

DALLAS BAPTIST UNIVERSITY REPORT



DAN HEEFNER
COACH. MENTOR. LEADER.

Dan Heefner, DBU head baseball coach, pictured with his wife, Liz, and sons (l-r) David, Zachariah, Titus, Jacob, and Luke.

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COACH. MENTOR. LEADER.

Dan Heefner has two great passions—discipling others to know God and glorify Him with their lives and the game of baseball. He struggled in making sense of these two seemingly disparate callings—should he go into the ministry or coach baseball? The Lord one day spoke to his heart and said, “You don’t need to choose between the two of them—you can do both.”

For the past decade, Dan has been discovering what it means to be a disciple-making Christian coach, one who constantly strives for excellence, both on and off the field.

A native of Iowa, Dan’s parents modeled for him the value of hard work, with his mom serving as a nurse and his dad as a landscaper. “I learned how to work hard while working for my dad,” Dan recalls.

His life was full of constant activity, whether through his hometown church, school, or various after school and summer jobs, in addition to his love for athletics. Although he played every sport he could, he always gravitated back to baseball. He was a standout catcher and short stop, positions that require a high level of baseball intelligence and leadership—two of Dan’s God-given abilities.

It was also during this time that his family moved to a new home church, where he met the love of his life, who also happened to be the pastor’s daughter, Liz Gilmore.

At this church, Dan learned what it meant to be a committed follower of Jesus. One day his youth pastor asked him to share his testimony at an upcoming service. Dan had given his life to Christ at an early age and was baptized in the fourth grade, but little had been done to develop his relationship with Jesus. As he thought through his testimony, he realized that he couldn’t speak about a walk with the Lord because very little of that had been happening. He turned down the opportunity, and the youth minister decided to take Dan and some others through the Bible study *Experiencing God* by Dr. Henry Blackaby. The study changed Dan’s outlook on the Christian life and started him down a new path of committed discipleship.

After high school, Dan played ball for the University of Northern Iowa, and soon, he and Liz married. During this time, he also became involved with a campus ministry known as Navigators and was discipled by Jim Luebe, who has since become the director of the Navigators’ National Collegiate Office.

“Through this ministry, I saw how important it was to have other believers in your life,” Dan explains. “I wanted to get in a campus ministry and do what Jim did for me and for other people. At the same time, I loved baseball and wanted to coach.”

It was at this time when the Lord spoke to Dan about the ability to do both—to become a disciple-making coach, and so he began focusing on how to become an excellent coach and an earnest discipler.

Dan eventually transferred to Olivet Nazarene University and was named twice as an All-American. Dan returned to the University of

Northern Iowa, where he served two years as the team’s volunteer assistant and completed his master’s degree. He then became the hitting coach for Creighton University.

While volunteering at UNI, Dan and Liz traveled down to DBU to see Liz’s brother, Jeff Gilmore, who was pitching for the Patriots. Dan got to know the coaching staff, and two years later when DBU underwent a coaching change, the incoming head coach, Eric Newman, asked Dan to join the staff. A few years later, Coach Newman accepted a position as the pitching coach for the University of Nebraska, and DBU turned to Dan to lead the Patriot Baseball Program.

Given his love for discipleship and the game of baseball, Dan believes that DBU offered him a perfect fit. He is not only able to connect his two passions, but he has also found a new mentor in Dr. Gary Cook, DBU president, who has encouraged him in his pursuit of Christ-centered coaching.

According to Dan, “I love DBU because I get to disciple players and glorify God at the highest level of Division I baseball. Every team stresses constant improvement and excellence to its players, but at DBU there is a backbone to what we are saying. We do this because of God. Our focus is on Him and His glory, not our own.”

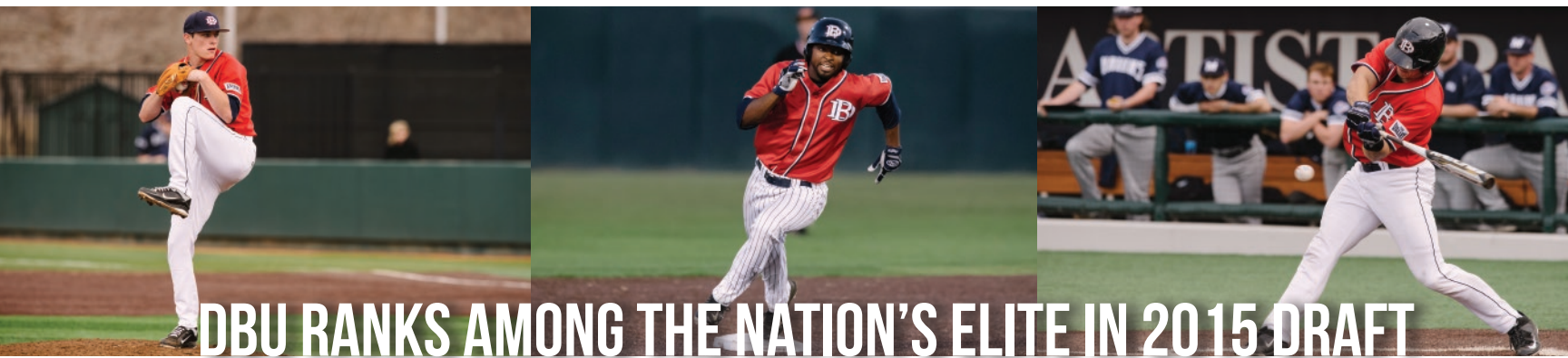
Dan regularly shares with his players a quote from Paul Tripp to help explain this passion for excellence: “If your heart is in awe of the glory of God, then there will be no place in your heart for being poorly prepared or mediocre....Awe reminds you that God is so glorious that it is impossible for you, as His ambassador, to have standards that are too high.”

Since taking the reins as head coach, Dan has established various discipleship programs, including mandatory team studies and a voluntary study group, The Oaks, for those who wish to go deeper into the Bible and become disciple makers.

Over the course of the last eight seasons as head coach, Dan has also led the Patriots to five NCAA Regionals, hosting this year’s tournament on the DBU campus, and a Super Regional. He has 302 career wins, with his 300th coming against the University of Texas in this year’s regional. Over the past eight years, 32 players have been drafted by Major League teams, and 10 have been named All-Americans with eight being named Freshman All-Americans. Twice he has been named Midwest Region Coach of the Year.

Such success is rarely seen this quickly in the coaching profession. Yet, if you ask Dan, he will tell you that real success is about more than what takes place on the field.

“True success,” Dan states, “is maximizing the abilities that God has given us and using those to glorify Him. As a program, we cannot measure our success right now, but instead it will be 30 years from now when we see what type of fathers and husbands our players become, and what they are doing to pass their faith along to others.”



DBU RANKS AMONG THE NATION'S ELITE IN 2015 DRAFT

The 2015 Patriot Baseball season started with a bang, winning six games in a row and going 23-3 in the first two months, placing them at the top of the nation's RPI ranking throughout the season. As the season ended, DBU was selected to be a regional host site for the NCAA Tournament. After dropping the first game, DBU clawed back to win three in a row before falling in the final game to VCU 1-3.

The Patriots concluded the year with a 46-15 record, notching impressive wins over Baylor, Texas Tech, TCU, University of Oklahoma, Wichita State, and the University of Texas.

Following the end of DBU's tournament play, the 2015 Major League draft kicked off, and DBU tied the previous school record with seven draft picks in the 2015 Major League Draft, matching the previous high set in 2006. Drew Smith was the highest draft selection from DBU this year, as the junior right-hand pitcher was taken by the Detroit Tigers in the third round.

With the selection of Smith in round three, Dallas Baptist is the only school from the state of Texas, and one of only nine programs in the nation, to have a player taken in the top three rounds in each of the last three years. Joining Smith on that elite list of players from DBU taken in the first three rounds are Cy Sneed, who was a third round selection of the Milwaukee Brewers in 2014, and Jake Johansen, who went in the second round to the Washington Nationals in 2013.

As a team known for their power arms this year, DBU saw five junior pitchers taken in the first 12 rounds, including Drew Smith (3rd round - Tigers), Brandon Koch (4th round - Rays), Chance Adams (5th round - Yankees), Cory Taylor (8th round - Giants), and Joseph Shaw (12th round - Mets), making it the first time in school history in which five pitchers have been selected from a single draft class. With the selections of Smith, Koch, and Adams, Dallas Baptist is also one of only five schools in the nation to have three pitchers taken in the top five rounds, joining the likes of Arizona State, TCU, Vanderbilt, and Virginia.

MAJOR LEAGUE DRAFTEES

	2015	2014	2013	TOTAL
Texas Christian University	8	6	6	20
Rice University	7	6	5	18
Dallas Baptist University	7	3	6	16
Texas A&M University	5	7	4	16
University of Texas	5	6	4	15
Texas Tech University	6	4	3	13
University of Texas at Arlington	2	6	2	10
Baylor University	0	2	5	7

Also selected in this year's draft were two position players in Daniel Salters, catcher, and Drew Turbin, second baseman. Salters, who was one of 20 finalists this year up for the Johnny Bench Award, went in the 13th round to the Cleveland Indians. Turbin, who was a First-Team All-Missouri Valley Conference selection in 2015 and ranked No. 21 in the nation in on-base percentage, went in the 14th round to the Baltimore Orioles. Following the draft, senior third baseman Nash Knight signed as a free agent with the Toronto Blue Jays.

Dating back to 2012, DBU has seen 22 players selected in the Major League draft, a number that ranks as the seventh highest total in the nation. DBU leads the Missouri Valley Conference in total number of players selected in the draft since DBU joined the conference in 2014. With this year's draft now complete, DBU head baseball coach, Dan Heefner, has coached 32 players who have been taken in the Major League draft.

