

Head Coach Interview – Great Britain Baseball

Stephan Rapaglia was born in Tübingen Germany, and grew up in Rye, New York. He was appointed to the position of Great Britain National Team head coach in March 2004 and brought years of successful collegiate, international and professional coaching experience to the GB programme. This includes time as head coach with the Johnstown Johnnies, an independent minor league franchise in the US; head coach with the Tübingen Hawks in the German Bundesliga; and an assistant coaching position with Iona College, a university team playing at the top level of US collegiate athletics.

Prior to coaching, Stephan enjoyed a successful career as a player in the US and Europe, including a stint in the Houston Astros organisation. In 2007, at his second European Championship, Stephan led Great Britain to a silver medal finish and automatic qualification for the 2009 Baseball World Cup.

Stephan combines his love of baseball with a career as a lawyer for Urstadt Biddle Properties in Greenwich, Connecticut. He now lives in Ridgefield, Connecticut, with wife Megan, daughter Hannah, aged 10 and twin daughters Katie and Sarah, aged 5.

What is your earliest baseball memory?

-My earliest baseball memories are of my father throwing pop-ups to me in the street in front of our apartment in Rye, NY.

Are there any coaches from your playing experience that have shaped your coaching style?

-I'm not sure that I have a specific coaching style. But, I certainly had many excellent coaches during my playing days, and I've taken much from each of them. I've also taken much from the tremendous coaches whom I've worked with. I am very fortunate that I currently get to work with a great staff (Charlie Sullivan, Brian Cleary, Alan Dean, Alan Smith and Brant Ust), and I get good ideas from these guys every day. The bottom line is that I don't claim to have many original ideas regarding how best to play the game, but I am capable of recognizing good ideas and adapting them for the purposes of the GB team.

What has been your best experience as the head coach of the Great Britain National Team?

-Sharing the silver medal at the 2007 EC with a group of players and coaches who pulled for each other at all times and took nothing for granted.

What do you find to be the most rewarding aspect of coaching the Great Britain team?

-Frankly, I consider it a great privilege to work with the calibre of people (players and coaches alike) that we have in the GB programme. The members of the GB programme take great pride in representing GB, and they make great personal and financial sacrifices for the opportunity to put on the GB uniform.

What are your goals for GB at the 2009 Baseball World Cup?

- We will strive to win every game that we play. That said, we are well aware of this event's specific format, and we will do everything that we can to advance to the 2nd round. From that point forward, we will just take it one game at a time.