



August 2014

SOFTBALL PLAYER PROFILE: BILL WHITELEY

By Larry Wolfe

A baseball junkie is defined as someone who loves baseball and “eats and breathes” the game. Bill Whiteley is the epitome of that definition. A native of Westminster, California, Bill was a three sport (baseball, basketball and football) letterman for the Westminster Lions, but baseball was always “his game.”

After graduating from high school, he played baseball at Golden West Junior College and Pacific Christian College before obtaining his degree from Long Beach State where he was an English major. Bill says that he was more of a “Huck Finn/Mark Twain-type” than a “Macbeth/William Shakespeare-type” English major!

Bill’s first “baseball job” was working at Bob’s Batting Cage in Westminster where he could take some free swings every day. He started that job as a 14-year-old and worked there part-time and summers for eight years. That may help explain the smooth swing and long ball prowess that he still shows on the field today.

In 1983 he became a full-time teacher at his alma mater, Westminster High, teaching English and PhysEd and coaching the baseball team. He later coached the junior varsity football and the girls’ soccer teams as well. He spent his entire career at Westminster with the exception of two

“breaks.” He coached the Golden West Junior College baseball team for a year and later spent two years as a hitting coach in the professional independent baseball leagues, first in Gastonia, NC and then in Palm Springs. After both ventures, he returned to his alma mater. Several of Bill’s “kids” were drafted, with Ryan Klesko becoming the most successful, enjoying a 16-year major league career.

In addition to coaching baseball, Bill played in various hardball leagues in California until he was 45 years old. He didn’t switch to softball until he retired and moved to Arizona. Bill and his lovely bride, Debi, first moved to the Seville community in Gilbert, but Seville was missing one very important amenity...a ball field! So Bill and Debi sold their Gilbert home and moved to Sun Lakes. “Sun Lakes is also much more of a community,” according to Bill. “In other places, people pull into their garages and you never see them again. It’s not that way here.”

He also enjoys the camaraderie at the Field of Dreams. Bill’s been playing in our league for two years now and coincidentally, hit a robust .782 each year. He was #2 in the league last season. Besides hitting for a high average, Bill is one of our top power hitters and is a versatile defender who is an accomplished shortstop and outfielder.

Bill does have some other interests including working out at the gym and playing pickle ball and golf. (Unfortunately, he hits too many homeruns and foul balls on the golf course, too!) Bill’s also an avid reader, particularly enjoying Western literature. But baseball and now softball are still #1! What would you expect from “The Baseball Junkie?”