

The heart of the 2001 NJ SIAA Baseball Tournament was centered in the Shore's best baseball town: Toms River. Toms River East and Toms River South both had state championship contenders.

Toms River East, coached by Bill Frank and led by catcher Colin Gaynor and a 7-foot-11 right-handed pitcher named Ryan Doherty, who was known as "The Big Unit" because of his height, but who Tony, in one of his infamous typos, once called "Bug Unit."

Toms River South, coached by Bill Frank's legendary older brother Ken, was led by pitcher/outfielder Jeff Frazier and had a freshman on the team named Todd Frazier.

Thanks to APP Scholastic Editors Joe Zedalis and Karen Wall and Observer sports editor Dave Biggy, Tony and I adopted the plan of alternating when it came to covering Toms River East and Toms River South's games in the state tournament one day. I would cover Toms River East and he Toms River South and the next state tournament day, we would switch.

We had both just mastered how to use cell phones and would call each other with updates and then relay them to the Frank Brothers.

The first Friday of the state tournament, Tony was at Toms River South and I was at Toms River East. Toms River South won easily.

Toms River East was trailing a very good Cherokee team by a run in the sixth. Colin Gaynor is at bat with the bases loaded and two out -

the big moment in the game. (My cell phone rings typical Tony timing). I don't answer because I want to watch the at-bat and

capture all the drama for the non-Pulitzer prize story I would eventually write. I knew Gaynor was going to get a hit. Tony keeps calling and calling. I keep not answering.

Gaynor gets the hit to put Toms River East ahead. I finally call Tony back. This time, he doesn't answer because he was busy doing his interviews. It's not until

after the Toms River East game ended that Tony and I get in touch with each other and I tell him about Gaynor's hit.

But, that whole state tournament was fun. Toms River East and Toms River South kept winning. And Tony and I kept serving as the relay men to Ken and Bill Frank to tell them how they know the other was doing. Every time I see Bill Frank he brings up how Tony and I kept them in touch with how the other was doing.

For the record, Toms River East won the Group IV state title. Toms River South lost in the Group III state final. And Tony and I got to see both games because the games started at different times.

-- Steve Falk