

SLIPPERY ROCK UNIVERSITY

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BY

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Could you discuss the Northeastern Baseball Program in Pennsylvania?

Sure the Northeastern Baseball Association is part of Northeastern School District, which is now the Riverside School District, comprised of Franklin , Marion, and North Sewickley Townships. The program started back in the early 1960's with Little League Baseball, and as the kids progressed Little League became Pony League and Colt League.

I started coaching one of the original Little League teams, and the first year we won the championship game. I stayed in Little League for several years, and when my sons became of age I coached them through Little League, Pony, and Colt.

In 1978 we formed the American Legion Team. At that point it became the Riverside School District, and that became the Riverside American Legion. I coached the American Legion for about eight years. The second year I coached I became the commissioner of the Riverside Athletic Association. I was in that position for two years. I was also in the Riverside League and that was becoming a little bit of a problem. So after the second year of being in charge, I just maintained the Riverside Baseball teams because it took so much of my time.

During my tenure, I was in charge of all the baseball teams, plus we had three Midget Football teams. So it was almost a year round project.

What that entailed was just overseeing everything. Such as overseeing operations, uniting committees, getting the field ready for baseball season, organizing uniforms,

making sure everybody got a uniform. Uniforms had to be replaced every second year. Beyond that, we had All-Star teams that I was responsible for setting up tournaments. We had a Women's Baseball Association, which was a pretty good association, which helped us. They donated money which helped our cause. We received funds from different committees to help manicure the field, put up fences, painting, and accumulating the equipment to help us in the years getting started.

In taking this position did you feel that you were doing good for the community by helping the youth in baseball?

Oh definitely, because at that time the kids were what were important. That was our main concern. It was really fun. A lot of hard work. A lot of people complaining, because you can't satisfy everybody. You struggled a lot and did whatever you thought was right. It was a good time, and it was a good organization. We kept our heads above water.

Do you find time, now that you're out of it, to go view baseball games from the youth?

Well, rarely anymore. Although, my youngest daughter played softball so I followed her all the way through. My oldest granddaughter is in the program now. So I try to get to as many games as I can.

Do you view it as America's past time?

That's my sport; baseball.

Is there anything that really attracted you to it?

Only because I played from the time I was thirteen until I was eighteen. Then I started coaching in Beaver Falls what was then what they called the Knee-high League, which was a combination of the Pony and Colt Leagues. I coached for them for about three years until Northeastern started their program. So I actually coached, except for one year, for that league.

You were Commissioner then also?

Yes.

Did you view the Ken Burns special on WQED about baseball?

No.

It seemed to be a weird time because of the baseball strike in professional baseball. I want to know how you felt about the strike among the professional teams?

I realize that because unions are unions, and with management in there, there's going to be problems. I think this is getting a little carried away, not knowing both sides problems or whatever. I can't see them taking this away from the fans. The fans are what made them. This really unfair and I hope that they get it resolved through

the winter.

Do you feel that the youth will see it as a negative against baseball?

I don't believe so. I just know that the kids love baseball, and if they are going to pursue it as a career this certainly is not going to stop them.

Do you feel that the organization helps pull the community together having Little League?

I don't know if it pulls the community together. I guess what you do is make new friends and new enemies, because it is like anything in competition. You're going to have people hate each other, but yet a lot of friendships start. If you get a winning program going it will have the tendency to pull a lot of people together.

What is your most memorable moment of that time?

There are several things. I guess when I go back to my last year of coaching at Beaver Falls I coached the colt League team. There were six Colt League teams in Western Pennsylvania. The Knee-high teams got the All-Star teams together and decided to have a series of the six teams. The winner would go onto Los Angeles for the national final.

I coached the Beaver Falls team, and it had people like Joe Namath, Loyd Gillingham, and Ted Candracki. These are names that went on to play college football, and became All Americans or Honorable Mention All Americans.

We got to the finals and played South Suburban or Pittsburgh. It was a round robin of three games. The best of the three games won the championship.

The first game we won, one to nothing. We had five player that also played for the Beaver Falls American Legion Team. They, as a coincidence, played in the Beaver County Championship Playoff Games. That Saturday we were going to play South Suburban Again. Beaver Falls also had a championship game. The coach for Beaver Falls had priority over me, and took four of the five best players. He left me with Namath. He was the pitcher. That really damaged our team. But Joe pitched a one hitter, and he faced a major leaguer to be in Sam MacDowell, who ended up pitching for the Cleveland Indians and other teams. Sam Pitched a no hitter and we ended up losing, one to nothing.

We had to play the third game and final game on Sunday. Beaver Falls happened to win on Saturday and they had to play again on Sunday. So it got down to where I had the same situation. I had one good player, and the rest were actually bench warmers. We lost that game, one to nothing. Both MacDowell and Namath pitched again that day. That team went to California and ended up being the runners up in that series. We lost a great opportunity.

I guess that's one of my memorable moments.. The next one would be the first year that Northeastern started, we won the first championship over Franklin-Marion. They had previously started before us in Little League. They had experienced kids, and we did not have experienced kids.

We ended up winning the championship, and that may have been the best coaching job I have done in my life. I just had a lot of kids who did not know how to play baseball.

What were the ages?

Ten, eleven, and twelve.

Even the Colt League?

No, the Colt League were all sixteen years old.

The only other big memory in the eight years of coaching the American Legion, is that we won a championship. It takes a lot to win an American Legion Championship. We're dealing with a lot of older kids that will move on into college and so forth. Two kids ended up getting drafted. After they went to college they ended up playing in the Minor Leagues.

The transcript of this interview is going to be in the Slippery Rock University Library in our archives for other people to see from now until eternity. So is there anything you want to say finally about baseball?

Well, I had said that baseball is my favorite sport. I think that it is the most exciting sport there is. There's not a lot of action continually like in hockey or football, but when there is action it is spontaneous. When there's a play at the plate, or a fly ball, or your tie is up at third and he tries to score and the catcher blocks the plate, and the ball comes in and it's just "Bang! Bang!", and everybody

has to do everything right. I think that's what makes
baseball so great.