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Dick Bennett on Gary Grzesk

St. Norbert College

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Gary Grzesk (Athletics)

A collegiate basketball legend weighs in on his former player's coaching achievements

The St. Norbert men's basketball program has enjoyed a revival under fourth-year coach **Gary Grzesk** (pronounced

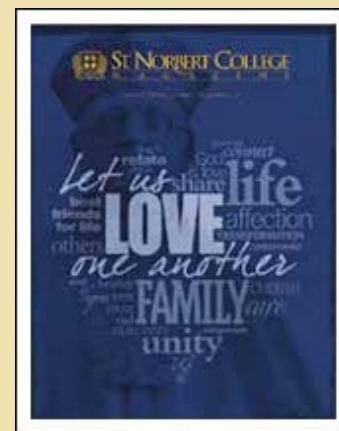
"Gresh"). The Green Knights climbed to as high as No. 9 in the Division III national rankings this season and have qualified for the NCAA Division III Tournament, along the way capturing their first Midwest Conference regular season championship in eight years.

Most coaches can trace their philosophies to at least one important coach in their past, and for Grzesk that person is Dick Bennett. Grzesk played for Bennett at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay from 1992-96, earning the team's Defensive Player of the Year award all four of his seasons.

Bennett went on to coach at the University of Wisconsin, where he guided the Badgers to a Final Four appearance, and at Washington State before retiring. The legendary coach isn't surprised to see his former star pupil succeeding in the coaching profession, according to **Mike Dauplaise '84**. Dauplaise interviewed Bennett while preparing an article for the print issue of St. Norbert College Magazine (Spring 2010) on the building success of the Green Knight men's basketball program.

What qualities about Gary Grzesk make him a successful coach?

Intrinsically, Gary is one of the most poised individuals I've ever coached. He's very calm on the outside, but also very calm on the inside. He's got a great presence of mind that is such an asset in any business, but especially in the business of coaching. He just doesn't rattle. I recognize it when I see it,



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[Too 'Old School' for our own good?](#)

President Tom Kunkel challenges colleges and universities to embrace new ways of delivering higher education.



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Steve Pyne (Dining Services), who has Down syndrome, was profiled in this recent article in the student newspaper, the St. Norbert Times.



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St. Norbert College Magazine dropped in on a rehearsal for this three-act operetta production, to be staged on campus.



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A gallery of images from a trip that connected a child in Kenya with his sponsors in the United



Dick Bennett (right)

but I never possessed it. I saw it in him as a player and I have seen it in his coaching. I knew whatever he did that he was going to be successful. He has tremendous coaching potential.

Grzesk was not a heavily recruited player coming out of high school. What led you to believe he could play at the Division I level?

Gary was tailor-made for our system. His high school coach kept telling me: "I've got a kid for you who you'll love. He will not be heavily recruited because his offensive talents don't stand out, but he's a great defender and a great person, and has all the intangibles in the world."

How did that translate into a player who could help your team win?

We could be very specific in our recruiting, and Gary filled a very specific role. He was a point guard and did the bulk of the ball handling. He wasn't spectacular, just sound. My senses tell me that's the way his teams play today.

Grzesk's collegiate playing highlight came in the first round of the 1994 NCAA Tournament, when his defensive efforts helped shut down University of California and current NBA star Jason Kidd on the way to a stunning UWGB victory. How was he able to accomplish that?

That one he can take to his grave. That was so very special. Gary was so flexible defensively that I could play him on anybody. He was playing against arguably the greatest point guard in college basketball at that time in Jason Kidd, and the next year he guarded [future NBA star and 6-foot-10] Vitaly Potapenko of Wright State in the conference tournament.


How has that type of focus helped him succeed at St. Norbert?

Gary's very special. Aside from what is obvious about him, there's also the fact that he's a good person and a good fit there [at St. Norbert], and he knows basketball.

States.

 **A father's love**

Jeff Kratz '92 offers a unique perspective on a father's love.

 **Words from life**

The poetry of **Ken Zahorski** (English, Emeritus) deals with fathers and sons, phases of life and familiar figures remembered across the years.

 **World view**

Gratzia Villarroel (Political Science) speaks with **Dean Michael Marsden** on international issues and educational opportunities.

 **Man of property**

Joe Jones '12 sits down with **Mike Dauplaise '84** to discuss an education in entrepreneurship and the launch of Jones' third business. He is 21 years old.

 **Dick Bennett on Gary Grzesk**

The basketball legend remembers his years presiding over the storied defensive career of Grzesk, current coach to the Green Knight men.



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