

**Oral History Interview of  
Tracy Archuleta**

**Interviewed by: Daniel U. Sánchez  
June 28, 2014  
Lubbock, Texas**

**Part of the:  
*College Baseball Hall of Fame Interviews***

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## Interview Series Background:

The College Baseball Foundation Project encompasses interviews with College Baseball Foundation Hall of Fame inductees, College Baseball Foundation Award Winners and affiliated coaches, administrators, family members, and others associated with either the College Baseball Foundation or the various awards committees.

## Transcript Overview:

This interview features Tracy Archuleta who discusses his experiences as a baseball coach leading to a career including two National Championship Game victories.

**Length of Interview:** 00:56:06

Subject	Transcript Page	Time Stamp
Biographical and family data	5	00:00:46
Early interest in sports	6	00:02:32
Student baseball experience, Metropolitan State College	7	00:04:18
Graduate Assistant Coaching, University of Wisconsin – Parkside	10	00:09:46
Coaching job at the University of Southern Indiana	13	00:21:50
Recent changes in baseball, development of the BBCOR bat	15	00:26:27
National Championship Game seasons, University of Southern Indiana	19	00:37:34
2014 Team at University of Southern Indiana	22	00:48:02

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**Daniel Sanchez (DS):**

My name is Daniel Sanchez; today's date is June 28, 2014. We're in Lubbock, Texas, as part of the College Baseball Hall of Fame, and today we're sitting down with Coach Tracy Archuleta from the University of Southern Indiana. And Tracy's going to cover his career, his experiences in baseball, and tell us what it means to be here as part of—well the award winners, because you won a Coach of the Year for you division, right? Okay. Coach Tony, thank you for being here—I mean Archuleta—

**Tracy Archuleta (TA):**

Tracy—it's alright.

DS:

Tracy. Well let's start off with your complete legal name.

TA:

Tracy Eugene Archuleta.

DS:

Okay and I'll keep Tracy in mind as we talk.

TA:

There you go.

DS:

And when and where were you born?

TA:

I was born in Billings, Montana in 1974.

DS:

Okay, and how about your parents, give us a little information on them.

TA:

My dad's Jovario Lesley Archuleta, everybody calls him Les. And then my mom is Christina Archuleta, and then her maiden name Hernandez—both from the northeast corner of Colorado. Dad – they moved out to Billings, Montana— when I believe my brother was probably two or three years old, and my dad was enlisted in Vietnam. He went to Vietnam and when they got back, that's when I was born, and from there they moved back to Sterling, Colorado, and that's where they still reside.

DS:

You mentioned a brother, is he your only sibling?

TA:

Yeah, Jovario Lesley Archuleta, Jr. He is there in Sterling, Colorado also outside in a small town Iliff, Colorado is where we're from. My dad owns a diesel mechanics shop, my mom is the director of the Head Start Program there in Iliff, Colorado, and then my brother runs his own business, it's a computer company there in town that he goes and builds sites and ports and all that stuff. So that's where everybody's at.

DS:

So how many years older than you is your brother?

TA:

He's four years older than me.

DS:

Four years older..

TA:

Yep, he graduated high school in 1988. We graduated from Caliche High School, which is a small—we're in a country town—really small—my graduating class was twenty-one.

DS:

Wow.

TA:

Yeah.

DS:

So did you follow your brother around and tag along and pick up sports from him, is that how it happened?

TA:

Really it was once my brother it is with him, and following him around. But also my dad, my dad played fast pitch softball.

DS:

Oh.



TA:

And him playing fast pitch softball, every weekend we were going somewhere, doing things with that. And I think that's how I really got the love for the game of baseball a little bit—through softball. And then my grandpa, Joe Archuleta, was a really big Dodger fan. Watching Fernando Valenzuela every time we'd go over to his house, we'd be watching that. And just little by little wanted to play, enjoyed playing, and it was a lot of fun.

DS:

Did sports come naturally to you?

TA:

Yeah, it was something I really enjoyed, and I was very fortunate to have success in both basketball and baseball, played basketball in high school, was player of the year my senior year of basketball in—I believe it was 2A at that time at Caliche High School. In baseball, was just something that just really, really enjoyed doing. Again, had some success with it during high school, I think we finished second in the state in high school, legion team. I played in Sidney, Nebraska, which is just right across the border, probably about fifteen miles from where I lived, and played there for Bob Maturo, who was a guy that sought us out and was able to play there, and I went to a state tournament there in Legion. So just how you said, I mean anytime you have success in something, you enjoy doing it, and was very fortunate to have success in baseball, and just athletics in general. Just loved being around people, loved the people that I've met through it, and it's been a lot of fun.

DS:

So what position did you play?

TA:

I was a middle infielder, played shortstop in high school, and then when I went to college—I went to Metropolitan State College in Denver, Colorado, division two school—and I started out second baseman there, and then my last two years I was a shortstop. I played for head coach Vince Porreco and enjoyed my time there. I was there for four years, got my degree in sport and allied fields from there. Didn't have as much success as far as the record-wise there in those four years, and that's probably what continued me on just into coaching, because I wanted to be able to give young student athletes a chance, and to have success, and to go out on a positive note.

DS:

And so you mentioned that you went to college—were you thinking about going to college when you were in high school already, or was it some your parents wanted for you?

TA:

Neither one of my parents—actually my dad I think finally got his degree when he was probably forty, and my mom probably after that—got their college degree. So going through high school, they always wanted us to go into college. My brother probably started out to where the athletic side came in—he wanted to play college baseball. Finally, he went to junior college for a year, and then it did not work out for him, but once he went through that, just seeing—and I'm going to say just seeing how much interest and success that you could get from the college athletics side really enlightened me to get there, because you want to continue to play, you want to continue to do things, and what I found out is how many great people, and how many good people that I've met through it. Each year the teammates that I've had and the relationships I was able to build during the college was something that I look back on now that I'm so fortunate to have and meet those people.

DS:

What's one of the important things you learned while you were in college—particularly from the baseball aspect?

TA:

That you got to get your priorities in line, that you have to work toward that goal, and that there's so many people out there with so much ability, that if you don't put in the work, and you don't have the pride and the effort, you'll get passed up really quickly I think is the one thing that I really noticed. The student athletes who were on track, both in the classroom and on the field, and really worked toward that goal were the ones that were able to achieve at a high level. And you notice that not only through your own teammates, but also through other institutions, and how they propelled, and how they went on to succeed.

DS:

Was it easy for you to maintain that focus that that kind of drive takes?

TA:

It took a year, it took a year or so. The first year of college, I'd been coming from a town of basically a high school that only had a hundred people in it. You're going to Denver, Colorado, where the millions living in downtown Denver was a big culture change, big thing that I had to change is to learn how to just to get to adapt to the area. When I went to Metropolitan State College, there were probably right over twenty-thousand students there. So it took a year for me to get adapted, to get adjusted and to find my own niche there in Denver. So after that one year, then I was able to focus a lot more on how to strengthen my abilities athletically, and to build relationships and to succeed academically.



DS:

And what baseball lesson did you learn while you were there, or which ones?

TA:

I would say the one thing that Coach Porreco really helped me realize is that there's not a day that goes by in the game of baseball that you don't pick up something new, and you don't try to look into something different. Because every day you go show up to the ballpark, seems like something new happens out of something, and there's different ways to succeed, but he really instilled the fundamentals in us, and he was a really, really good coach fundamentally. And learned a lot from him, and still to this day use a lot of what he taught us during his time there at Metro, and I think the thing that we talked about earlier was that I learned was—you have to put forth that work, and it's not about just showing up to practice, it's about working extra, and it's about developing that teammates, and it's not about hitting three-twenty, it's about how you can get a run in by bunting, or by whatever it is, the little things of baseball that you can end up winning baseball with.

DS:

This year's College World Series was a prime example of that—nobody was really just hitting it out of the ballpark, they were depending getting somebody out on first, moving around to third, and getting that run in.

TA:

Yeah, I tell you what—that is baseball, when you can get your guys around it and our club this year, as we'll get into, I think we ended up hitting—I know it was under two-thirty for the world series, and ended up with a national championship, and scored runs. And I think in one inning, we had six straight hits, and that was all the hits we had during the game was during that one inning we ended up manufacturing during that right time.

DS:

Yes, yeah, it's really turned into you really got to be efficient on what to do with those hits when you get somebody out there.

TA:

Yeah.

DS:

You just really do.

TA:

Yeah.

DS:

And so let's go back to when you got out of college, and you first started the coaching career. How'd that happen?

TA:

I basically went in that I had one more year left of school, and Coach Porreco asked me if I wanted to stay on as a student assistant, and I felt very fortunate that he would ask, and I was able to work with those guys. And that one year really helped me realize that this is something I wanted to continue to do for the rest of my life if I could. The competing part—just being able to compete every single day, and putting yourself out there against other institutions and other schools. Basically it's your system, and your niche in baseball, and seeing if what you believed in and the different things, the philosophies you have—either pitching, or your offense, or what it is that you instill in these young athletes—that's what I wanted to do. And after that year, after I got my degree, just went and tried to get on as a GA, as a graduate assistant. My dad really, really emphasized that he wanted me to get my master's, and he kind of was kind of leaning towards me just going in the business world and that, and I wasn't ready for that yet. I wanted to still do this baseball thing, and I was able to get a graduate assistant spot at Wayne State College in Nebraska under Coach Manganaro, who's a great friend of mine now, and a father figure. Went there, and the big thing about Wayne State was when I got there, he really let me develop my own system offensively, and develop defensively with the guys. He didn't micromanage me—he gave me ideas of what he wanted, and I had to be within those guides, but really let me coach, and really let me be my own person. And he was a very, very big part of my career, and still is, and still calls and different things. And the other thing that really with Wayne State College—and I'm tying a bunch of different things here with Wayne State because right now during this time, Greg McDermott, the head coach, basketball coach at Creighton University and his son Doug McDermott—Greg was the AD basketball coach there at that time, so I was also able to pick up a lot from him, of just community involvement. And he is unbelievable on getting the community—I mean this is a town of five thousand people in Wayne, and when a basketball game would hit, everybody there would be in town, or be talking about it, and he really did a great job with that, and I really learned a lot from him of just developing the community involvement, and how much that the community can help you in order to win baseball games and different things like that. And that was probably the most learning experience as a whole—one from Coach Manganaro just letting me go out and coach, and showing me how important it was to care for students. Care not only about what they're doing on the baseball field, but how you handle with their families, and how you get them to make sure their concentrating on their degrees. He was such a caring person—hard-nosed, was not afraid to jump on players at any point in time, and if they didn't jump into that system—but also just a father figure, and just really learned from him on that. And then with Coach McDermott, just learned how to build a fan base—just getting through, and like he said, the relationships you develop through this is amazing. I remember sitting there and going to Coach McDermott's office and seeing little

Doug, and he wouldn't say a word, and he had his basketball in his hand, and that's it. And to watch him grow up, and see him last year being the best player in college basketball, and seeing Coach McDermott just build Creighton up into one of the better teams in the country was just a learning experience in itself. And that experience of Wayne State in a town of five thousand, in a school I think that's only four thousand was probably one of the biggest instrumental educational as a coaching experience that I've had. I mean just learning and getting to know different things. And then from there, it was easier to know that this is what I wanted to do—just seeing the success. And we had some success there, went to a couple of regionals there, their first regional ever at Wayne State College was during my time there as an assistant coach, and from there I went on to Central Missouri State under Coach Brad Hill, who's now at K-State [Kansas State] in the Big 12. And that was the best offensive strategy guy ever—managed a game better than anybody else I've ever been around in the country. Knew exactly what to do in every situation before it happened, had a plan, and was in the baseball, and as far as the people I've been around—Coach Hill was able to get his system, and let the kids instinctively run it. It was structured, but what's so interesting about his system is that he was able to coach them during practice, and then once they got on the field, it was so much instinctive patterns, and plays, and different things that he taught them how to do during practice. And that's where I learned that yes, there's certain situations to bunt, and everybody's taught it, but it's about catching the defense off-guard when they don't think you're going to do stuff, and what to look for—when to steal a base, or when to bunt, when's your pitching situation, what you're doing, and different strategies, different times. And he was the best, I mean Coach Hill taught me a lot about the game of baseball and just how to go about to manage the whole part of the game, not just the recruiting part, not just the on the baseball part. So from there, I went back to Wayne State as the top assistant. So I went back to Wayne State College, got in there. For two years, was trying to get a head job, just battling back and forth, trying to get a head job, doing some different things there.

DS:

How difficult is that to get your first heads job?

TA:

Very difficult, especially in baseball, because so many people stay for so long, the good ones—

DS:

The longevity, yeah.

TA:

And college baseball's a lot different than football and basketball. It's starting to change a little bit, seeing the changes to where your bigger universities, it's Arizona State this year—the guy was there for I think three or four years, didn't really make a run in the World Series. He's no

longer there, now they're making changes. And baseball wasn't like that—it's about longevity, it's about building your school, and your tradition up, and your system. And baseball coaches like to stay at home and build great programs at home, and it's fun to see how it's adjusted. And to get my first opportunity, my first head coach job, was at the University of Wisconsin – Parkside. And the funny story about it—when I was at Wayne State—and I just got married at Wayne State; and when I was there I was married I think almost a year, and I interviewed at Iowa Lakes Community College there in—I'm trying to think of the name of the city, but I can't, I know there's a big lake right in there. And then from there, I also interviewed at Wisconsin – Parkside. Well when I was going through the interview process, Iowa Lakes was getting ready to offer me the job, and I called up Wisconsin – Parkside and said, "Hey, here's the situation: I'd much rather be a division two school than a junior college, but here's what I'm going." They couldn't pull the trigger on anything, they still had some more interviews to do, so I end up taking the Iowa Lakes Community College job, moved all my office stuff in there, was getting ready to buy a house with my wife at that time, Lisa, and I get a call from the assistant basketball coach, Rico Burkett, says, "Hey, you need to come back to the office—once you get back to the office and come see me." Was like alright, and so I go into Coach McDermott's office and Coach Burkett, and Rico says, "Hey, the position at Wisconsin – Parkside, the guy that they wanted isn't taking it, they'd like you to come back and interview." And I was like man—so, long story short, I end up resigning from Iowa Lakes, moving to Wisconsin – Parkside, it was the only undefeated coaching job I had, but I guess Iowa Lakes didn't lose a game, didn't win a game, or didn't lose a game. And went from there, and was at Wisconsin – Parkside, and the coldest climate I've ever been around. Not made for baseball very friendly weather-wise, but was my starting career as a head coach, and I believe I was twenty-seven years old at that time. Was there for five years, my first year was a rough one. I was hired in August; I believe we had twenty-two players on roster. Kept two or three walk-ons—one of those walk-ons ended up is going into the hall of fame here this year at the Wisconsin – Parkside in baseball, and is a great player—Adam Brechtel. And we'll kind of get back to that, but I moved away at 13-32 my first season, wasn't what had planned, or what any coach had planned, but after that—

DS:

How tough was it to recruit to a place like that?

TA:

It was very tough, because it's north.

DS:

Yeah.

TA:

You're trying to get the best players at our level to play, and to get a kid from—let's just even



say Indiana for that matter—to come north to play, that’s though. So you have to really focus in on the local kids, and find the best talent you could possibly—and we actually ended up going to Canada to get three or four players. My first recruiting class included seventeen junior college kids. Two of them from Canada, and then we also got a player from California oddly enough, we were able to get a pitcher from California, and a hitter from California to come in during our time there. And from there at Wisconsin – Parkside, it was a five years of got a program to their first ever regional. In 2004, we won the Great Lakes Valley Conference—I don’t remember the record off the top of my head, but we were able to get there, and it was when it was a four-team regional, not a six one. Now it’s sixteen-regional, so it was a fourteen-regional in 2004, and in 2005 made a regional tournament. In 2005 we made it to the championship game—we ended up getting beat by Grand Valley State in the fifth game to go to the World Series. From there, I was trying just to position myself on a better area as far as baseball-wise. But Wisconsin – Parkside really put myself on the map, that hey everything that I was teaching, that hey I can do it. Sometimes you wonder if you don’t have the success right away that you want.

DS:  
Right.

TA:  
As if what you’re teaching is right, and what you’re doing, and that was where we were able to, recruiting-wise and finding the best walk-ons we could find, and I just mentioned Adam Brechtel, probably one of the better hitters I’ve ever coached with, and he’s going in the hall of fame at Wisconsin – Parkside, and he was just a great player. He was a great hitter—helped us go on to win the first conference, GLVC [Great Lakes Valley Conference] Conference title ever at Wisconsin – Parkside, the first ever regional appearance, and just moved us on. And then the University of Southern Indiana job came open—excuse me, it was in our conference during when I was at Wisconsin – Parkside, and every time we’d go down there I said, “Man this would be a great job.” And they weren’t very good at the time, and every time we’d go down there, place would be full. They always had people there, always, and it was a great environment, a town of about two-hundred and fifty thousand, very similar here to Lubbock.

DS:  
Yeah.

TA:  
As a Division I school in town by the University of Evansville, and then University of Southern Indiana being a Division II, and there’s not a lot around Evansville—meaning two or three hours north of us is Indianapolis, two and a half hours south of us is Nashville, to the west is St. Louis, and to the east is Louisville. Three TV stations in town and a paper in town that just cover Evansville, it was perfect.

DS:

You're describing Lubbock, yeah.

TA:

Yeah, exactly, we have our own family right there in Evansville, and they want to see us win, and the paper and the news stations were all about it, you can see your highlights—and at a Division II school, you just don't see that. You don't see a community, and an involvement like we have. And I was able in 2007—took the job. They haven't had a winning season in three or four years, and it might have been longer than that, but we in our first year, it was amazing. One of the things I remember is getting the job, going into the press box, and about three or four of the players came into the press box and knew I was there. And one of the players was a kid by the name of Darin Mastroianni, and he was one of the players that was playing summer ball, and I couldn't get a hold of him when I got the job. He was one of the few players I didn't get a hold of. And he comes in and his first question to me was—he says, “Coach, can I wear my pants high, or do I have to wear them low, or what?” And I was like, “I don't care how you're going to wear pants, just show up and play, and that's what we're going to do.” And you could just see a big relief on his face. Well this kid I'm talking about has been in the big leagues with the Twins for a little bit, Darren has, he was drafted in the sixteenth round for us. And now he's with the Toronto Blue Jays, who drafted him back, and he's been back and forth in and out of triple and the big leagues. But he was my first player to ever coach to make it to the big leagues. So I remember meeting him. And our first year in 2007, we took a team that was whatever, I think they had twenty wins by the previous year, and then that year we ended up having forty-three wins I believe going to the College World Series. We beat Grand Valley State in their regional, and our first year we get to go to the College World Series, which I never knew anything about. Wanted to get there, saw coaches like Coach Urso from the University of Tampa was one of them that I always saw up there, and has won national championships, and we played Columbus State—long story short we end up going two and two in our first year in 2007 in the College World Series, so finished third to get beat by Tampa, who goes on to win the national championship that year. And that's when we started what we felt was going to be a really, really good career at the University of Southern Indiana, and from there we've had in 2010 we won our first national championship, and then this past year in 2014 a national championship. So in the eight years that I've been there, we've been to I believe five regionals, three World Series, and we've had two national championships, and a third-place finish since I've been there. And everybody always asks, “What's the secret?” and everything else, and I don't know if it's a secret—I think the biggest secret is that community. The people that we have, and the support that we get, and when you wake up in the morning and you go to breakfast at Bob Evans and you walk in and you see USI gear, you see the socks, you see the hats—everybody wants to know what's going on with the baseball program, and when you host a regional and there's probably close to probably twelve hundred people in the stands and everybody's involved in it—both. Out of the three worlds series that we've been to, the first regional was in Akron, Ohio, and there was



a mom and dad in the stands, and a couple of girlfriends and that was about it, and we beat Grand Valley 1-0. And in 2010 we hosted it, going from probably about we had five, six hundred people up there, a good crowd, and then 2014 it was just an unbelievable environment—it was what college baseball should be all about, and it's just been a lot of fun there.

DS:

And you mentioned that one player that asked you “How should I wear my pants?” How do you differentiate between what's the big stuff, and what's the little stuff?

TA:

You change every year, because the kids change. At first I remember my first head coaching job—and I don't know why, and to this day it still kind of rubs me a little bit the wrong way, but I deal with it—and the one thing, that you couldn't have earrings in, which is still the way it is now, and you couldn't wear your hat backward, I didn't want to see anybody wear the hat backwards. I don't know what it was, I don't know why it disrupted me, but there was some of the little things. So probably my first five years when I was at Wisconsin – Parkside, if I saw a kid with his hat backwards, I'd made sure he turned it around, look professional. And I went to Southern Indiana and different and whatever happened, now if I see—I mean when we're on field, of course it's never backwards—but on campus, or anything else, you just make little adjustments, and I think what I've learned is that some things that you really need to push forth to make sure the kids understand what it is to be a professional, what it is to be respected, before they know what your abilities are. And you have to put both in perspective because they have to be themselves. Every person has their own, just—whatever word I'm looking for here—personality, every person, and they need to be able to portray that through their own different ways, but also with guidance from you. And if you're able to let them portray it the way that they feel is proud, and know what is pride, and also with a little bit of your technique or guidance, then you're going to have them—meaning that you're going to have their trust. And that's what I found out, because sometimes we might have to make adjustments maybe that we grew up on, and believe that we have to make adjustments to how society has changed in the professionalism, and it's okay—Ken Griffey, Jr. I guess was the guy, he wore his hat backwards, and he's soon to be a hall of famer, and it's okay, just how he portrayed—it's a good thing. He's a good man, and a good person, and everybody has their own little things, and we have to learn to adjust to that. And if we can learn to adjust to that, people will accept us, and accept what we have to say, and maybe hold a little bit more weight and have trust in you. And if you can get trust in your players, that's probably one of the biggest things is just getting that trust, and being able to develop it.

DS:

Yeah, and you mentioned how things change, and you're fairly young—you're forty, right? And so you were probably playing your first games when you were eighteen as far as college

baseball. How have the players changed from when you were a player, to the players you have now?

TA:

Players when I played I think with the weight training—and that's just started to come in, the bigger, faster, stronger stuff I think the players today are in better shape, they're a lot stronger. And stronger runners, I don't know about faster, but stronger runners—more durable. I think the game has since with the bats and everything—I've went through both ends, I went through the minus fives, to the three, to the BBCOR [Ball-Bat Coefficient of Restitution] now, and the bats and in the metal era cause the kids got so strong, and the technology got so quick and so fast. Baseballs were flying out everywhere, and now back with the BBCOR now the strength issues, I think they finally hit it right to where the bat's right, as close as to wood as it possibly can be, and it's more true game. And the players have adjusted to that by being bigger—I mean I think you look at now, we have—excuse me—even in a Division II we have a strength and conditioning coach, and then they go through it now—treadmills, and they're on weights, and they're eating right. I just remember I just want to put food in my body, I don't remember going through the rituals of the weight training and that. I think that the one thing that we tried to get our guys—and I think that's taken away from the game, maybe not so much that I think they're bigger, faster, strong—but I think the pride. I think travel baseball, and individual baseball is so big right now. It's about getting my kid a scholarship, and it's about getting my kid on this travel team, and that travel team, and getting them seen by all these coaches. And what is left out is—how do you get a team to win? What are you going to do as a player in order to get your team to win? I think that me growing up in school, that's what it was about—it was about winning for Caliche High School, and it didn't matter if I had in basketball two points, or in baseball if I was three-four, the number one goal was to win, and that was it. And I think in this day and age, we've went away from that a little bit. It's about getting your son on this travel team to get him seen this way, so you can go play at Southern Indiana, or LSU, or whatever level it may be at. And I think that's some of the things that have been taken away, is this teaching kids how to win a baseball game, how to be a great teammate, and I think that's something we've went away from. But what I think the kids are, is they're bigger, faster, stronger, they're more in tune to everything in the world—I mean growing up I knew Arizona State a little bit, and Florida State a little bit, but not to what they know now about the LSUs, and who the coach is, and how do you get there, and now everything, it's right in front of them.

DS:

Yeah because you were there right as the explosion of where everybody started having access to the internet and now anybody in the world can find out what you're doing.

TA:

Yeah too quickly, too quickly.

DS:

Well within minutes after I was introduced to you, I was googling you.

TA:

Yeah.

DS:

So that's how it is, it's just nowadays you can just pull it up, find out new information.

TA:

Yeah.

DS:

But you mentioned something interesting about the bat changing and how athletes adjusted, how did coaches adjust to the different changes?

TA:

It's funny, because of every place I've been at, we've always been the, I want to say, we didn't have all the resources comparable to what the top ones had. So we had to make do with what we had. And so in order to do that, if you can't get the biggest, fastest, strongest, then what we did recruiting-wise, was we got the fastest, and we tried to find that kid that could hit, but not so much. So I think what happened was—I called California baseball, and I called maybe even here in Texas, called Augie Ball a little bit, to wear the bunting, and the stealing, and everything else has impacted the game of baseball. To where now, that can be how your produce, and how you can score a little bit more runs, you can't just sit back. When Skip was—during his time, they sit back, hit home runs, after home run, after home run that's how they're producing it. And now with the bat the way it is, you have to understand the whole game of baseball in order to win, because if you don't, if you're just relying on that one long ball, as they find out this year in Omaha, it's not going to happen very often.

DS:

Yeah.

TA:

You have to make that adjustment, and I think the bat's right now, I really do. I mean you can say you want it hotter and anything else, and we do want home runs, and we do want to see it. But as far as comparable to the wood bat, to what we all wanted, I think they found that niche with the BBCOR.

DS:

And so how long's that bat been in practice now?

TA:

That's a good question—that bat has been there now—I'm going to say this is in its third year. I'm going to say this was the third complete year of the BBCOR. Then the bat's better—the first year it was rough, it wasn't very good at all, and a wood bat was probably better. Second and third year have been much better, much better.

DS:

And you mentioned the first player you had go off into the pros, did he talk to you about how that switch from the college bat to the professional bat?

TA:

What's weird, when I went to the conference in the GLVC we were a wood bat conference. So our adjustment was going from the wood to aluminum once we went to post-season.

DS:

Oh.

TA:

So we didn't have that adjustment with the wood bat to the—he didn't, so he swung with the wood bat through, and I think a lot of junior colleges are doing that now. I think the Colorado Junior Colleges are all wood bat conference. So, I mean there's different things there, but he didn't say much about it. Of course when we got that aluminum in our hand, especially when it was the reflex them things, they jumped like no other, so it was a benefit. Now I actually think with the wood bat—it's easier to get the wood bat through the zone, just because it's top heavy, and you don't have to work it through. The aluminum bat you have to work through—

DS:

Yeah.

TA:

Work through that zone a little bit more. But it was definitely was a big difference.

DS:

Yeah, because—who was it—I'm trying to think, there was one player we had in here—I don't think it was Winfield, it was someone who was talking about how the sweet spot was much smaller.

TA:

Oh yeah, yeah it's like that, it's a lot smaller, but yeah.



DS:

So we've kind of been all over the map talking about your career and stuff. Let's concentrate on your winning seasons, and producing those titles that have led to you ultimately having lots of players recognized, and yourself recognized as National Coach of the Year.

TA:

Well, the first—I guess I said 2007 team was the team that started at USI. And let me go back even more, the 2004 and five team at Wisconsin – Park had made me realize that hey, we can get to the regional, hey we can win it, and just kind of enlightened things there. Then once we were in 2007, when we went to that meeting, we said hey, we can get to a regional, we can get to the (unintelligible) and they bought in. They bought into the system, and they did it, they were the first team to get it going. And our guys joked about it this year after we won it, and they said, “Hey we got a dynasty going. After we win one, we got a dyn—.” It's so fun to hear our guys talk about them, the alumni, “Hey we played here.” And at our level, it was a neat feeling after this year, but back to 2007 was the first year—it was a team that Darin stole sixty-three, I think it was sixty-three or sixty-five stolen bases, one of the fastest kids I'll ever have. We really ran a lot, and we did, and I mean he was one of the reasons. We had another guy in our three-hole, and we had another guy in the top order, think he had thirty or something like that. So the stealing, and the bunting, and all that stuff—people had to adjust to play us. And that was back when the bats were a little bit hot, they flew off there a little bit, and we did it a little different way. And one of the reasons why we did in my opinion is when we were recruiting, we only had six scholarships, everybody else was on nine. And we had to find a different way in order to win, and that club was—we brought in a couple guys, and we had a good core there back that they had, and we were able to get there.

And then 2010, that was the first National Championship Team. It was my—would that be seven—so it would be close to my fourth year, that would have been my fourth year there at Southern Indiana, and we talked about hosting a regional that first year. We talked about, and we were able to host it, and what a great experience it was for our student athletes, for our community. We went into there and we won the conference tournament, everything was going, we won our regular season, won the west, we were the favorite going in, and there's been a team that is always there also, and that's the Grand Valley State. And they come in and we win our first two games—the first thing is, that first game there was a night game, I mean we just got lights that year, and it was a night game, we're playing the University of Indianapolis, it's a great crowd, and at that point in time was the best environment that we've ever been a part of. And it was just great, and the community started getting involved, and if you don't know, I mean University of Southern Indiana, the state of Indiana, is known for what? It's basketball—Coach Knight and everything else, and Southern Indiana also won the national championship in basketball in 1995. That coach who won that national championship was Bruce Pearl. Bruce Pearl is now at Auburn, he was at Tennessee and all that stuff, so there's a lot of tradition there, and USI loves winners, but they love their basketball. But this was the first time there was a little

sniff of baseball. And 2010 for us to get there, and we get beat by Grand Valley State, and I remember we going to the huddle, and it was in the semi-final game, double elimination tournament, and we go in the huddle afterwards, and I just tell the guys, "Hey, a little setback, not exactly what we planned, but now we're just going to have to re-write the script a little bit, just make a story out of it." Well the story that ends up coming out was a little bit more entailed than what we really wanted. We go in and we win what I felt, that night we beat Northern Kentucky on Saturday night, what was probably one of the best games I've been involved with, one of the top five for sure. Brad Vance makes a play in the hole that was unbelievable, then I believe it was the bottom of the eighth inning, or the top of the ninth, and I can't remember for sure but—oh no I take it back, it was the top of the ninth—he goes in the hole on a ball, comes out of nowhere, gets in the hole, throws a guy out at first base, because there's a runner on second, and we bring back our pitcher, Trevor Leach, who started on Thursday. Okay, so he started on Thursday, game one, comes back in relief, we get out of there to go play Grand Valley State, we got to beat them twice. Great environment, come back we have to beat Grand Valley State twice, we show up at noon on Sunday, championship's Sunday, and Wandy Rosario's our shortstop closer, and I think we're up like 3-1 at the time—steals home. And you could just see when he stole home, that we kind of broke their back a little bit, they're like, "Oh my gosh, what's going to happen now? We just had a guy steal home on us." And that was—you could see the turning point, and we go on and win that first game. The second game we'd been going in all day on them, our pitchers had done a great job, we'd been going in, in, in, and we're getting them out. I think we're up six or seven runs at the time, and it's in the top of the eighth inning, and Wandy Rosario's up—they threw a ball right behind him. And reason why is because the pitch before, he drag bunted. Well, we were up six, seven, we were trying to go to the World Series, we're getting people on base, we're scoring runs. Well, they didn't like it, so they threw at Wandy, and long story short, umpires come in, warn us. Warn both coaches that whatever, I'm not worried about it, I mean he's pissed off he's getting beat, whatever it is—Coach Lyons. And comes the bottom of the eighth inning back and forth, one of our pitchers—we end up bring back Trevor Leach again, who started the first game by the way, and—I take it back, it was Dan Marcacci first, Dan Marcacci's our closer, and he runs a ball in, been throwing in all day, runs a ball in, hits the guy, I get ejected, he gets ejected, because of the warning. They didn't look into it, thought it was intentional, was not, we weren't throwing anybody. So me and Dan Marcacci get thrown out. My assistant coach is in charge, Chris Marx, they get through the eighth inning. It's the ninth inning, and they bring Trevor Leach back in. All of a sudden I see Coach Marx and Trevor Leach, well Trevor ran a ball in, he hit a guy, Trevor gets tossed, Coach Marx gets tossed. Now it's to our GA, Jeremy Kuester, they end up finishing out that game. We win the game. We're going on to our second national championship, and after the game we realize hey, I don't care about myself, but me and Coach Marx had to sit a game, but they are trying to get our players Dan Marcacci and Trevor Leach sitting for four games. So I'm very, very upset, and this is after everything, and so we're trying to petition it, and nobody would look at it, they said that's it, this is the umpire's ruling. Really didn't agree with it, but it is what it is. So we're going to the



National Championship without our number one, and our basically our closer number four, and they have to sit for four games. Well, I have to sit for one, Coach Marx has to sit for one. We stagger that, the first game of that World Series, I'm sitting out, Coach Marx gets to coach, so I'm out on top of the hill in Cary, North Carolina watching this game, which was probably the longest game of my career—excuse me—it's a little bit different, but we go there and he wins the first game, and Dan and Trevor Leach are sitting out of course for four games. Two, he sits out, we won that game. We were in our third game, we were in the semi-finals, and we're playing Columbus State—no, I take that back, we are playing Georgia College State, and if we win, we go to the championship game. Well, if we win, that's four games, they won't get to play. And my big thing is man, it's just really sad seeing those two guys in the stands, because they had such a big part of us, and not being able to play. Anyway, we're going after the game, we get beat, Georgia College beats us, 3-2. Well, we had to come back and play them again on Friday I believe. And so we go out there, Taylor Dennis pitching on three-day rest, pitches a gem, we win 3-2. We've played four games, we're in the National Championship Game against San Diego, we have our number one and our number four that had been resting, and our number one of course was going to start that game. All of a sudden everybody gives us a hard time, says, "Oh you threw that game." And we didn't throw no game, but it ended up working out. Somebody's always looking after you.

DS:

Right.

TA:

It always works out, and these two guys, and we had Trevor Leach pitching in the National Championship Game, hopefully we can close with Dan Marcacci. We're playing the University of San Diego, which at the time was number one in the country. They're like fifty something, and I don't remember their record but, well unfavored, we're just a Midwest school from Southern Indiana, playing in our first National Championship Game in baseball. And Trevor Leach goes out on the first inning, gives up a run leaving the ball up a little bit, settles down, and I believe he pitches eight and a third, Dan Marcacci comes in, closes out the game for us. We win our first national title in a heck of a story just how everything worked out for us.

DS:

Yeah.

TA:

And to come to find out win the state's first national title in baseball. No other team has won the national championship in baseball in the state of Indiana besides us. And coming back home, I remember looking at these guys, and just thinking how they invested all their trust and everything into us, and we were able to guide them in a direction of winning a national title, and

seeing the smiles on their face, seeing their family's smile, the tears of joy was one of the best feelings I've ever had as a coach, because it's just so great to see those young guys fulfill their dream—being that last team standing, catching that last ball, throwing that last pitch, getting that big hit. And that was just a tremendous, tremendous time of my life, being able to help them achieve happiness and greatness was just a great feeling. And going back home, we're probably thirty miles away from campus, and I get a call from Sheriff Williams, saying, "Coach let us know when you jump on the interstate, this and that, we just want to—." And I was like, "Okay, what's going on?" And this is probably about eleven o'clock at night, and Sheriff Williams pulls in—I think he had an SUV, he pulls in front of us in his SUV, we're getting a police escort into Evansville—sirens, and we're going sixty-five miles an hour down the Lloyd, everybody stops and what just a true community support, and for them to do that for us. The next day we're on fire trucks, we have probably four, five hundred people in the quad out there helping us celebrate this title. And it was truly just an amazing feeling, and an amazing thing to be a part of. And then going into the 2014 season was amazing. I guess this season we had thought we had a chance. 2012, 2013 we didn't even make the conference tournament, we went up from '10 to winning it in '11, to making regional and getting made out in '12 and '13, we didn't even make the conference tournament. So in 2014, we were just trying to get back in there, and this club talked about want to get to Cary [Cary, North Carolina, home of the national championship series] Cary, want to get to Cary. They always see the banner, the guys, the team picture 2010, and they talk about it. And what I don't know until afterwards is how much communication this club had with the 2010 club.

DS:

Ah.

TA:

And how they really grabbed a part of it, and reached out, and asked them questions.

DS:

Yeah, because you had nobody left from that squad.

TA:

Nobody left from that, we had a student assistant, but that's it—nobody left.

DS:

Wow.

TA:

And just how they reached out, and yeah I started to find this out during the season a little bit, but nothing right away. But and anyway, the other thing that was neat about the 2014 club was

we had more local players than we've ever had. And I mean local, probably within a ninety-mile radius, okay. And our starting lineup in the championship game, just our starting first baseman's from Evansville, our starting second baseman's from Evansville, our starting catcher was from Evansville, our starting left, center and right fielder's from Evansville, and our pitcher who ends up pitching the National Championship Game is from Newburgh, which is just right outside. So we have seven of our nine starting lineup is from the area. And that's one of the reasons why—and I talked about earlier about our support in '14. I mean that's one of the reasons why—we were able to recruit the best kids locally, get them to come to the University of Southern Indiana, which we felt at the time, but you don't know until afterwards, to come to find out we're the best team in the country with a bunch of local players. And it was unbelievable—it was unbelievable to be a part of, it was unbelievable for the community, it was unbelievable for us as a team to be able to go through, and do it very similar—and I can't remember the writer's name, but he was the same guy, the beat writer that covered us in Cary in 2010, he covered us in 2014, right when we show up he says, "I had this feeling this club was very similar to the 2010, because everything that's happened to you—I've been doing my research—is very similar." And you go, "Oh, yeah whatever," and you just kind of move on. And, well, in 2014 we were hosting the regional, and we get beat in the semi-finals, we have to come back, we have to play at night, we have one of the best crowds, and we end up playing Grand Valley State in that game. And we beat Grand Valley State, they kind of threw the ball around a little bit, we ended up beating them that night, we had to beat University of Drury, one of our conference rivals, twice. Oh I take that back, we had to beat them once, because the bracket changed, so we had one game, winner take all. Another interesting thing is our closer and our shortstop is Matt Chavarria, where in 2010 our closer shortstop was Wandy Rosario, very similar, very big component. Anyway, we're down a run going into the bottom of the eighth, and Matt hits a double that's just out of reach, scores a run, tie it up, next kid, Bertram gets a hit, we end up going ahead, all in the last two innings. I mean the place is erupting. Matt comes in, gets the final outs, we're going on to the World Series, and then we find out we're playing the University of Tampa. University of Tampa is at this time fifty-one and two. Okay, number one in the country, no doubt. Coach Urso's won that—sorry Coach Urso, I don't know how many, but a lot of national championships—I'm going to say he's won at least five national championships since I've been involved. They're trying to go back to back, they're defending national championship, that's who we open up with. Starting shortstop, played a Florida State for two years, transferred in—I mean you can just go through the line—division one transfer, to division one transfer. You look at everything, we're like, we got our hands full. We're throwing Ben Wright from Newburgh, and long story short, we knock off the number one team in the country, fifty one and three now.

DS:

Wow.

TA:

So, what's next? Number two team in the country, Lander. Great club, big power, starting pitcher for them is a transfer out of the University of North Carolina who was in their bullpen when they went to the World Series. He's anywhere from ninety-one to ninety-four, topping out at ninety-five, ninety-six. That's who we're facing game two. Here we got sitting on a 0-0 ball game, and our leadoff hitter hits a 2-2 fastball, ninety-five mile an hour fastball, and hits it out of the park—we're up 1-0. We had a double steal score another run for two, we go up, we beat the number two team in the country. What's next? The number three team in a country, University of Mankato. We lose that game, just like we did in 2010, get beat in a close game, we come back, play Mankato, beat them, knock off the number three team. Now we're playing Colorado Mason. Every game we're the underdog, and this beat writer keeps telling me, "Hey, I'm telling you, everything's way ahead, this is how it is, this is what's going on." And in the fourth game, Colorado Mason, we play twelve innings, we win on a walk—they walk in the winning run at the top of the twelfth inning.

DS:

Wow.

TS:

Matt Chavarria has the ball for four innings, he comes in in the eighth, pitches four innings of not giving up a run, and we go on and win our second national title in five years. It was, like I said, one the community involvement, how many local players that we had. Your second is not any better, but you learn to appreciate the 2010 one more. I think the biggest thing is I was able to look back and my assistant coach, Coach Kuester, who was with me at the time in 2010—one of the only coaches that was with us in 2010—we're walking up to the National Championship Game, and I said, "Coach Kuester, do you realize that we're walking into our second National Championship Game, and there were better coaches out there than us, and other than them, they've never been to a national championship at all, and we're walking into our second?" I said, "I feel very blessed, very fortunate to be part of this." And he goes, "Yeah, it's amazing." And then afterwards, after we won it, we look at each other and it's just hard to believe. It's hard to believe that we were able to be a part of that in such a short career that we've had.

DS:

Right, and we had somebody knock on the door which means that our time is basically up, but before we get out of here, let me ask—what's it mean to you to be involved—this is the second year you've come to Lubbock because of winning a title, and also Coach of the Year honoree stuff. So can you tell us what it means to you to be a part of that, and be in that fraternal hood of coaches that's here?



TS:

Well the first year I was involved, I had Coach Stevenson was here, Skip Bertman, Coach Bennett out of Fresno State, and Coach Graham out of Rice, and then Augie. I get off of my plane, I get in a car, all these guys are sitting in the back of me. These are guys I grew up with—legendary coaches, and just to be around them I'm like a kid. It's like a kid to be around these legendary guys, and be a part of it, and the city of Lubbock, and Mike and Jana just treat you so great. I mean everybody here, it becomes another part of your life, like a small family that you know, that you've known, and how they've developed this. And it means a lot to me just to be able to tell our story like we did today, and to tell the story of University of Southern Indiana, and the city of Evansville, and how they're such a great community, and they deserve the rights. And also, I think I talked about earlier is, for me on a personal note, it's just very rewarding to know that people care about what we're doing. That's it. That's what's so important to me, is that there's just not the small town of Evansville, two-hundred and fifty thousand that care, it's all across the nation that care. And they care about college baseball, and they care about what we've done, and how we've done it in a true, in a classy and professional way.

DS:

Well congratulations again, and thank you so much.

TS:

Thank you very much.

DS:

I believe y'all have an important gig after this, don't you?

TS:

I just have lunch, that's it.

DS:

Well not much more important than that.

*End of interview*