

Xavier Prep – State Basketball Champions, 1944

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Pictured above (from left to right) – First row: Alvin Dave, Charles Ferrand, Louis White, Austin Foster, Leon Soniat; Standing: Alfred Priestly, Coach; Second Row: Warren Braden, Elliot Norwood, Lionel Philip, Earl Streams, M. Knox; Third Row: Nathan Biagas, Willis Misshore, Henry Davis.

After getting off to a shaky start early in the season, the Xavier Prep players came into their own by out-hustling their opponents all season when the chips were down, to finally win the State Championship honors at the Annual L.I.A.L.A. (Louisiana Interscholastic, Athletic and Literary Organization) Rally at Southern University in Scotlandville, LA. By winning this 1944 State Championship title, the Xavier Prep Yellow Jackets established themselves as outstanding competitors in all high school athletics, for the Preppers had won many state championships previously in all seasonal sports.

They had worn the basketball crown four times before and the district crown five times since 1937. In 1938, led by the immortal “Red Wilson”, the Jackets reached their greatest heights by winning the National High School Basketball Championship held at Tuskegee, Alabama.

This year, 1944, the Yellow Jackets started the season with what was thought to be a mediocre team. Realizing the team's shortcomings, Coach Priestly, who had tutored many outstanding young players, shifted combinations until he was able to develop a strong array of basketeters. The 1943 championship title had gone to *Louisiana Normal* and they were favored to win in 1944. They started out like a house on fire against the Yellow Jackets, but the Xavierites, playing their best when the chips were down, was victorious, 34-20.

They reached the finals by overcoming a strong and classy Natchitoches team in the semi-finals with a score of 25-19. It was all uphill after this and the young men pictured above had memories to last them a life time.

Source: *The Louisiana Weekly*, March 25, 1944, page 9.

L.V.C.