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# Former Texas Tech baseball coach Kal Segrist dies at 84

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By [Don Williams](#)

A-J MEDIA

In 2014, the Texas Tech baseball program debuted at the College World Series, won 40 games for the 12th time and played in a stadium spruced up by a recent \$5 million face-lift.

In contrast, Kal Segrist had no budget to speak of, little chance to compete on even terms and a honey locust in play in his outfield. He treated his park and his players with love anyway.

“He gave it all to a program that really didn’t put much money in back then,” former Tech third baseman John Owens said Saturday.

“It’d be nice if he’d be remembered for what he did,” former Tech coach Larry Hays said. “All we’ve got today is because of what he started.”

Segrist, who coached the Red Raiders from 1968-83 and came to be revered by the coaches who followed him, died Friday in Lubbock. He was 84.

His record was 317-324-2. Baseball men say his record doesn’t capture his impact.

“I don’t think people realize what he was up against when he was here,” Hays said. “He came from a place like Texas that had everything and had to adjust to having a program with not anything. He had to share his baseball field with the football team — they worked out in the outfield. He had to teach a full load.

“And then he had to build a program with maybe a couple or three scholarships at different times in a league where, at that time, it was unlimited scholarships with two or three teams in the league.

“He did a good job of being a baseball man in a situation that didn’t have it before.”

Tech retired Segrist’s uniform No. 24 in 2010.

“He was the ultimate players’ coach,” Owens said. “He stood up for his players, and he’d let everybody in the student body walk on out there, nearly.”

Kal Hill Segrist was born April 14, 1931, in Greenville and had scores of stories from a lifetime in baseball. He

was the first player to hit a grand slam in the College World Series. He did that for Texas in 1950. He was involved in the biggest trade in Major League history, a 17-player swap in 1954 between the New York Yankees, Segrist's original team, and the Baltimore Orioles.

When he came to Tech in 1965 and became head coach three years later, a tree stood in fair territory. Left fielders just had to work around it. Segrist helped plan and design what's now Rip Griffin Park.

Because of the limited resources, Owens said, the Red Raiders regularly drove to games. On the way back from a trip to Houston, the Red Raiders would stop at the Segrist ranch in Hico to spend the night; the players sacked out on the floor.

"Every time we got together, he was always full of stories," former Tech shortstop Ronnie Mattson said. "It was just great story after great story."

Segrist, a three-time Southwest Conference coach of the year, pushed his colleagues to start the SWC tournament. On the NCAA rules committee, he worked to expand the number of teams who qualified for regional play and allowing more than one team from a conference to get in.

"He did as much for Tech baseball, and really, college baseball as probably any coach out there," Owens said. "Skip Bertman, who was coach at LSU, I've gotten to know, and he echoed the same thing about Kal."

Former Texas coach Cliff Gustafson said he "knew him better than most." The two enrolled at Texas on the same day and played second base and shortstop on the Longhorns' freshman team in 1949. Texas won the national championship that year and the next.

"Bibb Falk, the old legendary coach, was our coach," Gustafson said, "and he once said Kal Segrist was the best hitter he ever had."

Years later, he showed others how.

Mattson, a Tech shortstop from 1973-76, said Segrist "taught me how to hit the Kal Segrist way." It worked. Mattson went from walk-on to second-team all-American. He's scheduled for induction in the Tech Athletic Hall of Fame this fall.

"I just thoroughly enjoyed and just absolutely loved playing for him," Mattson said. "He was just a great guy who really taught me a lot about the game and was just a great teacher. And, really, just a good man."

Tech coach Tim Tadlock recently posted a picture of him and Segrist on Twitter, calling Segrist "one of the best men I've ever met."

Gary Ashby played for Segrist and succeeded him as coach in 1984.

In Tech's announcement of Segrist's passing, Ashby said, "His work is the foundation that Tech baseball is built on. He did more with less than any coach I know. Everyone that comes after coach Segrist owes him a debt of gratitude for all the thankless hours he invested in the program."

Segrist is survived by his wife, Becky, and four children: Scott, Khris, Sunny Beth and Sandy.

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