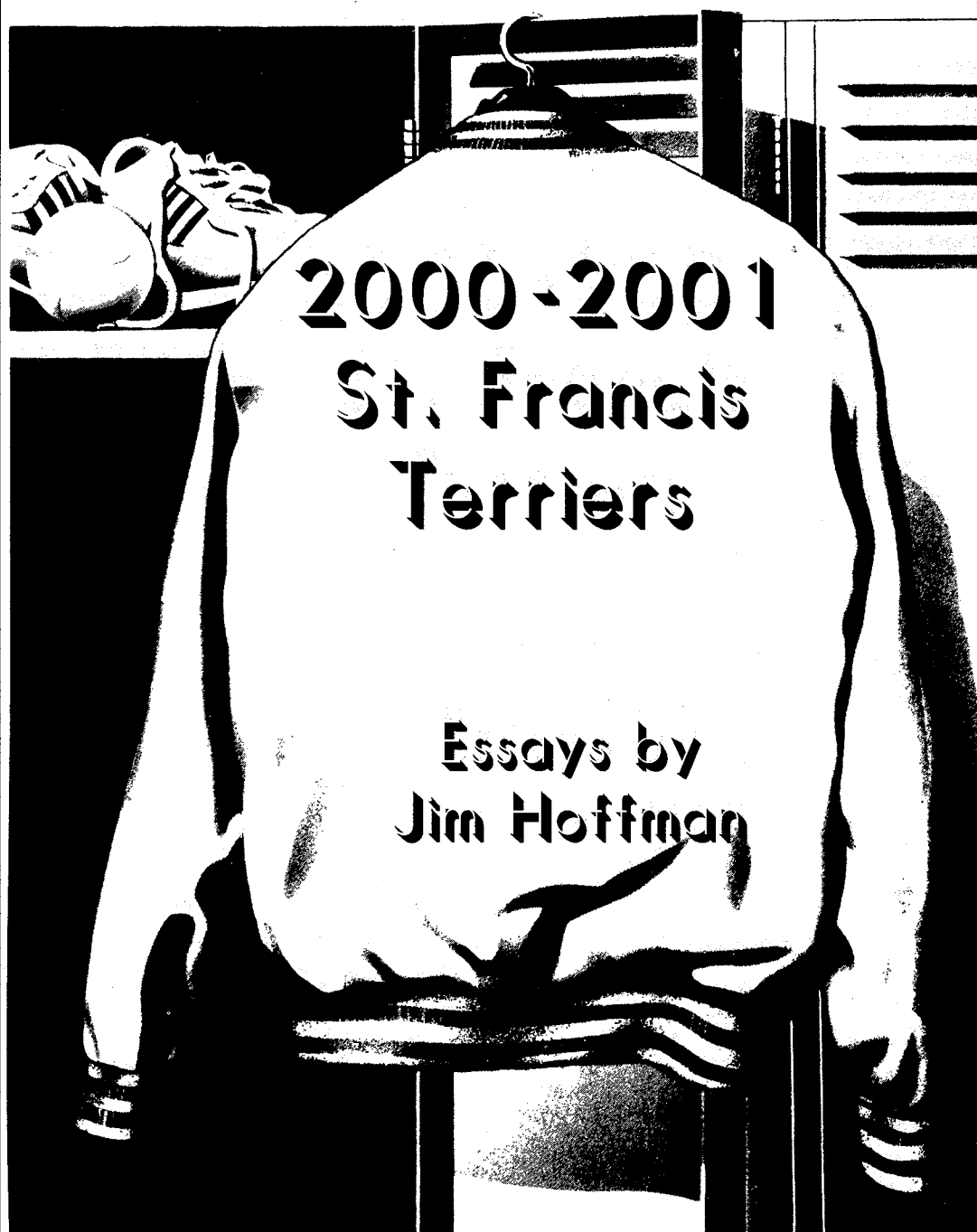
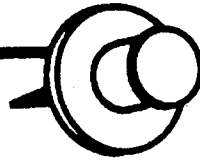


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*"Sports do not build character.
They reveal it."
Heywood Hale Broun*



Intercollegiate Athletics

The greatest sports stories are often those told about the underdog team that, lacking fancy uniforms and equipment, gets inspired by a fiery pep talk from a devoted coach and goes out and soundly trounces the opposition. Stories like this can be told time and time again in the history of sports at St. Francis. When there were little more than 100 students attending the college in the midst of the Great Depression, the basketball team alone racked up victory after victory against teams ten times its size. Then there was the time the swim team swept all first honors in a meet held at a borrowed pool. The football players had similar success without benefit of a home field.

Many outstanding "firsts" were chronicled in the sports pages of the college. St. Francis was the first college in the city of New York to sponsor a basketball team and the first Catholic college in the nation to start a lacrosse team. The school had integrated athletic teams several years before Jackie Robinson broke the racial barrier in professional sports. The first women's team quickly matched the successes of men, and, in fact, the leading all-time basketball scorer at St. Francis was a woman.

Perhaps St. Francis' teams are considered regional and even local by today's standards. Yet, several of them have participated in national tournaments, and have even seized

first-place victories. Some of the more talented athletes have been drafted by professional teams and invited to the Olympic trials. When college basketball was in its heyday, thousands of fans filled Madison Square Garden to cheer the St. Francis team. One of the key ingredients for success in sports at SFC has been the ability to change with the times, to infuse vitality into athletic endeavors, and to persevere in the face of overwhelming odds.

In an address to the Alumni Association in November, 1961, Most Rev. Dominic Coscia, O.F.M., Bishop of Jatai, Brazil, summed up the spirit that has always enabled St. Francis to compete successfully:

Franciscan spirit does not depend on the size of the school. It is something deeper, which is acquired from the friars. This school has always been a struggling man's college. The struggles the student has to undergo and the hardships he has to endure give him a better appreciation of the education he receives.

In no other area of college life was this more evident than in athletic competition. The St. Francis teams competed against schools with more money, better facilities, and bigger drawing power. Yet they still triumphed more often than not.

Essay by Ann Tracy,
taken from St. Francis College: The First One
Hundred Years