

MLB: The Greatest College Baseball Player Never Drafted

Remembering the Legend of St. Leo's Phil Ross

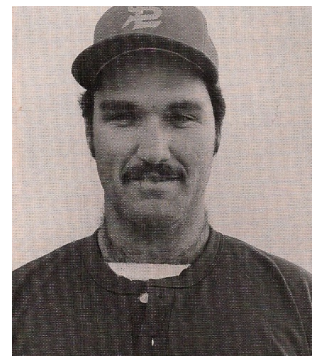
And how St. Leo College's run to the 1984 College World Series was curtailed

By Paul Bermel

July 2015

Story Highlights:

1. St. Leo's Phil Ross batted .484, had 22 HRs (1 HR every 8.5 at-bats) in 50 games, averaged 1.8 hits and 1.8 RBIs per game.
2. Years ahead of the widespread adoption of **Bill James's "Sabermetrics,"** Ross had a mind-boggling 1.607 OPS [On-base percentage (.645) plus slugging percentage (.962)]. That's 13% higher than **Barry Bonds'** MLB all-time record of 1.4217 set in 2004. The **NCAA** does not keep or rank OPS statistics.
3. Ross hit two grand slams in one inning (yes, one inning) versus Division I **Florida A&M** and he was featured on **CNN Sports** that night for one of the rarest accomplishments in baseball.
4. St. Leo first baseman Phil Ross was the only unanimous First Team All-American in Division II in 1985.
5. Ross set or tied eight NCAA records in 1985 (five are still in the record books 30 years later).
6. In the prestigious **Sunshine State Conference (SSC)**, Ross was the first and only player ever to win the **Triple Crown** (Highest batting average, most home runs, and most RBIs). Thru 2015, in the 30 years since the SSC was formed in 1975, an SSC team has 21 times been in the Division II **College World Series** championship game, winning the crown 14 times, and 7 times as runner-up. The SSC's **The University of Tampa** won its 7th NCAA D-2 Title last month.
7. A year prior, St. Leo's final 1984 final regular season **Collegiate Baseball** poll ranking ended was #5. St. Leo had the second most total wins in the country with 46, but was denied a chance to participate in the post season.



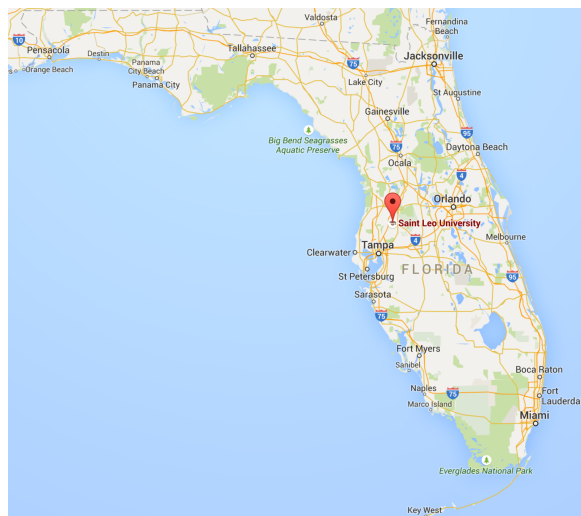
Note: In 1999 "St. Leo College" was upgraded to "University" status and became "Saint Leo University."

Phil Ross, **Ted Williams**, **Willie Stargell**, and **Barry Bonds**. The latter three are known Major League Baseball legends, but why is St. Leo's Ross mentioned in the same sentence?

While the SI story turned out to be a royal April Fool's hoax, Ross was smashing real records of his own that very month. His unbelievable statistics actually occurred and the NCAA, conference, and school record books are proof that it happened. Ross would later be inducted into his conference's and school's Hall of Fame.

Famed Ted Williams and Phil Ross each hit a home run in their last official at-bat. For a Division II college player like Phil Ross, that may not seem significant. But to those who played with and opposed Phil Ross in 1985, and those who were there that day in person, they will never forget it.

In his last college baseball game, playing at home against Sunshine State Conference rival **Eckerd College**, in Ross's last at-bat, he smashed his 22nd home run in the 50th and final game of the season. Eckerd College, in the visiting third base dugout that day, emptied their bench as Ross rounded the bases with each Eckerd player lining up between third base and home plate to shake Ross's hand as he rounded third. That's the opposing team! Not something anyone can ever recall seeing at the time or since.



Ross finished the season hitting .484, while averaging 1.8 RBIs per game, 1.8 hits per game, and more than 1 walk per game. He hit one home run every 8.5 at-bats. He set or tied eight NCAA records (five of which are still in the record books 30 years later).

FINAL 1985 SAINT LEO COLLEGE BASEBALL STATISTICS																						
FINAL RECORD: Overall 22-26-2 Sunshine State Conference 4-20																						
PLAYER	.AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI-GW	TB	SLG%	BB	SO	OB%	SB-SB%	BP	A	E	DP	FLD%	LHS/NHS	
ROSS (L)	.484	50	186	79	90	17	3	22	90-1	179	.962	53	15	.645	3-4	0/5	1	185	25	6	96	DD

Beyond the home run in the last at-bat similarity, Ross hit over .400 — .484 to be exact. Ted Williams entered the last day of the regular season for the **Boston Red Sox** in 1941 hitting .39955, which rounded up to .400. Williams could have played it safe by sitting out, to become the first hitter to bat over 400, but instead, on that last day of the season he played in both games of a double header, came to the plate 8 times and got 4 hits. Williams finished the season at the infamous .406 batting average.

Ross averaged 1.8 hits and 1.8 RBIs per game, playing in all of St. Leo's 50 games — gathering 90 hits and 90 RBIs in total. He hit the ball with such velocity that those watching were concerned for the opposing fielders getting hurt.

Ross didn't always hit with such incredible efficiency or power. In fact, in 1984, his junior season for St. Leo, he hit .313 as the only non-senior starter. That team, ranked #5 in the **Collegiate Baseball** Poll, had the second most wins in the country, and had two players who were drafted by MLB.

In that 1984 St. Leo baseball season, in addition to Ross batting a respectable .313, he had 8 HR and 38 RBIs in 59 games. He had 15 extra base hits and a .482 slugging percentage. However, given the team's success and seven other starting seniors, St. Leo was drawing several Major League Baseball scouts to every home game.

That next, unforgettable 1985 season, everything clicked for Ross, all in 9 less games (59 games in 1984 compared to 50 in 1985). His batting average improved 55%, from .313 to .484. He improved his HRs from 8 to 22, his RBIs from 38 to 90, and he almost tripled his extra base hits output, increasing from 15 to 42. His slugging percentage doubled, from .482 to a whopping .962.

Ross, a native of Venice, Florida, and a transfer from **Valencia Junior College**, was an easy going, kind, gentle, and thoughtful guy, which belied his physical stature. Opposing players were in awe of his physique. The first baseman was a player with incredible intensity and expectations. So much so, in his 1984 .313 batting average season, it seemed as if whenever Ross didn't get a hit or even a HR, he'd fling his bat in disgust and would run half-heartedly to first base.

While the 1984 St. Leo season is documented herein, it was perhaps that attitude and demeanor his junior year season that may have affected Ross's long term baseball prospects just one year later, despite his achieving one of the greatest college baseball statistical seasons ever.

Even though St. Leo was a D-2 conference, it always played a hearty schedule of Division 1 teams. And there's been dozens of players drafted from St. Leo and the Sunshine State Conference over the years. In 1984 St. Leo had two players drafted (**John Anderson** and **Bob Gibree**, see page 8). In 1981 St. Leo pitcher **Bob Tewksbury** was drafted by the **New York Yankees**. Tewksbury played 13 years in MLB with his most successful year being the 1992 season when he was an All-Star, finishing

16-5, and third in Cy Young Award voting. In 1982 St. Leo pitcher **Jim Corsi** was drafted by the Yankees. Corsi played 10 years in MLB. Relative to Phil Ross and the Sunshine State Conference, Eckerd College's **Steve Balboni**, also a first baseman (6'3, 225 lbs), was drafted in 1978 by the Yankees and played 11 years in MLB. Balboni played two years at Eckerd, as a sophomore hitting .335 (26 HRs, 77 RBIs, 1.273 OPS in 43 games), and as a junior hitting .403 (14 HRs, 46 RBIs, 1.323 OPS in 42 games). While Balboni's HRs exceeded that of Ross, Balboni's batting average, slugging, and OPS didn't compare to that of Ross, it was 21% lower.

The Sunshine State Conference — D-2 Baseball Dominance

In the prestigious **Sunshine State Conference (SSC)**, Ross was the first and only player ever to win the Triple Crown (Highest batting average, most home runs, and most RBIs). Thru 2015, in the 30 years since the SSC was formed in 1975, an SSC team has 21 times been in the Division II College World Series championship game, winning the crown 14 times, and finishing 7 times as runner-up. The SSC's **The University of Tampa** won its 7th NCAA D-2 Title last month.

MLB's Mike Marshall, St. Leo's New Coach, Impacts Ross in Dramatic, Spectacular Fashion

The 1985 season returned only two seniors and one starter (Ross). **Mike Marshall**, an incredible disciplinarian and former major leaguer himself (1974 National League Cy Young Award Winner for the **Los Angeles Dodgers**) was hired by St. Leo Athletic Director **Norm Kaye**. Kaye had founded the Sunshine State Conference in 1975.

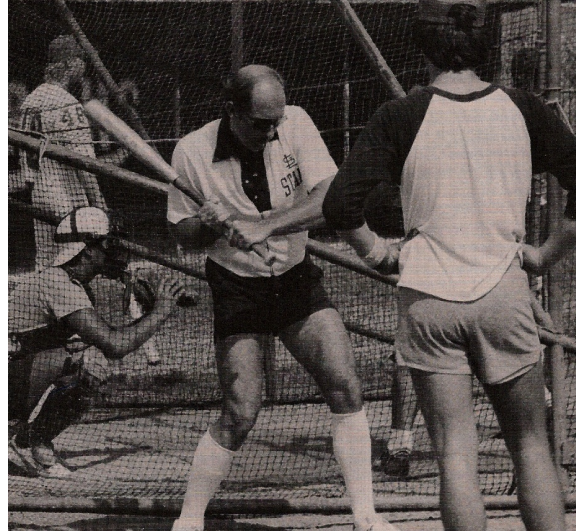


Phil Ross's 1985 St. Leo baseball Coach Mike Marshall was a 14-year Major League Baseball player himself.

Marshall got one glimpse of Phil Ross throwing the bat in pre-season and the story goes that Marshall, listed by MLB at 5'10, called Ross over and put his arm on Ross's 6'2" shoulders and said: "I got news for you, if you throw the bat one more time, you're off the team, and I'll eat your scholarship." And in the next breath Marshall added: "I want you to be captain of my team, if you'll let me change your swing!"

Not only did Ross never throw the bat again, but Marshall took Ross under his wing to make a game and life altering swing adjustment. Marshall had, back in 1985, a high-

speed film camera that captured 250 to 500 frames per second. While Marshall is known as a Cy Young Award-winning pitcher, he was also a position player initially in his career (shortstop) and is the only Major Leaguer to have his PHD (in Kinesiology and Physiology). Marshall also taught classes at St. Leo, unlike major college baseball coaches at most Division I schools. Marshall made every player on the team take his class on kinesiology and physiology.



Marshall instructing St. Leo players.

Ross was quoted in a March 19, 1985 St. Leo press release: "Coach (Marshall) has made me a lot smarter. I think before I do something, I feel a lot more comfortable around him, more at ease. He has definitely changed me for the better. Plus being chosen as captain, getting mad doesn't help matters any and he has helped me tremendously with that too."

Ross was known for taking 120 swings per session, three times daily.

In the same press release, Marshall was quoted as follows: "He (Ross) has led by example of being exactly what I want all my ball players to be, hard working, dedicated, putting the team before themselves. I think Phil has demonstrated that this year. He has shown poise, great leadership for the ball club, instead of being the person everybody thought was going to blow his stack. He is a calm man on the ball club ..."

Willie Stargell and Phil Ross

St. Leo's coach in 1985 was former Major League pitcher and 1974 Cy Young Award Winner **Mike Marshall** (15-12 with 21 saves and a 2.42 ERA). Marshall, who played in the majors for 14 years, called Ross: "The second strongest player I've ever seen."

So who was the strongest, in Marshall's opinion? "**Willie Stargell**," Marshall replied. "Pops" as Stargell was called, was the **Pittsburgh Pirates** legendary first baseman. Stargell, played 21 years, all for the Pirates, and won two World Series in that span. Stargell was 6'3, 235 lbs. in his heyday. Stargell hit .282 over his career, with 475 home runs (avg. 23 per year) and was inducted in the MLB Hall of Fame in 1988.

Ross, from Venice, Florida, at 6'2", 215 lbs, and also a lefty first baseman like Stargell, was recruited to St. Leo by Coach **Eddie Cardieri**. Ross transferred from Valencia Junior College. Ross never got to play under Cardieri at St. Leo. Cardieri left St. Leo in the fall of 1983 to become assistant coach at Division I **The University of South**

Florida (USF), in Tampa, just 30 miles south of St Leo. Three years later Cardieri would become head coach at USF. Cardieri had an eye for players, with over 100 of his players getting drafted by Major League Baseball, appearing in nine Division I NCAA tournaments. Cardieri has the distinction of being the only coach to be named Coach of the Year in three different Division I conferences.

In fact, with Cardieri's sudden departure, in his junior year 1984, Ross played for newly hired coach **Ernie Chapman**, an alum of St. Leo himself. The 1984 season, Ross's first in uniform for St. Leo, also had numerous distinctions that are told further below.

Barry Bonds and Phil Ross

In 1985 Ross had a mind-boggling 1.607 OPS [On-base percentage (.645) plus slugging percentage (.962)]. That's 13% higher than **Barry Bonds'** MLB all-time record of 1.4217 set in 2004. The NCAA does not keep or rank OPS statistics.

Ross Hits Two (2) Grand Slams in One Inning!

The date was March 18, 1985. It was St. Leo's 25th game and they were playing at home against Division 1 **Florida A&M**. Ross, batting third in the line-up, in his first at-bat in the bottom of the first, reached first base on a fielder's choice and later scored. In the second inning, Ross hit a grand slam his first time up in the inning. And when he approached the plate with the bases loaded, again still in the same 2nd inning, no one in the small crowd of an estimated 100 could believe that Florida A&M, now with it's second pitcher of the game, would actually pitch to him. Ross became the first college player in Division II baseball to hit two grand slams in one inning. St. Leo scored 15 runs on 7 hits in the inning.

Ross would come up again with the bases loaded, in the 3rd inning, against a third pitcher, and Ross hit a ball off the center field fence for a stand-up double and 3 more RBIs. Ross walked in the 4th inning, and St. Leo Coach Mike Marshall (a 14-year former major leaguer himself), performed a class act by calling time, walking out of the dugout to remove Ross from the game, allowing those present in the crowd and the players to celebrate Ross's unfathomable accomplishment. For the game, Ross had 3 hits in 4 plate appearances (not including the walk), 2 grand slams, 1 double, 11 RBIs, and 4 runs scored. St. Leo won the game 28-8. The game was called after the 6th inning. The two grand slams in one inning had only previously been accomplished in Division I baseball.

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June 1985 Major League Baseball Draft: Ross Inexplicably Isn't Drafted!

With all the accolades Ross garnered ...

- 1st team All-Conference
- Triple Crown Winner in the Sunshine State Conference (1st ever)
- 1st Team All-American (the only unanimous selection)
- .484 batting average
- 90 RBIs in 50 games (1.8 per game)
- 90 hits in 50 games (1.8 hits per game)
- .645 on-base percentage
- .965 slugging percentage
- 22 home runs (one HR every 8.5 at-bats)
- Over 1 walk per game
- Set or tied 8 NCAA records, 5 that are still in the record books 30 years later

... Ross's name wasn't called on draft day! Someone with Ross in a dorm room the day of the draft shared that when the draft concluded and Ross hadn't been contacted, they recalled Ross breaking down in tears. Who would blame him? To have had such a prodigious season and not get drafted, especially from a school and a conference where so many had been drafted. Not even being drafted in a later round, was inconceivable. In the 1985 MLB draft, there were 28 rounds, 832 players drafted. How could Phil Ross be overlooked and not be one of the 832 best players in the country? At the time, the Sunshine State Conference had dozens of players drafted since it was founded in 1975, and two St. Leo players from the 1984 team were drafted.

Was he not drafted because scouts noted his temper and bat-throwing propensity the year before? Was he not drafted because major league teams still held a grudge against Mike Marshall, who effectively was blackballed from MLB for being involved in propelling free agency in the mid 1970s?

Why wouldn't Ross pursue a walk-on tryout with a team? Information wasn't as freely available back in 1985. Perhaps Ross not being drafted simply sent him a definitive message, right or wrong, that he wasn't wanted, wasn't good enough, and as hard as it was, he just accepted that. Certainly in that 1985 season, the St. Leo team was weak with a 22-26-2 record, 4-20 and a last place finish in the Sunshine State Conference, and wasn't drawing major league scouts as it was the year before. Players were allowed to be drafted prior to their senior year in those days, but Ross didn't have incredible numbers in that prior 1984 season.

As a first baseman, Ross was nearly flawless in 1985, with a .988 fielding percentage, committing only 6 errors with 485 put-outs with 25 assists.

Before arriving at St. Leo, Ross had also played in the prestigious **Cape Cod League** in Massachusetts, as a member of the 1983 Champion **Harwich Mariners**.

Nowadays with the Internet you can just about find anyone (with 411.com and other similar sites), along with Facebook, etc. One former Phil Ross 1985 teammate recently contacted has had trouble connecting with Ross himself. The mystery of Phil Ross is even more mysterious without hearing his voice and opinion. At the age of 53 today, couldn't Ross be helping a Major League or minor league team as a batting coach with what he learned and applied at the plate?

Ross was inducted into the Sunshine State Conference Hall of Fame in the class of 1992-93 and he was inducted into the St. Leo College Hall of Fame in 1993.

St. Leo's 1984 Baseball Team - A Season for the Ages

While former St. Leo coach **Eddie Cardieri** recruited every starting player on the 1984 St. Leo team, Cardieri wasn't around to coach the team, having departed to become assistant coach under **Robin Roberts, Major League Baseball Hall of Famer and head coach of the University of South Florida (USF)**.

Of the eight St. Leo starting position players, seven were seniors and the 8th was junior Phil Ross at first base. The average age of the starters was more than 21. The starters for the 46-13 team were:

1B **Phil Ross** (.313, 8 HR, 38 RBIs, .482 SLG)
2B **Jim Stickles** (.283, 37 RBIs)
SS **Billy Chrysler** (.267, 29 RBIs)
3B **Mike Taylor** (.324, 39 RBIs, 7 GWRBI)
LF **Jamie Gage** (.302, 48 RBIs, 7 GWRBI)
CF **Ricky Dale** (.350, 79 hits, 12 HR, 55 RBI, .597 SLG, 27 SB, 31 xBHs)
RF **John Anderson** (.369, 79 Hits, 45 RBI, 7 GWRBI, .561 SLG, 31 SB) [drafted by the **Seattle Mariners**, 24th Round, 598th overall pick]
C **Bob Gibree** (.313, 49 RBI, 6 GWRBI, .540 SLG, 27 xBHs) [drafted by the Seattle Mariners, 7th Round, 160th overall pick]



New 1984 St. Leo College baseball Coach Ernie Chapman shakes hands with catcher Bob Gibree while Phil Ross respectfully bows.

1984 St. Leo Season Opens with Exhibition Game Versus The Chicago White Sox

The bus ride from north of Tampa to Sarasota was filled with excitement. Instinctively, the St. Leo bus pulled up at the **Chicago White Sox's** primary spring training stadium. Upon interaction with security and parking attendants, it was determined that St. Leo was playing at one of the White Sox's other baseball fields in Sarasota. Nonetheless, St. Leo was going toe-to-toe with a Major League Baseball team. **Tony LaRussa** was the manager of the White Sox that had a 99-63 record in 1983 and lost the American League Championship Series to the **Baltimore Orioles**. The starting pitcher for the White Sox versus St. Leo was the reigning **Cy Young Award Winner, LaMar Hoyt** (24-10, 3.66 ERA). Hoyt mowed down the first several batters until 2nd baseman Jimmy Stickles came to the plate. Stickles laced a liner off the outfield fence and had himself a standup double and a lifetime memory.

Catcher Bob Gibree — The Next Johnny Bench

The summer of 1983 catcher **Bob Gibree** was named to the prestigious Cape Cod League All-Star team and later that year he became the first alternate to the **U.S. Olympic Team** that was to compete in 1984 in Los Angeles. The two catchers who made the team ahead of Gibree were future major league players **B.J. Surhoff** and **John Marzano**. Gibree was known for hitting peas and had a gun for an arm.

Ironically, St. Leo defeated Surhoff and his college team, the **University of North Carolina** (UNC), at St. Leo in 1983. After that game, the coach of UNC, upset with losing to the Division II school, was heard storming off field: "We will never come play here at St. Leo again!" While Gibree left St. Leo in 1984 after being drafted as a junior in the 7th Round (160th overall pick) by the Seattle Mariners, BJ Surhoff was the overall #1 pick in the 1985 MLB draft, chosen by the **Milwaukee Brewers**. Marzano was a 1st Round draft choice (14th overall pick) in the 1984 draft. The '84 U.S Olympic team had many other notable future MLB players including **Mark McGwire**, **Barry Larkin**, and **Will Clark** to name a few.

St. Leo's 1984 Season - A Turning Point

St. Leo lost the season opener, at home, to Florida Atlantic. In fact, the team started the season slow with a 4-2 record, including a home loss to Division I **Jacksonville University**.

The average age of the team, specifically the starters, was more than 21. Half of the starters were JUCO (junior college) transfers, like Ross. St. Leo's new Head Coach, **Ernie Chapman** (St. Leo Class of 1972), was coaching for the first time at the collegiate level. He was previously baseball coach at Hernando High School in Hernando County, FL, and many of the players felt coaching St. Leo was too much for him to undertake. The veteran team rallied and worked out the early season stumble.

The turning point came a week later, after the February spring break in which no games were played, in a double header at Jacksonville University. St. Leo came from behind in both games to win, the second in near darkness, to start a winning stretch, going 19-1 to arrive at mid-season and Sunshine State Conference play with a 23-3 record!

St. Leo versus USF and Eddie Cardieri

Connecting back to Cardieri in the 1984 season, he was the architect of the 1984 St. Leo team, having recruited every player. Now with his departure, St. Leo was playing at Cardieri's new team, the **University of South Florida (USF)** in Tampa in mid April, late in the baseball season. St. Leo was hitting on all cylinders with a 37-9 record at the time. With **Major League Baseball Hall of Famer Robin Roberts** head coaching USF (Cardieri would become head coach for USF in 1986) I distinctly remember sitting in USF's press box when someone in the media made an ominous observation. The comment was akin to the movie **Rocky** when **Apollo Creed's** business manager was watching Rocky on TV working out punching meat in the freezer. The manager called out to Apollo: "Hey, champ, you ought to come and look at this boy you're gonna fight on TV. It looks like he means business."

Apollo Creed responded, without looking at the TV: "Yeah, yeah. I mean business too."

The person in the USF press box noted out loud, something he spotted on St. Leo's stats and game notes: "Hey, take a look at this, St. Leo is 16-1 versus Division I schools coming into this game!" A beat writer for a Tampa newspaper, who covered the USF team, responded back out loud, discarding the record, saying that "St. Leo was just a small Division II school between cow pastures and orange groves from up the road in Dade City and there was no way they could beat USF!"

St. Leo beat USF that day 6-4 and moved to 17-1 versus Division I schools for the season!

St. Leo Shafted from NCAA Post Season Play in 1984

St. Leo finished the regular 1984 season 46-13, ranked #5 in the **Collegiate Baseball** Weekly poll, and had the second most wins in Division II in the country!

Historically, the team that won the Sunshine State Conference, with the best win-loss record in conference games, advanced to the 4-team South Regionals of the NCAA Division II tournament. The winner of the South Regional advances to the College World Series.

There was an unwritten rule at that time that not more than two teams from the 8-team Sunshine State Conference could participate in the South Regionals. St. Leo heading

down the home stretch of the 1984 season, was 43-9, 14-7 in the conference. St. Leo went 3-4 over its last 7 games, all in conference play, to finish 46-13 overall, 17-11 in conference play. **Florida Southern College** won the conference with a 21-7 record, St. Leo finished 4th with a 17-11 record. Florida Southern would go on to be runner-up for the NCAA D-2 College World Series title that year, losing to **Cal State Northridge**, whose final record was only 46-21-1 (including 4-1 in the College World Series) compared to St. Leo's 46-13 record. And St. Leo had no post-season games to add to its win-loss record.

It was widely known that Florida Southern's Athletic Director, **Hal Smeltzly**, was on the NCAA selection committee at the time. Part of the reason Florida Southern had already won 5 NCAA titles by 1984, with Smeltzly coaching the team to 3 of those titles (and 3 runner-up titles), was the fact that Florida Southern often didn't have to compete with another SSC team in the South Regional bracket.

That 1984 season, with Florida Southern earning the "automatic bid" if you will, fellow SSC team The University of Tampa, which had finished 3rd in the SSC, was chosen to advance to the South Regionals over St. Leo! Tampa was 37-15 overall, and 18-10 in the Conference and had a lower national ranking than St. Leo. In fact, St. Thomas of Villanova in Miami (formerly Biscayne College) had finished 2nd in the SSC at 19-9, 37-18 overall, but they too were bypassed for post-season selection. Certainly Smeltzly knew that if St. Leo, or St. Thomas advanced, that Florida Southern couldn't beat them. St. Leo was 2-2 versus Florida Southern head-to-head in 1984. But why Tampa? St. Leo had clearly been shafted. And this wasn't the first time. In 1975, the first year of the Sunshine State Conference, St. Leo sued the NCAA for not being selected to the NCAA tournament. The lawsuit was thrown out because it wasn't filed in the right jurisdiction and time didn't permit any adjustment in the seedings to be made.

Back in 1984, unlike the modern televised and online streamed NCAA tournament selection process, there wasn't the transparency that should have existed.

About the Author

Paul Bermel (St. Leo Class of '85) wrote for the St. Leo College newspaper his freshman year before being asked to work as the Student Sports Information Director his final three years at St. Leo. Bermel kept the official scorebook for all 59 baseball games in 1984 for the 46-13 team. He also kept the scorebook for the majority of games in 1985, including the game Phil Ross hit two grand slams in one inning. Bermel compiled all the statistics, wrote all the athletic department's press releases, and communicated with the Sunshine State Publicity Director, media, etc. St. Leo's official Sports Information Director was its basketball head coach, Gary Richert. In the summer of 1984 Bermel worked press operations at the Olympics in Los Angeles (Olympic Soccer at The Rose Bowl) and from there worked press operations at the U.S. Open tennis tournament in New York.

In Bermel's senior year, 1984-85, in addition to serving as St. Leo's Student Sports Information Director, he served as Publicity Director for the Sunshine State Conference.

After interning at CNN Sports, Bermel stayed on and worked at Turner Broadcasting and CNN for 13 years, later as Director of Marketing for the network. He is presently Vice President of Marketing for New England Sports Network (NESN) in Boston. NESN is the official broadcaster of the Boston Red Sox and the Boston Bruins and owned by the parent company of each of the teams. In 2014 Forbes ranked NESN the 8th Most Valuable Sports Brand in the World.



The author, Paul Bermel, sitting behind the backstop, keeping the official scorebook for St. Leo. Three major league baseball scouts with jugs guns sit in folded beach chairs.

Author's Note: As improbable as it may seem, also in 1985, St. Leo sophomore catcher Cliff Champion, hit two grand slams in one inning. It occurred 13 days, 8 games after Phil Ross did it against D-1 Florida A&M (a 28-8 St. Leo win with the game called after the 6th inning). Champion's grand slams came at Eckerd College in St. Petersburg. St. Leo lost the game 23-22. Ross was the first to hit two grand slams in one inning in Division II, and Champion was the second! Bermel kept the scorebook for both games.