have occurred in the 1950s, 1980s, 1990s with the installation of the artificial playing surface, and continual capital improvements between 2006 and 2015
Brunswick Judy Kirsch Field Brunswick Auto Mart Stadium (Current formal name is Brunswick Auto Mart Stadium at Judy Kirsch Field)	3581 Center Rd., Brunswick, OH	1	Located on the campus of Brunswick High School Brunswick Auto Mart car dealership purchased naming rights to the stadium in November 2011
Cleveland Browns Stadium FirstEnergy Stadium	100 Alfred Lerner Way, Cleveland, OH	3	Current home of the Cleveland Browns (opened in 1999)
Bedford Bearcat Stadium	481 Northfield Rd., Bedford, OH	1	Located on the campus of Bedford High School, current home field of Bedford High School
Euclid Community Stadium	22800 Tracy Ave., Euclid, OH	1	Located on the campus of Euclid High School, current home field of Euclid High School. Construction completed in 2018

Table 4: Great American Rivalry Series Hall of Famers

Year of Hall of Fame Induction	St. Edward Representative	Saint Ignatius Representative
2007	Joe Neroni	Eric Haddad
2009	Dan Andrews	Josiah Kedzior
2011	Bryan Flannery	Keith Laschinger
2013	Rodney Bailey	Dan O’Leary
2017	Mark Reichard	Tim Fitzpatrick
2018	Bob Lenart	Bryan Hoffart

Appendix E: Uniforms

St. Edward Eagles

Jerseys: Green or white

Pants: Yellow with green and white trim or white with green and yellow trim

Alternate Jersey: Black (introduced in 2021)

Alternate Pants: Black with black trim (introduced in 2021)

Helmet: Yellow helmet, with a white stripe flanked by green stripes, Green Bay Packers style oval E on both sides



Green jersey, yellow pants, traditional helmet

Photo credit: The Canton Repository



White jersey, white pants, traditional helmet

Photo credit: NEO Sports Insiders



Black jersey, black pants, traditional helmet

Photo credit: The Edsman (St. Edward High School newspaper)



Traditional helmet

Photo credit: The Ohio Helmet Project

Saint Ignatius Wildcats

Jerseys: Navy or white (in 1988 a tradition began that nameplates would be added to the jerseys for playoff games only)

Pants: Yellow with navy trim

Alternate Pants: Navy

Helmet: Yellow helmet, with a double navy stripe, traditional navy pawprint (in the style of the Clemson University Tigers) on either side



Navy jersey, yellow pants, traditional helmet

Photo credit: Saint Ignatius High School Athletics



Navy jersey, navy pants, traditional helmet

Photo credit: Cleveland.com



White jersey, yellow pants, traditional helmet

Photo credit: Saint Ignatius High School Athletics



White jersey with nameplate, yellow pants, traditional helmet

Photo credit: Michele Bobinski Photography



Traditional helmet

Photo credit: The Ohio Helmet Project

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