



# TROY | THE BASEBALL COACH PERCIVAL

Most remember him as the Angels' closer, a pitcher with a 100-mph fastball, four All-Star appearances, and 358 career saves. But Troy Percival is also a father, son, husband and — as it turns out — one heck of a coach, who continues to play and teach the game he ardently loves.

“Baseball chose me,” says Percival, now head baseball coach for the UC Riverside Highlanders, his college team before being drafted in 1990 by the Angels. “It’s not that I was superior to everyone else growing up, but I was always one of the better players. I wrestled, played football and basketball, but nothing stimulated my mind and my body like baseball.”

Percival began playing ball when he was 6 on a Riverside Little League team coached by his dad, Richard. His father instilled a desire to excel and gave sage advice — “Hold nothing back and go full throttle till the game’s over” — that Percival carried into his professional career.

BY KOREN WETMORE

**“I WRESTLED, PLAYED FOOTBALL AND BASKETBALL, BUT NOTHING STIMULATED MY MIND AND MY BODY LIKE BASEBALL.”**

Since then, he’s been coached by the best, including Mike Scioscia, Tony LaRussa, Jim Leyland, and UCR’s Doug Smith, who retired last year yet continues to offer guidance and support.

Percival has taken up Smith’s mantle with a mix of humility and confidence

— and rightly so, as his resume touches every level of the game. He coached his son’s youth travel ball team, which ranked ninth in the nation. He helped Cal Poly High School’s players improve their pitching skills and led Moreno Valley High School’s baseball team to the playoffs, a feat they hadn’t accomplished in 30 years. He also served as a pitching coach for the Angels, not to mention the 20 years he spent playing professional ball.

Still, he knows many more lessons lie ahead.

“The college game on the West Coast has become very bunt happy and always tries to do some kind of trick play. I want us to show that you can play traditional baseball in the Big West and

win,” he says. “That’s not to say we’re going to win the championship right out of the chute, but I’m expecting big things from us.”

Because no matter at which level he may play or coach, the game is still baseball — the sport that chose him.