

# A bishop who knows the game

From hero worship of a Baseball Hall of Fame centerfielder to holding his own in serious pick-up basketball games to name-dropping the Ravens' No. 1 draft choice, sports are an enduring reference point and release for Bishop W. Francis Malooly.

A keen observer of all things Maryland - including the region's professional and collegiate teams - the 64-year-old qualifies as a "jock" himself, with multiple interests and an eagerness to compete.

Bishop Malooly's friends talk not about his tennis backhand or his willingness to mix it up under a basketball hoop, but about his commitment. In the 1990s, that manifested itself on vacation at Bethany Beach, Del., when a single day might include basketball, cycling and tennis.

"For six or seven hours, he separated himself from his responsibilities," said Rick Berndt, an attorney and companion on longer bicycle rides. "Just to get a day that worked for the two of us, that's an accomplishment in itself. It's really hard to schedule, and the fact that Bishop Malooly pursued it, just didn't give up finding a date, that says something."

They first met professionally, through Mr. Berndt's work for the Archdiocese of Baltimore. A partner at Gallagher, Evelius and Jones LLP, Mr. Berndt remembers weekly pick-up basketball games in Mount Washington that included Bishop Malooly.

"We were both in our mid 40s, and some of the guys we went up against were 23, 24," Mr. Berndt said. "People were playing to win, and Fran held his own. The point of all this was not just staying in shape. A broad range of camaraderie came out of it."

In June, when Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien received his pallium in Rome, Bishop Malooly shot hoops with the seminarians at the Pontifical North American College. At family gatherings, he tests his free throws accuracy.

Tennis against his brother Gerard occurs with less frequency, and his golf game is

restricted to the occasional charity tournament, as Bishop Malooly's main form of exercise is 30 minutes on a stationary bike four times a week.

"At Bethany Beach, we've gone from those triathlons to a couple of sets of tennis," the bishop said, "but I've always done the bike. It's a way to relieve stress."

Bishop Malooly baptized one of the children of the late Johnny Unitas, but his fan interests predate the quarterback who led the Baltimore Colts to National Football League titles in 1958 and '59, and even Brooks Robinson, who began a 23-year career with the Orioles in 1955.

That franchise didn't land in Baltimore until 1954, when young Fran Malooly was 10 and entrenched in the daily sports section.

"My favorite player was Duke Snider," Bishop Malooly said, citing a Brooklyn Dodgers star. "Before the Orioles came to Baltimore, I could pick up the Dodgers on radio, WEBB, 1010."

He has represented a unified church, albeit in a divided western vicariate

"As the western vicar, it's not just the Orioles and Ravens," he said. "In Howard County and Frederick County, you run into a lot of Redskins fans. When you get to Cumberland, you're talking (Pittsburgh's) Steelers and Pirates. It got to the point where you can look at the baseball hat and figure where you are."

That point led to a reference to the college alma mater of the Ravens' No. 1 draft choice.

"Delaware Blue Hens," Bishop Malooly said. "Phillies, Eagles, I'll be up to speed on them soon."