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Viking Athletic Association



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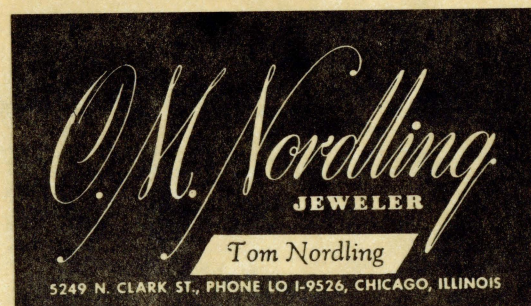
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1926 1986 Sixty Years In Sports



IT WAS on May 20, 1926 — sixty years ago — that seven young Swedes got together to form an athletic club, known first as the Liberty Ball Club. Their first acquisition was a soccer ball in order to engage in their favorite sport, not realizing at the time that they were laying the foundation for an athletic organization that would be recognized nationwide as the Viking Athletic Association. The group grew into four soccer teams and 150 members by 1928. Meetings were held in a haphazard fashion at any place available, but mostly at the home of Mrs. Theresa Strand, aunt of Viking's popular, ten-time president Ivar Strand.

Finally, in August, 1927, the group rented meeting quarters at 1706 Foster Avenue. In the first year of soccer play they landed on top in the fourth division. Gaining members and players as weeks went by, they fielded teams in the first, third and fourth divisions.

In 1928 a strong bowling team was added which was successful in adding trophies, also a gymnastic troupe was organized which put on exhibitions.

The year 1929 was a boom to the club, when the ladies formed an auxiliary to be known as the Girls of Viking Athletic Association. This group has throughout the years given loyal support in all ventures undertaken by the Association.

On June 6, 1930, the club changed its name to Viking Athletic Association, with soccer teams in the first, second and third divisions.

Year 1931 was the start of the Great Depression, causing a great loss to the club via club dues, collections and poor attendance at club functions. To top it off we were evicted from our club rooms at 1706 Foster Avenue. But determination and fortitude held forth to hold the membership together. For several seasons meetings were held wherever possible. And to top it all off, the soccer team ended up in last place.

On July 15, 1934, with the Swedish All-Stars vs. the Italian All-Stars (the Swedish All-Stars were all Vikings except one) the Thompson Trophy was won, and confidence was restored for the 1934-35 season, with the first and reserve teams taking the League titles.

In 1935 the Vikings took major and reserve division titles with the following players: Walter Norell, Jocke Johansson, Kurt Dahlen, Roland Beckman, Herbert Hawkinson, Helge Carlberg, Nels Brostrom, Folke Swanson, Hans Jensen, Nels Dahlquist, Einar Lindquist, Allan Lindstrand, John Swanson, Fritz Peterson, Fred Granquist, Sture Fors, John Granquist, Walter Peterson, Rudy Nystrom, Martin Erickson, Rudolph Peterson and Knut Magnuson.

Our present location was purchased and remodeled in 1940, with Lars Norman, being about the only one with a steady job, having to guarantee the mortgage. But with the Depression fading away, the mortgage was soon paid off. In the meantime our sports teams were gaining trophies in soccer, softball, golf, basketball and chess.

The 1945 major and state champions were Jimmy McDermott, Erne Kuehl, Steve Wisniewski, Hans Jensen, Borje Myllenberg, Nels Brostrom, Bill List, Kenneth Anderson, Einar Lindquist, Mons Sebby, Al O'Hare, Jocke Johansson (manager) and Ivar Abrahamson (trainer). Club president, Eric Haggberg; secretary, Nels Dahlquist.

In 1946 the Open Cup champions were Jock Johansson (manager), Andrew Hritz, Dick Arends, Steve Wisniewski, Nels Brostrom, Danny Dawson, Jimmy McDermott, Erne Kuehl, Jeff Coombes, Mons Sebby, Bill List, Einar Lindquist, Johnnie O'Boyle, Harry Phillips, Hans Jensen (captain), George Nemchik, Roscoe Anderson and Ivar Abrahamson (trainer). Club president, Elmer Stey; secretary, Nels Dahlquist.

It was also the year the softball players won 20 of 23 games played and the basket tossers took first place in the YMCA league.

The year 1947 was a bad one for soccer and softball, with the teams fighting to stay out of the cellar. It was in 1947 that the Viking A.A. golfers got started, and they have been screaming "fore" on various golf courses ever since. Club championships have been won by many members; however, Don McLean and Bert Peterson are tied with three club championships. Holes in one, a scarce commodity, have been shot by Bob ("Curly") Stieren, Ken Nye and Hjalmar ("Red") Kallman.

In 1948 the Vikings fought the Polish Americans for the league title, winning by a 2-1 score in a hard fought battle. They also won the Hines Veterans Hospital seven-a-side, beating Necaxa in the final game 1-0.

In the late 40's and early 50's Viking A.A., with the Swedish-Americans and Linnea, sponsored teams from Sweden, touring American and Canadian cities. In 1948 it was Djurgården (Stockholm), 1949 Goteborg, 1950 Jonkoping, and 1951 A.I.K. (Stockholm). About the best soccer game ever played in the city of Chicago was the contest between Jonkoping and Manchester United (England), ending in a 3-1 victory for the Swedes.

The 1949 Reserve Team, with Walter Norell as manager, played 14 league games, 6 exhibitions and 2 play-off tilts. They won 17, tied 2, lost 3, with 72 goals for and 19 against.

In 1950 indoor soccer was presented to the public at the Chicago Avenue Armory, televised and narrated by Joe Wilson and Jack Brickhouse. Our team took the honors with a 19 point total and a goal record of 29-9. They were also presented with a special trophy for displaying the best sportsmanship.

In 1953, under the leadership of Dr. Kenneth G. Sjoquist, the by-laws were changed to allow non-Scandinavians to hold elective offices in the club.

By 1958, with Steve Svenonius serving as president, a committee was formed to sell \$100 bonds to finance an addition to our clubrooms. A total of \$21,900 was sold to the membership and a few outsiders. In order to pay back the bond issue in a stated period of 10 years, "The Builder" fund was started. The bonds were redeemed in five years. About \$7,000 of the total payback was donated by the club to the bond committee.

In 1959 the soccer team finished last in the Major League and thus was demoted to the First Division. During the sixties the team had a few good years in the First Division, finishing as high as third place. During this period Jimmy McDermott became active again, managing the first team for a few seasons. This was an inspiration to the team, but it still became more and more difficult to keep our place in the First Division.

After demotion to the Second Division in 1965 we bounced back quickly, barely being nosed out of the first year and winning the Second Division title in 1967 with Mike Baran as manager. However, we did not have the caliber of players to stay up in the First Division for long. The early seventies were difficult times after losing a substantial number of players who formed in their own club. Through all these difficult times we had our bright moments, occasionally upsetting a top team in cup games and generally doing fairly well in summer tournaments.

The Viking A.A. has sponsored the "Pro" bowling team since 1969. They have competed in the Chicago All-Star League and Master's Traveling League. Notable achievements were second place in the City Tournament in 1971 and fourth place in the same tournament in 1973.

In 1973 we merged our soccer team with the Mustangs, who were struggling in the First Division. With the infusion of new players a fairly respectable team was formed, finishing as high as third in 1975. As second team has been playing in the Great Lakes League, consisting of young players from the Northbrook area and augmented by a few of our veterans.

In the seventies we also resumed an active juvenile program, which had been neglected for many years. The job of managing the kids' program has been fraught with many difficulties due to wide dispersion of players all over the city and suburbs and lack of sufficient parent involvement. A few dedicated members have had to do most of the work. Among those we must give special thanks to Kenneth Nye who, almost singlehandedly, started the program and has been very active since then.

During the eighties the Vikings were rejuvenated by the infusion of suburban high schools, they have risen to a respectable level in the Major Division of the Metropolitan Soccer League, founded in 1981. They have been contenders both indoors and outdoors and have contributed top players to the Metropolitan Soccer League All-Star team, but so far a championship has eluded them. They have also been fairly successful in U.S. Amateur Cup play, reaching the Illinois finals for the last three years, but once again stopped short.

The first team manager for the last three years has been Jim Duffy, a top player during or lean years in the seventies. The Reserves are being managed by Paul Kennan, a top player until recent injuries have forced him into at least temporary retirement.

* * *

AS WE LOOK BACK on our sixty years in sports, we certainly had our greatest moments of glory in the first twenty-five years. There are a lot of factors why the present era is so much more difficult. One of the main reasons is probably the lack of the neighborhood closeness of the old days, with many members and players living far away from the club and having many other interests and responsibilities. The potential for the future is still good, but it will require a wider participation and interest from the membership. We must attract more individuals who are willing to work for our sports program. We can't count on the old war horses to continue carrying the load forever.

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