

# Greater Lowell Tech coach Dave MacLaughlan enters 40th baseball season

Longtime Gryphons coach remains optimistic about young team's chances



Greater Lowell Tech baseball coach Dave MacLaughlan stares intently onto the diamond during a 2009 baseball game. MacLaughlan is still coaching the Gryphons. He recently began his 40th season. (Sun file photo)

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TYNGSBORO — Awe-inspiring victories. Gut-punching losses.

Dave MacLaughlan has experienced plenty of both during his decades on the baseball diamond. But as he enters his 40th season at Greater Lowell Tech, the longtime coach is still enjoying the battle, and everything that comes with it.

“I really take one game at a time at this stage now,” said MacLaughlan, 75. “I’ve been around for a while, but my health is good. I enjoy doing what I’m doing. I’m probably a throwback to the dinosaur age with some of these things that kids are getting into today with their approach to the game.”

Over the years, through various ups and downs, MacLaughlan has managed to maintain an even keel. He’s guided the Gryphons to over 450 wins, the latest a 4-3 decision Friday over Lowell Catholic, but it’s never been about personal statistics. It’s

about bringing the best out of your players, and he feels he's only gotten better at that with age.

"I've been fortunate by the support of the Greater Lowell Tech administration," said MacLaughlan, 75, who retired from teaching at the school a number of years ago. "They've allowed me to continue to coach, which has been great. I've also been fortunate to have great assistants that have been with me for a number of years."

Coach Mark Beati has been MacLaughlan's right hand man for over 27 years, serving as the JV baseball coach and varsity assistant coach. The late, great Steve Botto, who passed away from cancer in 2020, was also instrumental in the program's development, serving as varsity assistant coach for the skipper's first 16 seasons.

"Those two were great baseball guys," said MacLaughlan. "I've been very fortunate to have them on my staff. They really got along well together."

Originally from Lowell, MacLaughlan's coaching roots can be traced as far back as Senior League baseball at Shedd Park in 1972. He broke into the high school ranks as a Greater Lowell JV coach in 1975 before taking the head coaching reins in 1984.

He's led the team to a pair of North Sectional semifinals, including guiding a 15-5 squad in their most recent run in 2019 before bowing out to eventual D2 North champs St. Mary's in a 2-1 nail biter.

"We were the only team to score a run against them during their run," said MacLaughlan. "We were looking forward to our 2020 season, because eight of our players were coming back. Then COVID wiped that year out."

Since that time, the team has been battling to reestablish themselves.

The Gryphons went 9-8 last season, earning the 38th seed in the bracket, before bowing out to No. 27 North Reading, 14-0, in the first round of the MIAA Division 3 Tournament, only fueling their fire to improve.

"We're young," said MacLaughlan. "We have a number of sophomores in the field. No senior pitcher is in our top six, so we're also young there, too. We're going to have a battle on our hands. Our league and non-league schedule are tough games, so we'll be challenged over the course of the year. If we can't solidify ourselves defensively, we'll be struggling, because I don't know when our hitting is going to come."

Matt Stone is quite familiar with MacLaughlan's coaching style. The Lowell Catholic skipper has matched wits with the Greater Lowell legend over the past 12 seasons, facing the Gryphons twice a year.

"Every game we play is competitive, close and fun," said Stone. "It is a great local rivalry where most of the players know each other but is always played with great

sportsmanship. The players follow coach Mac's lead. Every time we play, I think I've seen all of coach Mac's playbook but then he hits us with another chapter I haven't seen yet. I've learned a lot and continue to learn from him."

Among their many battles was a marathon Senior Night affair at LeLacheur Park. The last out of the seventh was recorded at 12:30 a.m. on a school night.

"What a night," said Stone. "Whenever we go up against Greater Lowell and coach Mac we have to be prepared. I always make sure my lineup card is written before we play them because I always spend the whole pre-game chatting. That's my favorite part of each game, our pre- and post-game chats."

As for his legacy, MacLaughlan's tenure speaks for itself.

"There will never be another coach that dedicates his time to his players and the game," said Stone. "All you have to do is go watch a game and see for yourself. It is an honor to coach against him and over the years I am very happy that we have also become very close friends. Coach Mac is the best."

MacLaughlan remains upbeat as he guides his next class onto the field.

"We're always optimistic," said MacLaughlan, whose team dropped its season opener to Bedford. "We told the kids, you're competing in every game, so don't hang your heads. No matter what the score is, play the game the way it is supposed to be played. Today is done, tomorrow you come back, work harder, try to get better. Things may change next game around."

In April 1984, when a young MacLaughlan took over as Greater Lowell's varsity coach, Ronald Reagan was in the White House, the top movie in the country was "Police Academy" and teen-agers drove around blaring "Footloose" from their car speakers.

Much has changed. One thing hasn't. Dave MacLaughlan loves coaching baseball.



Greater Lowell Tech baseball coach Dave MacLaughlan is entering his 40th season with the Gryphons. He remains passionate about teaching the game. (Photo by Christopher Hurley)