

# Eddie O'Brien

They say the true test of a man's character is what he does when no one is watching. Although many watched Ed O'Brien on the baseball field or on the basketball court, it was his off-field values that made him a legend in the hearts and minds of those who knew him. Ed was born in South Amboy, NJ to Margaret and Edward "The Chief" O'Brien. A gifted athlete, Ed and his identical twin brother, John, passed up offers to play major league baseball immediately after high school to pursue athletic scholarships that could provide them a valuable college education. That opportunity came after meeting then Seattle University basketball and baseball coach Al Brightman at a semi-pro baseball tournament in Wichita, KS, in 1949. Al offered them both athletic scholarships to play for the SU Chieftains.

From 1950 to 1953, Ed helped anchor the SU basketball team to a 90-17 record (.841), averaging 13 points per game. Ed played a key role in the infamous defeat of the Harlem Globetrotters in 1952. Additionally, Ed played baseball for SU from 1950 to 1952, hitting .431 with nine home runs during the 1952 season.

After the 1953 NCAA Basketball Tournament, the twins began their professional baseball career. Encouraged to join Pittsburg by part owner, Bing Cosby, the twins signed with the Pirates, where Ed played from 1953 until 1958. Ed's athletic career was interrupted while he served his country in the US Army from September 1953 to June 1955. While with the Pirates, Ed formed a close relationship with General Manager, Branch Rickey, who earlier had famously broken the color barrier by signing Jackie Robinson. Ed and John made history as the first set of twins to play on the same team in the major leagues. The O'Briens ended their careers with major-league records for most games and most double plays by a second base/shortstop brother combination - a record that was eventually broken by the Ripkens, Cal and Billy.

Ed returned to Seattle U in 1958 as Athletic Director for 22 years and head baseball coach for a total of 14 years, compiling a record of 276-135 (.672). Ed and his brothers, through O'Brien Baseball Services, coached more than 6,000 children in the fundamentals of baseball. For 14 years, Ed enjoyed coaching the "Pac Asians", a women's softball team, who became extended family.

Ed also continued to be a strong supporter of the SU athletics program as it renewed its membership within the NCAA and reclassified to Division I status. The annual fundraising golf tournament benefiting the men's basketball program is named after the O'Brien brothers. As a thank you to the twins for their invaluable contribution to the University, SU named the O'Brien Center for Athletic Administration in their honor in 2010.

Published in The Seattle Times from Feb. 26 to Feb. 27, 2014