



# DRUM CORPS DIGEST



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# BLESSED SACRAMENT GOLDEN KNIGHTS

## A WISH TO BUILD A DREAM ON

by David Shaw

Blessed Sacrament, above all else, is a champion! In 15 years of existence they have won 9 national titles, 6 American Legion and 3 V.F.W. Everything about them — their look, their sound, their bearing — is etched with the gold of their prophetic nickname. The Golden Knights are a drum corps' drum corps . . . nationally respected, nationally admired, nationally imitated. It would almost appear that destiny dictates Blessed Sacrament's good fortune; however, travel the same road yourself and you become aware that hard work, sacrifice, dedication and intelligent well-directed planning

all far outweigh the story-book aspects of destiny or luck. A champion is not born, a champion is made; and Blessed Sacrament, however rapid their ascension, however Cinderella-like the atmosphere that surrounded their initial successes, has traveled the long agonizing route to the top not by wishing it so, but by making it so. What they have had, what is yet to come, they have earned. And this, more than all their trophies, more than all their flags, more than all the dates on their base drum, is what makes the Golden Knights what they are.

What lies beneath the glitter? What makes a corps like B.S. tick? First, and probably most important, is strong, intelligent adult leadership. Leaders chosen not on the mere basis of availability or desire, but on the qualifications they possess and the contributions they can make. A junior corps, regardless of the position they occupy, has a primary obligation to oversee the positive development of their membership. In Blessed Sacrament this responsibility lies with Father Garner, representing the steady, continuing influence of the Church. The depth of his success can be measured by the quality of his boys. Newark, by any stretch of the imagination, is far from the serene, fresh air atmosphere in which most parents would choose to raise their sons. It is a city, with all the associated disadvantages, and the Golden Knights are for the most part city boys. Yet, in spite of the outside forces with which he has to contend, Father Garner has established and solidified a standard of conduct for his corps that has earned them the respect of their most vocal critics. Never a corps known for excessive modesty or to pretensions to freedom from human fault, they nonetheless have been a source of continuing pride, not only to the people who bear the responsibility for their actions but to drum corps in general.

This well-directed adult leadership extends into their instruction program

*Drum Majors Al LaRocca (L) and Gene Kennedy (R) Accept "The Silver Drum" Emblematic of The American Legion Jr. National Champions 1963 in the Orange Bowl*





*HALL OF FAME Winners, Blessed Sacrament Golden Knights Perform in Orange Bowl and Capture Another National Legion Title*

as well, and it is from this source that their most obvious successes have been derived. You do not stumble into a national title. It takes a long-range program, carefully implemented by any timely innovations that might prove necessary. The legendary planners and executors of Blessed Sacrament's program for success were Bill Hayes and Bobby Thompson. Dictatorial in their perfectionist demands, they molded B.S. into drum corps' first "machine," and revolutionized the concepts of drum corps then in operation. Instructors Jimmy Day, Joe Porta, Frank Kubinak and Dick Burns have subsequently expanded upon these early ideas, and in so doing left the stamp of their own personalities on the corps. It is a new B.S. now, fresh, original, and infinitely more colorful, but they still pursue excellence with a non-deviating absorption that commands attention and demands success.

Finally, the third closely interwoven element in the fabric of a champion,

the individual whole-hearted dedication of every single member of the corps to its program and goals. The members of Blessed Sacrament have proven time and time again that they are willing to walk the extra mile, that they are willing to make whatever personal sacrifices might be necessary and to bear whatever hardships are entailed. In short, they will not, and therefore cannot be deterred. "Corps above self" is not a motto to them, but a reality which they live, breathe and believe.

This is the story of Blessed Sacrament—a champion! It is a story duplicated to some degree by many corps in many cities, from Racine, Wisconsin to Dorchester, Mass., St. Paul, Minn., to Casper, Wyoming. It is a story of a corps that could be your corps, not by wishing it so, but by making it so. What you are now, what you are going to become, is up to you. Are you wasting your time on wishing? Blessed Sacrament didn't!

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 Blessed Sacrament Golden Knights  
 292 Highland Ave., Kearney, N. J.

