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MIZZOU

The Duke of Cumberland

Mizzou alumnus is an up-and-coming coach in the Garden State.



The 2014 Cumberland County [New Jersey] Community College Dukes made it to the National Junior College Athletic Association Division III National Championship in Tyler, Texas, before falling to the host school in the final game.

Story by Marcus Wilkins

Photos courtesy of Keith Gorman

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“This is a simple game: You throw the ball, you hit the ball, you catch the ball. You got it?!” — Skip, manager in Bull Durham

Keith Gorman has too much respect for his talented squad to use the expression “dumb it down.” But that’s precisely what he does when asked for his secret to turning around a baseball program mired in a 10-year stretch of losing seasons.

The Cumberland County [New Jersey] College coach even sounds a bit like the boisterous skipper in the aforementioned classic film.

“I don’t know if other coaches simplify the fundamentals of the game or not, but we need to be able to catch and throw the baseball better than the other team,” says Gorman, BS ’03. “That’s what my hometown Kansas City Royals are doing better than anyone else right now — catching the ball.”

Gorman, who in 2015 begins his fourth season as Cumberland’s baseball coach and his third as its athletic director, led the school to a National Junior College Athletic Association Division III championship appearance. His No. 1-seeded Dukes fell to tournament host and second-seed Tyler [Texas] Junior College 6–3 in the final game May 28, 2014.

Although that moment was technically the pinnacle of Gorman’s young coaching career, it sure felt like soul-crushing defeat.

“You work for something so long, all together pushing on the same side of the rock with one thing on our minds, and you come up just short,” Gorman says. “It

really takes a toll. I thanked [the players] for putting in the work and allowing the coaching staff to ride along with them, and I told them I was proud of them.”

Gorman is humble, but his accomplishments are accumulating. In his previous gig, he led Holy Spirit High School in Absecon, New Jersey, to a 120–54 record while winning three consecutive conference titles. In Gorman’s first season at Cumberland in 2013, the Dukes’ 24–18 record was the fourth best in school history. The team set the school record the following season with a 33–14 mark, then broke that record in 2014 finishing 49–10.



In three seasons at Cumberland, Gorman (No. 7) has consistently improved the program and developed junior college players for bigger stages.

Now the community college in Vineland, New Jersey, is one of the premier programs of the region, and recruiting has begun to flourish as the Dukes groom more and more players to transfer to D-I schools.

The son of a baseball coach, Gorman played at Kansas City Kansas Community College and later North Central Missouri College before realizing coaching was in his blood. Despite earning a bachelor’s degree in biological science at MU, Gorman’s playing career didn’t round the Taylor Stadium bases.

“I had a knee injury in my final game my sophomore

year [at NCMC], and it really started to bother me in the summer,” says Gorman, who played baseball, football and basketball in high school. “In fact, I was playing more basketball and football at the MU rec than anything else.”

His multisport roots make Gorman well suited for his duties as athletic director, and as his career path ascends, more opportunities are likely.

“I want to make [Cumberland] a consistent winner, as we’ve done in the short term here,” Gorman says. “Obviously I’d like to get to the Division I or II level, but I wouldn’t leave here unless it was a great opportunity.”

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