

## EAGA Business Builder

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## Today's guest speaker was Tod Brown—University of New Mexico Baseball



Our guest speaker today was Tod Brown, Head Coach of the UNM Baseball Team. In big time college sports, knowing who is running the program tells a lot about the direction, and potential success of the program. Coach Brown grew up as an Air Force Brat, with 'home' being a new place every couple of years. Moving to a new location meant losing old friends to attend a new school. Participating in sports was a great way to meet new friends, so Tod started doing that. He became quite good at pitching a baseball, and ultimately played for the University of

Arizona team. From college, Mr. Brown got a shot at the big leagues when he was invited to spring training with the Cleveland Guardians (way back in those days, the team was known as the Cleveland Indians). The adventure didn't turn out as well as Tod had hoped and he was cut in the off season when the team opted for some other previously unknown lefthanded, fireball throwing pitcher named Bortolo Colon. So what would be next now that playing baseball in the major leagues was off the table? Good athletes that are also good people often find their way to a non-playing career in sports. And those avenues can originate in unexpected places. In Mr. Brown's case, his break into the world of coaching came when a chance encounter with his old high school chemistry teacher led to a job as a teacher/football coach/asst baseball coach. From there, Tod advanced into the college coaching ranks, albeit he was on the outer fringes of those ranks as the 4th assistant coach for an NCAA member team. NCAA rules only allowed for 3 paid coaches on a team, so technically, Mr. Brown was not a professional because he wasn't being paid. But that didn't last long. Soon he was on to other teams and an actual paid-professional status. Tod's first really big move was when at the young age of 25, he became head coach in the San Francisco Seals baseball program. In that arena, guys trying to make the pros would play a rigorous schedule of 72 games in 78 days hoping to perform well enough to land a position on one of the major league teams. Head coaching jobs are almost always a challenge, and quite often lead to unexpected situations. Such was the case for Mr. Brown when his activities landed him in prison. Actually his whole team was sent to San Quentin - to play a regularly scheduled game against the San Quinten Pirates baseball team. The Seals team had to go to the prison since, probably understandably, the Pirates are not allowed to play away games. The experience was a sort of surreal adventure, beginning with a caution by prison staff: "... be aware that if you are taken hostage, the prison will not negotiate for your release...". The game was played on an all dirt, no fence, field in the prison yard. In one play, a Pirates player hit the ball through the gap in the outfield. Without a fence, the ball rolled out into the common part of the yard and under a table where other prisoners were sitting. Presuming an 'out of play' situation, the Seals player gave the customary 'ground-rule-double' signal. One of the prisoners kicked the ball back into the playing area and the runner kept going; ending up on third base. Coach Tod protested that the runner should be moved back to second, but the umpire (turns out that he was also a prisoner) decided that the play would stand and was effectively a 'ground-rule-triple'. All in all the experience was a positive thing. The Pirates players were quite cordial and interactions with the Seals players were always friendly and of an interesting nature. Often, the Pirates conveyed the advice of "...do the right thing. Don't do something stupid that lands you in here". That message was even more powerfully presented through the circumstances of one of the Pirates pitchers. It is very likely that he was good enough to be playing professional baseball, but his past criminal activities eliminated that opportunity. After multiple arrests, he had been given a long prison sentence, ironically, under California's "Three strikes..." rule. Coach Brown's team did make it out of prison (actually winning the game, too). It wasn't very long before Tod had an opportunity to advanced farther up the ladder to 1st Assistant Coach at Bowling Green. After another 8 years, and two children, Mr. Brown took the head coaching position at North Dakota State. The season before he arrived the NDSU Bison had a record of 12 and 44. Coach Brown's final season there, the Bison were 42 and 19. He left NDSU to become the Head Baseball Coach for the University of New Mexico Lobos. Arriving during the pandemic area, Coach Brown tookg over the reigns at UNM in June 2021. He plans to get the Lobos back into NCAA tournament contention as soon as possible. The Lobos just recently beat 11th ranked Arizona and 9th ranked Texas Tech. Perhaps things are looking positive already. There will be obstacles to overcome though. There always are. Recruiting players is a challenge. Tod would like to continue attracting good players from within New Mexico and the state's new program of free tuition for in-state students will help with that. UNM has 11.7 scholarships to use for baseball players. The current team members average about 30% scholarship assistance. A combination of free tuition and partial scholarship could definitely provide incentives for in-state players to go to UNM. The new NCAA policies for the Transfer Portal and the N.I.L. (name, image and likeness financial benefits given to players) definitely generate hurdles for smaller schools when competing for players. The portal was put in place to give players stuck in the lower levels of a depth chart the ability to go to another school where they would get better playing opportunities. Instead, the portal has become a program that is unfair to smaller schools. Institutions (usually the smaller ones) take a chance on (or are better at seeing the potential of) a player that the bigger named schools pass over. After the player proves their abilities at the smaller school, the bigger schools encourage the player to enter The Portal where they can be picked up by the bigger name schools. The smaller schools take the chances, develop the players, then lose out to the poaching bigger schools. But whatever the challenges, UNM will continue to work on improving their roster, improving the player's skills and competing at a high level. Other hurdles to overcome include a never-enough financing situation. The UNM baseball program does not generate a big revenue stream like the football and basketball programs do, so Coach Brown encourages a couple of things for those that want to help the baseball team: 1) Support the football and basket ball programs. Revenues from those sports are shared with the 'smaller' programs, like baseball; 2) Support the baseball fundraisers. Revenues from those events go directly to aid the baseball program. UNM's baseball facilities have definitely seen improvement over that past few years, but there is always a need for maintenance and for new equipment and technologies. One example is the NCAA's recent rule change to now allow 1 way communication between a coach and the catcher. That radio system costs about \$5,000...and is only one of many needs. From what we heard today, Coach Brown has the work ethic, the experience and the desire to get UNM baseball to a high level of success. And he intends to do it with players that are quality individuals, both on and off the field. It would be good for us to do what we can to help the lefthanded high school science teacher make the UNM Baseball program a success.

## Leads & Business Information:

BEST FRIENDS, pet crematorium, opening @ 1001E Menaul NE  
MAUI WOWIE DISPENSARY opening @ 2130 San Mateo NE, Suite B  
- Lionel Specter—ZEON Signs

## Reciprocity:

None submitted this week

- ◆ Welcome to our newest member: RXL, LLC Representative: John Rockwell email: jrockwell360@gmail.com
- ◆ Board Members please note: There will be a meeting right after breakfast on May 10th.
- ◆ The EAGA Golf Tournament will be June 10th at Santa Ana Golf Club. Starting time is 1:00pm. Cost is \$20 for members and \$85 for guests. (The fees will be billed to your EAGA account. Don't bring payment to the event). The committee is also soliciting hole sponsors at \$100 each. Signup sheets for members, guests and hole sponsors will be available at breakfast for the next couple of weeks. Contact Jerry Becker (jerry@steamaticnm.com) if you need more information.
- ◆ There will not be a breakfast meeting on May 31 in honor of Memorial Day.
- ◆ HELP! We need speakers and badge board attendants. The last scheduled speaker is this coming Tuesday (May 10th). After that everything is wide open. See the incredible empty space at the bottom of this page. We want to hear your story, your experiences, your successes. Please contact Mario if you can take one of the available days. It would be greatly appreciated.

## Badge Board Greeters

May 10 <sup>th</sup>	Robert Biernacki—Waterquest Landscaping
May 17 <sup>th</sup>	Ben Hoffman—Kinney Brick Company
May 24 <sup>th</sup>	Paul Losey—Covenant Schools of America
May 31 <sup>st</sup>	<b>No meeting –Memorial Day Holiday</b>
June 7 <sup>th</sup>	Rick Reese—Blue Ristra
June 14 <sup>th</sup>	Rich Rosley—A-TECH Security
June 21 <sup>st</sup>	Chuck Osborn—Steamatic of Albuquerque & Santa Fe
June 28 <sup>th</sup>	John Woods—PHOCUS Real Estate

## Upcoming Speakers

May 10 <sup>th</sup>	Thomas Briones—Briones Business Law Consulting
May 17 <sup>th</sup>	
May 24 <sup>th</sup>	
May 31 <sup>st</sup>	<b>No meeting –Memorial Day Holiday</b>
June 7 <sup>th</sup>	
June 14 <sup>th</sup>	
June 21 <sup>st</sup>	
June 28 <sup>th</sup>	
July 5 <sup>th</sup>	<b>No meeting –Fourth of July Holiday</b>
July 12 <sup>th</sup>	

Contact information for Executive Director: Mario Hernandez

Phone: 505-239-0259 email: eagaed@gmail.com

8100 Wyoming Blvd NE; Suite M-4 #35 Albuquerque, NM 87113