

COLLEGE SPORTS DECEMBER 26, 2015 12:00 AM

Former State College of Florida baseball coach and National JUCO Hall of Famer Tim Hill passes away at age 71



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MANATEE -- Winning and losing weren't the most important things to Tim Hill.

Rather, the former longtime State College of Florida baseball coach's legacy is the long-lasting relationships that blossomed away from the diamond.

And those countless relationships remained so strong over the years that an outpouring of condolences found their way to Hill's family after he passed away Friday at the age of 71.

"My phone's been blowing up like crazy," said current SCF head coach Tim Hill II, one of three children surviving Hill. "Between emails and texts and phone calls, all that kind of stuff, I can't keep up with all of them right now. He touched a lot of lives."

Hill's family did not disclose his cause of his death, but said he died peacefully.

Services are scheduled for 11 a.m. Wednesday, Jan. 6, at State College of Florida's Robert C. Wynn baseball field. A reception for those attending is slated to follow the service, which coincides with Hill's 49th wedding anniversary to his wife, Genny.

"When he asked me to marry him, I told him, 'You do know I want to have 12 kids,'" Genny said. "He said, 'I love you anyways and we'll have 12 kids.' Well, we ended up with four. One of them didn't make it. But he gave me even more than 12 kids through the years with all of the boys has coached who have been a part of our family."

Assistant coach Barry Batson, who came to the program when it was called Manatee Community College in 2006, agreed.

"He cared about the person, he cared about the player, he cared about the kid and he wanted them to be not only great baseball players, but better men of character," Batson said. "... That's a very impressionable age. He could've went on and coached in pro ball or in a major university, and there were plenty of opportunities to do that, but his calling in life I believe truly was -- and he told me this often -- junior college baseball, the 18-, 19-, 20-year-old young men that he had an opportunity to reach into their lives."

Affectionately known as "7," for the number he wore during his 31 years as the head baseball coach at the Bradenton program, Hill collected more wins than any other Florida junior college baseball coach.

He won inclusion into the National Junior College Athletic Association Baseball Hall of Fame in 2005, among various other coaching accolades.

Hill also guided SCF to five NJCAA World Series appearances, culminating in two national runner-up finishes. He coached countless players who earned scholarships to four-year colleges and ones that were drafted to play professional baseball.

But before he arrived in Bradenton, Hill played pro ball in the former Washington Senators organization, then cut his teeth coaching high school ball at Yorktown (Arlington, Va.) High.

Hill left Virginia to become the head baseball coach at South Florida Community College, where he caught the eye of Bob Wynn.

Wynn, for whom SCF's baseball field is named, started the Bradenton program and was shifting away from coaching there by the late 1970s.

So Hill was brought in as an assistant for three seasons as a sort of coach-in-waiting, an innovation that predates the current trend along the college landscape of naming a successor for a longtime head coach nearing retirement.

In 1982, Hill became SCF's second head coach. He retired in 2012, handing the reins over to his son, Tim Hill II, as the program's third head coach since it started in 1958.

"I could tell immediately that he was a committed Christian and that he was a good, devoted family man and a good, devoted teacher," Wynn said.

The younger Hill said people from all over the country and world have reached out to offer support, from places such as Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, California, Utah and Pennsylvania, to name a few.

Hill is survived by his wife of 48 years, Genny; their three children, Tim Hill II, Kimberly Martin and Whitney Corbeil; and nine grandchildren.

"He was a Godly man," the younger Hill said. "He had his faith in Jesus Christ as his savior, and that's why we're happy for him that he's in a much better place right now, even though my mom and I and my sisters feel like a piece of us has left."

Hill collected 1,109 victories against just 484 defeats in 31 years at SCF, which was known as Manatee Community College when he took over in the early 1980s. One of his teams also defeated the Pittsburgh Pirates in a 2009 charity game that featured Andrew McCutchen, who was in Triple-A at the time. The game generated national headlines. His last team also beat the Baltimore Orioles in a 2012 modified scrimmage.

His legacy, however, is his attachment to players past and present, and the family feel of the baseball program at SCF.

Athletic director Matt Ennis said Nick Cafaro, a 1965 alum and Manatees' Hall of Fame baseball player, delivered an email to alums breaking the news, and the support has been mind-boggling.

"It's been pretty impressive in the last 24 hours to see just a chain of phone calls from one guy to the next, spreading the news. and everybody's hurting, but Coach always said it was about the relationships," Ennis said.

The younger Hill agreed.

"He said, 'The wins and losses are really nice and the championships are nice, and we've won more than most, but the best part of it was just being able to impact guys' lives and how

they stay in touch after they leave the program," he said.

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Coach Hill was a prince, a man of character. I was privileged to know and work with him and had the highest respect for him. My condolences to the family.

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RIP Coach Hill or "six" as we old guys called him. Truly one of the finest men I knew. He never knew how many mens lives he touched.He wil find out Jan 6 when he looks down at Wynn field. Godspeed Coach!

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