

The Bob Vrbicek Metro Baseball Tournament takes place right at the start of each baseball season for Cedar Rapids Metro teams. None of today's players (and fewer and fewer coaches) have any first-hand knowledge of Bob Vrbicek (pronounced VERB-A-CHECK), so here's a quick synopsis of why this tournament which is traditionally the start of the baseball season bears his name.

Verb (as he was known throughout the community) was a truly local product of Cedar Rapids, born in 1929. He played American Legion baseball and attended Wilson High School where he played center field on back-to-back state champion baseball teams in 1947 and 1948 (Wilson compiled a 50-3 record over those two seasons). Vrbicek is circled below in a picture taken immediately after capturing the state title in 1947.



After serving in the Army during the Korean War, Vrbicek returned to Cedar Rapids and embarked on a long and influential career teaching, coaching at the junior and senior high levels, and officiating high school and collegiate games, all while mentoring those around him.

Among an array of accolades, Verb was honored with induction into Iowa High School Baseball Coaches Association Hall of Fame as an umpire and Iowa High School Athletic Association Hall of Fame as an official.

Robert J. (Bob) Vrbicek died in 1999 and is fondly remembered as an educator, a coach, an official, a mentor, a friend and an example of the many incredible values one can learn and teach through sports.