



Through the Eyes of a Former Player



Former Wisconsin baseball player Paul Zuziak reflects on his fond memories of the program, provides insight into the causes behind the dismissal of the baseball program and also addresses what he thinks must happen if the the program is to be brought back.

By: Zach Lutz

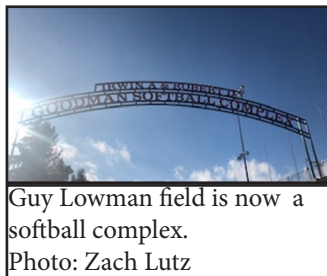
Buried beneath its 28 years of absence, the University of Wisconsin’s baseball program finds its voice and support for ressurection from former players like Paul Zuziak.

Paul, now 52 years old, resides in Glen Ellyn, Illinois with his wife and two kids. A proud Wisconsin alum and former baseball player, Paul had a unique opportunity to be a part of this program before it was dismissed. Zuziak attended UW from 1985 to 1989 and walked on to the baseball team for the 1986 and 87 seasons as an outfielder.

While in high school, Paul was being recruited by various schools to play college baseball, especially in the greater Chicago area. However, when a high school friend, playing football for the Badgers at the time reached out and told Paul to come visit Madison and talk to head baseball coach Steve Land about a tryout, Paul was pretty sure that Madison was the place for him.

“It didn’t have the best facilities, but I was sure of playing for Wisconsin because of the guys and because of head coach Steve Land.”

“He was a stoic coach, and he was a big part of why I went there. Overall, it was a cool atmosphere and I got warm feelings about it in my visits.”



Guy Lowman field is now a softball complex.
Photo: Zach Lutz

During Paul’s first season with the team they had a successful season making it to the final four of the Big Ten, lead by players like Paul Quantrill, who would go on to play in the MLB. The few years after that season the team struggled, and Paul thinks that lack of success contributed to the timing of the dismissal with financial issues, sprouting from the failure of major revenue sports, and Title IX issues being the main causes for the program’s cut.

“I think most of the guys, and coach Land especially, saw the cut coming, said Zuziak. There was just no upkeep with the facilities. When we went to schools like Iowa you could just tell those schools were reinvesting in the program.”

Paul’s biggest regret from college was quitting the baseball team for his final two years. He describes the comradery in the locker room and the bus rides with all the guys as his most fond memories of playing for Wisconsin.

Paul felt that the baseball team did have respect on campus, and fans who had no affiliations with the players would come out and show their support.

Paul admires Barry Alvarez for turning the athletic department around, but to bring baseball back, Wisconsin needs an enforcer of authority to get in Alvarez’ ear. Someone like former MLB commissioner Bud Selig.



UW alum and former Commissioner of Baseball Bud Selig speaks during the winter commencement ceremony at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Photo: Bryce Richter

Zuziak would love to see the program brought back and thinks it would be phenomenal for the State of Wisconsin.