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SOFTBALL PLAYER PROFILE: JOHN WHITMAN
-Larry Wolfe

To list all the accomplishments and accolades earned by Coach John Whitman would fill an entire book, not just this column; so here's a very abridged version:

- Member of the Antioch (CA) High Legends Hall of Fame as Baseball/Basketball Coach;**
- Three-time Eastbay Baseball Coach of the Year;**
- Lesher Publications* Baseball & Basketball Coach of the Year;**
- Guided three different sports teams to Sectional appearances;**
- Head baseball coach of #5 team in the nation;**
- Two-Time head baseball coach of #1 team in California;**
- Head Coach of Bronze-medal winning Czechoslovakian team in the 1993 European Games;**
- Head Coach of eight league and three sectional baseball championship teams; and,**
- “Owner” of over 400 victories as a head baseball coach with a winning percentage of nearly 75%.**

The list could go on and on; however, you get the picture. John Whitman was one of the most successful coaches in the history of California high school sports. When he retired from coaching, newspaper articles referred to him as “legendary” and the “King of Coaches.”

After attending St. Mary’s College Prep and Albany High where he was a three-sport letterman, John earned degrees from Laney Junior College and Cal State-Hayward. He also took post-graduate courses at St. Mary’s College. He then taught and coached for six years at Salesian High before spending 28 years at Antioch High where he taught History, PE and Student Government and, at various times, coached varsity baseball, boys and girls basketball and girls volleyball. But it was as the varsity baseball coach that he became “the legend.” Many of his players received college scholarships or were drafted; three even became Major League baseball players.

Since retiring in 2008, John’s still involved in baseball and softball activities. He’s spoken at baseball seminars in four different countries and was General Manager of the Arizona Grinders baseball travel teams for three years; and, he still does private coaching lessons for youngsters. Of course, he’s also one of the top hitters in our league and started his Sun Lakes coaching career this year.

Besides coaching and playing, John is a “super fan” and memorabilia collector. His home office is actually a veritable baseball museum with one wall dedicated to his all-time favorite, Willie Mays. His collection of autographed balls and prints would make Cooperstown proud! John’s also attended games at over thirty major league stadiums with the remainder on his “bucket list.”

John and his lovely wife, Cheryl, married in 1976; thankfully she also loves baseball. Cheryl was a teacher, too, and acted as Scorekeeper for John’s teams for many years. For twenty years, they enjoyed getaways to their summer place in Tahoe, but recently bought a summer home in Benicia to be closer to their expanding family. John and Cheryl have two daughters, Nicole and Danielle, who also excelled in sports. It’s no surprise that that the first spoken word from their grandson, Grayson, wasn’t Mama or Dada, but “Ball!” Maybe we’ll have another “legendary coach” in the future!