

Fish joins '600 Club' as Marion sweeps

Written by Jim Ecker

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TAMA - Steve Fish lived all over the United States and all over the world when he was growing up as a Navy brat, but he found a home in Iowa and never left after graduating from Coe College in 1983.

Now he's a member of an exclusive club in his adopted state.

Fish won his 600th game as a high school baseball coach Wednesday night when the Marion Indians swept a Wamac Conference doubleheader from South Tama, 7-5 and 11-0 in five innings.

Fish captured No. 600 in the opener and has an overall record of 601-336 in 27 years as a head coach, including 15 years at Marion and 12 years before that at Central City. He became the 36th member of the '600 Club' in Iowa among coaches who have spent all their time at the high school level, according to the Iowa High School Baseball Coaches Association website.

The milestone had extra meaning for Fish because his son Baylor, a sophomore shortstop who has been struggling at the plate this season with a .197 batting average, went 3-for-4 in the 600th victory to celebrate with his father.

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"It was finally nice to have some success at the plate," Baylor Fish remarked. "I guess it was the right time."

All three Fish brothers have played baseball for their father at Marion High School with B.J., Byron and Baylor all growing up with the game.

Their sister, Brittany, played sports at Marion as well with their father and mother, Vickie, guiding them along.

"When it involves my own kids, that's cool," said Fish, who had a bucket of ice-water dumped on his head after the doubleheader by two of his players.

"Life is about relationships and family, it's not about winning 600 games. If you do it as long as I have, you're going to fall into some victories.

"It's about the relationship with kids and my own family."

Fish, 54, was born in Oakland, Calif., and moved all over the world with his family. His father, Capt. Dennis Fish, was a supply officer in the Navy and the family lived in Puerto Rico, Spain, Georgia, Rhode Island, Michigan, the Washington, D.C. area and Japan.

Dennis Fish passed away in February 2013 and was buried at Arlington National Cemetery with full Navy honors.

Capt. Fish was born in Iowa, but Steve Fish never lived in Iowa as a kid and never dreamed he would. His first experience with Iowa did not leave a favorable impression on the young boy.

"My dad was on a family trip through Iowa, and I was kicking and screaming all the way through the state, 'Get us the heck out of here!'," he said, laughing at the memory.

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Fish graduated from Nile Kinnick High School in Japan and played baseball there. He wasn't sure where to go for college, but a friend told him about Coe College and said he'd have a chance to play baseball and football for the Kohawks.

"So I filled out the papers to come to school -- they had the best financial aid package -- and my dad goes, 'That's where you're going!' I came here sight unseen.

"I pulled into Cedar Rapids and said, 'What the heck is this?' Because I was an ocean kid, a navy brat. I want to see water."

Fish played baseball for Pinky Primrose at Coe and began his coaching career as an assistant for Primrose. Now it's more than 30 years later and Fish has become an Iowan through and through.

"I value family, and I don't think there's a better place in the country to raise a family," he said.

Baylor Fish grew up at the Marion High School baseball field, tagging after his father and watching his older brothers play ball.

"I can remember being up at the field from as little as 6," he said. "I was in the dugout and finally graduated to the book (keeping the scorebook) in sixth grade. Before that I was just batboy and ballboy.

"It's been fun," he said. "It was a nice treat to watch their teams have success. It's nice to have some success with our team.

"I could picture myself on the field when I was little, running the bases after games. My brother (Byron) was part of 500, so it's cool to be part of 600."

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Steve Fish is not sure how long he'll stick with coaching, but plans to coach for at least two more years with Baylor still on the club.

Beyond that, he's not sure.

"I used to be OK at golf," he said. "I would like to play that again. And you can't do that with baseball all the time."

Fish, a physical education teacher at Marion High School, was constantly teaching his players during Wednesday's doubleheader, reminding them about different situations and keeping them on their toes.

"As you see, I still enjoy the kids," he remarked. "It's special having your own son on the team. It's also a burden on him, and he handles it better than I ever would."

"He's struggling at the plate, but tonight he steps up and gets three hits. I was sitting back and thinking, 'This is pretty cool.'"

Marion raised its record to 21-14 with the sweep. South Tama fell to 11-21.

The Indians had a 7-0 lead heading into the bottom of the seventh inning of the opener with Brady Donohue in total control on the mound, but an infield error helped South Tama rally for four unearned runs. Owen Carstensen relieved Donohue after it became 7-4 and got the final out to end the suspense and give Fish his 600th victory.

Marion went 12-for-12 in stolen bases in the opener against a young catcher who is playing for the South Tama varsity as an eighth grader.

Maverick Miller stole four of those bags for the Indians and was 2-for-3 at the plate.

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David Kuhn tossed a three-hit shutout for Marion in the nightcap. Miller and Parker Ridge had two hits.

GAME 1

Marion █ █ █ █ **201 021 1 - 7 11 2**

South Tama █ **000 000 4 - 4 █ 7 1**

W - Donohue. L - Frakes.

GAME 2

Marion █ █ █ █ **402 23 - 11 9 0**

South Tama █ **000 00 - █ 0 3 4**

W - Kuhn. L - G. Koch.