



## University of Akron Athletic Conferences

*Ken MacDonald*

On September 1, 1966, The University of Akron ended its forty-three-year association with the Ohio Athletic Conference. For the next twelve years, the University competed as an independent—first in the NCAA College Division, then in the NCAA II in 1973 when the NCAA separated colleges and universities into four divisions: NCAA I, I AA, II, and III.

On July 1, 1977, the University ended its independent days by joining the new Mid-Continent Conference. One year later, it applied for membership in the Ohio Valley Conference, which was NCAA I AA in football and NCAA I in all other sports, and began OVC play in the fall of 1980.

The OVC membership lasted until 1987, when the University declared it was going NCAA I in all sports. The transition was unprecedented in college athletics, as it became the first school in the nation to progress from the College Division to NCAA I.

In 1989, the University joined the Association of Mid-Continent Universities, where it competed in men's sports through the spring of 1992.

However, behind the leadership of Athletic Director Jim Dennison, The University of Akron accepted an invitation of membership to join the Mid-American Conference and began competing in all sports on September 1, 1992. "In my opinion, joining the MAC is the single most important event in our athletic history," said Dennison.