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Hail to the D'Backs Chief

By Nick Marnell



Campolindo High School's Chip Hale is all smiles as he is announced as the manager of the Arizona Diamondbacks. Photo Jennifer Stewart, Arizona Diamondbacks

Padres and the San Francisco Giants.

During his freshman year Hale made his Campolindo varsity debut against Livermore High School. Again, he had every reason to be intimidated. Hale's first at bat was against Cowboys' star pitcher Randy Johnson, the future major league Hall of Fame lefthander.

"The four years at Campo were fantastic," said Hale. "And we played together all summer in American Legion ball. I remember camping with the team in Oregon, before we came in runner up in the 1982 American Legion World Series." Hale said he felt the team aspect of baseball has been compromised today. "We knew how to win, as a team," he said. "Now, the emphasis is more on individuals, playing on travel teams."

Hale confirmed that playing for Miller was stressful. "He was more of a football style coach. There was lots of yelling and screaming, but we needed it. He put us through the wringer, and it helped us in the future."

Early on, Hale exhibited signs that he was a natural for management. "We're playing in the 1980 North Coast Championship, in Albert's Park," said Miller. "We're scouting Redwood and Petaluma highs. Chip says, 'Hey coach, can I go with you guys to scout?' This was a freshman! You look back at that, and you can see why he was born to be a big league manager."

"I talk to Donny as much as any coach I've ever had, maybe once a week," said Hale. "In some respects, I'll try to run this team his way. Of course, now you need a different way to teach. Discipline will be different. But I plan to teach the team winning baseball, and I will expect that the game be played the right way."

After he starred at the University of Arizona, the Minnesota Twins chose Hale in the 1987 amateur draft. He played seven seasons with the Twins and the Los Angeles Dodgers before he began his professional managerial career in 2000. For the past three seasons Hale was the Oakland A's bench coach, and after the 2014 season, he spoke with the Twins about their managerial vacancy.

"I was about to interview with Minnesota, and I got a call from Arizona," said Hale. "It was Derrick Hall, team president." He met with Hall, chief baseball officer Tony La Russa, general

New Arizona Diamondbacks manager Chip Hale had every reason to be intimidated when he tried out for the Campolindo High School baseball team in 1980.

"We had a great team," said his coach, Lafayette resident Don Miller. "I don't think he realized what he was getting into. Chip was a stocky, left handed hitting third baseman. He wasn't a great athlete. He was a good player with the mental toughness and an intense desire to compete."

"No one worked harder, though," continued Miller. "After practice, he'd ask, 'Coach, can I drag the field for you?' He was that kind of a kid."

"I was actually more of a football guy," said Hale, who also quarterbacked the Cougars' football team. "We had just moved from San Jose to Moraga so I started on Miller's junior varsity squad." Hale had to play his way onto a team loaded with future professional players, including Paul Faries, who later played for the San Diego

manager Dave Stewart and three others from the Diamondbacks' front office.

"It was an intimidating group," said Hale. "We talked about how I would do things. They called back the next day, and said, 'Don't commit to the Twins.' Sunday night, I had dinner with the front office, and the deal was announced the next day."

On Oct. 13, the Arizona Diamondbacks formally introduced Hale as their manager. Once again, Hale will face an immediate intimidating challenge, as the Diamondbacks open the 2015 season against the world champion San Francisco Giants.

"I am excited and proud to say I'm a Campolindo grad and that I am now a major league manager," said Hale. "If my dad hadn't bought that house on Corliss in Moraga, and if it weren't for my experiences at Campolindo, I wouldn't be here today."

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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