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Dusty Rhodes

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University of North Florida

James B. Crooks
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Interviewee: Dusty Rhodes
Interviewer: James Crooks
Date of Interview: 9/22/06

C: Today is September 22. This is the UNF Oral History program. I'm Jim Crooks interviewing Dusty Rhodes. For starters, what's the given first name?

R: Well, my real name is Dusty Rhodes, but my first name is Jack. My parents, [it is] kind of a strange situation because there was a baseball player in the New York Giants at that time named Dusty Rhodes, they didn't use it as a nickname; they actually put it on my birth certificate. It's good and bad. They remember what you do good, but they also remember what you do bad. It's one of those situations.

C: So where did you grow up? What got you to UNF?

R: I grew up in West Palm Beach. I was born in Alabama and grew up in West Palm Beach. I went to Florida Southern College, graduated from there with my bachelor's degree. [I] got a master's degree in education administration from Florida Atlantic. I started coaching baseball as soon as I got out of school. I coached at Palm Beach Junior College for seven years: one year as an assistant and the next seven years as a head coach. Then I went to the University of Florida as the assistant coach there for four years.

C: You played ball while you were in college?

R: Yeah, I played ball when I was in college. I went to spring training one year with the Montreal Expos, the first year they were a minor league team. But I ended up, because I was trying to work on my master's degree and the whole nine yards, I went back and started coaching. After I was at the University of Florida for four years as an assistant, during that time I ran into Doug Harmon. Doug was a big Florida booster, but he lived in Jacksonville. He knew the situation was going to happen with this university, and they were trying to get sports started. He contacted me, and that's basically how I got started.

C: What year was that?

R: First met Doug Harmon in 1982. In 1986, Doug came and said, you know, we've starting sports at UNF. The first team was a tennis team, and then a cross-country team. He said they were going to bring baseball online. I talked to him, and there were like four or five major players that came over to see me: Jerry Hurst, Doug Harmon, Dave Palladino, Dottie Dorion. Those four pretty much were the four that kind of tried to get baseball involved here at UNF. They had to sell the baseball program to Curtis McCray. They said they would put up some money to get it started. In the fall of 1986, I came on board, back in October... At that time, there was no field here; they were working on the field. They were trying to get the facilities built. They eventually got a field down on the ground, ground surface part of it. I helped sod the infield. We were sodding the infield, so we were working on a weekend. It was like a Sunday. Curtis McCray, the president at that time, drove up and was watching us put down the sod and everything. He was talking to us. People who knew Curtis knew he was really into having a neat place: pick up the trash, that situation. He'd drive in and pick

up trash. So, eventually he said, you all don't mind if I put down some sod, do you? I said, No. That would be fine with me. He had nice clothes on, and he started laying sod. Some of the times that I think about the field, and I think about all the people that had something to do with it, well, here's the president of the university laying sod with me. So, I felt pretty good that I wasn't going to get fired the first year as long as he laid the sod down.

It was very interesting, because Doug Harmon, Jerry Hurst, Dave Palladino, and Dottie Dorion had all been associated with other universities. They really didn't have a connection here, other than they started the Osprey Club, which is the booster club for athletics. So, when they came to me and said, look, would you be interested in starting a program at UNF? There were other opportunities. I could have gone to an established place, but when I first drove on campus, I just thought, this was it. It was just such a pristine area. You were looking at a great place. Instead of looking at it as if it was going to be a lot of hard work, I thought to myself, you know, this is a chance to build something that I built, not go work somewhere else for somebody else. They'd say, well, he came in and took over this program. It was a great opportunity for me. I had to think about how exactly am I going to do this, and who are the people that are going to help you? When I saw Dottie Dorion, Dave Pallavino, Jerry Hurst, and Doug Harmon, especially, they said, you come here, and we'll help you. You have to believe those people because, at the time, all we had was the field. We had no fences; we had no stadium. The biggest problem I had was keeping the armadillos from digging up the grass. Now, that's a true story.

But they gave me a year, 1987. I spent that whole year finishing the facilities and starting to recruit to bring players in. Doug Harmon and Jerry Hurst got together and said, we need to go put down bleachers, and make some kind of stadium here. Of course we didn't have an athletic budget. They went to Curtis McCray, and said, we want to build a stadium here. Curtis said, well, it's going to cost money, and we don't have it. You can build what you want, but you're going to have to get the money to pay for it. We actually took a trip one day down to Deland and we met a builder named Bob Finrock. Bob Finrock graduated from Vanderbilt. He was in a business where he had precast concrete buildings. He built parking lots. He built football stadiums. He built fifty-two football stadiums in the state of Florida at that time. Now, he's one of the biggest dorm builders in the United States. We went down and said, have you ever built a baseball stadium? He said, no, but I'd like to give it a try. We said, well, if you give us a break on the stadium, we'll let you build it for us. So, Jack Diamond was like the consulting engineer, the whole nine yards. Doug Harmon said, let's build it.

C: What was Doug Harmon's background? He was kind of the lead of the quartet.

R: He and Dottie Dorion. Doug Harmon actually started the business called Progressive Driver's Service. What he did was he actually hired drivers that would drive for big companies. Big companies would have to hire drivers, pay their insurance, make sure they had trucks, the whole nine yards. Well, they had

a big turnover in that. So, Doug said, this is what I'm going to do. I'll hire the drivers. I'll pay them. I'll take care of the insurance. All you do is you pay me, and I'll supply the drivers for your company. At the time, it was a unique situation. A lot of people had never done that. So, when he started it, it really took off. One of his biggest customers was Wal-Mart... and Anheuser-Busch. Through the Anheuser-Busch people, he actually met Dottie Dorion. Her husband bottles Bacardi Rum. So, they got together, and they said, we've got a university in town. Let's get behind them and do something for them. Doug, at the time, was a Bull Gator at the University of Florida, so he had a lot of contacts with construction people. He was the perfect guy to say, we're going to do things, and we're going to do them right.

One thing I remember [was] going to a meeting and sitting down, and them talking to me and saying, look, we're going to build things right here. We're going to do them right from the beginning, because we don't want to do them over. Great example of that was the tennis courts. We had a tennis team, we just had a couple of old tennis courts. We went to the university and said, look, we want to build some tennis courts, here. What would it cost us? And they said, it would probably cost a couple thousand dollars to build tennis courts for these guys. It actually was girls first. So, Doug Harmon and Dottie Dorion and all of them got together and said, who builds the best tennis courts in Jacksonville? And they said, well, probably Wayland Tennis Company. They said, that's who's going to build our tennis courts. They went to him. Instead of asking him what was the bare minimum, they said, no, we've got to build a standard, because the standard we build now will carry over forever in the athletic department. So, they got Wayland Tennis, and they worked out a deal. They got sponsors to sponsor each court—Coca-Cola sponsored one. There's a plaque out there with all the sponsors on it. They built the best tennis courts you could build. So, that's the kind of people they were, and that's really what kind of brought me here. I felt like they were up-front; they were going to go first-class. And they did. I think what they did was they set the standard for the whole athletic department. If you're going to have athletics here, let's go first-class. Let's do these things the best we can do them. At that time, we couldn't be in the NCAA; we didn't have enough team sports. We were always NAIA for a while. Sports that were here... cross country and tennis... The women's tennis team won a National Championship. The second year we went to the National Championship in baseball. Cross country had All-American runners that won national championship.

It was a different atmosphere. I've been at Florida. It was a giant place. They had decent facilities, but at that time, they weren't great. We could get a lot of people in at Florida. When I came here, they basically said, look, there's no exceptions for athletes academics. When you go to recruit, you've got to get a student who plays a sport. So, for me, I thought, well, that's going to be tough. I'd recruited at Florida. I knew they had some great players, but they were kind of stupid. I felt like I was going to have to start off in a different way. But I found

out it was a lot easier, because if I went to see a player play, and asked about the grades and he didn't have him, I just forgot about him and went to the next guy. All of a sudden, I started to realize, hey, there are a lot of guys out here that are really smart that can play. But I had to bring them on campus. We didn't have a stadium; we just had a field, no fence around it. When I'd bring guys on there, I'd say, look, there's going to be a stadium here. This is going to be built here. I'd show them some kind of drawings that we had at the time.

Unbelievably, guys came. If I tried to do that today, you would say, we're going to have this built. Most of the time people would say, yeah, sure. You're going to have it built, but I'm not going to be here.

C: You must have been a super salesman

R: Well, I was lucky because I had a lot of guys I knew growing up in South Florida, and I'd been a junior college coach for seven years. So, I knew the junior college coaches. A lot of them would call me and say, look, we've got a player here, not a lot of people want to recruit him, but he's a great student. Whenever I heard that word, I went down and watched him play, and I'd try to get him in here. But the thing about it was, I was there making promises. These kids had to say, you know, I believe what you're saying. Dottie Dorion and George Dorion and Doug Harmon, and Hurst, and Pallavino, sometimes they'd say, look, we'll do whatever we can do. If we can't do something, we'll say we can't do it, and then we'll go on to the next step. Which was as honest as it can be. Today they're the same way. Doug's passed away; Jerry and Dave are still involved in the program big time. They basically said, if we can help you, we'll help you. If we can't help you, we'll tell you we can't help you.

C: Did you have any scholarship money for kids?

R: We didn't have much scholarship. We had about four or five. At the same time, Tom Healy was here, and they made Tom Healy the AD [athletic director]. Tom had been a big part of the Osprey Club, too. He actually got it going. Tom was just a hands-on guy, a great "people" guy. I mean, he's a people-person. He could do a lot of things. He was big in this. Without him we'd had no guidance from athletics. We just didn't have any. I'm not knocking the administrators, but some of them don't have the kind of sense that a lot of people have. Tom was great about that. We went down to look at the stadium and stuff, and we came back. Tom said, "We're going to do this. Yeah, we're going to try this." It was a big undertaking, because at that time, that stadium cost about a quarter of a million dollars. There were some rich boosters there, but they were going to put the money... they were going to raise money. So, we had everything. Tom, we had auctions downtown at the railroad station; when they built that down there, that was a big thing. It went over good. We raised money, and everyone got involved in it. Everybody felt like they had a hand in it. Sure enough, Hurst and Doug Harmon, they signed their names on a loan to get it going. We got it up. We built it. There was no NAIA school in the country that had better facilities, and probably not many in NCAA Division II programs had the facilities we had. It was so much easier recruiting. Not only that, we won the first year. We played

some good teams the first year. We beat some Division I teams. We came from nowhere and got to be ranked in the NAIA in the first year. We set a record for the most wins as a first-year program in college baseball. [The record] still stands. We one our district...

C: How did you do that? I've heard stories of you being a disciplinarian and hard-working. Is that the key to it? Explain this because it's remarkable.

R: You're a product of who you learn from. I was lucky when I was younger that I had a football coach named Jim Mayer. He actually was a pilot in World War II and got shot down over Europe, and spent time in a concentration camp. When you played for him, he wasn't impressed with a sprained ankle. If you were hurt, you'd better be hurt, because if you were not really injured, you had to get out there and do some things. Then I played basketball for a guy that was one of the best high school basketball coaches in the country, that actually played for the Boston Celtics. I played baseball for different guys. I've been lucky in baseball, because we've won state championships in Little League, Pony League, two American League state championships, went to the national championships with those guys. I had a background of discipline, getting things done. My dad was just a hard-working guy. He'd been in Okinawa in World War II, and he was the military type. It wasn't that he was a military guy, but he'd been through some tough times. He was the type of person that if you work for somebody, if he was paying you, you earned your money. There wasn't a question about doing things. There was no half-ass with him. You either did it, or you did it right. That background, I think, gives you the opportunity to sit down and say when you bring a kid in here, these are the rules. You're going to follow them. If you step out of line, you're going to pay the price.

C: Now the other side of the equation is, Florida kids are known to be surfers, laid back, and you're introducing them to something they may or may not be familiar with. How did you make that work?

R: Well, first of all I made them all sign a contract. We still do this today. We've got a contract with all the rules. First of all, you can't wear your hat backwards. Your hair had to be cut. You had to dress a certain way. Those were things you had to do. When they had the first meeting, I'd sit down and say, look, this is the contract right here. You're coming to a university. When you graduate from this university, you're going to go out into the world and you're going to get a job. Well, you're going to walk into IBM and want a job. They're going to say, hey, you've got to wear a tie to work here. You've got to look presentable every day. You represent the company. I took that idea and said, you represent this university. This is what you've got to do. What I would do is, on the back page of that contract—I'd make everyone of them read it—they'd sign their name. I'd take their contract, and I'd tape it in their locker, so that every day they broke a rule, I'd say, is this your signature? Didn't you read the contract?

Plus, I was able to handpick guys. I wasn't just dealt a hand, and say make something out of it. I was able to go out and say, do this. This is what I want. I picked guys that came from programs that were disciplined, and I think

the first couple of years, that's how we won. We were in better shape physically. We drove them hard. I made them do things that they wouldn't have to do at other schools. They had to run a mile in under six minutes. Well, a mile in six minutes is the same thing they do in the Army—you used to have to do in the Army. That was the top level. If you could run a mile in six minutes, you were considered one of the upper physically-fit people. I made them do that. There were certain things they had to do: take care of the field. They had a job list. We still do that today. There's a job list there. This guy's in charge of first base, that area. This guy's at home plate. You pick up all the balls. I learned a long time ago that people that are really important, most of them who became really rich started at the lowest levels. You got a guy at Wal-mart. You got a guy who used to work in a chicken place, and now all of a sudden he's a millionaire. Why? Because he learned every level, and if he was a good person, he wasn't ashamed to do that job down there. Not only that, he learned how that job was done so that he could his job better.

[I'm] really intrigued with oriental baseball, Japanese baseball. We brought a team here last year from Japan, the national championship in college in Japan. They were here for ten days. As I started getting into it a little more and more, they have great mental—it's a mental thing. It's not about physical; it's about mental. It's about competing. That carried on a long time. I got guys; I sold it to them. We had a bunch of guys who weren't really that great, but they thought they could beat you. If you didn't play really well against them, they would beat you. That's how we worked, and that's how we still are. We beat teams because if you make mistakes, we'll beat you. That's just how it works. Plus, we had a pretty good system. The system that we have is based on a little bit different stuff. It's not based on trying to beat somebody based on their weaknesses. It's having them beat you based on your strengths. If you can't do that, we can't beat you. So, it's a little bit different and I think the kids bought into it. I would always try to bring things in to them that they could associate with. I do this still. Guys that won the Medal of Honor talk about who they were and what they were and how they did things in their lives. All of a sudden, things came along and an opportunity that you could do something better: do something you can't physically do [or] make a play you can't make. Those kinds of things. So, it was one of those [things]. It's tough here, but it's going to be here. We're going to get there. They bought it. We won, and in the second year, we went to the National Championship. There were like 200 NAIA teams, and we finished third in the country.

That year, Adam Herbert had come on; McCray had gone. About 1989 was his first year. Adam Herbert and Doug Harmon, that group, they said, Adam, you've go to go to the NAIA World Series with us. It was in Lewiston, Idaho. Beautiful background, the mountains; beautiful ballpark. The whole city of Lewiston, both sides of the river, this was the biggest thing going in that area at the time. He went to the ballpark and had a great time. [There were] 5,000 people at the game. He got into it. There were two things I liked about Adam

Herbert. First of all, he had been an athlete. He ran track in college with Mike Garrett who won the Heisman Trophy. Second of all, he had vision. I mean, he could say, man, this is something we need for our students, because now we have something for our students to support. And not only can they support them because they're just students. No exceptions here. We're not giving them anything extra. They're not getting in because they're a dumb guy. They're just students. After we had the stadium built, he came back and said, because you guys have done this well, I'm going to put lights on your field. He worked it out. He got money together, and they built it. Well, the lighting system's the best in the state of Florida, and it still is.

It was a great time, because there were a lot of things that didn't go well. Again, I used to get up at five or six and come over and work on the field and do the paperwork or whatever I had to do. Then we'd have practice, and they'd all leave. I'd still be there, and all my assistant coaches would be there. But we were building something. Over the years, that's just gotten better and better.

Well, I've had connections in minor league baseball. Actually, I coached for the Yankees in the minor leagues in 1982, before I went to Florida. George Steinbrenner [owner of the New York Yankees] is actually a pretty smart guy. A lot of people don't know that George Steinbrenner was a college football coach. He actually coached with Lou Saban [college football and professional football head coach] at one time. So, in his minor league system, he thought college coaches were better teachers than professional coaches. In 1981 and 1982, he got college coaches, and he assigned one of those to his minor league teams, all the way up the line, just to come in and be instructors. In 1982, I got a call, and they said, would you be interested working for the Yankees this summer, going to Greensboro, North Carolina, and working with the infielders and the hitters, that kind of stuff? I jumped at it. It was a great chance. So, that was the first year I got in minor league baseball, and I worked for them. But the next year I was going to Florida. Well, the NCAA had a rule where you couldn't do that. Stupid, but that's the NCAA. But anyway, after like the second year here, I got a call from Milwaukee Brewers. They said, you're NAIA, so you could work with minor league teams. Would you be interesting in managing our team in Helena, Montana. So, I did that for three years there and one year at Beloit, Wisconsin. Because I came to UNF, I got that opportunity.

In 1992, I got a call from USA baseball. They were putting together teams to play against Japan and go to the World Championships. They asked me if I'd be interested in working for them in 1993, select the players, go to Millington, Tennessee, work with the team while they were in Millington, and then they would take the team. I would just be up in Millington helping them. That was a great opportunity doing that. In 1994, they called me up and said, would you want to be one of the coaches? There were only four coaches on the USA team, and I was one of them. To me it was the greatest thing going, because now I'm going to get to see Japan. Go to Japan and see how they operated and all that kind of stuff. Well, I coached that team and went to the World Championships in

Managua, Nicaragua, and I came back.

At the time, I saw Japan. I saw how they worked. We spent time there. I got to talk to coaches, and I really bought into some of the stuff they teach. They're not like the United States. They all are better-educated. Their educational system is better than ours. It's all based on discipline. You make up your mind, you're going to be what you are, and you strive to be that. You're expected to be responsible for your actions. If you don't, you're punished for it, but it's a system. So, between that and this, coming back to UNF, I brought that back. Then in 2001, they called me again and said, we want you to be a coach on the USA team. It was great. I spent two years there; it worked out. I brought stuff back from Japan, and it really had worked for us. We started playing better. Our kids were more disciplined. We started beating teams that we shouldn't have beaten.

People were saying, my son wants to go to school there. I said, what kind of grades does he make? Well, can't help us. I know it was tough because I lost a lot of good players. But the one thing I was telling parents was, we're not selling baseball; we're selling education. If your kid can come here and go to school, then he'll have the opportunity to play baseball, which is the way it should be. It's not that way, but it's the way it should be. That worked out great. We started getting better. We went to the NCAA Division II.

C: What year was that?

R: I think it was 1993 was the first year. We weren't capable of going to the Division II championships. In 1993, we were counted as the NAIA-NCAA dual enrollment. In 1994, our first year in the Sunshine State Conference, we finished second. The next year, we won the conference championship. The next year, we finished third, but we didn't get to go to the World Series. Well, the conference was made up of all private schools. Adam Herbert had gone to each of the presidents, and he had gotten us into the conference. But, they put a lot of restrictions on us. They were saying, well, it doesn't cost as much to go to North Florida. You've got more students. They said, we're going to put you on a three-year deal where you have forty total scholarships for your whole athletic program. At the time, the most you could have in Division II was nine. We had like seven, I think, for baseball. After three years, they said, we will review it. Well, they reviewed it and said, no, because we'd been successful. Our track teams had won. The teams that we had, they played good. So they said, no, we're not going to change. Well, Adam Herbert said, we can't do this. Our program's growing, and your program's been that ways for ten years. He moved us to another conference, which was Peach Belt [Conference]. The Peach Belt, basically, we were the only team in the conference from Florida. All the rest of the teams were in Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina?

C: State schools?

R: All state schools. Well, we were pretty successful in there. The first year, we finished second. I think that was in 1996. The next year, we struggled. 1996, it was the worst team we had, and it's kind of an amazement because we had

more professional players on that team than any team. Most of the players on that team got a chance to play professionally. But then, in 1996, we came back, and we got close. We won one one year; I don't know when. 1999, all of a sudden, we win six of the next seven conference championships and go to the World Series three times. Again, people were saying, I want to go to school there. Well, what are your grades? We kept doing the same thing.

The university was growing at the same time. Now, all of a sudden, people are saying, man, that's a beautiful campus. It's amazing how many people would come on campus that we were trying to recruit, and they'd say, you know, I have a daughter. This is the perfect place for her. It's safe. You're in a big city, but you don't know you're in a big city. It's just a beautiful campus. You drive on campus, the trees, the way it looks. I kept seeing this university as being a gold mine. Every day I drive on campus, I say, man, if somebody would just come along and say, let's go. Let's move this thing; let's step on it! Because I got to know the teachers here, and I got to know the professors here. They were great people. Tom Healy was just doing a great job. When we built that stadium, we'd go out into the community, and say, we're building a stadium at UNF. We're starting a baseball team. We need some concrete. Guys would say, I'll help you as much as you can. I'll give you what you need. We got two or three concrete companies to provide concrete for the stadium. We talked to a steel guy who said, you know, I got a lot of steel here that we didn't use on the jobs. You probably could use this and use that. Nobody said no to us. The community was unbelievable about that. Every time we asked somebody for something, they'd say, sure, I might not be able to help you with everything, but I'll help you. Over the years that kept me here. The good community was just unbelievable. I'd never been around people like that. You know, if you're at the University of Florida and you go up and ask for something, [they'd say], you're Florida. What are you asking me for? Yeah, I'll do it. Then they just forgot you. I'm not knocking Florida, but I was on that side. But here was not like that.

C: What has student support been like at ball games?

R: At first, it was kind of slow, but as the years went on, there got to be students that got really involved in it. I taught a baseball class here. I'm thinking, a baseball class, there won't be that many people, maybe ten or fifteen people. Well, we had thirty or forty people. Women. Whole nine yards.

C: What would the baseball class be?

R: Basically, it covers everything: how you start a team, how you build a field, the equipment list, any kind of budget you have, how you'd run that, and then teaching the fundamentals of the game. I had a lot of guys who had to be re-certified. They saw that, coaches taking classes, and said, well, I'll do that. It worked out pretty good, and I really enjoyed that.

C: Have you had much to do with the coaches at the high schools around?

R: The first thing we did was in 1989, they had the high school coaches convention here. Every year, they have it. All the high school coaches have to go to it. It was in Daytona Beach. Well, I got them to switch it to here. I brought them all

here to UNF. I had Bucky Dent [former Major League player and manager] down here. I had some guys who played in the big leagues. They came on campus. We had a big tent out here. We fed them. They stayed in hotels downtown. They had a great time. Well, we got all the high school coaches in the state to see our place, see our facilities, see our university. All of a sudden, it opened up a whole new recruiting team. One thing I preached at was academics. You had to be able to go to school here. That's what it's about.

I started getting calls. I have a great kid. He was a great student, but he's just not quite old enough. Well, I got a guy who's going to graduate who's sixteen years-old! I had a kid here. When he got out of high school, he was sixteen. He weighed about 155 pounds. He was sixteen! He could have played high school baseball for two more years! We red-shirted him one year. [When] he graduated, he weighed 215. He threw ninety miles per hour. He played professional baseball. Those are the kind of guys we got. We got guys we kind of had to make into players. We kept working and working and working.

Then in 1996, I got a call from a guy who used to work for the Milwaukee Brewers, and he was in Australia working for the Brewers. They have a winter league in Australia. They'd asked him to coach the Australians in the Olympics in 1996 in Atlanta. In 1996, I was going to help out the USA team. I was just going to be a scout for them. I was going to scout Cuba [and] Korea. Baseball now was an Olympic sport. This was going to be the first time they could medal in an Olympic sport. It was going to be in Atlanta in Fulton County Stadium [Atlanta Braves stadium]. When he called me, he said, look, would you like to be coach, be on the field? I said, hell, yeah. I called Skip Bertman, who was the head coach [of the USA team]. I said, Skip, I've got a dilemma here. He was the head coach at LSU. I said, I got a chance to be on the field and coach in the Olympics, or I got a chance to sit in the stands and scout for you guys. I'd be glad to do that and I've already committed to do it. I'll stick with it. He said, no, you have to have that opportunity to do that. So, that summer, I met with the Australian baseball team. We met them at the Dodgers Spring Training. We spent three months training them, getting them ready. We played the USA team in exhibition games all over the United States. We played in San Antonio, Texas. We played in Maryland. We played in Minnesota. We played everywhere. International baseball was dominated by Cuba. Cuba won a hundred consecutive international games. We're stupid in the United States, because we think we own it. We don't own it. It's been proven in this last year when they had the world championship with major league players. Cuba beat them.

C: We learned that in basketball too.

R: We learned that in soccer and basketball. Both basketballs now, the women got beat yesterday. So, it was an opportunity that I got to go stay in the Olympic village, be around those athletes every day, competing in the Olympics.

C: When you're not head coach, what's your specialty?

R: Well, that's really all I've done here.

C: I was thinking with the Australians.

- R: Well, what I did with the Australians was I was like a hitting coach. I did work on defense. But, I worked with this guy because both of us had been managers in the minor leagues with the Milwaukee Brewers. I knew him. He knew me. He had never been involved in international baseball; I had. It's different. The game's different; the format's different. Everything's different. So, I got to walk in the Opening Ceremonies. The first time I was in the Olympics. It was the greatest thing in my life. When we walked into Fulton County Stadium, we kind of walked up over a rise, and you walked in it. As you walked in it, this is the new stadium [Centennial Olympic Stadium, now Turner Field], this wasn't Fulton County. As you walk in it, there were thousands of people. Well, there were a billion watching on TV. To be around those athletes, those elite people, the best athletes in the world, I mean, physically, mentally, might be the best athletes. Just to be around them and be in that atmosphere was tremendous. I would never have stayed at UNF. That might have happened down the line.
- C: It's unusual being in a regional university like UNF, to have these exceptional experiences.
- R: I don't know how. I've just been a lucky guy. You've got to give things up. I wasn't married, so if they needed somebody, they'd say, well, you can always call him because he'll go no matter what. Going to Nicaragua and playing is a different game. Because, when we you go into Nicaragua, we landed at the airport, and the hotel was right across the street from the airport. There was a line of soldiers as we got off the plane with machine guns all the way down. We got on a bus with soldiers in behind us, guy on the bus with machine gun, soldiers in front of us; just to drive across the street! When we played games, there were guys in our dugouts with machine guns. Nobody could sit behind us. Soldiers were on top of us. Bomb dogs went through the stadium before every game. We were driven into the stadium, not outside of it. Because, at that time, Nicaragua was coming off a civil war. They had the earthquakes; the place was devastated. Baseball was a big sport to them, the biggest probably. So, between Cuba and the United States, they made sure that we were safe the whole time. Those are experiences you never forget. It wasn't funny at the time, but during the opening ceremonies of the world championships, they'd turn the lights out in the stadium, and then they had fireworks. Well, if you'd been in the army you could hear that poomph. It sounds like a mortar round. Except when they're shooting fireworks, the lights were off and the poomph goes off, and you think, was that a mortar round or is that fireworks? But they were great. The people were great, and it worked out.
- C: Coming back to the UNF story, you mentioned challenges, obstacles, and so forth. What are some of the things you faced over the years?
- R: Taking care of facilities is tough. Taking care of an athletic field is different than taking care of everything else. There are things that have to be done every day on it. You have to take care of clay. It has to be watered. Things have to be fixed.
- C: You didn't have staff then; you did it yourself.

R: I did it all myself. Now, we have grounds-keeping, but I still do it. So, I had to learn everything. Well, I had learned a lot before that, because I built a field in junior college. I had a background in it, but again, you had to drag the field and do that kind of stuff. I wanted our guys to feel like, I would tell them, you're going to work on this field everyday, because I want you to care about it. If you don't work on it, you won't care about it, so you're going to do it. You're going to take care of it. I had basically thirty grounds keepers. I had to say, look, this is what your job is today. Get it done. Take care of it. I had to eventually make sure everything was working on it. I had a couple of really good friends. One of them was Billy Burbank, who did fencing, did netting. He helped me with batting cages. He's been a great friend to this university. He's done a lot of stuff here. Athletics for the first time, people always think, well, athletes want special favors. No. The one thing I wanted to do was make sure that they didn't. Our guys got nothing special. You do it exactly like you're supposed to do with a student.

C: What happens when you had an away game and the player has an exam?

R: We send out a schedule, and it basically has on there when they're going to miss. They have to take it to each professor, and each professor should look at it and say, okay, I know you've got to miss this and I know you've got to miss that. Some professors have deals and say, you can't miss these many classes. Well, if we ever got down to that, I'd say, well, you can't go. Now, there's a policy at the University that if somebody misses based upon representing the University, than they can make up the work. The one thing I always wanted to try to do is check and make sure they were doing all right in class. I never talked to a professor unless they came to games. I would never talk to them about a student. I told our students, I'm never going to talk to them. If something happens, it's between you and them. That's how it's got to be. It's always worked. Now, there were some professors that would say, well, I don't want him to miss this class. He can't do this, or I'm going to drop him a letter grade. I'd say, look, you go talk to the professor, and if you're a good enough student, they'll give you an option to do what you can do to make it up. If not, you're going to have to live with what you get.

As it got going along, you ask about the students get involved, well, I think professors got involved. Some of them came to games. Some of them were big time athletic guys. There were two or three guys here: Steve Shapiro's one of them, but the other guy wrote a book, the one that died. [Ken Jennings, UNF professor, management] He wrote a book on salaries in major league baseball. Steve Shapiro's been awesome. He e-mails me all the time. Steve would always say, I've got on of your guys in class, and he isn't going to make it. And I'd say, you sure he isn't going to make it? He'd say, well, he doesn't seem like it. This would be early. You'd better tell him. Because Steve's tough. He's a tough guy. Well, Steve called me one time, and said, I've got this guy in class, and I don't think he's going to make it. I said, he's pretty smart. He said, well, he sits in the back of the room. He looks like a bum. I said, what do you mean, he looks like a bum? I said, he's from Chiefland. He's just a country guy. But, I

think you're going to be surprised. He's not a bad guy. The first test, he got the only "A" in the class. Steve goes, oh, you're right. So, there were certain guys always there. The biggest help was Tom Healy, because Tom knew people. Tom had paid his dues here like most of you guys paid your dues here. He was really a big help.

A couple years ago, we had a pitcher named Brian Tollberg. He had graduated in accounting and got a chance to play in the big leagues. The accounting department asked him to come back and talk to the accounting students here. We came back and talked about how it was to be in the big leagues, but the most important thing is he knew how to run his life. When he got money, he knew what to do with it. That was more important than being in the big leagues, is, when you do have money, you know how to handle it.

R: Sid Roberson was a unique kind of guy because he wasn't very big. He was only 5'8". But he was a great baseball player, and he was an excellent student, a straight "A" guy. When we signed him, a lot of people said, this guy's a little-bitty guy. He's not very big, but he was an excellent athlete. The first game he pitched here as a college pitcher, he threw a no-hitter. Nobody's ever done that in the history of college baseball. He was making straight "A"s. By the time he got out of here, he was the highest academic guy in his class that year in the county. He went to the major leagues. His third year here, he got drafted like in the thirtieth round, way down. He came to me and said, coach, I've done everything I can do in college. I want the chance to play professional baseball, and I might not get another chance. I said, you sign. If you want to sign, you sign. You're going to graduate ahead of time. He went ahead and signed. His first year, he did pretty good. One night he was in a California league, he called me and said, coach, I'm thinking about hanging it up. I said, "Why? He goes, well, I had a bad game, and I'm struggling a little bit. I'm not getting going. I'm the littlest guy on the team. It's just politics. I don't think I'm going to get that opportunity." I said, well, whatever you do, don't quit on a losing mode. Go out and win your next game. If you win your next game and you want to quit, then hang it up. You've got a degree. Do what you want to do. Well, he wins his next game. The next thing you know, he's the pitcher of the year in that league. Then he's the pitcher of the year in the Texas League in AA. The next thing you know, he's in the majors. All along the way, while he's riding busses, he's doing things. He's getting his insurer's license. He's getting his real estate license. He's studying on the bus and taking the tests. Perfect guy. That's the kind of guy you really want. Well, after he got to the big leagues and did all that, he pretty much set a standard that all our guys could look up to. They'd say, he's the guy; that's what I want to do. He got hurt in the big leagues. He played a year or two and came back. But now, he's really done it. The thing about it is UNF gave that guy a chance. Everything was against him. He was too small; he couldn't throw hard enough, the whole nine yards. That guy beat every rule that was going. Highest guy in his class, major league pitcher, those kind of situations. That became like a standard here. We send guys up there, this guy's a pretty good player; he's a

great student. We'd try to make a player out of him. We've graduated almost 200 guys through baseball program. Almost 86% of our guys graduate. Five of the seven guys that made it to the major leagues all got degrees. It set a standard. The standard was set by UNF. The standard was set by the academic people. The standard was set by the presidents at that time. I've been through five presidents. I'm sure you've been through as many or more. All of them were different. All of them had different values. The ones that stick out in my mind are the ones who had vision.

C: Who sticks out in your mind?

R: Adam Herbert, because I think Adam had the vision to see what this could be. I think that was his biggest asset. He looked up, and he looked ahead. Let's keep going. There were people that said, well, you can't do this. Well, why can't you do this? We can do this. We'll find a way to do this. John Delaney's the same kind of guy. You could just tell by what he did in the city how he got people to go to facilities that were built for this community and use them and say, man, this is great. The baseball stadium's great. Because noew when I used to go to the old ballpark, I'd see older people there. Not that there's anything wrong with older people, because I'm one of them. But you'd never see the young people there. You'd never see them with their kids there. Now, when you go to the ballpark downtown, it's young people. They're bringing their kids with them. It's a safe place to go. They've got places for the kids. The equestrian center, who would think about building an equestrian center in the middle of a major city? Well, they did. I've been to rodeos there. I've been to bull riding. He had vision. It took vision. Not just him, but I think he has it here. One thing I like about him is he had connections in Tallahassee along with Adam Herbert, that could get funding for education. He could go over there and say, we need this. Those are the kind of people you need there. So, I thought those two guys have been the ones.

C: Who have you worked with now? You've worked with a series of athletic directors as well. Do you report to them?

R: I report to the athletic director. One year, they hired an athletic director here, and after they hired him, he never really showed up. I mean, we never saw the guy again. So, basically, we ran the athletic program on our own. We did the paperwork. We had one secretary, and all the coaches did the paperwork, got it in on time, and ran it. Then, the next year, they hired another guy named John Ratliff. He was a young guy. He did a pretty good job; he kept things moving. Finally, we hired Richard Gropper. Richard Gropper had been at FIU when they went to Division II to Division I, so he had the background in that. He has the expertise on Title IX, which is big here at this university.

C: Title IX being gender equity?

R: Gender equity. It's based not on athletic participation. It's based on how many students you have in school that are female. This university is 59%. So, 59% of the money has to go to the athletic department, and has to be separated that way. So, he knew that. He understood all that. Tom Healy was the greatest guy to work for, because he was just a jack of all trades. He was always plugging a

hole here in different departments. This guy's leaving; we need you to take over until we can get somebody else. I learned a lot from that guy. I learned a lot from Doug Harmon. Doug Harmon was a big time business man. You'd be riding in car with him and Augie Busch would call. He'd say, Doug, I've got a plant in Virginia, and they're going on strike. The truckers won't cross the picket line. What am I going to do? Well, he'd say, I'll get you somebody up there that will drive those trucks across the lines. That's big business, and you've got to understand how things work in real life. The thing with Adam Herbert, like I said about vision, I think he's a guy who could see things and see what they could be. A lot of people say, man, I really like this. I'm satisfied with this, and never want to move to that next step. I've always been somebody that said, let's play Florida. We can beat them. People would go, you're nuts. You can't beat them. Yeah, we can. Let's play the Yankees. We can beat them, too! Well, you've got to be able to feel like what you're doing is the right thing for your program. That's what I felt like being here at UNF.

C: Well, this is the time for me to ask my question. Why don't you beat JU [Jacksonville University] more regularly?

R: You know, there's a reason that I think JU has been different for us. That was the first competitor we had here. The very first game we played them, we had a lead and lost to them late in the game. A couple years went by, and we played them two times. I really appreciate JU's playing us, because they didn't have to play us. They pretty much could have said, look, we're Division I, you're NAIA. We're not going to play you. But they never did that. To their credit, that's great. That was good for this city. It was great for the city. We lost to them three times last year. Three of the four previous times, we beat them. Now, we're in the same conference with them. That's great. Well, there's always going to be teams you lose to. That happens. On the other hand, just like the Boston Red Sox and the New York Yankees, you know. You knock around and you knock around and all of a sudden Boston wins the World Series. They keep going back and forth. That's what it's about, that competition.

C: Are you Division I now?

R: Yeah, now we're Division I.

C: Which league are you in?

R: We're in the Atlantic Sun with Stetson, it was Florida Atlantic, Central Florida, those teams. We played LSU last year and beat them. We beat Florida last year with 6,200 people [in attendance]. That was the biggest crowd to see a college baseball game in history in Jacksonville. So, we're getting there. It's starting to go forward. John Delaney had the vision to come in and say, we're going to Division I. Why? We should be in Division I. We're a Florida state university. All the rest of them are Division I. We can't make this step up if we can't step everything up. So, he did a good job of it. I think he's done the same thing with academics. I think he's identified some programs that need to be stepped up. These are programs that hopefully will bring the rest of them up the same way. We need to get that information out.

- C: I've heard you say two major ingredients in the success of your team. One is academics, and the other is discipline. Is there another component that either the Japanese taught you or the kids themselves have brought to us?
- R: I think the main thing that you do is honesty. I know that when you're working for a company... I took a test one time to work for a major baseball team. There was a question on there that said, what are the most important things about being a coach on this team? Knowledge of the game, this that and the other, reports, the whole nine yards, and the last one was loyalty. Loyalty is the correct answer. In order for somebody to be loyal, they've got to be honest, whether it's right or wrong. If you believe it's right, you've got to be loyal and say, this is what I believe. I think when you recruit students and recruit athletes, you've got to be loyal and you've got to be honest. You can't promise them the world, and, all of a sudden when they get here, it doesn't happen. Now, they're never going to trust you. On the other hand, if they do something wrong, they know where you stand. You've got to draw that line in the sand. That's part of discipline. For me, I try to as honest as I could be with every player I've got. If you can't play, you can't play. If it's a situation where he comes in and says, coach, I'm struggling. I don't think this is the right thing for me. I'm going to be up front with him and say, look, you do whatever you think is best for you. I'm not going to disrespect you if you say, I quit today. I've given it everything I can, and I'm not good enough
- C: But there's a third thing there you haven't quite hit on yet. That's what builds the cohesion within the team. Your teams have had spirit, a desire to win games, to play ball, etc. What's the source of that? I mean, that's unique, That's what makes a winner.
- R: It's hard. A lot of people say it's that you have a system. You put them in a system, and they all work, then that's great. But you're right about some things. Whenever you're on a team, whether it's a team of academics, a team of business guys, you've got to trust the other guys. You've got to build trust. These kids today don't trust people. I mean, I get a lot of guys who don't trust coaches, because somewhere down the line, little league coaches, they couldn't trust them. You've got to get them to trust you, and you've got to get that part of them. Then you're willing to go all the way. I don't make them do anything physically that I hadn't done before. I've done this, so I know it can be done. I know what can be done. I like to be on the field with them. I like to be involved with them. I give them space. Their personal life is none of my business. I tell their parents when they come here, I don't have a uniform that can fit you. This guy's eighteen years old. He could be in Iraq. He could be in Vietnam, or he could be somewhere else. It's time to let him go. You got him this far; he's got to do stuff. You've got to accept responsibility. I think sometimes, when you are that disciplined, you make that person really see that he accepts that. Then all of a sudden he goes back and says, you know, I'm working for this guy because I know he's going to go to the end of the rope for me and I'm going to go to the end of the rope for him.
- C: It's a sign of maturity on your part.

R: Again, that's the discipline part. I don't just throw out the balls. I'm there all the time. I try to bring in stuff that they can look at, like videos. These guys are visual guys. Our whole society is computer screens; if I can see it, I can do it, type thing. I've changed over the times. I used to tell them stories about stuff. Now, I bring in video tapes, I look on the History Channel, and it has to do something with the story on what we're trying to accomplish. It's really hit. These guys pay attention when they see that. One of the things I do every year, the very first time, we lift weights at five in the morning. There are reasons for that. First of all, when we get in the weight room, we're there by ourselves. Second of all, no other team they are going play us doing that. I tell them everyday, guys, you've got to get better. You're gaining ground. You're getting better and better. They buy into that. A lot of times, if the student has a problem, then I help them. The worst thing that ever happened was one of my players committed suicide. To this day, I have no idea why. He would've been one of the fewest I would have ever thought that would happen. It woke me up to some things. All of them have problems. All of them are capable of having problems. So I make sure that, if they have problems and if I can help, I'd help them. If I can't help them, I'd give them somebody that could help them. I think they feel that you care about them. Kids these days, some of them come from families that [say], give him whatever he wants, and he'll leave us alone. I feel bad for those guys, because I'm not going to give them everything they want. They're going to have to earn some stuff. We've been lucky because the parents have come to and said, you know, he's changed. He comes home. He picks up stuff. He does things... He's changed. Well, he didn't have a choice. It's like being in the Army. If you get in the Army and that sergeant tells you to do something, you do it. If you don't, it's gonna happen.

C: What kind of changes have you seen in the young kids from twenty years ago when you came here to now?

R: You know, the first guys I brought in here, a lot of those guys came from a different background. There were still guys doing physical labor. You know, kids don't do physical labor anymore in the summertime. Most of them don't even work. When we were growing up, I had a construction job when I was fifteen years old working with guys that were twenty-five, thirty years old who had been around the block. They had background. Some of them weren't good. But, I learned the hard way to work, earn your money, do your thing. My dad pretty much told me how life was. And I did that. Well as times go on, that hasn't happened. Every year I ask one question, I ask, how many guys have worked on a construction this summer? Nobody. They're not going to go out in that sun and earn that much money doing that stuff. You know how that is. So, they've changed in that way.

And again, they're visual. A couple years back, it got to the point where I would teach things to guys, and they couldn't remember it. They couldn't see it happening. So, I finally started getting tapes of big league players. This is what it looks like. Watch this guy do this. I found out that looked at them and said,

man, I can see it. I try to tell them mistakes. You're doing this wrong. They couldn't get it. Videotape them, here it is: this is what you're doing wrong. All of a sudden, it just clicks. They see that they're not doing something right; they make an adjustment. But, you can't tell them that. I think that's what's wrong with the kids these days. If you try to explain it to them, they shut you off, some of them do. But if they see it, they're going to go, man, that's me?

It's a little bit different now because the rules have changed. You're limited to what you can do. We can only practice twenty hours a week now. The NCAA thinks they're doing the right thing. We can't win anything internationally. We can't win in the Olympics in basketball. We're the best athletes in the world. We can't win world championships in baseball. We can't win in soccer; we can't win the World Cup. We can't do it because we don't let our guys become the best they can be. What we do is say, okay, here's the limit. Go to the limit. That's it. Can't do anymore. But I want to do more. No, you can't. That's the limit. When I brought that Japanese team over here, I made our guys come out and watch them practice everyday. They flew from Japan into Orlando. From Orlando, they came here on bus. When they got off the bus at 9:00 p.m., they went out and practiced. They wake up in the morning. They go to school. They practice. They go to class. They get out. They practice. They go home about 7:00 p.m.; they study. They go to school, and they're better than us. They're a better team internationally. It kills me because the people in the United States laugh about soccer. Football's the king.

Well, I was head coach for the Greek Olympic team in Athens in 2004. What we had was American players of Greek background, because Greece has no baseball. I kept trying to tell this guys, look, you don't know anything about international baseball. We're going to get our ass kicked because these teams play better. They're better baseball players. Some of them were major league players. They kept thinking, oh, we've got a good team. I said, you don't know what you're in for. We went to the European championships, and Greece had never won a game in the European championships. We finished second, which was a major deal. The same thing, the players said, we finished second. I said, you don't know what you're getting into when you get to the Olympics. These guys are much better. They're big league players. We get to the Olympics, and all of a sudden, its like, whoa. This is the Japanese Major League All Stars team, that was their Olympic team. The USA team didn't even qualify. They got beat by Canada and Cuba. They're out. Canada [were] all AAA ballplayers, older guys. They'd been around; almost in the big leagues. Australia, the same thing. Here is a game we started, and we let these other people have it. They've taken it and gotten better at it. Same thing in academics. It's scary because we have the potential to have the greatest academic people in the world. The ones who stand out are the ones that have got that background that's work, work, work, work, work.

- C: But this twenty hour limit that the NCAA set was probably to keep some schools. There must have been some abuses of training, and at the expense of

academics?

R: That's the point that I'm saying about the academics. Proposition 48 came along. What was proposition 48? Well, it was the idea, this kid is a great athlete, but he doesn't have the grades. Let's let him in the school and see if we can make him any better. Is that academic fraud? Hell, yeah, it is. Well, who made this rule? The NCAA and the college presidents. To me, when you get somebody and say academic fraud, you're bringing a guy in that can't go to school, that can't read at this level, that's can't write at this level, and you're putting him in an atmosphere that he's doomed. Some of them make it. That's great, but why not let them go to junior college? Give them the background, and then take them out of junior college. Well, twenty hours a week? Twenty hours a week of what? What's twenty hours of week when you figure? Twenty hours a week is like two and a half hours a day for six days. How much do you study? The idea was, we have problems with graduation rates. Our graduation rates are down. Athletes are not graduating. Well, actually athletes on this campus graduate at a higher rate than the student body. We have a better retention rate. It's not graduation; it's retention where we fail. That's where most people fail. Kids come to school for the first two years, then they're gone. Why did they leave? They failed. Why did they fail? Were they athletes? No, the athletes are still here. They've got a reason to stay here. Some students don't have that reason. So, it bothers me sometimes because the rules... And again, yeah, there are misuses. And most of the misuses are caused by people that have to win, big money; I understand all that stuff. But never at the NCAA... Do you ever hear of the NCAA kicking a school out? Never. They have never kicked a school out yet.

C: What about if they suspend or penalize them?

R: Well, they penalize them they're not going to post-season play, or you lose your scholarships. Why don't they kick them out? They're not going to kick them out. They pay money to be in there. They make them money. It's kind of a situation where I'm not anti-NCAA, because they have great rules. But when you get to the point where the rules say, I want to be better, and the rules say, no, you can't. Did they ever put rules of twenty hours a week on music students? No they don't. Well, I couldn't be a great musician if I could only practice twenty hours a week. Olympic athletes quit playing in college. Olympic swimmers quit and say, I can't work hard enough. Did they graduate from college? Yeah, they graduated. They still do it. The problem we have is we don't make that standard set in high schools, high school teams. I remember years back, Texas came out and said said, you can't play football in Texas unless you have a 2.0 grade point average. That place went nuts! Do you remember that? We underestimate the quality of the people we're dealing with. I think that's what happens. But I feel bad because I got guys that want to be better. They say, I want to do this. I can't help you.

C: Is most of your life here at UNF focused on your baseball and the athletic department? Have you had much contact with other parts of the university?

R: I know a lot of the people who have been here for a long time. Like today, Mr.

Walker, he worked in the arena as a janitor, took care of all that stuff; he reminds me of a story about a guy that won the Medal of Honor. This guy's telling a story. He's a student at Air Force Academy, and he's reading a book one day, and he's reading about World War Two. All of a sudden, he sees this guy's name, Bill Campbell. He goes to his roommate and says, you know, I think our janitor won the Medal of Honor. The guy says, no, it's not possible. They walked down the hall and say, are you Bill Campbell who won the medal of honor? He said, yeah. The one thing he did was he had ten things to live by. One of them was to never put anybody in any kind of category; don't categorize people. Always respect people, no matter what, because you don't know them. Well, I've always had a good relationship with the grounds guys. Same thing with professors. I like to know about them. I like to know what they do. I was just an average student, but I got through and got a master's degree. It's done me some good, because I've learned some things. I like to know those people. A lot of times, some of them will call me and say, look, my son's little league team, they want to have a clinic, so I'd go help them out. I got involved.

C: It works both ways.

R: It works both ways.

C: Any inner-city kids play for UNF?

R: We've really tried to make a real push to get that. In 2004, we went to the World Series and finished second; we had four blacks on the team. This year, we've got three. Next year, we'll have another one. We've really pushed to do that. One of my assistant coaches is black. It's hard for a couple of reasons. First of all, baseball is a work job. It's one of those deals where you don't get full scholarships. Because you've got thirty guys on a team, you've got eleven scholarships. With basketball, you get a full ride. Football, you get a full ride. Academics have got to be there. The guys that we've had have been great. We're doing everything we can right now. Right now, my assistant, Theron Todd, there's a program in town called Mr. Jones, he is trying to start a program where they take a group of black players and they take them to Atlanta for a tournament. They all get them in the same area, so professional scouts and college guys would come and watch them play baseball and then try to sign guys out of that, because the black players, a lot of times, don't have good programs in high school. They're good athletes, but they're not great baseball players. So they're doing that. We did that in the summer. We let them use the facilities. They came in and practiced. They went to Atlanta. Some of those guys got seen by different colleges. We were trying to help them go to college. We've always tried to do some stuff with Rains [High School] and Ribault, anything we could do to try to help them out. I've got about eleven of my former players are high school coaches. Seven of them are head coaches in Jacksonville. There are players that we'd really like to have. If they don't have the grades, we can't do anything for them. It's a shame because there are a lot of them that we'd like to have that we just can't get just can't get. I think when you set a standard like we set, you're going to limit what you can draw from. That's a great deal. But,

I've really been impressed with the guys that we've had from the inner city.

I've always had a respect for my assistant coach. His name is Theron Todd. He was a player that I saw play in the minor leagues when I was coaching, and I really liked the guy. He worked hard and did a great job. He came down and worked out down here with us for a couple years while he was still playing. When he got out he said, I'd like to get a chance to coach minor league baseball, but at the time there weren't a lot of black coaches. But this guy was an articulate guy who knew the game and could get along with people, so I called the Milwaukee Brewers that I'd worked for, and they hired him. He worked for them for a couple years, went to the Pirates, the Colorado Rockies, spent eleven years. [He] moved down here and stayed here. When he got through he said, look, when I get finished, I'd really like to coach in college. Now he's a volunteer coach for us. He does lessons here in town and teaches guys. Now, he's involved in bringing the black kids out and getting them involved in baseball. We're trying to do what we can.

One of my pitching coaches in minor league baseball was a guy named Ray Burris. Ray was a black pitcher who pitched in the big leagues for eleven years. I remember the first time we had a black history week here. One of the professors came to me and said, you think you could get a black athlete to come down here and speak to us. I said, yeah, I've got a guy who played in the major leagues. He's a good guy. I bought him a plane ticket, flew him in here, and brought him to the campus. We had it set up for him to meet with everybody. I guess they advertised it; I didn't even pay attention. When everybody came, there were like seventeen white guys and two blacks. I was thinking to myself, wait a minute, here. I just flew this guy in to do this thing. To him, it was like, I wish I could have done more. We should have done more ourselves.

Latin players; we've had Latin players. Over the years, I had a lot of guys who were different. I had a Japanese guy a couple of years ago. He is teaching mathematics at Bishop Kenny [High School] now. He was a great guy. He just showed up. He had actually come to the United States to go to school in North Carolina, and he didn't like it because it wasn't disciplined enough. He got online, looked around, and asked some people. He shows up in my office and says, I'm going to school here and I want to play baseball. I said, well, who told you about it? He says, I just heard about it. Great guy. [He] really helped a lot, especially on the baseball part of it, just a super guy.

But the school itself, again, everyday I drive in here, I look at it and say, man, we could be a lot better. We could be better than we are. Everyday, it's getting better. I think we're getting better. Maybe we are; maybe we aren't. You've seen all the changes. One day, you just don't want to get so big, that we don't have that human communication that we used to have. I think that's one of the things that's different. But I would have left a long time ago unless I thought there were great possibilities here. But the people that I first met were Harmon and Healy, and Dottie Dorion, those guys. They were always up front with me. They were honest. I could never leave them, because they had been too good.

C: Because of your loyalty.

R: Well, I hope that's true. Some people say, well, you ought to go get the dollar. Yeah, but those dollars will go away. But you can't forget being a part of this. To be able to start a program and see it go for twenty years; I wouldn't change it.

C: Which reminds me of something I wanted to share. Your experience in that is like a lot of the faculty who came here. Chris Rasche in sociology, she could have gone to the University of Wisconsin and gone to their graduate school, but she would have been one among dozens of professors. She came here because she could start a program. That kind of thing has happened time and time again here. In that sense, in terms of creating the university, your story has parallels on the academic side which are really great. The enthusiasm that you've had, I've seen over the years.

R: I'll tell you, you're right about that. I look back on it when I was younger, and I think about all the difficulties I've had to get this going. You think, man, I ought to go do something; I ought to go where they can take care of this or take care of that. I guess when you're a faculty member, the same thing happens. But all of a sudden, twenty years later, people are coming back and students are coming back and saying, I really appreciate you doing this for me because it has made a difference in my life. It makes a difference.

C: Anything else you want to add?

R: That's about it. I didn't mean to ramble on.

C: Thank you very much.