

Business Professor Studies Baseball's Leaders

Teaching on and off the field

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Pictured from left to right: KU Instructor Dr. Rebecca Herman with Managers Ned Yost of the Kansas City Royals; Don Mattingly of the Los Angeles Dodgers; and Manny Acta of the Cleveland Indians.

Two of **Dr. Rebecca Herman's** favorite topics are leadership and baseball.

On weekdays, Rebecca teaches graduate courses in leadership and organizational behavior in Kaplan University's School of Business. On weekends, she can often be seen in the stands at San Diego Padres' games, cheering on the home team.

So it was with great delight last year when Rebecca hit upon the Grand Slam of all research projects: a study of leadership in Major League Baseball.

"The key to effective research is marrying your passions," Rebecca said. "I'm passionate about leadership and a huge baseball fan, and there was very little research about leadership in Major League Baseball or what it takes to be a great leader in the sport. It seemed to be the perfect marriage."

Baseball also seemed to be the perfect microcosm for studying the essentials of leadership—strategy, persuasion, discipline, analysis and crisis management—qualities on exhibit at every playing field.

Rebecca teamed with Dr. Howard Fero, a former Kaplan instructor who shares her interests, and together they hatched a game plan.

After reviewing the literature and reading former managers' stories and biographies, they set out to do some real-time field research.

First up: Spring training

In March, Howard visited the Grapefruit League in Florida and Rebecca went to the Cactus League in Arizona. Each spent time inside team locker rooms with pencils, notepads and tape recorders in hand.

“We interviewed major league managers, met with players, and took in the sights and sounds of America’s greatest pastime,” Rebecca said. “For several days, we experienced what it’s like to be members’ of the sports media.”

The two scored interviews with a number of managers, including Don Mattingly of the Los Angeles Dodgers and Davey Johnson of the Washington Nationals, who led the New York Mets to a world championship in 1986.

In baseball parlance, their research is still in its early innings.

“We hope to discover how managers gain trust from players, what it takes to motivate a diverse team, when to lead by the numbers and when to lead from the heart, and much more,” added Rebecca.

If things go as planned, Rebecca and Howard’s research will culminate in a book designed to break new ground on leadership practices that transcend the world of baseball. The intention is that “baseball enthusiasts, industry leaders, and anyone who wants a practical approach to increasing their leadership effectiveness will find usefulness [as well as engaging stories] in our work,” said Rebecca.

For more information on the professors’ research as well as photos of the pair with some baseball legends, check out <http://leadmeouttotheballgame.com>.

<http://knet.kaplan.edu/kunet/News/Pages/Business-Professor-Studies-Baseball's-Leaders.aspx>

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