



# Koa Travel Baseball Staff Bios

## Oscar Espinal, 10u Coach

**How long have you been with Koa, and in what capacity:** I joined the Koa family in January 2018.

**Playing/coaching experience:** Assistant coach for one season at my HS before joining Koa. 2x champion in Koa's BABL A division. I am also a coach in the BABL AA division and assist in the Travel program.

**What makes you tick (what motivates you)?** Living in each moment as if it were my last. I try to make the best out of every situation. There might not be a tomorrow, "Yesterday is history and tomorrow's a mystery, today is a gift, which is why they call it the present."

**What's the best thing about baseball?** The best thing about baseball, in my opinion, is, once the cleats are laced, and the umpire yells "PLAY BALL!." That feeling of "alright, let's do this!" knowing that your team is behind you, that they're all there for the same common goal and they are going to give it their ALL!

**Non-baseball interests:** I have been doing stand-up comedy since the age of 18, Besides writing jokes, I spend my spare time working on a screen play.



## Rob Castillo , 10u Coach

**How Long Coaching for Koa, Capacities:** This will be my second season with Koa Sports and many more to come!

**What Makes You Tick/ Motivated:** Teaching the game. It gives me the gratification that they have learned something from me. Seeing that smile on their face, and watching them play with fun puts a smile on my face!! I have a saying, 'believe in yourself' and everything will be all right while playing baseball.

**Previous Baseball Experience:** Started playing baseball at 8. 1981 Montgomery County Recreation League. Played in middle school with Catholic Youth Organization with St. Jerome's Hyattsville, MD. Attended DeMatha Catholic HS, in Hyattsville played baseball there for 3 years. During my high school career, played Babe Ruth and American Legion. I had an opportunity to play in Nicaragua in an amateur league after graduating from High School.

**Off-field Interests:** Love to hang out with my wife and take long walks with my dog, Makoto. I have twin boys age 14, Leo and Dylan.





## Steve Friedman, 11u Coach

**How long have you been with Koa/ Capacities:** I have been with Koa since January of 2017. I coached 3 seasons of BABL and this Spring will be my 4th season coaching travel.

**Playing/Coaching Experience:** I played many years of travel baseball in MCBA, JV and Varsity starting shortstop at Rockville High School, 1 fall season at Montgomery College.

**What motivates you?** The opportunity to get better in any way, every day. Nothing is more rewarding for me than seeing the potential in a kid and being able to help them reach their goals and be they best player and person they can be.

**Non-baseball interests:** Going on bike rides and playing pick up basketball



## Stephen Cuccia, 11u Coach

**What does Shaping Kids' Lives Through Sports mean to you?:**

"Building the kids to not only be better players on the baseball field, but overall shaping their lives into being more positive, disciplined, and hardworking; being their best self on and off the field."

**Playing Experience:** Coach Stephen played Travel Baseball from little league through high school (including a trip to Cooperstown) with the Crofton Baseball Club. He played pitcher and first baseman for four years at Arundel High School.

**Coaching/Mentoring Experience:** Stephen has worked many different athletic realms. He worked as a ski instructor in Winter Park, Colorado. Stephen also worked as a golf instructor at Lake Presidential, Maryland and Keystone River Course, Colorado. He also has coached Koa 11U Travel Baseball.

**Season Started with Koa Sports:** Fall 2019

**Off the Field Interests:** Skiing Mountain Biking Golf Hiking Spending time with family





## Howard Bolden, 12u Coach

**How Long Coaching for Koa, Capacities:** I have been with Koa for 3 years. 3 season coaching BABL with one undefeated season + one championship. 6 seasons of travel baseball, 3 with 12u, 2 with 13u, 1 fall season with 14u.

**What Makes You Tick/Motivated:** I love the game and I love seeing the kids get better. I want to teach them as much as possible about the game I have to make them the best coaches possible.

**Previous Baseball Experience:**

4 years varsity baseball in High School. 2 years of club baseball at UVA.

**Local Connection:** Lives in Falls Church, originally from Lynchburg, VA. Lived in the DC Area for 20 years.

**Off-field Interests:** I DJ as a hobby and work with a pit bull rescue group.



## John Paseur, 12u Coach

**How Long Coaching for Koa, Capacities:** This is my second year with Koa; I've coached the Splitters in the fall of 2016, spring of 2017, including a championship in the fall of 2017, and will continue into 2018. I've also had the pleasure of coaching Koa's 10u Travel team in the spring, summer, and fall of 2017, and am excited about our upcoming 2018 schedule.

**What Makes You Tick/Motivated:** I enjoy coaching because I love the game. Teaching and sharing my knowledge, experience, and skills with young men, I hope to not only enable them to succeed on the playing field but in the classroom, and in life beyond baseball.

**Previous Baseball Experience:** I played a little D3 baseball for Johns Hopkins University, where I graduated from in 2016.

**Local Connection:** I'm from McLean, Virginia, and attended The Landon School in Bethesda, Maryland.

**Off-field Interests:** When I'm not out on the field, I can be found around Koa's HQ, helping out with hitting or catching clinics.





## Brock Hunter, 13u Coach

**What does Shaping Kids' Lives Through Sports mean to you?:**

"Helping kids grow up, learn life lessons, and skills through sports to get real life experiences."

**Playing Experience:** Played in Great Falls Little League and McLean Babe Ruth when I was a kid. Graduated from McLean High school and played three years at Coastal Carolina before Tommy John. I then played my senior season at George Mason. Also played two summers in the Valley baseball summer league for the Strasburg Express.

**Coaching Experience:** Coach Brock began coaching at Lake Braddock Secondary School in fall of 2017. Once his playing career was over he started as a pitching coach for the Loudoun Riverdogs in the Cal Ripken Collegiate league in the summer of 2018 and joining the T Bolts for 2019. He has also has coached the Koa 12U Travel Baseball team.

**Season Started with Koa Sports:** 2009 as a player 2018 as a coach.

**Off the Field Interests:** Hanging out with his dogs, Watching sports, Playing basketball and baseball, Videogames



## Greg Popatak, 13u Coach

**What does Shaping Kids' Lives Through Sports mean to you?:**

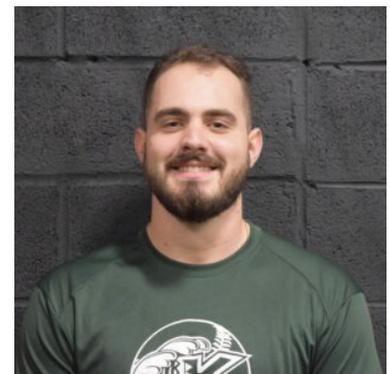
"Making kids into better people by challenging them to work with their peers."

**Playing Experience:** Coach Greg played 4 years of varsity baseball in High School as a starter. After graduation, he played D1 ball at George Mason.

**Coaching/Mentoring Experience:** Greg has several years' worth of experience coaching at George Mason Camps.

**Season Started with Koa Sports:** Fall, 2019

**Off the Field Interests:** Lifting, Music, Videogames, Food





## Steve Christakos, 14u Coach

**How Long Coaching for Koa, Capacities:** Been with Koa since 2012, both as a BABL and Travel Head Coach. Currently coaches the BABL Baysox and Koa's 14U East Travel Team

**What Makes You Tick/Motivated:** Effort/attitude that is given when no one is watching. Teaching proper pitching mechanics to ensure pitchers can throw efficiently and reduce injury and help hitter drive the ball into the gap.

**Previous Baseball Experience:** 3 years Varsity starting pitcher in high school, Montgomery County All-Star as a pitcher, 4-year college pitcher at Ursinus College.

**Local Connection:** Next Level (Koa) Travel Player and Walter Johnson High School.

**Off-field Interests:** Red Sox fan.



## Mark Brown, 14u Coach

**How Long Coaching for Koa, Capacities:** 2 years, 2 years with AA Changeups, 3 years of Travel.

**What Makes You Tick/Motivated:** Winning while bringing the team together. I love seeing the progress and hard work that brings the team together.

**Previous Baseball Experience:** Played 4 years at Wootton High School, finished 3rd in ERA in the county. Won 3 state championships at the travel level and also 1 world series.

**Local Connection:** Grew up in Gaithersburg, went to Frost Middle School and Wootton High School.

**Off-field Interests:** I love hanging with friends, just relaxing, watching sports. I find any time I can to be outside and playing basketball, football or baseball. I've been working with kids since I was 16 so I thoroughly enjoy being around and spending time with kids.





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## Tony Korson, CEO

If you haven't met him, you surely will soon. CEO Tony Korson is a Bethesda boy with a love of baseball and a belief in the power of youth sports.

**Playing/coaching experience:** After attending Whitman HS (where he's now a proud member of the Hall of Fame!!), he received his BA in Finance and tossed his 12-6 curveball at Florida Gulf Coast University. After graduation, Tony decided to forego the world of suits and ties for jerseys and cleats...and Koa Sports was born!

**Favorite De-Stresser:** Cruising in the Jeep, top down, doors off!

**Signature Look:** Crazy hair

**Walkup Song:** Pursuit of Happiness – Kid Cudi



## Andrew Cresci, Director of Baseball Operations

**How long have you been with Koa, and in what capacity:**

I started working at Koa in February 2018 as a coach/instructor and baseball operations assistant. I will be coaching the BABL A Dingers as well as providing instruction for clinics and private lessons.

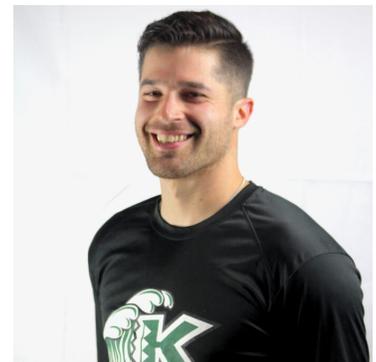
**Playing/coaching experience:** In 2017 I played overseas in Rome, Italy for S.S. Lazio. Prior to that, I played collegiate baseball at Sacred Heart University. I have 5+ years coaching in both individual and team environments and have coached several rec and travel teams in both, New Jersey and New York.

**What makes you tick (what motivates you)?** The passion for coaching and the sport of baseball. Coaching is the only job I've ever had where I do not have to look at the clock and hope my day is over. Nothing motivates me like a love for what you do.

**What's the best thing about baseball?** The atmosphere and extra base hits.

**Local Connection:** I recently moved to Washington, D.C. and love it!

**Non-baseball interests:** After making the switch from full time player to full time coach, I am attempting to fill that competitive void with giving cycling/road racing a go. I am also a big history buff, so I enjoy museums and being outdoors.





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## Eryk Dees, Travel Baseball Director

**How long have you been with Koa?:** Since 2019

**Playing Career:**

- 4 Year Varsity Letterman (Coral Reef Senior High School; Miami, FL),
- D1 NCAA (Eastern Kentucky University)

**Coaching Career:**

- Hitting/Infield Coach (Felix Varela Senior High School; Miami, FL)
- Hitting/Infield Coach (Miami Palmetto Senior High School; Miami, FL)
- Hitting/Offensive Consultant (Coral Reef Senior High School; Miami, FL)



**What motivates you?** Working smarter not harder.

**Local Connection:** Wife's family lives North Potomac, MD.

**Fun Fact:** I'm a huge University of Miami Hurricane football fan.

## Brian Brewer, GM College Team

**Year you started with Koa?** I've been with Koa since 2007, when Koa was named "Next Level Baseball".

**Previous Baseball Experience:** Brian was a 2x All State, 3x Baltimore Sun All Met, 2x Washington Post All Met player at Hammond HS in Columbia MD. In 2016, he was inducted into Hammond HS Hall of Fame. In College, he attended Nationally ranked UNC-Wilmington, where he was part of the #3, ranked pitching staff in the country playing in the LSU Regional in 2003. A serious injury forced Brian to transfer closer to home, where he finished his playing career at Towson University.



**Coaching Career:** Hammond HS - 2008 - 2012 - 2 state championship appearances  
CCBC Catonsville - 2013 - Present - Won 2 MD Division 2 JUCO Championships and won the Region XX Championship in 2016. Summer - Coached 14U,15U,16U and the MCBL College Team. Currently serving as General Manager for Koa Sports Collegiate Team and is the Head Coach of the Silver Spring Thunderbolts in the Cal Ripken Collegiate League.

**What motivates you?** Every time you step on the field never knowing who is watching you! Never take a play off, or mental break. Always keep your head and stay in the game!

**Local Connection:** Born and raised in Howard County. Went to Hammond HS in Columbia MD. Currently, serves as the Resource Teacher for Physical Education, Health, Art, Theater and Technology at Sligo Middle School in Silver Spring MD.