

# AMS baseball field dedicated to AHS coaching icon Tyler

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer  
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ALTON – When it comes to compiling the list of great coaches in the history of Alton High School, Wayne Tyler would certainly be atop the list.

Tyler, who coached AHS baseball in the 1962-78 and taught and coached in the Alton School District for some 30 years before his 1988 retirement and coached the Redbirds to five Southwestern Conference championships, six IHSA district titles, three IHSA regional crowns, three IHSA sectional championships and took them to the 1966 IHSA baseball semifinals and to second in the 1972 state tournament in the one-class era, died in 2015, but his influence on the players he coached is still felt in the community.

The baseball field at Alton Middle School – which was previously Alton High School before the current campus on Humbert Road opened – was dedicated to Tyler in a Monday afternoon ceremony attended by the current Redbird athletic administration, former players and family members.

“It was our honor to dedicate this field to coach Tyler,” said Alton school superintendent Mark Cappel. “He is one of our iconic coaches in the Alton School District; this was his baseball field for 17 years and he had a great record and was inducted into (the Illinois Baseball Coaches Association Hall of Fame in 1981), so it was our honor to be able to dedicate the field to him today.

Cappel actually had tried out for the baseball team his junior year and didn't quite make the team. "He could recognize talent and I did not have the talent, I'll admit that. He got that one right," Cappel said with a laugh. "But many of his ballplayers went on to college and many played (minor-league baseball) and Bill Lyons, who came up to the majors with the Cardinals for awhile (Lyons played with the Cards in 1983 and 1984).

"He was a true player's coach and just a wonderful teacher and wonderful coach. This was his home field and that's why it was special we were able to honor him in this way."

"He was a very gentle, kind man," said Tyler's wife Bonnie. "He was a strong disciplinarian with the kids, but with love and I supported him and his endeavors – it wasn't easy with him coming home at all hours, but it was a wonderful life."

"He was just always a great guy," said Tyler's daughter Ginger. "I remember coming up here to the ballgames and watching him and his team and bringing my little sister because she was 15 years younger up her to the field, but my brother Mark actually played for dad.

"Like mom said, he was a strong disciplinarian and he did had to discipline his son quite often; he would sit him down and I'd be here and he wasn't playing. I'd be angry, but I didn't know he'd gotten in trouble. He was just a wonderful guy; anyone you talk to has exceptionally nice things to say about him."

Tyler compiled a winning percentage of .800 over the years at the helm of the Redbirds, but, as Ginger said, "I didn't realize how great a coach he was until years later because he certainly never bragged – he just did it."

"He would be embarrassed today to receive all this adulation," Bonnie said.

"Coaching is more than just baseball," his son Mark said. "He would make boys men."





