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Former NBC MVP Returns to Liberal

Business led Gerry D'Onofrio to Southwest Kansas Wednesday, but memories led him to Fairgrounds Park in 1979. The former NBC Tournament MVP returned to Liberal Wednesday afternoon and met with BJ General Manager Bob Carlile and former BJ President Bob Judd. D'Onofrio who played at Oral Roberts and six years in the Astros organization says it's great to be associated with the BJ program. "Just being part of a great tradition and winning program which helped me reinforce the idea of winning and getting to meet great people in the community. All the winning and traveling through this part of the country brings back great memories."

D'Onofrio was actually the nine hole hitter in a powerful BJ lineup which included slugging second baseman Chuck Melito and third baseman Fritz Connally. That team banged out the most hits (751), RBI's (565), and home runs (123) in BJ history. Legendary BJ Manager Bob Cerv helped that team put up eye popping numbers and D'Onofrio gives him credit. "I owe a lot of credit to Bob (Cerv). He really turned my career around actually. He changed some of my hitting technique and it was a great success after that."

That BJ team also has the longest winning streak in Liberal's history. They were 19-10 before tearing off a record 29 consecutive wins including an NBC championship win over the Santa Maria Indians to finish 48-10.

"We were an excellent team at that time," D'Onofrio said of the 1979 team. "We'd had some transition. Bob (Cerv) kicked us in the behind like only Bob can do. We also were all disappointed from the year before. I think that team was just as good or better even and we lost in the semifinals and we were greatly disappointed."

D'Onofrio says he has been in recent contact with Connally and NBC Pitcher of the Year in 1979 and 1980 Mike Moore. D'Onofrio has lived in Dallas the past 26 years.

His interview will air Friday morning during the Sportsguys on Talkradio 1270 and kscbnews.net.

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