

# BASEBALL ALUMNI NEWS

FALL 2019



Hall of Fame manager Tony La Russa gives his acceptance speech after being honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award at the 20th annual Legends for Youth Dinner on Thursday, Nov. 7, 2019.

“  
You are only  
as good as  
what you do  
to give back.

- Tony La Russa

## LA RUSSA, DAMON AND KENDRICK RECOGNIZED AT 20TH ANNUAL LEGENDS FOR YOUTH DINNER

By Jeff Gold / Special to MLB.com

**N**EW YORK — It's been quite a stretch for postseason hero Howie Kendrick. A week after helping to lift the Nats to the franchise's first World Series title -- and D.C.'s first since 1924 -- Kendrick was honored with the Heart & Hustle Award at the Major League Baseball Players Alumni Association's 20th Annual Legends for Youth dinner on Thursday, November 7, 2019.

"Being chosen as a Heart & Hustle winner out of all the finalists, there were a lot of great guys this year, but I'm truly humbled they chose me," Kendrick said in a recorded speech. "It's truly an honor to be like [past winners]. They set the table. They laid the foundation, and I get an opportunity to represent something I've modeled my career after."

The Heart & Hustle Award is voted on by Alumni and active Major League players, and it is presented annually to an active player who demonstrates a passion for the game of baseball and best embodies the values, spirit and traditions of the game. One player from each team was chosen, then fans, alumni and active players voted on an overall winner from that pool.

Not only did Kendrick hit the decisive homer in Game 7 of the World Series on Oct. 30, but he also became the first player in MLB history to hit multiple home runs in the seventh inning or later in winner-take-all games in a postseason. His grand slam in the top of the 10th inning in Game 5 of the National League Division Series against the Dodgers on Oct. 9 sparked the Nationals to the franchise's first postseason series victory.

The two historic and unforgettable highlights added to what had already been an outstanding 2019 season for the 36-year-old Kendrick, who hit a career-best .344 with 17 homers and 62 RBIs. He has 1,722 career hits over a distinguished 14-year career., 2019

Kendrick wasn't the only person  
Continued on page 3



Above: Byron and Lindsey Buxton attend the 20th annual Legends for Youth Dinner on Thursday, Nov. 7, 2019.

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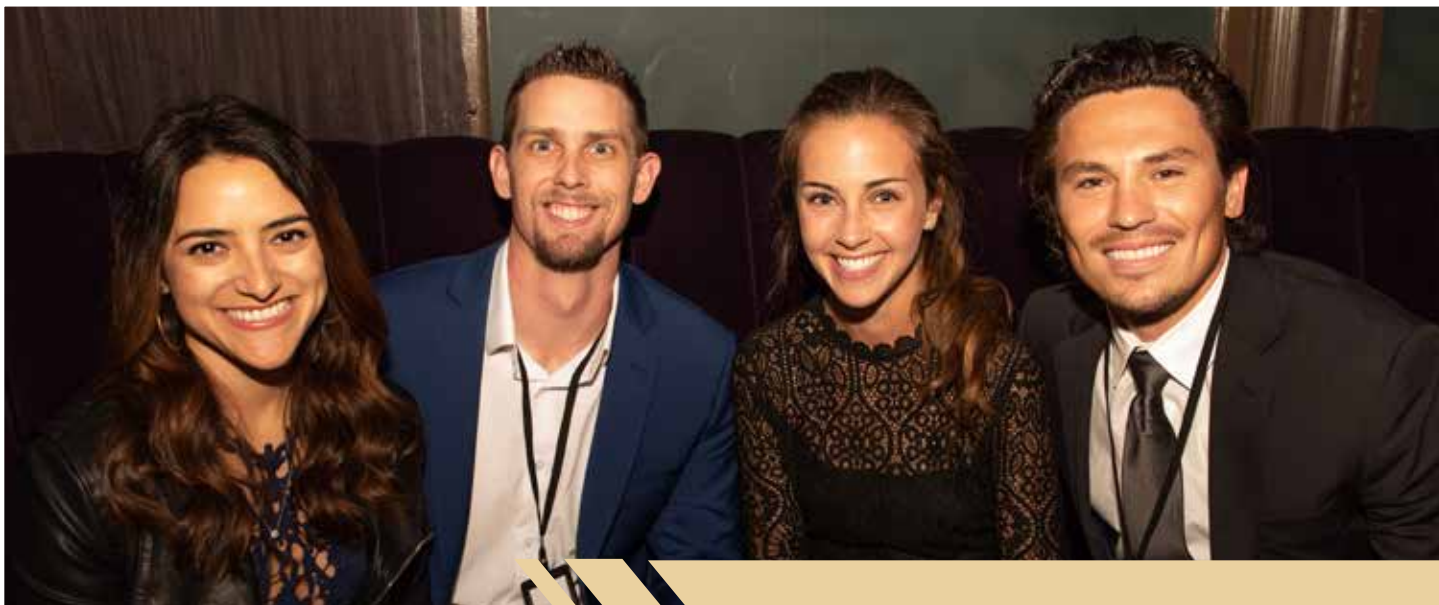
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Heart and Hustle Award nominees Jeff McNeil (left center) and Tony Wolters (far right) are joined by their wives, Tatiana and Kaitlyn, at the 20th annual Legends for Youth Dinner on Thursday, Nov. 7, 2019.

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honored at the packed dinner. Hall of Famer Tony La Russa was recognized with the 2019 Lifetime Achievement Award. A three-time World Series winner as a manager, La Russa's 2,728 career wins trail just Connie Mack and John McGraw for most in MLB history. La Russa has dedicated countless hours to his Animal Rescue Foundation (ARF), where animals without a home can be kept and matched with potential owners, including military vets. The ARF has saved more than 42,000 cats and dogs.

"You are only as good as what you do to give back," La Russa said. "My wife and I take that seriously." In addition to La Russa, Hall of Famers Joe Torre (who introduced La Russa), Harold Baines, Andre Dawson and Lee Smith were among the baseball legends who attended the event.

Two-time World Series champion and two-time All-Star Johnny Damon received the Association's Brooks Robinson Community Service Award. Damon has been active with various charities both during his playing career and in retirement, and he said he always made a point -- even leading teammates -- to visit the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center when

on the road in Baltimore.

"I always feel like you can give more to help out the people who can't help themselves and to help out charities that are near and dear to my heart," Damon said. "Sometimes you can't recognize guys when they first come to Walter Reed, and then you see them five, 10 years later and you have a conversation with them, and they're like, 'I remember.' And I think that's the coolest thing ever.



Above: Harold and Marla Baines pose for a photo at the 20th annual Legends for Youth Dinner on Thursday, Nov. 7, 2019.



Brooks Robinson Community Service Award honoree Johnny Damon at the 20th annual Legends for Youth Dinner on Thursday, Nov. 7, 2019.



# MLBPAA HOSTS 29TH ANNUAL DALLAS-FORT WORTH MLBPAA GOLF TOURNAMENT

By Dic Humphrey

**K**ELLER, TX — The Dallas/Ft. Worth chapter of the Major League Baseball Players' Alumni Association hosted a charity golf tournament this Thursday at the Sky Creek Ranch Golf Club in Keller. Approximately 40 current and former players mixed in with local players – about 170 in all – for a day of golf and a lot of baseball talk.

Jack Lazorko, former pitcher with the Angels, Brewers, Mariners and Tigers, heads up the local chapter and is the force behind the tournament. “The MLBAA is a charity that has been ongoing since 1982 when Brooks Robinson started the MLBPAA. It’s to benefit kids and under privileged kids. We donate money to hospitals and charities all over the country,” Lazorko said.

Lazorko added, “This chapter here in Dallas is probably one of the longest running chapters. It’s been going for 29 years. Eddie Robinson started it, then Doyle (Alexander) had it for a year, and I’ve doing it here for the last 15 years as the President of the MLBPAA here in Dallas.”

Getting participants is no problem at this point. He prints brochures, and it’s easy to sign up online (Baseballlegends.com), but at this point, most of his players are repeat customers. “What happens is a lot of these teams want to come back every year because they enjoy seeing the players every year. So we get a lot of repeat sponsors coming back.”

The scramble format is utilized for the tournament to make the game feasible

for golfers of all skill levels. There were five-somes including a celebrity player.

Geoff Hixson, the Chief Executive Officer of the MLPAA in Colorado Springs was on hand for this tournament. He said they hold around 30 of these charity golf events over the course of a year. Some of the tournaments are done in conjunction with other organizations, though many like this one are large enough to be held just for the MLBPAA.

There were baseball relics available for auction. Many were laid out for a silent auction. There were autographed photographs of Hall of Famers Ivan Rodriguez, Alan Trammell, Ozzie Smith and Wade Boggs, among others. There was a wide selection of autographed baseballs. Included were balls signed by Lee Smith, Brett Gardner, Andre Dawson, Joey Votto, Don Mattingly and Gerrit Cole. There were gift baskets, and paraphernalia from the other Major sports teams in the area – the Dallas Cowboys, the Dallas Mavericks and the Dallas Stars. A couple of baseballs were slated to be auctioned live after the golf was finished. They were autographed by Duke Snider and Mike Trout.

Interestingly, three of the former Major League players on hand are perhaps more recently known for their sons’ work on the gridiron at quarterback. Steve Buechele (son Shane at SMU), Ken Hill (Kenny formerly at Texas A&M and TCU), and Pat Mahomes (Patrick of the Kansas City Chiefs) all took part.

Ken Hill echoed the sentiment of most of the players and former players there.

“Shoot I’ve been doing this since it first started. Giving back. Being part of the Alumni. Visit with the fellows and have fun. I like to see all the guys, all the ex-players, just being around them whooping and hollering. It’s always a special time.” He says he also plays at the tournament put on at the WinStar Casino in Oklahoma.

One Keller resident was in the field for the third straight year. He doesn’t play with any particular group of people. “I just told Jack (Lazorko) to put me wherever.” He likes meeting different people. As for players, he says, “It’s always nice to see guys that I grew up watching (playing in the Majors.)” He was especially interested in seeing former Rangers Kevin Mench and Jeff Frey.

The Sky Creek Ranch is a magnificent setting for the tournament. The 18 hole golf course was designed by Robert Trent Jones. It’s a par 72 course that is 6,953 yards long from the pro tees. The clubhouse sits atop the highest point in Tarrant County.

The tournament is a big undertaking. Lazorko, though, has put it together for so long that he makes it look easy. It was a day of no losers. The fans got to play an outstanding layout. Current and former players got to reunite. Most of all, a notable amount of money was raised to help disadvantaged children across the nation.



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MLB alumni introduce themselves during an Alumni Day event in San Diego, Calif. on Tuesday, Sept. 24, 2019.

## THEIR LOVE FOR BASEBALL IS EVIDENT AT MLBPAA EVENT IN SAN DIEGO

By Jay Paris / Special to MLB.com

**S**AN DIEGO, CA — Batting practice was in full swing, the smell of hot dogs filled the air and you bet it was time for baseball.

"It's a day at the ball park for the guys and this reminds them of the passion they have for the game," San Diego Padres legend Randy Jones said.

Jones, who won the 1976 National League Cy Young Award, wasn't talking about the participants prepping for Tuesday night's contest between the Los Angeles Dodgers and Padres on September 24, 2019.

Instead it was the national pastime's former players that were in Jones' thoughts, as he looked around a packed auditorium at Petco Park.

The Major League Baseball Players Alumni Association was having its Alumni Day Series in America's Finest City and there were more bodies than there were chairs.

"Every one of these guys still has a love for the game and you can see it in their eyes," said Jones, who also pitched for the Mets. "Even if

they just got a taste of the big leagues, we all share that passion."

Plenty of stories were getting passed around as more than 40 men told tales, some tall and some otherwise. It was a reunion of sorts, with guys swapping stories of the glory days gone by, but never forgotten.

"It doesn't take long before I see someone I either played with or against," said David Newhan, who spent parts of eight major-league seasons with five teams.

Among the cool parts at an event where sore shoulders, barking elbows and aching knees were put on ice were the introductions. Each player rose, stated their name and the number of squads they cashed a check from.

The once-speedy Derrel Thomas stood and started running through his list when someone shouted: "We don't have time for all your teams."

That line brought with it a hearty laugh and a booming voice from the back.

"I got all you guys beat," Mark Redman said.

He certainly did in the jewelry department as his 2003 Florida Marlins World Series ring swallowed the lefty's hefty finger.

"It is pretty big, but I thought I would bring it out for this function," he said.

But back to his plethora of teams. It's enough that Redman had to take a deep breath before spitting out: Twins, Blue Jays, Twins, Tigers, Marlins, Rangers, A's, Pirates, Royals, Blue Jays, Braves and Rockies.

Whew.

But no matter the uniform, length of service time, position or platitudes, all these gentleman were the same: they played the game with honor and now they live it with pride.

"We're all part of the same fraternity," said Newhan, fresh from managing the Angels Class AA team in Mobile, Ala. "Regardless of what generation you might have played in it's just nice to be around other guys that played the game. It's great to be connected to the game, and these guys, through this organization."

Other professional leagues look at the



Alumni pose for a group photo at the Alumni Day event in San Diego, Calif. on Tuesday, Sept. 24, 2019.

MLBPAA with envy. It has more than 9,000 members, with 75 percent of them being ex-players. Also included are the players' wives, baseball scouts, front-office personnel, umpires and even a baseball scribe or two.

"Hey wasn't your dad a sportswriter?" Joe Sambito said when spotting Newhan.

Ross Newhan certainly was, an icon in Southern California newspaper circles.

"I hope he never ripped you," David Newhan said with a chuckle.

Sambito, who pitched 11 seasons with the Astros, Mets and Red Sox, put in perspective the thrills and realities of being in "The Show."

"We get to live out every fan's dream," he said. "But you can also get injured by the smallest of things and it can be over."

That's where the MLBPAA steps in. It assists its members with health benefits, pensions and finding work after the cheering has stopped.

"We want to promote the game of baseball, raise money for charities and serve the needs of the former players," said Dan Foster, the CEO of the MLBPAA.

That's a big endeavor, but it's a worthy cause for these appreciative former big leaguers.

**We're all part of the same fraternity... It's great to be connected to the game, and these guys, through this organization.**

**- Ross Newhan**



A table of alumni players socialize with one-another during the Alumni Day event in San Diego, Calif. on Tuesday, Sept. 24, 2019.





Former Pittsburgh Pirates pitcher Jason Grilli works on pitching mechanics with a participant at the Legends for Youth clinic in Tarentum, Pa. on Saturday, October 19, 2019

PHOTO: JOE SARGENT/MLB.COM

## MLBPAA HOSTS YOUTH CLINIC IN PENNSYLVANIA

By Dic Humphrey / Special to MLB.com

**T**ARENTUM, PA — It can be hard to get the undivided attention of 175 youngsters.

However, having a National League Most Valuable Player award to your name helps get anyone's attention. So, Andrew McCutchen had a captive audience Saturday, October 19 when he addressed the scores of young ballplayers who attended the Legends for Youth Clinic at the No Offseason Sports training facility, presented by the Major League Baseball Players Alumni Association.

The Philadelphia Phillies outfielder's message was a simple one – you can learn something about baseball every day.

McCutchen talked about how he attended a youth camp at the Roberto Clemente Sports City complex in San Juan, Puerto Rico when he was 11 years old and one of the best pieces of advice he was ever given.

One of the instructors noticed that the

alignment of McCutchen's knuckles on the barrel of the bat was wrong. He showed McCutchen the proper grip to ensure he was relaxed as possible when he was in the batter's box.

"Imagine if I hadn't been there that day and didn't learn that," McCutchen told the young players. "Who knows what would have happened? I might not be here today talking to you. I might have never become a professional baseball player. You always have to be willing to learn in this game."

McCutchen learned his lessons well. He has been playing in the major leagues for 11 years, been selected to five All-Star Games and was the NL MVP in 2013 when he helped the Pittsburgh Pirates end a streak of 20 straight losing seasons and reach the postseason for the first time since 1992.

There was a lot of teaching and learning going on Saturday at the sprawling facility 20 miles north of Pittsburgh. Aspiring big leaguers were taught the nuances of pitching, hitting, fielding,



Miami Marlins pitcher Neil Walker poses for a photo with a child at the Legends for Youth clinic in Tarentum, Pa. on Saturday, October 19, 2019.

PHOTO: JOE SARGENT/MLB.COM





Participants practice running drills at the Legends for Youth clinic in Tarentum, Pa. on Saturday, October 19, 2019.

PHOTO: JOE SARGENT/MLB.COM

baserunning and even the proper way to warm up before practicing from a host of current and former major league players.

Another active player participating was infielder Neal Walker, who spent this season with the Miami Marlins. Among the retired players were Sean Casey, Jason Grilli, Steve Grilli, Omar Olivares Kevin Orie, Chris Peters, Scott Seabol and Marc Wilkins.

It was difficult to tell who had a better time on a beautiful autumn afternoon, the children or the instructors.

Orie enjoyed sharing some of the wisdom gained while playing 13 seasons of professional baseball after being the Chicago Cubs' first-round draft pick in the 1993 amateur draft. The third baseman spent four seasons in the major leagues with the Cubs between 1997 and 2002.

"It's a great way to stay connected to the game," Orie said. "Being able to

come out to an event like this, to be around the kids, to try to teach them some things, is a lot of fun. It's good from both a physical and mental standpoint to be able to come out and work with the kids and it's important to the game itself to have kids want to learn more about the game and develop a love of baseball."

While there was plenty of work on the fundamentals of the game, every instructor had the same theme while talking to the youngsters – you can achieve anything with hard work.

Steve Grilli talked about how he was so

skinny that he did not make the team at Christian Brothers High School in Memphis, Tenn., until his senior year. Even after blossoming at Division II Gannon University, Grilli went undrafted and signed with the Detroit Tigers as an amateur free agent in 1970.

Yet Grilli made to the major leagues and pitched in 70 games for the Tigers from 1975-79.

Grilli's son, Jason, wound up being a first-round draft of the San Francisco Giants in 1997, selected fourth overall after starring at Seton Hall University. Jason Grilli, who pitched for nine

**It's a great way to stay connected to the game.**

**- Kevin Orie**

teams during a 15-year major league career that ended in 2017, relayed to the attendees how a strong work ethic enabled him to reach a lofty draft status and eventually pitch in four postseasons and an All-Star Game.

"I wasn't always the best player on my team when I was growing up," Grilli told the campers. "What made the difference is I put in the work. I worked harder than anyone else so I could reach my dreams. It's like that in anything. Say you're a C student. If you put in the work and try hard, you can become an A student. Hard work makes a difference."

Sean Casey, who played in three All-Star Games during his 12-year career as a first baseman from 1997-2008, used Washington Nationals second baseman Howie Kendrick as an example of how hard work continues to yield dividends even after a player reaches the pinnacle of the sport. Kendrick was named the MVP of the National League Championship Series following the Nationals' sweep of the St. Louis Cardinals.

In his role as a studio analyst for MLB Network, Casey had the opportunity to interview Kendrick following the NLCS. Casey relayed how Kendrick said he has been able to keep his batting stroke sharp thanks in part to hitting off a tee

**“For me, there’s not a higher honor than to just be able to share what we know.”**

**- Marc Wilkins**

during his daily pre-game work.

"That's going back to the basics, but it just shows how mastering the basics pay off, even for guys in the big leagues," Casey said.

Almost all the instructors either grew up or live in the Pittsburgh area. What was heartening to each of them was the large turnout of young players, even after the youth league and tournament seasons have ended.

Grilli and Wilkins have played a large part in the development of No Offseason Sports, which is owned and founded by Charles Vrabel Jr. and is considered one of the top baseball training facilities in Pennsylvania.

By the time Offseason Baseball's latest expansion project is finished, it will have 21 fields to go with its spacious

indoor facility. Six of the fields will be covered by a bubble, allowing kids to work on their games all year round.

Grilli is so hands on that he regularly operates a bulldozer as part of the expansion effort.

"The community has given so much to us that it's nice to give back, thanks to the Vrabel family," Grilli said. "It's just a good time for a bunch of us ex-players to get together and maybe give a kid a piece of information or a nugget to help him further his career."

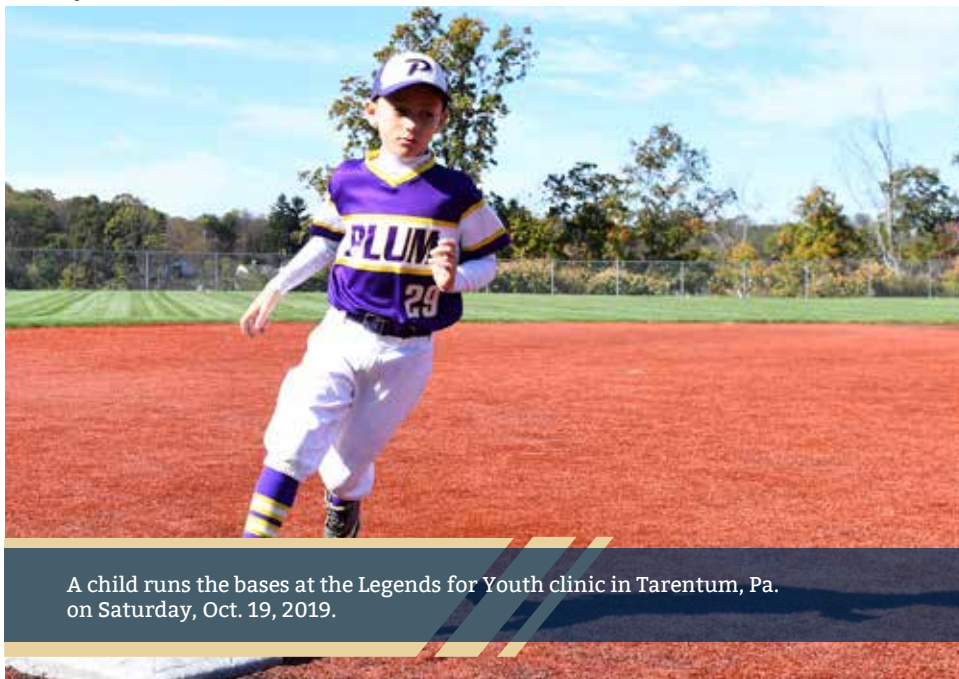
"You never ever want to take the uniform off and I always tried to play as long as I could. There's that transition period where you try to decide how you might be able to stay in the game. Could it be broadcasting? Could I get into coaching? Could I

become a scout? To me, personally, Chuck Vrabel has been a saving grace to have this wonderful opportunity to allow me to work with kids and try to help them realize their dreams."

Wilkins, a relief pitcher with the Pirates from 1996-2001, also enjoys imparting the knowledge gained from playing in the big leagues.

"For me, there's not a higher honor than to just be able to share what we know," Wilkins said. "I love to interact with the kids and the real thrill is sharing something with a kid that nobody else can share unless you were able to make it all the way to the major leagues. You don't know what you don't know and there's a certain degree of knowledge that only us (former major leaguers) can teach these kids. That's pretty special."

PHOTO: JOE SARGENT/MLB.COM



A child runs the bases at the Legends for Youth clinic in Tarentum, Pa. on Saturday, Oct. 19, 2019.

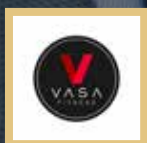


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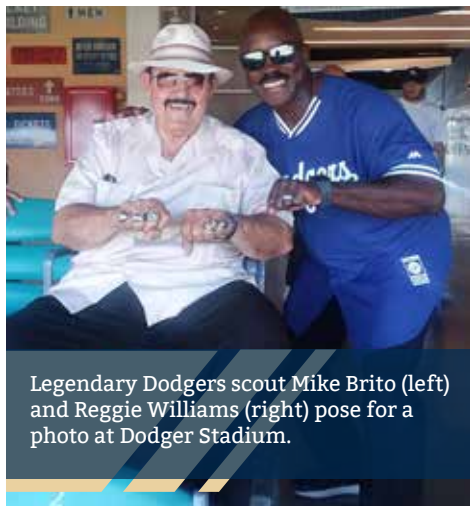


# WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

## REGGIE WILLIAMS

By Alex Matyuf / MLBPA

The transition from baseball to civilian life can be a tricky one for ballplayers. While some remain in the baseball world on the coaching staff, in the front office or in the broadcast booth, others are uncertain of their career path. Former outfielder Reggie Williams belonged in the latter category after four years in the majors with the Los Angeles Dodgers and Cleveland Indians – he eventually found a passion that he felt came naturally: teaching.



Legendary Dodgers scout Mike Brito (left) and Reggie Williams (right) pose for a photo at Dodger Stadium.

PHOTO: REGGIE WILLIAMS

Williams began his post-playing career working odd jobs until he became a substitute teacher in Memphis, Tenn., where he found the joy of teaching and working with young people, leading him back to school to earn his Master's degree in teaching.

"I began to really enjoy teaching, so I went back to school and got another Masters in School Administration and Supervision," Williams said. "After that, I became an administrator of a middle school and I did

that for about a little more than a year."

Not long after his teaching career took off, a unique opportunity was presented to Williams that melded his love of teaching and his love of baseball into one vision: a non-profit Triple-A baseball team in Memphis.

"I believe it was one of the first professional baseball teams run as a non-profit and that was the Memphis Redbirds," said Williams. "It became an affiliate of the regionally popular team, the St. Louis Cardinals. So I worked with the Memphis Redbirds and became the vice president of community relations."

Williams also participated in radio and television broadcasting for the team, and ran their Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities (RBI) program which had 14 sites and more than 1,000 kids participating.

With the creation of a minor league team came the rebirth of a previously lost middle school baseball and softball program.

The return of middle school baseball and softball programs is partly thanks to Dean and Kristi Jernigan, the founders of the Memphis Redbirds. Their mission was to have a non-profit to bring baseball back to the inner-city schools given Memphis' rich baseball history.

"With it being missing in the middle schools, the high school [teams] didn't have feeder schools," said Williams. "As a result, high school baseball in the urban schools was not as competitive as it should have been. Dean and Kristi's vision was to bring middle school baseball back along with the baseball summer program RBI, which is a component of Major League Baseball – to

bring it back to kids who were not exposed."

This was a huge undertaking, according to Williams, who ran clinics for the teachers who wanted to coach but lacked the playing experience.

"I would do clinics and camps for the coaches so that they could teach those proper mechanics of fielding, throwing, hitting and running the bases, etcetera so that at least we could have some kind of background in terms of teaching the kids."

Since bringing baseball back to Memphis middle schools, Williams still works periodically with some of the teams by participating in a practice or talking to players about the challenges and benefits of baseball, while also mentioned the education and exposure one can obtain from being a baseball player. He also emphasizes the idea that baseball is not a discriminatory sport.

"You don't have to be so tall, you don't have to be so big like in football," said Williams. "If you can hit, throw, run and catch, you're



Reggie Williams serves dinner to parishioners at his church.

PHOTO: REGGIE WILLIAMS

eligible. That gives some kid who's not fast or some kid who's not big or some kid who's not tall that can dribble, he can get out there and try baseball."

Williams assisted the Redbirds in supplying equipment, jerseys and other necessities for the baseball and softball teams. After 12 years of service with the Redbirds, Williams left the team and joined the Milwaukee Brewers organization as a base running and outfield rover before becoming a first base coach for their minor league system. Williams then moved on to the Cincinnati Reds organization after seven years with the Brewers. He currently works as a minor league bench coach with the Cincinnati Reds minor league team in Greenville, Tenn. while juggling an adjunct professor job teaching a course entitled "Baseball in America" at the University of Memphis.

"It's an online course, so I don't have to be at the university proper," Williams said. "I can be at Greenville, I can be at Phoenix, Ariz. and I can communicate with students via email. That's primarily how we communicate."

The online course is something Williams appreciates as it allows him to still coach baseball while still continuing a teaching career, a job he feels makes a difference in the lives of young people by getting them to understand the importance of having an education.

While Williams' ideal dream is to return to the majors in a coaching position, he knows education will remain in his future plans.

"It's something I do very naturally," said Williams. When you help kids learn and get that feeling of accomplishment when you see a student improving grades, that's a feeling of not only success, but a feeling that you're somewhat contributing to life."

Williams said while he's approaching retirement, he doesn't see himself sitting idly by at home. Instead, he wants to continue working in the education field, potentially opening up his own baseball academy in the Memphis area that would include batting cages and baseball lessons,

but also emphasize the importance of education.

"[I also want to have] a tutoring educational component aligned with that particular academy because I want to try to impress upon the students that sport is not guaranteed, but an education can take you a lifelong time," Williams said. "Learning is lifelong and our world continues to evolve so you want to always be in a position to learn."

Williams doesn't take all the credit for his success, however. One of his "stabilizing forces", as he puts it, is his wife Allyson.

"I want to make sure she knows that I appreciate the woman that she's been, the force that she's been and just the encourager, the team player with me," Williams said. "She's been a real key factor for me having the successes that I have had in life. Even in college, she would help me with studying, encouraging me on text. She's been a real key component and for me, that's been a huge factor in the successes that I've had in my life."



Reggie Williams has dinner with his wife Allyson (far left), daughter Lesly (right-center) and son Lane (far right).

PHOTO: REGGIE WILLIAMS



# LEGENDS FOR YOUTH CLINIC TEACHES THE GAME TO SOLANA BEACH KIDS

By Jay Paris / Special to MLB.com

World Series chatter filled the air and it wasn't restricted to those playing for the Houston Astros and Washington Nationals.

Charles Nagy, who pitched in two Fall Classics with the Cleveland Indians, was spreading the gospel to 75 youngsters, between the ages of 6-16, at the Legends for Youth Baseball Clinic on a sun-splashed Saturday morning on October 26, 2019.

"Find your balance point, step toward that catcher and throw a strike," Nagy told those with bright eyes in Solana Beach, Calif. "That's it and it's simple."

The national pastime can be a complicated game but Nagy and seven other Major League Baseball Players Alumni members were breaking it down for those with grand dreams.

"I want to be a major-league player for the Dodgers," Grant Harrison, 14, said.

Harrison looked the part of a smooth-fielding shortstop and a pitcher with a presence. It's a long road ahead for any player seeking to be in "The Show" but it doesn't hurt showing up and getting advice from those that have been there.

"This is really cool that these guys come out here," Harrison said. "And it's cool for us to learn from veteran major-leaguers."

Nagy had more than a cup of coffee in the bigs. The 14-year veteran won 129 games, was a key part of those two American League champion teams with the Tribe and he was selected to three All-Star games.

Despite those accolades, his smile was as big as those listening to him. Giving back is important to Nagy, as he recalls coaches disbursing their time and wisdom when he was a tyke.

"I just try to remember the lessons that I learned and then pass along the message," Nagy said.

Bobby Mitchell, a former Los Angeles Dodgers and Minnesota Twins outfielder, was watching participants



Children pose for a photo at the Legends for Youth clinic in Solana Beach, Calif. on October 26, 2019.

pass by — but in the right position.

Mitchell was conducting base-running drills which included a bottle of water for the players to veer around coming out of the batter's box when headed for first base, and a plastic cone for them to go inside of when aiming for second base.

"If you want to go on and play ball at a higher level you can stand above everyone else if you are a complete ballplayer," Mitchell said. "That includes being a good base runner."

"I will guarantee you 50 percent of the players that reach the pros don't know how to run the bases the right way. If you can, you are ahead of the game."

Cole Liniak, an ex-Chicago Cubs infielder, was preaching to the masses about staying low to field a ball, with the glove on the ground and the other hand above it.

"Then when you get it throw it by gripping the ball with four seams," Liniak said. "Then it will go straight. But first you have to get in an athletic position by getting your body low and bringing the ball into your belly. Stay balanced and give them a good throw."

Liniak's pitch wasn't restricted to a baseball. He stressed that playing

baseball minus stress is a skill in itself.

"Baseball is hard and it's a game of failure," he said. "So you have to just come back the next day with a positive attitude. Sometimes when you get past 12 and 13 years old, the fun gets taken out of it."

Raul Gonzalez, an outfielder for four teams over five years, wasn't out of his element teaching the proper techniques.

His appearance, along with Liniak's, illustrated the bond that can develop through the great game of baseball.

Gonzalez and Liniak met in the Boston Red Sox bat room at their training facility in Fort Meyers, Fla., in 1995. All these years later, they were trading stories like kids do baseball cards.

"It's a friendship that we have that is very special," Liniak said.

It was special for the younger generation to learn from their elders. Their parents also appreciated the endeavor which has the full support of the Major League Baseball Players Alumni group. Other members taking part were Calvin Pickering, Jerry Turner, Kyle Phillips and Phil Ouellette.

"These guys are major-leaguers," said Scott Harrison, Grant's father. "They talk about the fundamentals, but they also give a great reminder to keep it fun. There's a reason why they call it a game."



Former outfielder Bobby Mitchell takes a knee to talk to participants at the Legends for Youth clinic in Solana Beach, Calif. on October 26, 2019.



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## MLBPAA MISSION STATEMENT

To promote the game of baseball, raise money for charity, inspire and educate youth through positive sport images and protect the dignity of the game through former Major League players.



Former Pittsburgh Pirates pitcher Jason Grilli watches on as a clinic participant practices his pitching technique at the Legends for Youth clinic in Tarentum, Pa. on Saturday, October 19, 2019.

PHOTO: JOE SARGENT/MLB.COM