

NCSS Player Interview – Sammy Olivas

Player Highlight – Who Am I? – I am Sammy Olivas

I played in NCSS for about as long as anybody, 18 years. I remember playing with Hank Mason at Bradley Field, Joe Raffa at Brengle Terrace and voting in Don Chandler as commissioner. When Johnnie Martinez got me to join NCSS around the turn of the century, he didn't even have to borrow money to play the league initiation fee - \$10.

Born in Escondido CA December 7, 1946, I was the 5th of 8 children. Even at a young age I was a noted Marbles champion back in 1959, wielding a massive agate. I won an early baseball (or was it football?) championship at St. Mary's parochial school in 1960. Graduating with the class of 1966 at Orange Glen High School, I went on to Palomar College where I was a QB and linebacker hurting the scales at 165 pounds after the coach put me on a special diet to bulk up (I had played middle linebacker at 150 pounds). I remember playing with local Oceanside legends Chris Chambliss (New York Yankees) and Willie Buchanon (Green Bay Packers and later San Diego Chargers). I also played with Tom Dempsey, long before he kicked his impossible record 63-yard field goal.

After High School I joined Uncle Sam's Army. I'm the only guy the Phantom writer know who was drafted four times. Too bad it was never by a pro team. The fourth time was a charm in 1070 when the draft numbers were called and I drew lucky #12. I served six years as a Supply Sergeant and later nine years in the National Guard. I spent some of those years playing center field on the Army's Fastpitch softball team in Germany. I still remember a 3-run home run inside-the-park to win the Armed Services championship game for Army.

After the Army fate stepped in. I played with my brother 1973-1975 on a minor league or semi-pro baseball team in the Carmel/Monterey area on a team sponsored by Herman Edwards, of SDSU, New York Jets and KC Chiefs fame. After Injuring my ankle, "Barbara" kinda started taking care of me. Things happened, we married and have stayed together 47 years. The Phantom takes the odds he'll make 48.

Alternatively known as "My First Name Sosa" or "My First Name Montoya" (a worker) I worked in construction, often with asphalt. In 1988, while running a "roller" I had an accident and got partially run over by the roller as I jumped off. I was back on my feet and playing again in six months. But some feel that is where I started to lose some of my blinding speed.

In NCSS I most recently played on Team 3's championship team, one of many I have enjoyed. While I doesn't have a favorite NCSS player, Willie Mays was my favorite MLB ballplayer. My favorite play of all time was a pop-up at Brengle Terrace. It will be hard for me to put in words. But looking directly into the sun, I stuck my glove up high, nodded my head down low (looking at the ground), waited for the impact and - miraculously caught the ball. The Phantom sure could have used that play today. By the way, if you ever need to check an old schedule, I have every one since 2005.

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I asked the man what advice he has to offer the young'uns in our league. He answered with two words. "Show up!"

I and my wife Barbara have been married 48 years. My daughter, Christina, lives in Benton OR, and son, Christopher in Smyrna TN, which was recently listed by U.S. News & World Report as one of the best places in the United States to retire. You better read this quick because by the time you're done, that's where I will live – I'm pulling the plug on San Marcos and not even taking my bat with me. Does anyone want a deal on a gently used Worth bat?

Alternate ending: The next time you hear from me, I will probably be the chief caretaker of the Vanderbilt Commodores College baseball field, my dream job. Part-time of course.

p.s. Head coach Tim Corbin has been there 18 years – same as my tour at NCSS - A coincidence?



Me in 2004 at age 104