

History, Baby!

Who Writes it Last, Lasts the Longest!

This is how it all began for Sophos International/VMarlins' Native American National Team's Wild Penguins. It started years ago with the founder learning how to coach a bunch of children on a fluke set of circumstances some 47 years ago!!

I, Frank Hundley Fulton, Jr., first started coaching a bunch of little kids who were abandoned by their Little League coach one hot may day in 1976. I was driving home from my first year of college to meet my girlfriend when I hit the city limits. We would go get some ice cream and review all the subject matter I had learned in the classrooms of Bagby, Morton, and Hundley Stadium.

However, she had to keep baseball score at a little league game and I had to watch the game and wait for it to end before we did our school debriefing!

The game was lopsided with one team beating the other 12-2 as they went into the last inning. During that last inning, the losing team came back and won the game 12-13! It was an amazing comeback and the winning team which had my little brother on it, was jumping for joy and excitement. The other team however, was experiencing a different scene.

The coach of the losing team took his players out into the outfield and started cursing them with big boy swear words. Then he grab a boy, slapped him in the face, and threw him to the ground. He lashed out a few minute more, the took his clip board, threw it, said, "I quit!", and walked away!

Everyone who saw this was aghast to say the least. I had never ever seen a grown man slap his player like that; (later I found out it was his son). Regardless, it was bad and the little guys were all sitting on the ground huddled up, and staring into the night wondering what to do. One of the players got so upset that he took off and ran away before his parents could get there to pick him up.

The president of the league was their that night, saw it all, and did the craziest thing of the day.... He came over to me and asked, "Frank, could you take over this team and work with these little guys until we find an adult to coach them?"

My answer was an immediate yes and I agreed to give them all the positive energy I had to share.

I went to tell my girlfriend no ice cream tonight and that I had to go find that young man who had run away.

I met with the players, told them to meet me the next day at Robert E. Lee Junior High School field and we would get this ship going again.

It was 1976 when this happened and it was in 1976 I found my life calling. Bring joy to those in need. I did not know what I was doing, had a great deal of negativity thrown at me also by those of adult years, and yet we persevered. We found joy in the game again. We found confidence in playing again. We found smiles on our faces, and we found out how to win and win and win. That

little bunch of Bad News Bears, (which by the way the movie “Bad News Bears” came out in 1976 too) went from fourth place to winning the district title. Then a bunch of them went on to play and win on the All-Star team. The little fella who was slapped became our All-Star Pitcher and the little fella who ran away became our All Star pitcher/Shortstop. He also years later went on to play ball at the University of Maryland on a full scholarship! Our litte team, knows as Team “Exchange” became the best in the community that summer and I was so proud of being a part of their joy!

So for the summer of 1976 I Did it, love it, and in the fall I returned to battle as a warrior in football and baseball on the collegiate fields of play at Hampden-Sydney College.

When my competitive collegiate days were over, my baby momma wife (Same girlfriend from earlier) encouraged me to teach and coach. So I did. No banking suit for me. Go play and learn and teach and play some more!!!!

I Coached in the High Schools of Virginia, the colleges of Virginia, the pros of Virginia, the internationals circles within Germany/Europe, then back to the colleges of Virginia to develop athletics. Once this mission was complete, the question that was asked of me by me was, “Now what?”

What to do with a family and a career of coaching student-athletes from all over the Northern Hemisphere? Funny but after Six children and memories upon memories later, I would coach again but this time, with mine/our own:

First, it was a little league team with our youngest son.

Then our baby girl played softball during the day and danced in the evenings.

At the same time we were supporting our collegiate soccer warrior and our professional baseball player.

Eventually, our number four child needed a program to develop his and his friends’ baseball skill sets so I formed a fall team and took a bunch of Older Bad News Bears to a whole “nother” level of play. These boys worked out every fall day, played games every weekend, and in the spring created championship teams for their respective school teams.

Our/my work was becoming more than a friendly afternoon of athletic participation. It was becoming a business. It was becoming a fun filled business of running baseball events all over the place. Recruiting, teaching, playing, networking boom-bam-thank-you mam. We started tournaments, ran showcases, sent scouts to players, and brokered agents to top prospects.

My first team was the VA Warriors. I found local players who were not playing American Legion during the summer, and I put them together to play games with different pick-up pre-travel baseball teams in Tennessee, all parts of Virginia, and North Carolina. I also took them to Perfect Game USA regional events because I was working for Perfect Game USA as director of Business Development and naturally I developed games for others to play in. I would then recruit these “other” players to participate in future PG events.

As the years moved forward, I was overly impressed with the educational and developmental process of minor league baseball as it pertained to the handling of our son who was with the Florida

Marlins. I liked how they worked their programs, developed their players, and I wanted to represent their image and professionalism in our program somehow. I also served as an associate scout with the Florida Marlins in 1997 during their first year of existence. We won the world series that first year and I technically should have had a world series ring to show. Maybe one day I will buy one and represent it.

During the 2008-2009 summer seasons I changed from the warriors to the Virginia Marlins. I bought black uniforms with the Marlins Logo and we went to play in a collegiate summer league within the Virginia/North Carolina region. We also started inviting international players to come and join us in Danville, Virginia to play. We had a great connection with Averett University, and we utilized their field to play games and practice. (My brother was the Head Coach and my dad had supported the building of the baseball and softball dugouts, press boxes, and other improvements to the field as the family worked hand in hand with the college.) I paid my fees to play and I had a little connection with the school since I started the collegiate football program for them in 1999!

Over the years, our VMarlins became globally recognized for collegiate summer competition, professional development of scholastic, collegiate, and international players. We hosted players from over 25 different states and many different countries. Players visited Danville Virginia from Ireland, Germany, Belgium, The Netherlands, Czech Republic, France, Canada, Australia, Japan, Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Jamaica, and Puerto Rico.

As we grew so did other programs. Travel Baseball became a new industrial vertical with lots of money spent on team fees, tournament participations, and travel. We stayed away from charging big fees and we concentrated on those players who did not have the resources. We enjoyed working with our misfits and we created great opportunities for them. However, we did not have a big pool of financial resources to expand and the landscape of our supportive facilities changed. Averett University found a need to go in another direction. In 2019 after ten years or more of working with Averett University we were now without a field. The city of Danville was also experiencing a decline in youth baseball activity and facilities were limited in use. Our spirit was being taxed and we did not know what direction to go. Then it happened:

Years earlier I was approached by a group of Native Americans in the wild west to form a national team to play in the world games. At that time, I knew we could not do it. I put the notion on the back burner and continued to stay locked in our system. On a brisk winter day of January 2019 a thought came... "Start the new Native American National Team. Give people the opportunity to play for the love of the game and embrace the Spirit of freedom. You do not need a field or a league or a conventional community...just go find warriors who want to play..."

And we did!

I went to Lumberton, NC and conducted the first tryout ever. It was amazing! Native American warriors of various ages came out to play. We worked out, we collected information, and the process began.

Eventually, we created a program, held our first national game at Purnell Swett HS, and developed the first Native American National Team Program

The next season with big plans set to play all over the Mid-Atlantic, we were shut down by Covid 19. Nothing happened this year. No games, no workouts, nothing. It was hard and discouraging however we hung in with hopes of another day.

That day came with a phone call from Dan Mouschon, the President of the new Appalachian League collegiate summer program. He asked if I would play an exhibition tour with our Native American National Team against another team at all the pro parks when their teams was not in town. I quickly agreed, worked to set the schedule, and in the summer of 2021 the Native American National Team played the VNuts in 9 different locations within the Appy League. Both teams were technically subsidiaries of the VMarlins but we kept the Marlins name out of the tour event so as not to upset the Professional MLB decision makers who might have an issue.

Needless to say we enjoyed the process, fought through the return of play during the covid 19 challenges, created great memories, and connected players with future opportunities in the world of baseball competition and academic advancement.

In 2022 our program reached out to other teams within the summer baseball seasons and we conducted touring games in Maryland, Washington DC, West Virginia, North Carolina, and Virginia.

In 2023 we expanded our NAW into a National Men's Team and a Junior National Team. We also created Team Antarctica. Team Antarctica was to be a virtual fictional team made up of celebrities and individuals who would play as the warrior penguins, represent the warriors fighting global warming, and provide us with a global connection enjoying the game of baseball with all around the world. However a very funny thing happened.

The concept of a warrior penguin and a wild penguin kept playing out in the mind of our existence. Yes, we are all life warriors, and yes we all want to belong and be loved. We also love to play and bring joy to the world, just like our Happy Footed Waddle of Penguins that occupy the vanishing fields of play.

So why not change our warrior's name which was replacing our Vmarlins name and create our own unique globally connected Wild Penguins National Team!

We have the logo, we have the colors, we have the spirit, and now we have a mission that is noble, right, and a perfect fit that defines all we have done since I can remember... JUST Play and Enjoy the Day!!!!

JUST PLAY and ENJOY the DAY!!!

What a mission to be on. What a reason to do what you have to do to do what you want to do! The Penguins just want to play. Our life warriors just want to play. The people of the world just want to play. Why not have a mission that encourages everyone to create an environment, program, agenda, that allows us all the opportunity to play?

Oh Malanta!!!! It has so many ancient, current, and future implications for successful living on this planet and the process is so us, me, we. Just play and do the work that needs to be done so we can play another day too.

In 2023 during the summer of the year, the decision was made to go from Warriors to Wild Penguins. The Native American National Program, the developmental VMarlins, and the Sophos International Educational Vertical wrapped all their being into the new Waddle of the Wild Penguins.

Native Americans, Europeans, Africans, Asians, and Antarcticans now have a global team to play for. The enrollment process is simple: Respect self, others, and the process. Maintain the three Rs and maintain membership into the Wild Penguin Waddle.

Therefore, we offer the Wild Penguins' Waddle Invitation to all who want to play with us, protect the planet, and support positive activity! We encourage all to join our global party of activity, camaraderie, and positive competitive play.