

## SPORTS

# 'I didn't want to quit playing'

## Former Portland Mavs pitcher from The Dalles reflects on career

By **GABRIEL BRAVO**  
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When baseball is mentioned, teams and players come to mind, like the Washington Nationals, Stephen Strasburg and Ken Griffey Jr.

When America's pastime is mentioned to area old-timers, the Portland Mavericks come to mind.

Only in existence from 1973-1977, the Mavericks played in the Northwest League, a Class A short-season minor league. In those five years, the Mavs earned fan loyalty, beat favored opponents and provided a second chance to hopeful baseball dreamers from across the country.

Michael Guischer, from The Dalles, was one of them.

With hopes of pitching in the major leagues, Guischer tore cartilage in his knee in his final year at Portland State University in 1972.

"I thought that it was going to be the end of it," Guischer said. "I didn't want to quit playing and I knew there was a little chance of climbing out of there and getting anywhere. But I was still young, loved the game and I've been playing since I was 8 years old. I just wasn't ready to call it good."

Guischer returned to baseball in 1974 for one season with the Eugene Emeralds, then transferred to the Mavericks and pitched in 1975 and 1976.

"Well, I had probably the best year in Eugene. I was seven and one and I got released along with pretty much the whole ball club," Guischer said. "College kids came from all over the country to (the Mavericks) weeklong inter-squad game. Guys were coming in and out from eight o'clock in the morning to eight o'clock at night. So, everybody got a chance to play and got a chance to see everybody. I got something out of that camp as one of the two pitchers."

This unconventional way of recruiting attracted baseball players who didn't fall in the, then, traditional baseball player category: guys weren't in the best shape, smoked in the locker rooms and had no filter. Despite their misleading appearance, the Mavericks played well.

In its inaugural year, the Mavs had a 45-35 record, 50-34 in 1974, 42-35 in 1975, 40-32 in 1976 and 44-22 in their last season.

Maverick fans appreciated the underdog aspect of the team. With no affiliation with a major league club, the Mavs beat other clubs who were affiliated with the Philadelphia Phillies, Los Angeles Dodgers and the San Diego Padres.

"We were pretty seasoned ball players," Guischer said. "There was rumors that (other clubs) sent people down from their higher ball clubs to beat us."

Game attendance for those five years averaged 2,724. During Guischer's two years with the team, total season attendance exceeded 100,000. In its final season, it is estimated a total of 125,300 people attended Maverick home games.

"When I was going to school at Portland State, we'd go to a lot of the triple-A games; Portland Beavers were a Triple A club," Guischer said. "There'd only be a couple hundred people in that ballpark watching them. For some reason, when the Mavericks started playing, they were very supportive of the ball club. It was a fun place to play. Great fan support!"

Now that it's been over 40 years since he played for the Mavericks, Guischer has been married for 27 years and has two daughters who also picked up the sport and position.

Daughters Chelan and Ann-Marie Guischer were raised playing the sport and were babysat by Sarah Clark, former star pitcher for The Dalles High School.

"During the summers, (Clark) babysat the kids so she had an influence on them too and she helped coach pitching lessons," Guischer said. "They ended up loving the game and played as long as they could."

Both daughters continued the baseball tradition and played in college. Chelan attended Linfield College in McMinnville, Ore. while Ann-Marie went to the Oregon Institute of Technology in Klamath Falls.

Guischer has helped in TDHS's soft ball team but couldn't continue due to work scheduling conflicts. But with the kids out of the nest and retirement in the horizon, Guischer said he'd like to, again, give back to the sport.

"If I ever do retire, I would probably give it a go again," Guischer said. "I really enjoyed softball. I wouldn't mind doing the assistant coach managing end of it. I'd work with the pitchers more than anything."

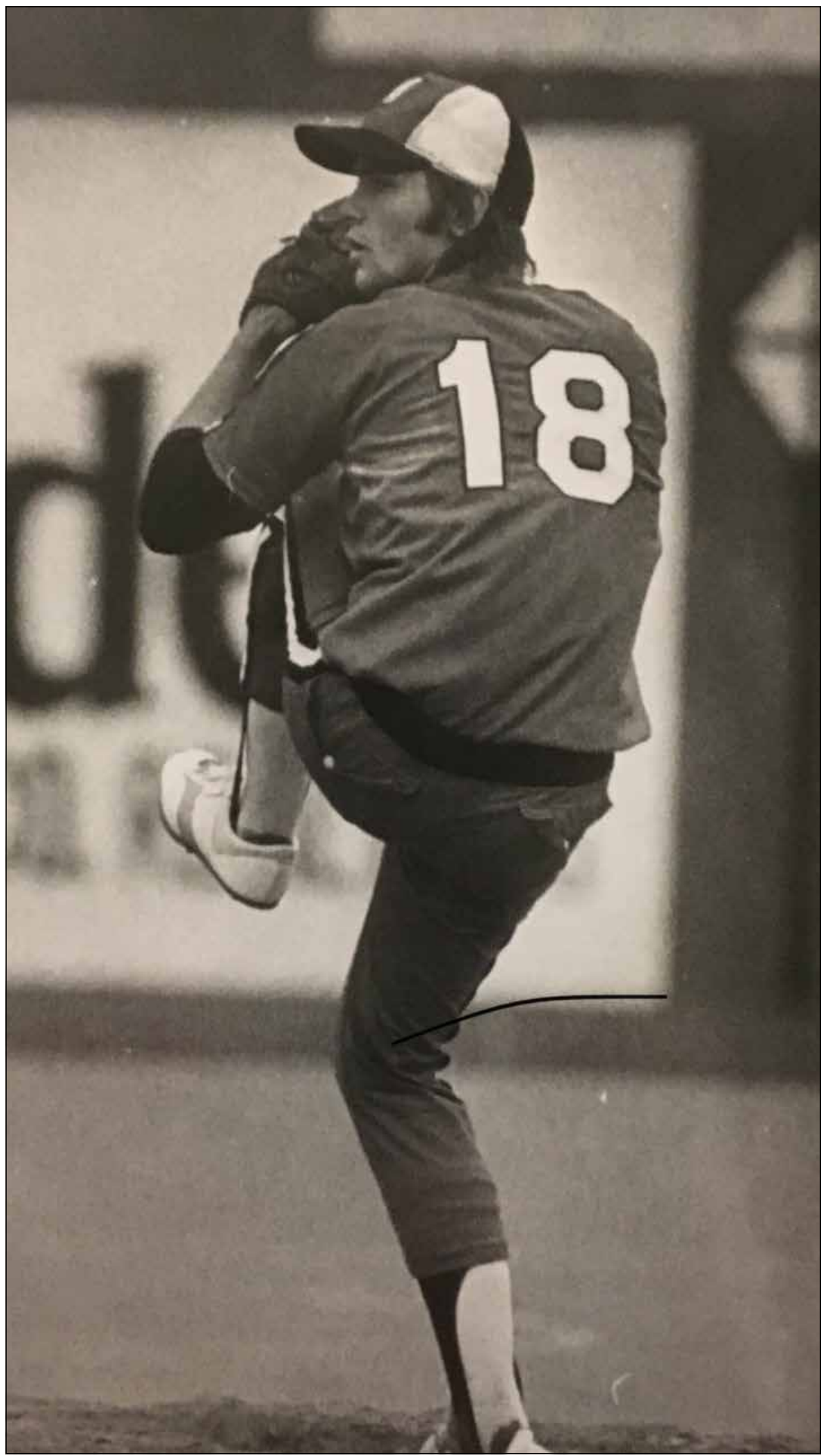


Photo courtesy of Michael Guischer

**PITCHER** for the Portland Mavericks, Michael Guischer, was with the team for the 1975 and 1976 season.

## HOOPS CLINIC WITH CODY KUNIGEL

Photos by Gabriel Bravo



Substitute teacher and basketball coach Cody Kunigel held a basketball clinic aimed at improving second through eighth graders' offensive strategy Jan. 20 at Vannet Court at Hood River Valley High School. HRV senior Cruise Hawk (blue shirt) and HRV graduate Juan Zuniga (white shirt) face off as Eric Fauth (grey shirt) moves in for a screen with Cody Kunigel (farthest right) supervises.



Hoop clinics have been going on for about three years now, Cody Kunigel said. Families from The Dalles, Maupin and as far away as Heppner attended the clinic. A session for second through fifth graders was from 8-9:30 a.m. and a session for sixth through eighth graders was from 10 a.m. to noon.



HRV senior and basketball starter Cruise Hawk volunteered in the sixth through eighth session. Twenty-one kids participated in this session. The kids in Monday's session seemed enthusiastic and eager to learn basketball skills, Hawk said. Because this is Hawk's last year in school, he said he wanted to give back to the community and help kids in developing their skills.