

It's all in the family



(L-R) Ross and Tom Pagel

By Casie Vogel

“Well you have to treat every kid alike, but every kid differently at the same time. They have to think they're all being treated alike, but you can't do that because they're all different.”

That's what Tom Pagel, assistant baseball coach at Mesa High School in Mesa, Ariz., says what he's learned over the years. He should know. Recently, the 81-year-old coach received a 50-year coaching award from the BCA.

As a young boy growing up in Milwaukee, Wis., Pagel would play baseball in the summers. That young boy grew up to be a coach in not only baseball, but football as well.

“I really liked football except weekends were always breakdowns of the film for the next game, and you spent the whole doggone weekend doing that, but baseball, I dunno, I always played it. Guys, now gals are playing it. Everyone seems to like it,” he said.

Pagel started coaching baseball at Washington High School in Phoenix, Ariz. in 1961. Since then, he's coached around the Phoenix metro area, even once as assistant coach to his son, Ross Pagel, when they were both at Westwood High School in Mesa, Ariz.

“We had this family thing going on for about 12 years. It actually got to a point where I couldn't talk to him,” Ross said. “And that's when I said, ‘I've got to quit, I can't talk to my dad.’”

Ross has been coaching baseball for 22 years and is currently head coach at Red Mountain High School. While they disagreed when they were working so closely together, Ross believes that they actually have very similar coaching styles.

“He's very hard-nosed, I'm very hard-nosed,” Pagel said. “But I pretty much wear my emotions on my sleeve whereas my dad was a hard-nosed, old school, kind of guy. Over the years he has softened up a bit. He was a great assistant because when I chewed he picked up the pieces a lot. He's gotten to the point where he really tries to enjoy the kids a little bit more, the relationships a little bit more, than before.”

Ross says that his father always encouraged him to be athletic, eventually pushing Ross to become a baseball coach himself.

“With 4 brothers we grew up with athletics, football, basketball, baseball. My father always said, your job is going to be athletics, don't get a job we'll give you what you need – which wasn't a lot back then – but we survived and we got what we needed,” Ross said. “It's in the family blood.”

Both Tom and Ross Pagel traveled from Arizona to attend the BCA's annual convention in Raleigh this year.