

Demie ‘Doc’ Mainieri, former Dade North Falcons baseball coach, dies at 90

BY WALTER VILLA MIAMI HERALD WRITER

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Demie Mainieri, left, former Dade North Falcons baseball coach, and his son Paul Mainieri, LSU’s baseball coach and former Notre Dame coach, in an undated photo.

Former Dade North Falcons baseball coach Demie “Doc” Mainieri, who died on March 13 at age 90, always figured his life had been spared for a good reason, and he made the most of his time.

The youngest of 11 children, Mainieri played baseball at West Virginia University. He earned master’s and doctorate degrees from Columbia, which is how he got his “Doc” nickname.

After college, Mainieri was drafted into the U.S. Army during the Korean War. After boot camp, roughly 700 soldiers stood on the tarmac, waiting for their assignments.

Nearly all of them went to the front lines, and most of those men died in combat. Mainieri was one of just seven soldiers who were instead sent to Europe, a non-combat mission.

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“Dad felt God allowed him to survive so he could do good works for society,” said his son, Paul Mainieri, who is the head baseball coach at LSU and the winner of the 2009 national championship. “That had a major effect on him.”

Mainieri eventually left the military and was hired by Jack Netcher as Dade North’s first baseball coach in August of 1960.

Mainieri's first team went 14-8. Dade North didn't have its own field yet, and the Falcons practiced at a local high school.

Three years later, the Falcons were national champions, winning the 1964 Junior College World Series.

Mainieri went on to coach the Falcons for 30 years, becoming the first junior college baseball coach to win 1,000 games. He returned to the Junior College World Series four more times over the next decade and was named to the NJCAA Hall of Fame in 1983.

He was also elected to the National College Baseball Hall of Fame in 2014.

But even though some may dismiss Mainieri's accomplishments as having been achieved at "just a junior college," Division I coaches knew their way to Dade North.

So did pro scouts.

Mainieri helped send 35 players to the major leagues, including Steve Carlton, Mike Piazza, Mickey Rivers, Bucky Dent and Warren Cromartie.

"He was a big mentor, a legend," Dent said. "He was one of those tough little Italian guys. If you were on first base, you better break up the double play or you'd hear about it."

First baseman Randy Bush, who played 1,219 major league games and slugged 96 homers, is a good example of how Mainieri's keen eyes for baseball helped his athletes.

Bush didn't get drafted out of high school or out of Dade North, where he played for Mainieri in 1977-78. Bush may have been discouraged ... but Mainieri wasn't.

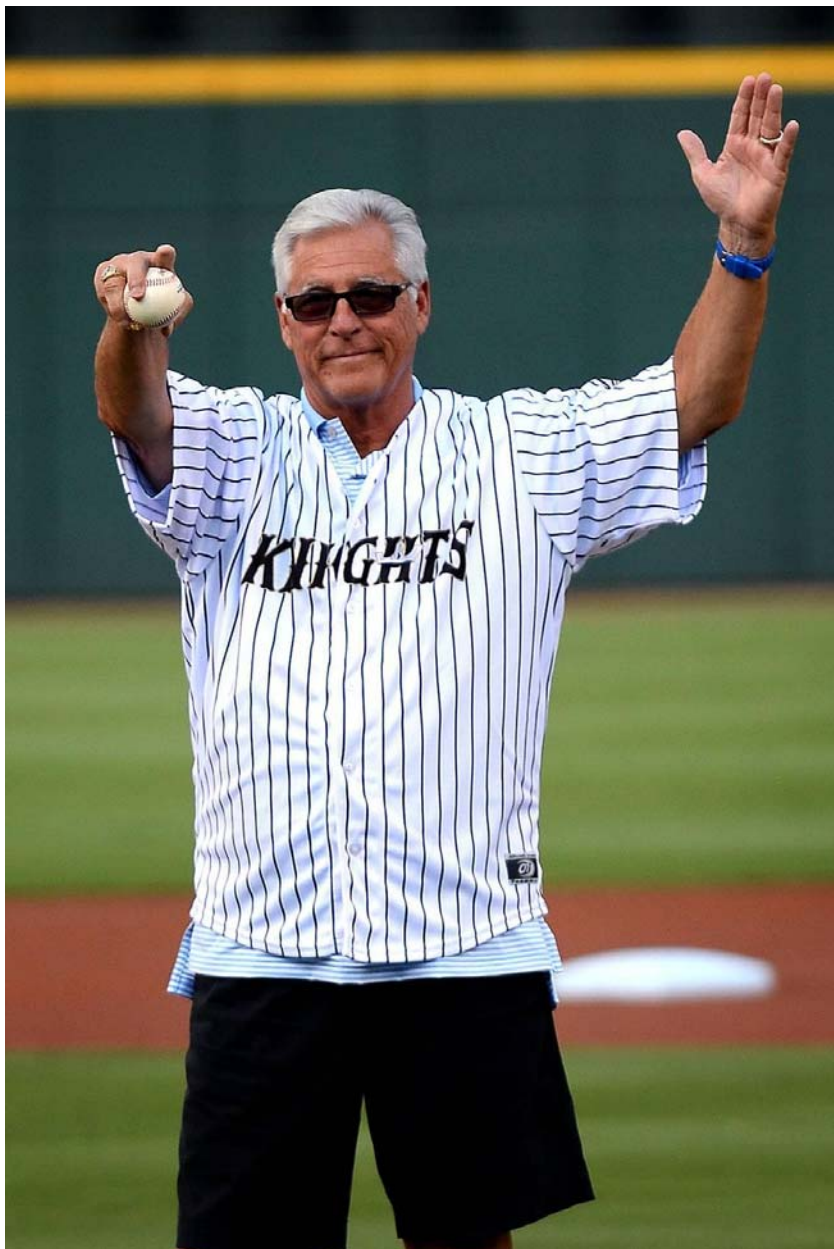
"Doc Mainieri changed my life in a tangible way," Bush said. "He said, 'You will get a chance. These scouts are not seeing the improvement in you. I want you to come play for me in the Cape Cod League, and you should accept the scholarship offer to play at the University of New Orleans.'"

Bush did exactly what Mainieri asked him to do, and — sure enough — the Twins drafted him in the second round in 1979.

“There have been many times,” Bush said, “that I have reflected on what my life would’ve been if not for Doc Mainieri.”

Mainieri was an original. When he won his national title in ‘64, there were no pro teams in Miami. The Dolphins, Heat, Marlins and Panthers didn’t exist, and it would be nearly two decades before the University of Miami Hurricanes would win their first national title in football.

Skip Bertman,



Former major league shortstop Bucky Dent, who played under former Dade North Falcons baseball coach Demie “Doc” Mainieri, acknowledges the cheers of the fans at BB&T Ballpark in Charlotte prior to throwing the first pitch to Charlotte Knights pitcher Carson Fulmer in 2017. During his career, Dent played for the Chicago White Sox, New York Yankees, Texas Rangers and Kansas City Royals. He won two World Series Championships with the Yankees earning 1978 World Series MVP award. More famously, Dent is

who won five
national titles
at LSU but
before that
was a

remembered for a home run against the Boston Red Sox at the end of the 1978
season.

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prominent assistant coach with the Miami Hurricanes under Ron Fraser, called Paul
Mainieri as soon as he got the news on Demie.

“He said, ‘Paul, your dad was a pioneer. I learned from him. Fraser learned from him. Every
coach in Miami gravitated toward him. He was the king.’”