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Coach
Malatesta's
wife, Karen
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Vineland's five
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Vineland High School
Baseball – Florida trip issue

Clan finish 2011 season 12-12

VINELAND RETURNS TO PLAYOFFS, BUT DROPS FINAL TWO GAMES:

Although the Fighting Clan reached their primary objectives in winning at least 12 games and making a return trip to the playoffs, they would have liked to have finished on a more positive note and with a winning record.

But, in the Cape-Atlantic League, no win is easy to come by, as Vineland found that out the hard way in losses to Mainland and Absegami to close out the season. However, there were plenty of highlights during head coach John Malatesta's second season at the helm.

Early on, Vineland proved it would be a competitive team in the CAL American Conference by taking Millville, a team that won the South Jersey Group IV championship, to the limit before losing on a walk-off home run. The Fighting Clan also advanced to the semifinals of the Al Hedelt Tournament with a big win over Williamstown and swept the season series from Lower Cape May, Oakcrest and Atlantic City.

The one thing Vineland truly lacked was a shutdown pitcher at the end of games. The Clan lost by one run to Mainland, Absegami, Hammonton and by two runs to Absegami and Ocean City the first time around. Vineland avenged its loss to Ocean City and also had quality wins over Egg Harbor Township and Oakcrest, and nearly knocked off South Jersey powerhouse Holy Spirit in the opening round of the Hedelt tournament.

Perhaps Vineland's signature win of the 2011 season came on May 26 at Third and Chestnut in the annual City Series rivalry with Sacred Heart. Vineland trailed 4-3 heading into the seventh inning, but the Lions made the mistake of pitching to senior center fielder Bobby Romano, who just happened to be in the midst of the best week of baseball of his life. Romano crushed a 3-run homer, giving the Fighting Clan a 6-4 victory, its first over Sacred Heart in more than eight years.

Vineland's playoff run was short-lived as it ran into a tough Cherokee team on May 23 in the opening round. Romano blasted a pair of two-run home runs, but that was all the offense the Clan could muster as Cherokee pounded out 10 hits in a 13-4 win.

Still, returning to the playoffs was quite an accomplishment for a team that went 6-17 during the 2010 season.

News and notes



"Baseball was my whole life. Nothing's ever been as fun as baseball."

Mickey Mantle

GETTING SOME INK:

Vineland had a pair of seniors named as "Athlete of the Day" by the Daily Journal during the season, center fielder Bobby Romano and first baseman Andrew Schwegel... Assistant coach Tim Edmeads became a father for a second time, as he and his wife welcomed a baby boy during the season... Romano, who graduated with a grade-point average well above 4.0, will be attending Gettysburg College and hopes to play both baseball and football there... Former Vineland star Darren Ford came off the disabled list recently was sent back down to triple A Fresno. Ford has played in 17 games so far this season with the San Francisco Giants, batting .300 (3-for-10) with six runs scored and five stolen bases. With the Fresno Grizzlies, Ford came into this weekend hitting .211 with two home runs, seven RBIs, 10 runs and 10 steals in 18 games... Assistant coach Dave O'Sullivan welcomed his 15th nephew into the world on June 29, a boy named Simon Michael Jacobs. Coach Sully said little Simon projects as a scrappy second baseman in the Dustin Pedroia mold. Unless, of course, he chooses soccer, as his father was a soccer player at Southern Regional High School back in the 1980s.

Senior breakdown

CARLOS LEBRON:

Lebron had a steady and productive senior season, emerging as the Clan's top pitcher. On the hill Lebron went 4-1 with a save and a team-leading 3.25 earned-run average. He allowed just 24 earned runs in 52 innings pitched. At the plate, he batted .319 with 22 hits, three doubles, a home run and 14 RBIs.

BOBBY ROMANO:

Romano earned first-team All-Cape-Atlantic League American Conference honors after leading the team with five home runs and 28 RBIs while hitting .329 with eight doubles, three triples and 21 runs scored. He also was one of the top defensive outfielders in the league.

VAUGHN WATSON:

Watson established himself as one of the best defensive second basemen in the CAL as a junior and was equally as good his senior year. Offensively he batted .274 with a team-high 23 runs out of the leadoff spot. He also had 15 walks and 23 hits in 73 at-bats.

ANDREW SCHWEGEL:

After playing mostly as a DH his junior year, Schwegel proved himself a capable first baseman and had an above average year defensively. He also produced with the bat, hitting .300 with three homers, 14 RBIs and 16 runs scored.

JOSH STUART:

Although Stuart didn't hit for a high average, he was a tough out and became the team's best bunter in crucial situations. He also played an outstanding left field, making several game-changing plays throughout the season.



Karen Malatesta, wife of Coach John Malatesta

Question: *So, what's it like being married to a high school baseball coach?*

Answer: *Coach Mal is always busy, that's for sure. If he's not on the field, he's home preparing for the next game or educating himself to become the best coach for his team.*

Q: *What's the most difficult thing about being a coach's wife? The best?*

A: *The most difficult thing is the time spent away from home, but I realize his passion of the game and his love for his team is very important to him too. The best part is I don't have to carpool back and forth to practices and games. Coach Mal will bring Johnny to and from the field.*

Q: *Your husband, John, is a pretty intense guy. Do you try to console him after a tough loss, or just stay out of the way?*

A: *Anyone who knows me realizes I love to talk! Coach Mal, believe it or not, is quiet at home. The most intense he's been after a game was the Millville walk-off home run, since Vineland was winning the entire time.*

Q: *Do you think a wife has to be a fan of the sport her husband coaches? How big of a baseball fan are you?*

A: *I believe in supporting my family and have always been there for them. I am the youngest of five children and my three older brothers played baseball in high school and college and my father coached Little League for years. I really don't like watching baseball on TV, but I don't have a choice. We went to the Phillies game last year and I asked Johnny when Chase Utley was pitching.*

Q: *You do a lot of work behind the scenes for different events, such as fundraisers and awards ceremonies. Where do you get the motivation to do so many things for the team?*

A: *I have always loved helping our community and children. Our VHS Baseball Parent Association assists the team too, and I would like to thank the parents for all they do. My motivation comes from listening to the players and how thankful they are for what they are given. I went into teaching for the love of the children, and I will continue to always help them in any way I can.*

Q: *At team gatherings, John always mentions you as number one on his list. Do you think he really means that, or is he just trying to get on your good side so he gets a hot meal?*

A: *Ha! Coach Mal actually is a softie when you get to know him. Just don't tell his players! He always lets me know he appreciates all I do for him and the team. I have always cooked, but coach is always welcomed in the kitchen to cook a meal or two!*

Q: *Your daughter, Tiffany, was a highly successful swimmer at Vineland and the University of Pittsburgh and your son, Johnny, was on the swimming and baseball teams as a freshman this year. What's the biggest difference between handling a female teenage athlete and a male teenage athlete at home?*

A: *I would have to say drama, but not in a negative way. It seems as though there was a little more with girls than boys.*

Q: *What's the most difficult thing about being the mother of a high school athlete?*

A: *It's time consuming but rewarding. We continually stress the magnitude of academics first. And I think between swimming and baseball, I wash three loads of laundry a day. It definitely adds more chores to my list.*

Q: *Baseball is obviously one of John's passions. What is a passion of yours that you enjoy in your free time?*

A: *I love swimming, although I'm not as fast as my children. I enjoy the beach, and Coach Mal is always welcome to take me there for some rest and relaxation.*

Q: *Is it safe to say your dream vacation would have absolutely nothing to do with baseball?*

A: *Well, that depends. If one day VHS baseball is traveling to a state title game, I certainly would cherish that situation as one of my dream vacations!*

Down on the farm

The junior varsity and freshman teams both had outstanding years on the diamond for Vineland High School. The freshman team, although inexperienced, posted a 9-5 record and did a good job of dealing with tough scheduling that included rainouts and other schools that couldn't field teams at the freshman level.

The junior varsity had perhaps its best season under coach Travis Amstutz, posting a 17-3 record that included winning the Oakcrest tournament.

Players throughout the lineup had impressive numbers, led by team MVP Johnny Malatesta, a freshman. Malatesta hit .405 with 30 hits, 30 runs scored, 23 RBIs, 14 walks and only two strikeouts in 74 at-bats. He also went 4-1 as a pitcher with a 2.88 ERA, striking out 36 in 34 innings. Brandon Velez was equally effective on the hill, going 5-0 with a 1.52 ERA. Anthony Sommerville and Jake Brooks each added three pitching wins.

Tyler Martine led the Fighting Clan with a .476 batting average and Charles Mistretta, Justin Rivera, Andrew Gee, Cameron Lopez, Brooks and Velez all hit better than .350. Mistretta led the team with 27 RBIs and Rivera was tops in stolen bases with 16.

Team awards included: Lopez (Gold glove), Mistretta (Gold glove), Malatesta (Red and Gray slugger, MVP), Velez (Cy Young), Gee (Rookie of the year), Brooks/Edelstein (X factor), Mike Forte (Mr. Utility), Randall Maldonado (Unsung Hero), Vincent Heredia (Most improved), Martine (Coach's award).

Freshman awards: Stratoti (Gold glove), Eddie Gutierrez (Gold glove), Jacob Venditti (Red and Gray slugger, Rookie of the year, MVP), Venditti/Stratoti (Cy Young), Jim Hague, Gee (X factor), Raekwon Ortiz (Mr. Utility), Joseph Galan (Mr. Hustle, Most improved), Adam Cortes (Unsung Hero), Nick English (Coach's award)



Junior varsity statistical leaders

BATTING

(Minimum 20 at-bats) Batting average: Tyler Martine .476, Raekwon Ortiz .459, Johnny Malatesta .405, Andrew Gee .400, Cameron Lopez .400. Doubles: Malatesta 5, Edelstein 4, Gee 4, Ortiz 3, Justin Rivera 3. Runs: Malatesta 30, Edelstein 25, Mistretta 24, Mike Forte 22, Rivera 20. Walks: Edelstein 16, Gee 15, Malatesta 14, Mistretta 14, Rivera 13. RBIs: Mistretta 27, Malatesta 23, Gee 22, Ortiz 18, Rivera 17.

PITCHING

Strikeouts: Malatesta 36, Brandon Velez 28, Jake Brooks 18. ERA: Velez 1.52, Sommerville 2.24, Malatesta 2.88, Jacob Brooks 3.17.

*"The strongest thing
baseball has going for
it today are its
yesterdays."*

-Lawrence Ritter



*"More than
any other
sport, baseball
creates the
magnetic,
addictive
illusion that it
can almost be
understood."*

-Thomas Boswell

Vineland dedicates complex

The Vineland High School athletic department, with a lot of prompting from former swim coach John Casadia, dedicated its baseball field and the surrounding sports complex to the late Anthony J. DiTomo on May 22.

Casadia hosted the event and gave some remarks about DiTomo, and other prominent members of the VHS sports family gave their thoughts as well, including athletic director Don Robbins, Board of Education member Scott English and Allan Bernardini, and the National Anthem was played by the select choir and marching band.

DiTomo was memorialized with a monument that sits beneath the flagpole, and local families and businesses pledged their support for the project by purchasing pavers that are arranged in a semi-circle walkway leading up to the memorial. Also, the landscaping around the memorial was revamped, including new plants, sod and mulch.

Anthony DiTomo was one of Vineland High School's most accomplished athletes in the history of the school. He was a star athlete in the late 1930s and a member of the 1939 football team that won the state championship. He was the region's highest scorer that year, and also played basketball and baseball.

DiTomo went on to play football on a scholarship to Temple University in Philadelphia as well as Wake Forest University in North Carolina. He was offered a contract to play for the Buffalo Bills, but turned it down to become a teacher and coach.

He served in World War II and returned to start his teaching career at Vineland in 1949. He coached tennis, baseball, football and wrestling throughout his career and also was the school's athletic director for 17 years, retiring in 1989.

As a special treat for the guests in attendance at the memorial dedication, DiTomo's last surviving sister was there and gave some emotional remarks about a man who touched thousands of lives during his five decades at Vineland High School.



“The best way to catch a knuckleball is to wait until the ball stops rolling and then pick it up.”

-Bob Uecker

Former Vineland rival makes MLB debut

TROUT GETS CALL TO L.A. ANGELS

Mike Trout, who graduated from Millville High School in 2009 and played against Vineland for four years during his prep career, got called up to the major leagues on July 8, making his debut in a 4-3 win over the Seattle Mariners. He went 0-for-3 at the plate, but did make a nice running grab of a fly ball deep in the gap in right-center field.

Trout, a first-round draft pick of the Los Angeles Angels in 2009, has been tearing up the minor leagues. The 19-year-old was named the Midwest League MVP in 2010 while playing with the Cedar Rapids Kernels. This season he was named a Texas League All-Star and was named to his second straight Futures Game.

In 75 games with the Double-A Arkansas Travelers this year prior to his call-up, Trout was hitting .324 with nine home runs, 12 doubles, 11 triples, 27 RBIs, 69 runs scored and 28 stolen bases.



Fourth marking period grades

The Vineland baseball team has been getting the job done in the classroom as well as on the field. Here's how some of the program's players did during the fourth marking period:

Summa Cum Laude

Bobby Romano, Chris Lopez, Jesse Edelstein, Mark Rowan, Kevin Williams, Joseph Galan, John Malatesta, Eric Stratoti

Magna Cum Laude

Tommy Rodriguez, Jeff Rowan, Brandon Velez

Cum Laude

Carlos Lebron, Rickey Hinds, Mike Forte, Charles Mistretta, Don Money, Nick English, Andrew Gee, Andrew Schwegel, Tyler Martine, Justin Rivera, Jose Mateo, Jamie Ortiz, Austin Padilla, Ivan Quiroz

Team grade-point average: 3.00

Seniors: 3.06

Juniors: 2.79

Sophomores: 3.40

Freshmen: 2.74

Highest overall GPA: Bobby Romano, 4.25

“Baseball statistics are like a girl in a bikini. They show a lot, but not everything.”

-Toby Harrah