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A 1993 graduate of Gallup High, Brian Silva took his diploma and baseball skills to Seminole Junior College in Oklahoma for two years, where his team missed the World Series by just a game. Returning to New Mexico for a try at NMJC, that didn't work out well for him, he finished his college years in Portales as a Greyhound.

That move was not totally unexpected since one of his coaches in Connie Mack summer ball was Mickey Menapace, whose story was on these pages recently.

Brian had other good coaches as he worked his way up from the Gallup T-Ball start, including the legendary-like Johnny Espinosa – many stories have been written about him – his dad Ron Silva, Doug Howes, and in high school, Rob Hollis and Ed Matlosz.

But it was Mickey, and his Connie Mack team, that probably had the most influence. That team captured two state titles, and a Regional too, during Brian's time on the field.

Silva also had a prime opportunity to back up Mickey's decision in one game in the regional to not just start him at pitcher, but also to list him as the clean-up batter. Brian responded to the jeers and sneers of the other coaches by crushing the ball over the fence in his first at-bat, then threw an excellent game from the mound.

When his playing days were finished at Eastern NM, Brian returned home to work with his dad at Gallup Fire Extinguisher Company, and concentrated more on real life, supporting his wife Deanne and daughters Katlynn, Shelby and Ryleigh.

He also too the reins of the Patriot nine after Larry Macias stepped down from coaching. This is his sixth year as the head coach and only the second time his players have missed the state tournament. They finished second in state one year, losing to Piedra Vista in 2010.

"I enjoyed playing baseball," Brian said in an earlier interview. "Now there are mortgage payments, car payments, insurance and all the rest of the things that come from being a husband and a father. I had a chance to join an Independent League team, but decided against it."

Not that he's given up the sport entirely. Even with a large staff of helpers for the high school team – Phil Gutierrez, Robert Rodrigues, Anthony Vinson, P.J. Gutierrez, Brian Poyer and Jeff DeArmond – to help during the season, the job requires a lot of time, and travel.

"My players take more than a couple of swings every day," Silva explained. "There are a lot of hand drills, machine and manual skills for them to get better at each year. It takes a lot of work.

"We have four seniors on the team this year, I leave it up to them (to continue on with baseball and/or college). We work with Marty Chavez at South Mountain Community College in Phoenix. He's also a Gallup boy. We set up tryouts for the players and between us we have a lot of good baseball friends around Arizona and New Mexico."

Brian still finds time to spend time with his wife and three girls, working with Miyamura freshman, Katlynn, pitcher and hitter on her swing as he has since she was five. The two younger girls are on his U-12 Sliders traveling softball team, visiting Albuquerque, Farmington, Ruidoso, Socorro and Las Cruces during the summer.

And then there is the business as well, which keeps him plenty busy year-round. And his friends still in Gallup, most of whom have played with him in years past, like Gallup head coach Anthony Sanchez.

"I have to thank all the fans that come out to watch us play," Brian says in a final note. "They never quit on us and it helps drive the players in every game."