

VARSITY BASEBALL

Martin returns to C.H. East as assistant coach

In good health, former coach glad to be back

By KEVIN MINNICK
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Once a baseball guy, always a baseball guy.

When Dave Martin walked away from the Cherry Hill East program after the 2005 season, the legendary coach figured he'd catch some minor league games, play golf and take a step back. After 32 years, 500-plus victories and a handful of championships, it was only fitting that he leave on his own terms.

The funny thing about baseball, though, is that you can never really get it out of your system. It's the one game most grow up with, a timeless pleasure passed down through generations.

After dealing with health issues, including a battle with prostate cancer that was diagnosed in 2006, a former player reintroduced him to the high school game.

It was the beginning of a new journey.

And today, through the generosity of another former player, Dave Martin is back where he belongs. This time as an assistant coach for Erik Radbill at the school where his legend began.

"My batteries have been recharged," said Martin, a member of the South Jersey Baseball Hall of Fame. "I have my health. I'm back trying to help 'Rad' and East baseball. I'm really glad that I made the decision. It's a role I'm comfortable with."

Radbill played for Martin from 1985-87 and took



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Former Cherry Hill East coach Dave Martin (right) has had his batteries recharged as a member of Erik Radbill's staff at East.

over for his mentor after seven years as an assistant.

"It has been unbelievably positive and productive, probably more than anyone could have expected," Radbill said. "I couldn't be happier. It's been a win-win for the program."

"I ask him for so much advice. It's just been a tremendous relationship so far. I have tremendous respect for the man and my education in baseball was from him."

Martin returned to the diamond last season as an assistant for the freshman team at rival Eastern. Steve Young, who also played for Martin, asked if

he'd come help.

"My enthusiasm and desire came back," Martin said. "I was so comfortable working with Steve and the kids from Eastern."

Young ended up becoming an administrator, and Radbill had an opening on his staff for this spring after an assistant went across town to Cherry Hill West.

"We talked in the fall and it kind of got real serious," Martin said. "I told him that I'd be very interested in coming back as an assistant at any level, doing anything to help. He was gracious enough to say he'd hire me in a second."

"My wife and kids said that I spent a lot of years there. If I was serious, my family said it would be a good fit. I'm really thrilled to be back with them."

If not for a yearly blood test, Martin may have never had the opportunity. He doesn't shy away from his story, openly sharing it in hopes of teaching others about the disease.

"That was a real eye-opener," said Martin, 61, who's been a driver's education and health teacher for 38 years at East. "I was very lucky and fortunate it was discovered in my yearly blood work."

"I tell everyone to be proactive with their

health. Just take the time to get checked out. I recovered and have been blessed."

Martin handles hitting and works closely with the Cougars' pitching staff.

"It's great to be involved in South Jersey baseball, which has been a hotbed for colleges and pros for a long time," Martin added. "A lot of schools do it the right way and it feels wonderful to be back coaching."

Said Radbill: "He's healthy, energetic and having as much fun as the kids."

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