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## *Vineland High School Baseball*

# 2010 Season in Review

## **SLOW START, STRONG FINISH UNDER NEW REGIME:**

The snow has finally stopped falling, the sun is poking through the clouds again, and the first warm winds of spring have been felt, signaling the return of baseball season! Throughout the country high school baseball players are digging out their gear, loosening up their arms, and daring to dream of conference and state championships. As the Vineland High School baseball team prepares for the 2011 season, first let's take a look back at the 2010 campaign, the first under new head coach John Malatesta.

The Fighting Clan got off to an inauspicious start under their new skipper, dropping their first six games of the season and falling into an early hole in the Cape-Atlantic League's American Division with lopsided losses to St. Augustine and arch-rival Millville. But things started to turn around, ironically, during a loss. Vineland was in a tight contest with Hammonton, and senior southpaw Santos Cintron was hurling a gem. In fact, he pitched five innings of no-hit ball. Because he had reached his innings limit, however, that meant the game would be in the hands of then-sophomore Chris Lopez. Lopez, in his first true test as a varsity player, pitched well, but the Blue Devils scratched across a couple of runs to take a 4-1 lead.

What happened next, however, is what might have saved the season for the Fighting Clan. Vineland began to rally and had Hammonton on the ropes, narrowing the gap to 4-3 and putting the tying run at second base before the Blue Devils were able to work out of the seventh-inning jam and preserve the win. The way Vineland fought back, and never gave up, gave the players a sense of belief that they were good enough to compete in perhaps the toughest baseball conference in South Jersey.

Vineland finished the season at 6-17, but played much better ball down the stretch, scoring big wins over Absegami, Atlantic City and Mainland before nearly knocking off powerhouse teams like Buena Regional and Sacred Heart in the final week of the season.

## A look at some individual performances



### EARNING THEIR FEATHERS:

Although Cintron didn't have a dazzling won-lost record, he was one of the better and more consistent pitchers in the CAL all season, and every time he pitched the Clan had a chance to win. Vineland also got some big contributions from some of its underclassmen, some of whom were in their first full years of varsity baseball. Carlos Lebron, a junior in 2010, hit .297 with 22 hits, 17 runs, two home runs and nine RBI. Bobby Romano led the way with a .373 average that included 25 hits, eight doubles, three home runs and a team-leading 17 RBI. Vaughn Watson, a current senior, set the table as the leadoff man, hitting .313 with 20 hits, 17 runs and an on-base percentage of .439. Vineland also got key contributions from guys like Lopez, Andrew Schwegel, Josh Stuart and Rickey Hinds, and got a look at some freshmen who were pulled up to the varsity squad for the final two weeks of the season. Jeff and Mark Rowan, Mike Forte, Don Money, Jesse Edelstein and Charles Mistretta all made their varsity debuts.

*"This is a game to be savored, not gulped. There's time to discuss everything between pitches or between innings."*

*Bill Veeck*

## New faces join returning coaches

### FORMER FIGHTING CLAN STAR ON BOARD:

The coaching staff has a new look this season with an injection of youth, as former area stars Bubba O'Donnell, a Vineland graduate, and Tim Edmeads, a Buena Regional alum, have joined a staff that includes Malatesta, Dave O'Sullivan, Don Money II, Jim Hague, Travis Amstutz and Kyle Jones. Amstutz and Jones will be back in their respective roles of junior varsity and freshman coaches, while O'Sullivan, Hague, Money II and Vineland High School Hall-of-Famer Bobby Allen return to assist on all levels on a part-time basis.

O'Donnell was drafted by the Chicago Cubs in the 34<sup>th</sup> round of the 2008 MLB June Amateur Draft and has played professionally for the Boise Hawks, Newark Bears and the Wichita Wingnuts. In 2008, the 6-foot-2, 210-pound righty went 6-3 with a 3.97 ERA with 36 strikeouts in 49 innings for the Hawks. O'Donnell attended High Point University in North Carolina after a stellar career at Vineland High School. He will serve as a pitching instructor for the Fighting Clan this season.

Coach Edmeads had similar success. He was first-team All-State in high school in 2003 and was drafted by the Chicago White Sox. He went on to play at West Virginia University in 2004 and Gloucester County College in 2005, where he led his team to the Junior College World Series title and was named National Junior College Player of the Year. He finished his career at Rowan University in 2007 and was an assistant coach at Deptford High in 2008. Edmeads currently is a substitute teacher at Vineland, and he and wife Jaylene have a 2-year-old daughter named Sofia and are expecting a second child in April.



## The quest for the perfect baseball complex

In an effort to make the Vineland baseball facility one of the best in South Jersey, the coaching staff and players have put in a tremendous amount of work on the field and facilities to improve not only appearance, but also the quality of play and practice players are able to receive.

Coaches Malatesta and O'Sullivan were out at the field several times a week all summer long making improvements, which included creating and planting a flower bed under the flag pole behind home plate, revamping the bullpen mound on the visitors' side and creating on-deck areas near both dugouts, among other projects.

Also, the dugouts were repainted a bright red and the team put up a brand-new wind screen along the outfield fence to improve the look of the field and give it more of a "complex" look, instead of just a high school baseball field. Many area businesses also have shown their support for the program, and their logos adorn large baseball plaques that hang from the outfield fence.

In addition, fencing was added behind both dugouts to allow space for a variety of instructional equipment, much of which coach Malatesta paid for himself. There still are plans for more upgrades, including laying down cement inside the home-side batting cage so that players can continue to take batting practice in less-than-ideal conditions and not have to worry about mud the day after a rainstorm. Another idea under consideration is building a new bullpen mound down the right-field line that would allow more than one relief pitcher to warm up late in a close ballgame.

The Press box still needs a new coat of red paint, and coach Malatesta has hinted at purchasing a new sound system for the field to announce lineups during the game. All that takes money, however, and the coaches and players have been actively fundraising for more than a year. Some of the fundraisers have included coin drops at various businesses in town, a comedy night during the winter that was a huge success, pasta dinners and breakfast buffets at the North Italy Club in Vineland, as well as other ventures.



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*"There have only been two geniuses in the world. Willie Mays and Willie Shakespeare."*

*-Tallulah Bankhead*

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*"Difficulties in life are intended to make us better, not bitter."*

*-Dan Reeves*

## Heading south for spring



### **FIGHTING CLAN HEADING TO FLORIDA:**

In an effort to get a jump on the April 1 opening day, Vineland will be making a trip to sunny Florida from March 22-27.

The team will be departing from Philadelphia on Tuesday afternoon and returning Sunday afternoon, and in between will be playing eight games against teams from all over the country, including some from New Jersey.

But it won't be all just baseball, although with the schedule that is planned, there won't be time for much else. The players and coaches will have some time, however, to swim, and on Saturday afternoon the guys will get a chance to watch a spring training game between the Mets and Braves at Digital Domain Park. Also on Saturday, Vineland will get the chance to play a game under the lights when the Fighting Clan take on Lyndhurst at 7 p.m.

## On deck in Florida

### **TUESDAY, MARCH 22**

Team departs Philadelphia at 4:55 p.m. and arrives in Orlando, Fla., at 7:35 p.m., then is transported to Fort Pierce.

### **WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23**

8:45 a.m. vs. Deerfield Academy; 2:30 p.m. vs. St. Luke's School

### **THURSDAY, MARCH 24**

Noon vs. Iona Prep; 6 p.m. vs. Taft School

### **FRIDAY, MARCH 25**

Noon vs. Lenape Valley; 3 p.m. vs. Worcester Academy

### **SATURDAY, MARCH 26**

9 a.m. vs. Princeton Day School; 7 p.m. vs. Lyndhurst

### **SUNDAY, MARCH 27**

Team arrives back in Philadelphia at 11:40 a.m. and arrives at Vineland High School at approximately 1:30 p.m.

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*"Good guys are a dime a dozen. An aggressive leader is priceless."*

*-Red Blaik*



## Giving back to the community

Something very important to coach Malatesta, and all the coaches, for that matter, is teaching the young men in the program not only about baseball, but about values they will need as they go through life beyond high school and the diamond. Values such as hard work, respect, honor, and giving back to the community. To that end, the Vineland High School baseball program does many things throughout the year in the hopes of teaching these boys that not only are they a part of a baseball team, they are part of a community as well.

Last spring, members from all three levels of the program spent an afternoon assisting players in the North Vineland Little League's Challenger Division, a league that was formed several years ago to give kids throughout South Jersey who are challenged either physically or cognitively an opportunity to play Little League baseball. The Vineland players, adorned in their gray pants and red practice jerseys, acted as "buddies" for the Challenger League players, helping them with their batting stances, fielding, and running around the bases.

"I've been involved with the Challenger League for several years now, and I know for me, personally, it's been a very rewarding experience," said assistant coach Dave "Sully" O'Sullivan. "For myself, and I'm sure a lot of the players on the high school team, we've always been some of the best players growing up and I think sometimes you take for granted the ability you were blessed with. I think it was very important for these young men to see that there are other kids out there who love baseball just as much and might not be fortunate enough to play Little League or high school ball. I know many of the Vineland players were impressed with the enthusiasm and dedication of the Challenger League players."

Added Rickey Hinds, a current junior outfielder: "The team and I had a chance to show our respect for the community and it made me feel like a leader, and that it doesn't matter what you're condition might be, if you put your mind to it you can do anything."

In addition, the high school players helped set up for the BBQ 'n' Chili Cookoff in the fall, the DiTomo facility cleanup, Toys for Tots and the Vineland Christmas Parade.



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*"The harder you work,  
the harder it is to  
surrender."*

*-Vince Lombardi*



## 2011 Varsity Schedule

### April

1	vs. Egg Harbor Township	4pm
2	Holy Spirit*	9am
4	vs. St. Augustine	4pm
6	at Ocean City	4pm
8	at Mainland	4pm
9	Williamstown *	11:30am
10	Oakcrest*	TBA
12	vs. Hammonton	4pm
13	at Atlantic City	4pm
15	at Millville	4pm
18	at Oakcrest	4pm
27	vs. Lower Cape May	4pm
29	at Egg Harbor Township	4pm

### May

2	at St. Augustine	4pm
4	vs. Ocean City	4pm
6	vs. Mainland	4pm
11	vs. Atlantic City	4pm
13	vs. Millville	4pm
16	vs. Oakcrest	4pm
18	at Hammonton	4pm
20	at Absegami	4pm
23	vs. Absegami (Senior Day)	4pm
24	at Lower Cape May	4pm
26	at Sacred Heart	4pm
31	at Buena Regional	4pm

\*Al Hedelt Tournament

—Also, the Vineland High School Memorial Day  
Tournament for ages 8U to 14U will be held May  
27-30.

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*"It isn't hard to be  
good from time to  
time in sports. What is  
tough is being good  
every day."*

*-Willie Mays*



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*"You can observe a lot just by watching."*

*-Yogi Berra*

## Getting pitchers to throw inside

Throwing inside is one of the most valuable skills a pitcher can learn. It has been a skill that has been somewhat taken out of baseball for a number of reasons. I feel that kids are afraid to throw inside. Here's why. Number one, they are afraid to hit a batter. It is a real fear that pitchers have. There is no doubt about it. They are afraid for two reasons. First, they do not want to hurt anybody. Second, they do not want to put anybody on base. You hear coaches talk all the time about how walks will kill you, giving up free bases will kill you, and that is a part of it. The other reason kids are afraid to throw inside is that they are afraid they cannot control the pitch and making a mistake inside can be very costly.

Here are a few tips I think are really important for a pitcher who wants to learn how to throw inside.

### 1. You cannot have fear.

You have to put that out of your head. If it helps, try this. Draw a circle where you want to put the ball and paint everything else black so that you are just going through one little circle and not looking at the hitter. You cannot have the fear of hitting the batter. That is part of the game whether we like it or not. Nobody wants to get hurt. Nobody wants to be the one who hurts somebody, but a properly placed inside pitch, even if you hit a batter, will not hurt him.

### 2. You have to know where to place the pitch.

A good spot to place an inside pitch is right underneath the hitter's hands. Remember, what is in the hitter's hands? The bat. So in order to move his hand, he has got to move the bat, which takes the bat out of his natural position of power. Also, throwing in that area gives the hitter a lot of leeway with their hips

### 3. You have to be very clear on what you want to do.

I tell my pitchers that it has got to be perfect or the hitter has got to move. There are no two ways about it. You cannot have a hitter take away the inside part of the plate. I think it was Bob Gibson who said that intimidation is an extra pitch and intimidation is a part of the game.

Let's face it. Intimidation does not mean that you are being mean or you are being a bad person, but it is part of the game. If the hitter hits one off our shins they do not seem to mind, but they do mind when someone gets brushed back. In today's age of aluminum bats and substance injection we have to be able to guard the inside part of the plate. If you do not guard the inside part of the plate you are going to be very vulnerable and you have to practice this.

Another tip I will close with is you can **take a mile or two off of an inside fastball.**

Remember, when you are locating a pitch, it is not how fast it gets there, it is where it goes. That is the most important thing. Sometimes guys will try and rear back and throw harder. Remember that nobody knows what is coming out of your hand. Nobody knows you are going to take a mile or two off to locate your fastball. The faster you throw, the harder the pitch is to control. That is just physics, but if we are good at really pinpointing our control we can take a mile or two off and we will have the added benefit of a slight change in speed, which is also good.

You must throw in to win.

*Paul Reddick, Pirates scout – from [baseballtips.com](http://baseballtips.com)*

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*"The critic is one who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing."*

*-Oscar Wilde*

