

baseball

Emery's time for decision is Oregon's gain

By MIKE GRADY
Of the Emerald

A lot of people say good things always end up costing you. But ask any member of the Oregon baseball program if that's true and he'll tell you just how wrong those people are.

The Ducks are more than fortunate to have a man named Cal Emery on the coaching staff this year. Not just because he coached hitting to people like Mike Schmidt, Bill Robinson, Greg Luzinski and Oscar Gamble.

And not just because Emery thinks the world of baseball and loves to teach it. The Ducks are not only fortunate to have him for these reasons alone, but also for the fact that he's free.

Emery doesn't get paid for his coaching efforts. But then again

he's reached the point where money will never measure what's important to him — self value.

Only three years ago Emery was one of the most successful coaches in minor league baseball. As a coach in the Philadelphia Phillies organization, a system he'd played in from 1958 to 1970, he led two of the four teams he had to pennant winning finishes.

Every team he managed or coached was a winner. Then in the midst of the 1975 season, with his Triple-A Oklahoma City ballclub in a tie for first place, something suddenly changed for Emery.

"It's hard to state any logical reason for what happened," he explained recently. "It's not that I didn't like the carefree life of baseball; I think I was just getting

tired of living out of a suitcase. I guess I just wanted to find a purpose in what I was doing."

To do that, Emery decided the best thing to do would be to call the front office and ask to be transferred elsewhere until his contract expired. The Phillies refused to re-negotiate and subsequently dropped him.

"As it was, it came out that I quit and that isn't true," Emery said. "I'm bitter about that."

So Emery decided to go where he'd enjoyed it most during his playing and coaching days all across the country — Eugene. Divorced for ten years, he had no set place to call home. Since that was a difficulty with his way of life at the time, he decided to attack it first.

"Since I wasn't sure of what I wanted to do," he said, "the first question I had to answer was: 'Where do I want to do it?' I've been all over the country but there's no place I've enjoyed as much as Eugene."

"I really love it here and Eugene is where I want to make my home."

So what does an ex-pro, who still loves the game and expects to someday return to it, do in his off hours from work at the Eugene Planing Mill?

He volunteers his services to the needy; that's what. And while we can attribute Oregon's improved status this year to new talent and green grass in the infield, we've also got to give credit to that tall skinny guy coaching third base.

"He's helped quite a bit," said senior pitcher Jerry Cunningham. "He's got so much integrity. When Cal says something, everybody's ears perk up."

"He's a baseball genius," said fellow assistant coach Dave Pyles. "The guys know so much about baseball fundamentals."

The problem facing Emery now, however, is what to do next. "Right now it's like I'm living in a vacuum," he said. "I'm not really producing."

"I'm gonna make a decision before the next season starts." Although he admits to not really having anything substantial to show for 20 years of service to baseball, he states he has no regrets for getting into it.

What would make a re-entry into pro ball worthwhile now according to Emery, would only be to make it to the majors. Three and a half years of service at that level will qualify him for a pension, something which is very tempting.

"As I contemplate whether to go back into professional ball and try for the majors, Emery said, "one thing that bugs me is the maniacal attitude."

"It's the way things are going in athletics now days; it's a win or kill attitude. You're either a hero or you're hung in effigy."

But on the other hand is the nagging desire to reach the top spot in your field. Emery was well on his way before and he realizes he can still do it. He just wants to do it his way this time.

"I miss it," he admitted. "I see guys on television that played for me at one time and it kind of chokes me up."

Until the time comes to decide which way to go, Emery is looking into other possibilities outside of baseball. He knows it won't last forever and that there are things other than the game.

"I've been thinking of perhaps going into counseling," he said. "In baseball for instance, there are a lot of guys who think they want to go pro, but can't adjust to the alternative life style."

"We're really afraid to look at ourselves, we're really scared of that. I think I can help somebody make those decisions since I've already been there."



Photo by Mike Marino

Cal Emery decided to take some time off from the pros for a while, but in the meantime he's decided he likes Eugene and that's to the benefit of the Oregon players he tutors.

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