

Dave Siegriest

Baseball Coach

Class of 1978

The story of Dave Siegriest is one of the most triumphant and most tragic in Nyack's history. Siegriest grew up in Nyack, played sports at NHS, and returned to coach Football and Baseball, helping transform the Baseball team into a perennial power. Dave, however, had his career and life cut heartbreakingly short when he passed away from pancreatic cancer when he was only 46 years old. Despite the horrible hand he was dealt, Siegriest's attitude and perseverance during his illness served as, and continues to serve as, powerful inspiration to his team, family, friends, and those inside and beyond the community. For his success, but even more for his mentorship and his strength, Dave will long be remembered as one of Nyack's finest.

Siegriest played Football and Baseball for Nyack in high school. He starred as a catcher for the Baseball team. As a senior he was First Team All-County as he hit .424 and threw out baserunners on 9 of 14 base-stealing attempts. He went on to play college baseball at Brevard Community College and the University of West Florida before getting a Physical Education job at Upper Nyack Elementary School. Dave began his coaching career at Nyack in the 1980s and helped the Football and Baseball teams enjoy great success. He was an assistant under Head Coach John Castellano (NHSAHOF 2017) as the team won section titles in 1989 with Jermaine Harris (2016) and in 1995 with Michael Mack (2019). Siegriest went on to coach Football as a JV head coach and varsity assistant at Nanuet High School.

Of course, Dave Siegriest is most-known for his tenure as the coach of the Nyack Baseball team. After coaching with the JV team, Siegriest took over the varsity team in 1993. The team had largely struggled for decades, but Dave led them to a 17-5 record his first season in charge, setting a school record for wins. Siegriest made Baseball a year-round program, incorporating more rigorous preparation. He had the team in a fall Sunday afternoon league, ran indoor clinics and drills for players middle school-age and up and varsity Sunday night batting cage sessions during the winter. He also added a pre season week in Florida and did lots of preseason work with his pitchers.

The effort Siegriest and the team put in certainly paid off. Nyack Baseball became a powerhouse. The 1997 team, led by Max Krance (NHSAHOF 2017), broke the school wins record by going 22-5, and they won the league title. That marked Nyack's first Baseball championship in 26 years, and just the 4th title in 48 years. Siegriest ended up leading the team to 8 league titles in 10 years, as well as 2 section titles in 1999 and 2005. The 2005 team was led

by Mike Wanamaker (NHSA HOF 2019), one of the greatest players Dave ever coached. Siegriest won 5 Coach of the Year Awards, finishing with a 241-94 record. He never had a losing season as Nyack's head coach.

Siegriest received his terminal diagnosis in October 2005, and the odds were against him living more than a few months longer. Dave refused to accept that, not only living for more than another year, but continuing to teach and coach despite having his life force draining away. He lost weight and energy, having to sit and rest during warmups and after games. Nevertheless, Dave persevered, continuing to stand in the 3rd base coaches box during Baseball games despite his suffering. His dedication to his students at Upper Nyack and his players at Nyack High and Nanuet High inspired them and the communities at large. Those communities gave Siegriest great support in return, and that support, along with being able to do what he loved, helped drive him on. Playing for him, the Nyack Baseball team earned a 2-seed and advanced to the section semifinals in 2006. Dave coached and taught into the next school year before eventually passing in December 2006. He was buried in his Number 15 Nyack Baseball uniform, the number that Coach Pete Recla and the team wore on their caps and sleeves the next season to honor him.

Nyack's Baseball field and Red & Black Tournament were both renamed for Siegriest. The Dave Siegriest Memorial Tournament has raised awareness for cancer and funding for the Dave Siegriest Scholarship, which has gone to seniors from Nyack and Nanuet High Schools. Nyack won the inaugural Siegriest Tournament in 2007, appropriately showcasing a never-give-up spirit like their old coach in a comeback win in the final.

Siegriest established relationships with his players that lasted well past their high school days, and his strength and dedication will long be remembered by his family, students, players, and communities who were fortunate enough to know him. Dave described his attitude best: "I was not going to sit in a corner somewhere and that'd be it. Uh-uh. I'm a fighter and I'm going to fight it. That's the way I am, and that's the way I'm going to be."