



Courtesy photo

Scott Dulin, head baseball coach at Fisher College in Boston, congratulates a player who scored a run in a 2019 game.

# Coaches **Scott and Todd Dulin** driven by a shared love of the game

**I**t is a summer's day under a sky that promises rain at the North Andover High School baseball field.

A bird call, high and near, sounds from an unseen perch, and a dozen starlings land in centerfield by a pool of standing water.

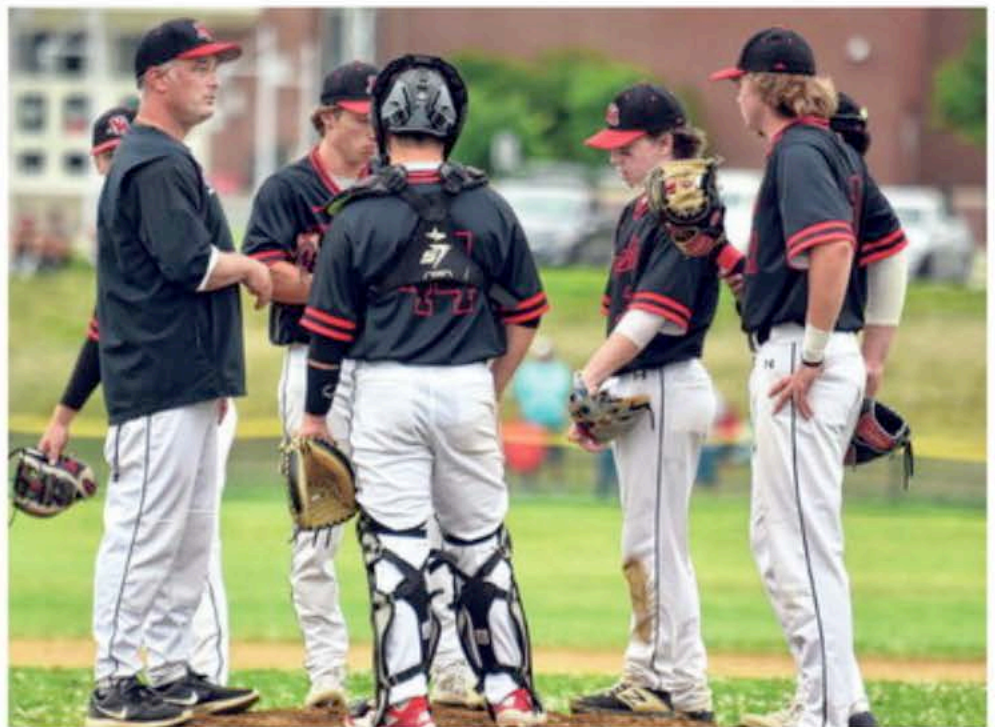
It's been a wet summer.

Scott and Todd Dulin talk baseball in the third-base side dugout. They reminisce about playing catch as kids in the yard and their father lofting pop-ups for them to track and catch.

Todd says a game of catch, throwing a baseball back and forth, was, and remains, for him, one of life's simple pleasures.

He also recalls the first time he swung a bat and hit a baseball well. It was in the yard. His father, Henry, threw a pitch with a hardball, not the spongy little-kid ball they had been using.

There was no vibration when the bat met the ball, and the ball sprang from his bat and crashed through a window on

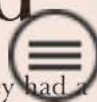


Carl Russo photo

Todd Dulin, head baseball coach at North Andover High School, gives his team a pep talk during a 2021 semifinal game.

*By* TERRY DATE • *Photos by* TIM JEAN

# Unforgettable moments on the field



The unforeseen happens in baseball. Oddball plays and quirky circumstances never witnessed before or expected to come around again.

Its distinct setting, a diamond infield and expansive, curved outfield and alternating grass and dirt surfaces.

Its fair and foul territory subject to rules based on the home field's layout.

Its timeless, innings-based sequences unfolding by way of strategy and subject to chance results in an alchemy rife with firsts.

Baseball announcers who have watched or called thousands of games and tens of thousands of innings and millions of pitches delight in novel occurrences.

The professional game is peppered with dramatic calls coined under high drama delivering improbable or long-sought outcomes.

Boston Red Sox radio announcer Joe Castiglione's signature tagline, "Can you believe it?" took wing in 2004, when he and other long-suffering fans witnessed the team's first World Series championship in 86 years.

The amateur ranks from Little League to school and college and adult leagues offer countless opportunities for memorable firsts.

Todd Dulin, varsity baseball coach at North Andover High School, says that his team's most memorable moment took place several years ago.

"One of my favorite plays was when we were playing Lawrence High School



Roger Darrigrand photo

**Ryan Sifferlen, left, and Brandon Walsh give coach Todd Dulin an ice bath after winning the Division 2 North championship in 2009.**

and Brendan Parisotto was in center field and the big, slow-running catcher from Lawrence got a hit up the middle, and Parisotto threw him out at first base from center field," he says. "That was the first and only time that I witnessed such a play. Coach (Brendan) Neilon from Lawrence was not happy."

Scott Dulin, head baseball coach at Fisher College, won't soon forget a game from this past season.

"My most memorable game to date would be the one that won our way back into the national tournament," he says. "We were down five runs heading into the bottom of the ninth. With three outs left to give, we started the inning with a home run and ended up tying the game after some big hits and costly errors on their end.

"We left the bases loaded to end the inning but went into extra innings," he

says. "In the top of the 11th, they had a runner on second base to start the inning. He stole third, and our catcher threw the ball into left field. For some reason, the runner did not attempt to score. We got the next three guys out. In the bottom of the 11th, we loaded the bases for our best hitter, who hit a soft liner into left field for the walk-off win to get us to the next round" of the tournament.

"As our guys were running onto the field to celebrate the crazy win, their pitcher punched one of our guys, and what followed was absolute craziness," Scott says. "Luckily, after watching film, none of our guys were disciplined and we were able to move on without any suspensions.

"The reason why it is so memorable is because of the range of emotions from being tight early in the game, getting down big in the middle of the game, losing steam toward the late innings, to somehow tying it, to the nerve-wracking extra innings to celebration to a head-scratcher," he says.

The moment that most sticks out for Scott's assistant coach, Anthony Perry, took place when he was a sophomore playing at Fisher. That year, the team had a 49-0 win over Vermont's College of St. Joseph.

"Our designated hitter (Jose Reyes) made all three outs," Perry says. "In the first inning, he hit two sacrifice flies and a ground out."

— Terry Date



**Todd Dulin, left, throws a pitch to his brother, Scott Dulin, while recalling their playing days on the baseball field at North Andover High School.**

their house.

Scott recalls diving for ground balls on the expansive lawn across the street where the neighbor was never home. The brothers pretended they were Ozzie Smith, the acrobatic, smooth and sure-handed short-stop for the St. Louis Cardinals.

Their grandfather Loren played baseball in dusty Kansas and told his grandchildren about what it was like playing the game in the olden days.

The extended family played Wiffle ball games in the Poconos on visits to their grandmother's house, where a painted strike zone adorned the barn.

The Dulins are baseball brothers. Former players and longtime coaches.

Both played for North Andover High

School. Todd was a centerfielder who graduated in 1991, and Scott was a short-stop and pitcher, graduating in 1993.

Scott knew he wanted to be a baseball coach and went to the University of Maine at Farmington to play the game and learn how to coach it.

He learned much of what he knows about hitting from coach John Winkin, who learned much about hitting from the greatest hitter of all time, Ted Williams of the Boston Red Sox, the last player to ever have a season batting average of .400.

Between Scott and Todd, they have coached close to 50 years and well over 1,500 games.

Scott, 48, who lives in Andover with his family, has been Fisher College's coach for 23 years and notched 600 career wins.

Todd, 50, coaches where he teaches history, at North Andover High School, and lives in town with his family. He has coached more than 20 years, including four years as the freshman baseball coach for the North Andover High Scarlet Knights.

## Stepping up to the plate

Baseball is a constant in a changing world for the Dulin. Baseball, too, is changing.

It is more organized, more structured, and the kids avail themselves of modern technology, including videos and metrics to measure bat speed and analyze swings and recommend drills and exercises to boost performance.

The Dulin brothers are at home in the dugout or on the diamond, the two places we catch up with them this afternoon just shy of the Fourth of July.

Their high school and college seasons have just ended.

The summer season is in full swing.

The 2024 baseball campaigns are off in the distance, but baseball never goes away for them.

In shallow left field and centerfield, a father, Rob Rossi, a North Andover American Legion baseball coach; his twin sons; and a friend of theirs rake soil in wet areas to ready the field for a summer league game scheduled the following day.

Todd goes over and chats with Rob.

Scott has a rare day off from coaching this day. He is coaching an under-17 travel baseball team, the Nor'Easter Runbirds, based in Tewksbury but whose players come from throughout the region and from New Hampshire.

It used to be that teams were town-



Courtesy photo

The Fisher College baseball team visits the Clemente Museum, which preserves the life and legacy of baseball great Roberto Clemente, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in April 2022.

## A fiery journey

On Sunday, April 16, the Fisher College baseball team bus was homeward bound on Interstate 95 in Maryland after disappointing losses to Montreat College in North Carolina.

They had been on the road a half-hour when two back tires on the left side blew, igniting the brake line.

By the time the last of the more than 30 players, coaches and staff were off the bus, the back was on fire.

Soon, it was consumed by flames, black smoke billowing from the bus and teammates running on the side of the highway.

"We were lucky," coach Scott Dulin says. "Within minutes, the whole bus was engulfed."

No one was hurt.

The White Marsh Volunteer Fire Company extinguished the fire and ferried the team in ambulances and firetrucks to the fire station, where the firefighters fed the players and showed them around.

Scott was one of the last ones to catch a ride to the fire station.

"By the time I got back there, my (players) were in full fire gear knocking down doors with fire axes," the coach says.

Six hours later, the Fisher Falcons were on a replacement bus.

The next morning, the accelerator on the new bus broke and they were forced to travel 15 mph in the breakdown lane from Connecticut to Boston.

Scott was ready for a relaxing day when he got a call from the college telling him to be ready for a press conference.

News outlets visited the team practice. It was national news, international even.

The coach was getting calls from players he had been recruiting in Canada who were telling him they saw the clips and heard the report of the bus fire.

based, but travel baseball has become more prevalent as kids tend to specialize in a given sport, playing or training year-round in it.

Scott started the baseball program from scratch at Fisher College in Boston, and the first four years drew all his players from the Merrimack Valley. He scoured the area, going to American Legion, Babe Ruth and Pony League games seeking recruits for the Fisher Falcons.

Scott has grown the program and been a baseball emissary to Costa Rica and other Latin American countries.

Now, many of his players come from Puerto Rico and the Dominican

Republic, baseball-crazed islands and wellsprings of talent.

The Caribbean connection grew out of Scott's involvement with the Roberto Clemente Foundation, a philanthropic organization that serves kids with cultural activities and provides humanitarian assistance.

Scott and his players were on the island distributing food and other assistance in the wake of natural disasters that have befallen the island in recent years, earthquakes and Hurricane Maria.

## Ready to launch

The storm clouds approaching North

Andover are getting closer, and Todd and Scott take the field for a little fun.

Todd winds up on the mound and throws a batting practice fastball to brother Scott, standing in the batter's box, a bat on his shoulder.

Scott squares around and catches the baseball with the barrel of the bat, cushioning the contact between the two hard objects and dropping down a bunt inside the foul line and well short of third base.

It's textbook. Precise. Would be a perfect sacrifice bunt were this a game instead of two brothers having fun playing a game that Americans have long associated with youth, green grass and summer.

In several short months, the brothers Dulin will be back at the helm readying their teams for their seasons.

Scott hosts a fall baseball season for his college team.

Once the regular season starts, he never forfeits an opportunity in the third base coach's box, says his assistant coach and fellow Andover resident, Anthony Perry.

The third base coach is as close as a coach can get to being part of the game. The coach relays signs to the batter,

directing them to take a pitch or bunt or hit and run.

The coach also directs runners on the base path, a tricky bit of speculation in which the coach must judge if the runner has the speed or enough of a jump to avoid being thrown out at the plate and score a run.

Perry is one of 22 Fisher players who have gone on to play professional baseball in the minor leagues.

Perry is a baseball person, too, and says Scott's life is intertwined with the pastime.

It teaches life skills; demands preparation, focus and competitiveness; and can prepare people for life's ebbs and flows, as well as lend drama and excitement to it.

Scott has his teams ready to play regular season games in February, including at the New England Baseball Complex in Northborough, if the weather is clear and the temperatures aren't too cold.

Their home field, Fraser Field in Lynn, has artificial turf and, if cleared of snow, can host games.

Meanwhile, the rain arrives in North Andover, and the baseball brothers get in a few more throws and bunts and head for their cars. 🌧️



Courtesy photo

**Todd and Scott Dulin started playing baseball when they were young.**

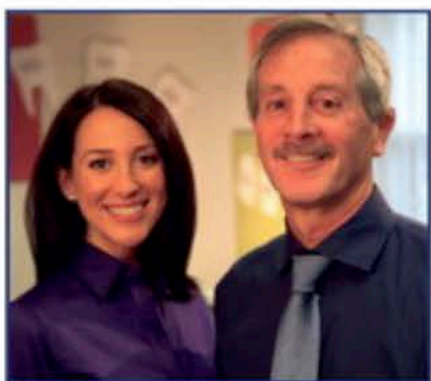
## Sibling scoreboard

### TODD DULIN

- ▶ **Coach:** North Andover High School, more than 20 years, the first four for freshman team
- ▶ **Upcoming season:** Starts March 18. 22-game regular season from early April to Memorial Day weekend followed by playoffs. "I think we will have a good team this year. They have been working very hard."
- ▶ **Accomplishments:** More than 250 wins. 11 league championships in last 16 years. 2009 and 2011 North Sectional champions. 2019 Division 1 Super 8 state champion.
- ▶ **Most proud:** The players from North Andover High who have gone on to play in college and professionally.

### SCOTT DULIN

- ▶ **Coach:** Fisher College, 23 years. Also two years at Massachusetts College of Pharmacy.
- ▶ **Upcoming season:** Preseason started Jan. 15, first game Feb 16. 50-game regular season ends April 28. If qualifying, post-season conference tournament May 4-6 in Georgia, NAIA national tournament May 13-17 and NAIA National Championship May 23-31 in Idaho. "We have depth and talent where we need it, and the chemistry of this year's group is the best I have had in years."
- ▶ **Accomplishments:** More than 600 wins, seven conference championships, four regional championships and seven appearances in the NAIA National Tournament. Numerous coach of year honors, induction in first Fisher Hall of Fame. Twenty-one former Fisher players have gone on to play professionally since 2008. Baseball envoy to Latin America and board member of Roberto Clemente Foundation dedicated to humanitarian and cultural outreach.
- ▶ **Most proud:** "Watching my guys graduate and move on to being successful husbands and fathers and playing good roles in their communities and workplaces."



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