



AT LEFT: Eaton's head coach Jim Danley, right, and assistant coach Bob Ervin have been coaching baseball together for 31 years, 28 of those at Eaton. Danley and Ervin will try to guide their team to a state-record 43rd straight win on Saturday.

RICHARD M. HACKETT
Greeley Tribune

BOTTOM INSET: Danley, left, and Ervin in a 1972 photo.

COURTESY PHOTO

Together forever

Longtime Eaton baseball coaches know what it takes to build winning team

BY T.M. FASANO
Greeley Tribune

EATON — Eaton head baseball coach Jim Danley and his longtime assistant Bob Ervin are into making history these days.

When Danley and Ervin took over the Reds way back in 1972, all they wanted to do was make some kind of success out of the program.

Some would say that they overextended themselves.

Around noon on Saturday, Danley and Ervin could be a part of something that no

other coaches have experienced in the history of Colorado high school baseball.

A win over Holy Family (12-6) in the Class 3A Region 1 semifinals, which starts at 10 a.m. Saturday at Butch Butler Field, would be Eaton's 43rd straight, an all-time state record that would pass Valley (1979-81) and Grand Junction (1960-62) on the consecutive wins list.

Top-ranked Eaton (18-0) would then face the winner of Paonia and Falcon in the regional championship game at 3 p.m for a berth in the Final Four May 21-22 in Denver.

In the other 3A playoff regional of interest to Weld County baseball fans, Roo-



sevelt (13-4) travels to Pueblo's Runyon Field for a Region 4 game against D'Evelyn (9-10) at 12:30 p.m. A Rough Riders win would put them in the championship game against the winner of No. 2 Lamar or Erie for a chance to play in the Final Four.

Danley, 52, and Ervin, 53, started coaching summer baseball together in

1969.

They've been together so long, they're finishing each other's sentences.

"We know what each other is going to say before he says it," Danley joked.

Danley's and Ervin's 28-year tenure with Eaton's high school baseball team has spanned the Nixon Ad-

ministration, Ford Administration, Carter Administration, Reagan Administration, Bush Administration and is on the tail end of the Clinton Administration.

They've made it through the Beach Boys, Hardy Boys and Backstreet Boys, while watching the younger generation wear platform shoes, bell bottoms, leisure suits, black Chuck Taylor Converse high tops, white Air Jordan medium cuts and now back to bell bottoms.

The one outfit that went unchanged over all the years was the pinstripes of the Eaton Reds.

They're the Hope and Crosby, Carson and McMahon and Batman and Robin of Colorado baseball. They've been around longer than traffic on Interstate 25.

Danley coaches third base. Ervin coaches first base. The 5-foot-8 Danley used to have hair. The 6-3 Ervin used to

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have black hair.

That's when they first met at Eaton High School when Danley was teaching German and Ervin was teaching English. Ervin is still teaching at the high school, while Danley moved over to the middle school and is a counselor.

Both know what it's like to wait for a state title. After 23 years of coaching the Reds, the elusive state baseball title came home to Eaton in 1994. They've won two more titles since '94 and will be favored to win their fourth state title in six years next weekend if they survive Saturday's regionals.

"From 1973 to 1993 we did not win a state title," Ervin said. "We still remember how long it takes to build a team."

This current crop of Reds know what the two men mean to the Eaton program.

"They put so much time into this program. They've been around forever," said all-state third baseman Mike Carrasco, who was a bat boy for the Reds when he was in elementary school and the two coaches were still trying to win their first state title. "They've coached some of the parents here. They keep the tradition going. They just love baseball and that rubs off on us."

Up until three summers ago, Ervin and Danley coached the Eaton high school players in the Legion B program. Ervin, who won his first state title as the Reds' girls basketball coach last winter, gave up coaching summer baseball to concentrate on coaching the girls in the summer.

Growing up in a program since the age of 5 when future Reds start playing T-ball, every Eaton baseball prospect knows what to expect before ever entering high school.

Reds assistant coach Randy Sparkman has been with the baseball program for the past nine years

and said it's such a benefit to have players come into a familiar system that they've been in for 10 years.

"The kids know what's expected. They don't have to learn a lot of coaching philosophies," Sparkman said. "It's been the same when they were in the fifth grade watching high school ball. They wear the same uniforms. (Danley and Ervin) have coached players who have boys coming through high school. You just don't see that."

Danley and Ervin have coached baseball together 13 years longer than their center fielder Jason Smith has been alive.

"That's pretty amazing," said the 18-year-old Smith. "They love this game. They make you think about the game. To them, baseball is more of a mental game than a physical game."

Jeff Meyers, a four-year starter and all-stater at shortstop, said Danley and Ervin are great coaches.

"I don't know what else to say. They know baseball probably better than most people in the state. Coach (Danley) has won way over 400 games. He knows how to win."

With a record of 436 wins and only 120 losses in 28 years, win No. 437 against Holy Family would be the one victory that makes state history.

There's the three state titles, 12 Final Four appearances, nine regional championships, 16 league titles and one game away from a state-record 43 straight, but all of that isn't the most important accomplishment to Danley.

He said his biggest accomplishment is that his teams, with Ervin coaching right with him, have made the state playoffs every year since 1983.

"That says more about the youth coaches we have and the dozens and dozens of kids who have

WHAT A RUN

THE DANLEY-ERVIN YEARS

Year	Wins	Losses	Final Four
1972	13	5	
1973	11	6	
1974	9	7	
1975	6	9	
1976	13	7	*
1977	9	7	
1978	11	6	
1979	14	5	
1980	13	6	
1981	19	3	*
1982	14	4	
1983	15	1	*
1984	17	1	
1985	21	2	*
1986	15	4	
1987	17	4	
1988	16	4	
1989	19	3	*
1990	16	3	
1991	14	9	*
1992	14	6	
1993	19	4	*
1994	20	3	*
(1st)			
1995	22	1	*
(1st)			
1996	18	6	*
1997	19	4	*
1998	24	0	*
(1st)			
1999	18	0	???
Overall	436	120	.784

played here and have taken the program in the right direction," Danley said. "The credit should go to the entire community and the coaches and players who have worn the pinstripes."

But all along the way, Danley and Ervin have been there to nurture this baby. A baby that has captured the attention of every baseball fan in the state.