



MEN IN BLACK, *Basketball Style*

SUBMITTED BY LIZ NOACK | PHOTOS SUBMITTED BY ST. FRANCIS DE SALES SEMINARY

ON VALENTINE'S DAY WEEKEND THIS YEAR, more than 400 young men from around the country came to Milwaukee for a change of scenery. Their scenery changed from stained glass, soft music, no outside visitors, prayer and study, to bright lights, fierce competition, cheering crowds, and pizza and beer, in an NBA-quality facility. The St. Francis de Sales 6th Annual Seminary Tournament was underway.

The tournament is an opportunity for people to see future priests in a different light; in the throes of competitive vigor and excitement. Very Rev. Luke Strand, Rector of the seminary, says, "This tournament is formational for the men. They have to sacrifice for their brothers to make it happen. The fraternity the men share with seminarians from around the country is inspiring for their vocations

and is making a profound impact on the broader Church. And, the tournament is a blast!"

Fr. Luke Strand was instrumental in getting the tournament started six years ago when a young and sporty seminarian, Kevin Durand, floated the idea. Kevin appreciated the beautiful Bucks training facility and dreamt of using it for something bigger. The tournament has grown from a humble beginning with a handful of teams, mostly from the Midwest, to this year's field of 18 seminaries from around the country. Now a busy priest, Fr. Durand has to carve out time for a few precious hours of fellowship with the seminarians, who are competing at the annual event he helped to found.

Many of the games are played in the Bucks former training facility, so the setting is legitimate. Families from near and far pack

the stands, creating a palpable crowd-fueled excitement that lasts throughout each game.

Pewaukee native Shane O'Brien, is in the first-year preparatory stage of seminary, and first year playing in the tournament. O'Brien is an enthusiastic athlete, just a few years off of a college football career, happy to mix it up on a court again. The experience made a huge impression. "This was by far one of the greatest experiences of my life. Not only because of the close basketball games and the electric environment, but because of the 450 seminarians. It was such an encouraging moment for me this weekend to persevere. I was so moved and motivated."

Seminaries from Nebraska, Florida, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Louisiana, and many states in between were represented in the 2026 tourney. And, yes, our hometown seminary team, the St. Francis de Sales Shoremen, did win the championship trophy this year! For just the second time in tournament history, the host team took the trophy in a hard-fought overtime game that thrilled the entire crowd. If you're looking for a fun family event in 2027, mark your calendars for next year's tournament to be held February 5-7, 2027. Hope to see you there!

The Shoremen Team

- 1 David Marrone, Cross Plains
- 3 Christian Brayer, New Berlin
- 5 Adam Widder Sheboygan, Teaching Parish St. Jerome Oconomowoc
- 10 Deacon Andy Swietlik, Elm Grove
- 11 Deacon Joel Kolb, West Bend
- 21 Tim Heyrman, New Berlin, Teaching Parish St. Charles Hartland
- 23 John Andress, Hubertus
- 24 Mitchell Carey, Clarkston, WA
- 32 Levi Spaeth, Sparta
- 40 Charles Pomroy, Menomonee Falls
- 41 Shane O'Brien, Pewaukee
- 44 John Francis, Chippewa Falls