

MoATA Hall of Fame Spotlight

October 2019

Nick Swartz

Hall of Fame Inductee 2015

By Michael Schwarzer, MSED, ATC

Career Beginnings

Nick got his first taste of athletic training while in high school. He wasn't able to participate in fall sports due to his asthma, so he became the manager for his high school football team. The summer of his junior year a new football coach came to Nick's home and gave him a Cramer First Aider journal and told him that he wanted him to study the info and be the team's "trainer". Nick read the journal and took the Cramer Correspondence Course and his interest grew from there. He attended Eastern Illinois University to pursue a career in Athletic Training. Nick received his B.S. in Physical Education, as there was no formal degree program for Athletic Training at E.I.U. He learned in his first semester from an A.T. Graduate Assistant about Minor League Baseball life and from there his direction was one of working with a professional sports team, versus a Teacher/Athletic Trainer position in a school district. Nick ended up working with the late Marty Pattin (KC Royal Pitcher), prior to spring training his first two years at Eastern Illinois. Through Pattin's encouragement, Nick wrote letters to Baseball and Football teams each year in hopes of a summer position. In the summer of 1975 Nick landed an internship with the St. Louis Cardinals (Football) who were working out at E.I.U. for their "pre-season camp". Nick learned that summer football wasn't likely going to be for him and he persistently pursued baseball the next two years. In 1977, 3 years of writing letters paid off as the Kansas City Royals hired him for a Rookie League position and over the next 33 years Nick moved up through the Royals organization, culminating in 21 years of Major League service, with the final 19 as the Head Athletic Trainer.

Mentors

Along the way Nick had several people that he credits to his long and successful career. Mostly, he wants to give acknowledgement to the



Advice for Young Professionals

Nick advises young athletic trainers to get a broad base of experience working with various populations and in multiple settings. Hands-on experience is the best and try not to shy away from a challenge, as they always make you better.

Nick prides himself on having made the best decisions for the players and treating all of them equally, no matter if they were an all-star or a rookie.

Always put your best foot forward and stick with it, Nick reflects as he shares the anecdote of how he signed 29 one-year contracts and 2 two-year contracts in his 33 years with the Royals. His hard work allowed for his ascension through the Royals organization.

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athletes that he served as they motivated him to do his best every day. Nick credits The Cramer Company for opening a door and direction for him to pursue a career in Athletic Training as well as Marty Pattin for encouraging his pursuit of a career in Professional Baseball. He's very thankful for the time he spent learning and working with Dr. Steve Joyce, former Team Physician for the K.C. Royals. Nick also feels fortunate to have had the opportunity to work and learn from two of the "most respected" physicians in Sports Medicine, Dr. James Andrews and the late Dr. Lewis Yocum. Finally, Nick thanks EVERY Athletic Trainer he had the pleasure to meet and talk with. Nick states, "Fellow A.T.C.'s are probably your BEST source for knowledge and information.....if you'll just take a moment and LISTEN!!"

Memorable Moments

One of the first things Nick had to do after being hired to the Royals rookie ball team was handle a situation where three of his players were involved in an automobile accident. He had to effectively communicate the tough news to their parents and appropriately care for some of their injuries. This was an "a-ha moment" that affirmed Nick's athletic training career choice and made him realize just how important all the work was that he'd put in during school. Whether it was his EMT training, administrative work or sport team coverage, they all had appropriately prepared him for this event.

A moment Nick will never forget is opening day for the KC Royals in 1989 where he was announced as Assistant Athletic Trainer, marking his entrance into Major League Baseball after 12 years of working Minor League Baseball. While in the Major Leagues, Nick remembers working with George Brett and a shoulder injury over the final 7 days of the 92' season while George was pursuing his 3000th hit. He recalls Brett sat out the 1st two games, unable to swing a bat. Before game 3 of the series, he felt good enough to try it, going 4-5 that night to record his 3,000th hit.

Swartz also worked two All-Star games but especially recalls the first one in 96'. "IRON MAN" Cal Ripkin broke his nose following the American League Team photo, fortunately Nick was relieved to watch Cal play that night, keeping his major league record "Consecutive Games Played" intact!

All that being said, Swartz states "NO moment to date has been GREATER for me than the call in 2015 informing me of my MoATA H.O.F. selection. I was totally surprised and I'm honored for this recognition!!"

Contributions to the Profession

Nick loved being a part of the Royals organization and took great pride in working his way from the bottom to the top of the ranks. In the minors he performed many duties not related to athletic training such as laundry, equipment care, driving the team bus, etc. He believes this set a good example of the merits of loyalty and commitment, and how determination pays off. This is why his name being announced as the Fourth K.C. Royals Head Athletic Trainer in 1991, was so special to him and served as a testament to his determination. Nick was actively involved with the Professional Baseball Athletic Trainers Society (PBATS), NATA and MOATA, where he presented talks on Baseball Injuries, Throwing Mechanics and Injury Prevention during two NATA Conventions as well as numerous presentations for the yearly Injuries in Baseball Courses presented by ASMI and Kerlan-Jobe. In 2006, Nick was honored by the American Sports Medicine Institute (ASMI) with the Career Service Award given annually at the Injuries in Baseball Course.

"Sticky Side Down"



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