



During his 30 years as the head baseball coach at Barbe High School, Glenn Cecchini has made the program a regional powerhouse, among the elite in the state - with nine titles - and even a national championship.

All the while, he has made the Bucs a family, one that sticks together even after the players have left Lake Charles. Ask any one of his former players and they will say the same thing; they still have Buc pride. "Coach taught us more than baseball -- he taught us about life and what it takes to become a winner on and off the field," former Bucs star Gunner Leger said after his freshman year at Louisiana-Lafayette in the spring of 2015.

Leger is just one of the latest former Cecchini players who has gone on to make a name for himself on the next level of baseball. That includes a pair of high draft pick sons who are currently playing professionally.

The Cecchini baseball tree has many branches and reaches all parts of the country. It even spread internationally last summer when he led the "18 and under" USA National Team to the title as the first high school coach to do so. He is once again running the national under-18 team this summer and will conclude that work this month. Currently his Barbe program is on a three-year run at winning the Class 5A state championship, as well.

Coach Cecchini recently answered questions about his program and himself for *Thrive*.

# first person

with Glenn Cecchini *by Jim Gazzolo*

**What gives you more pleasure -- winning or seeing your players succeed on the next level?**

It is not about me. Seeing players succeed on and off the field means much more to me. Baseball mirrors life to me and it's an everyday thing. We try to teach life through baseball. There are so many ups and downs in baseball, just like in life, and you can learn from the game so much.

**What was it like to represent our country in baseball?**

Humbling, incredible, and an honor to be able to coach some of the best young players in the game to the World Cup gold medal. To represent my country, especially with the game I love -- it was surreal. It meant so much to me, I can't really say.

**When did you realize you had a special program at Barbe?**

It was always the dream and the goal, but it was not an easy process. I kind of realized it with the first state championship. We started to get recognition and then things just took off. It wasn't just one thing or one game; it was a process with a lot of hard work and things just kind of snowballed.

**What makes each year fresh for you?**

New challenges, new motivations. I try to find ways to make things new. I'm always looking for ways to inspire, to get the new kids to buy into what we are doing. We always want to give the players credit. We want the new group to believe in themselves and make it fresh for them.

**What do you want your legacy to be?**

That all things are possible. I want to help inspire people to do special things, to show people from all over the country you can do this. I share my dreams with a lot of people, you can't do this all by yourself. If you can do it in Lake Charles, people can do this in other parts of the country, as well.

**Why is family and faith such an important part of you and your program?**

I was a slow learner. It took me 51 years to learn it. This was a spiritual growth. There are a lot of people in the world that don't have the opportunities we have in America and I want to pass it along. Learn that every day is a blessing. It is a big part of what we do.

**What's it like to have two sons play professionally in the sport you taught them?**

I use that as an example of what can happen for others. We want to inspire our kids. It is gratifying to see them live out their goals. We want our kids to live their dreams. To see their goals come true, even with the ups and downs, is awesome. It is fun to watch them doing something they love so much and dreamed about for years.

**Is a fourth title in a row for Barbe within reach and what would that mean?**

That is our goal. Somebody has to be the first to do so, it might as well be us.

