

With baseball in his blood, Braender takes over Northstars varsity team

By Rich Fisher

Fish4Scores.com

Dec. 12: During his first five years as Nottingham High boys' soccer coach, Mike Braender has proven he can mold a team into a winner.

Just think what he might do as head coach of the sport he has spent a lifetime playing and learning.

Braender will be the new Northstars varsity baseball coach in the spring of 2012, taking over for Bill Langdon.

Langdon stepped down last spring after eight years as varsity coach and 41 years as some kind of baseball coach at Nottingham. Braender leaped at the opportunity.

A Hamilton Township product, he played on the 12-year-old Nottingham All Star team that reached the 1992 Little League World Series. After several years of being known as Bullet Head by a few gym teachers at Crockett Middle School, Braender played second base at Steinert and after graduating in 1997 went on to play third base/shortstop/pitcher at Rowan University.

He also played for Hamilton Post 31 in legion ball, and learned from everyone he played under along the way.

"The Giallellas have been very influential," he said. "I played for Big G (Rich) at Steinert, and Brian (The Chef) coached with Rick Freeman in legion. Rick was an influence on my coaching.

"I just hope to make the program here half of what it is at Steinert. I learned some quality things baseball-wise and, and about life in general from those guys. I watch what they do and a lot of people in area watch what they do."

Braender has been paying his dues since arriving at Nottingham nine years ago. He was the freshman baseball coach for seven years before moving over as varsity assistant last year, coaching third base and helping run practices.

"It was basically a transition period for me to see what I can do and give me an opportunity to run the show," Braender said. "Bill still had influence but we worked hand-in-hand making decisions, things like that.

"I want to thank Langdon especially. He kind of hung around a little because he knew my wife was giving birth, and I learned a lot the one year I was with him. I appreciate what he did for me as far as getting me in the program and what Al Offredo did as well. They were the varsity coaches my first seven years here."

Braender has had some varsity coaching success, as he was named the Colonial Valley Conference Boys' Soccer Coach of the Year last Thursday after guiding the Northstars to one of their best seasons in years.

He will return for his sixth year as soccer coach in the fall but is primed for the baseball season.

Mike Braender Sr. will serve as his son's pitching coach and former Northstar standout Charlie Iacano is also a varsity assistant. The legendary Capone duo of Pete and son Vince will remain JV coaches while Al Offredo and Tony Benedetto are the freshman coaches.

Rob "The Apprentice Voice" Nosari will serve as a roaming coach and help out at all three levels.

The Northstars are in rebuilding mode after finishing 6-12 last year.

"I think it's gonna be a building year without a doubt," Braender said. "We have a bunch of

seniors that are JV players. Basically we're a pretty young team. I'm kind of happy with that, it allows me to build from the ground up.

"I'm hoping to start a little bit new and build some new things here," he said. "I want to try to put in some of my own ideas of coaching, while also putting some things in use that I learned here."