

Rhys Casley: Captain, 2013 World Champion New Zealand Black Sox

Former Black Sox captain Rhys Casley was a member of the Black Sox from 2001-2013 and Captain of the team from 2009 to 2013. He was captain of the New Zealand softball team which won the Mens' Softball World Championship, hitting the winning home run in the final against Venezuela.

He first played softball at Fraser Park as a five year old, represented Hutt Valley in softball, played his first game for the Black Sox at Fraser Park and finished his softball career with the Dodgers. His father Barrie Casley played softball for the Hutt Valley from the 1970s to the 1990s. Son Danny (8) plays Little League softball for the Hutt Valley under-9s representative team.

1. When did you first visit/play sport at Fraser Park? What were your first memories?

I was five when I started playing for Wainuiomata and we had games at Fraser Park. My first memories are watching my Dad playing at the old skin diamond under the grandstand when I was about five. I went on to be the bat boy for his father's team, Hutt Valley Marist, when I was about eight or nine. I really loved being around the team. I was paid in lollies and was a young fella out with Dad. They used to treat me really well and I was exposed to sport at the top level and enjoyed interacting with players from all over the world.

2. How many years have you been associated with Fraser Park?

About 35 years from when I was five until I played with the Dodgers in the last five years of my career.

3. Can you describe some highlights from your association with Fraser Park?

I was in the Hutt Valley senior mens' team from the late 1990s to 2011. We won the national title in 1999, 2000 and 2001 (at Fraser Park) and it hasn't been won again until this year.

In 2001 I debuted for the Black Sox in a game against Japan at Fraser Park, which we won. It was really nice to play that game on my home-ground in front of family, friends and Hutt team mates. The Black Sox didn't play at Fraser Park a lot but we ran some coaching clinics and had a lot of training sessions there. It was great to interact with the locals. When I was playing with the Dodgers, Fraser Park was our home ground.

4. What do you think about the new Sportsville development? How will it change things for your sport?

What a great facility to have for the Hutt. I hope in time we can hold big international sporting events to showcase our community. It would be great for our own national teams to also utilise the facility and help create awareness for our respective sports. Hopefully we can get our national teams back here to play. Softball still holds a special place in our community and has a very rich heritage and a fantastic legacy of success.



Rhys and son Danny doing a lap of honour after New Zealand won the World Series in 2013.