

Mike Marcely hits a “home run” in life

Strike one.

Ball one.

Strike two.

Sport fans, it's gone! It's another home run.

These words were once music to the Denver Zoo General Manager Mike Marcely's ears.

While playing baseball for Metropolitan State College, Mike led the team in hitting with a .440 average his junior year. He also was part of the team that had its first winning season and topped 370 NAIA teams while winning the national batting championship with a .384 average. While Metropolitan State College of Denver doesn't compare to the baseball powerhouses of the south, it is the third largest higher-education institution in Colorado and one of the largest public four-year colleges in the United States.



Mike, with the 1994 "A" Fast Pitch National Champion Red Feather team

After college, Mike continued playing baseball in a local fast pitch league. He played with his brothers, Marty and Paul. He said they always had fun. Mike achieved another athletic accolade when his fast pitch team won the 1994 “A” Fast Pitch National Championship. The Denver-based team traveled to Salem, Oregon to win the championship. He stopped playing fast pitch in 2000.

Mike started his college career with a baseball scholarship to play ball at Lamar Community College in Lamar, Colorado. The school has one of the best junior college baseball programs in the country. After graduating with an associate degree, he went to Metro to play ball and study journalism.



Mike, center right, with Metro State team members

After graduating from college, Mike took a job with Gannett Outdoor Advertising painting billboards. When the computer age eliminated that trade, he turned to KM Concessions where he had worked for Kevin McNicholas while growing up.

Mike also stars on the gridiron

While attending Mullen High School in Denver, Mike played several sports. During one football season, he faced off against his older brother, Marty, who was playing for a rival school. Marty shared that Mullen, with the talents of Mike, kicked their butts.

Mike still plays football at least once a year in the “Snow Bowl” even though he mentioned that 2004 might have been his last appearance on the gridiron. He claims he was tackled so hard that the next day he had so many aches and pains he could barely move. The Snow Bowl is a holiday tradition. For the past 16 years, the family has played a rough and tough “flag” football game on Christmas Eve. Teams composed of sons, nephews, friends and KM/SSA employees gather at Kevin’s house to play. For two hours or so, they run and tackle while slipping and sliding – trying to score a touchdown.



At half time, Mary McNicholas, Kevin’s wife, supplies the hot chocolate and snacks. As the team’s “owner,” Kevin sits the sidelines cheering.

It has become a Snow Bowl tradition that Mike wears a sleeveless jersey even though it can be cold. One year he tried to play in a jersey with sleeves and was jeered. He changed to a sleeveless shirt. One year when there wasn’t snow, Kevin trucked in shavings from the local ice arena to provide a soft (?) turf for his players. However, his home was the only one in the neighborhood that had a white Christmas.

Mike focuses his athletic talent on golf

In the past few years, Mike has become an avid golfer. He likes the game even though it’s an individual sport, and he has always played team sports. Is it because he doesn’t have 100 mph fastballs flying toward his head as he experienced for many years while playing ball?

To Mike, the game of golf is one of honor – and he claims he doesn’t indulge in the art of cursing, club throwing or gasket blowing while playing.

As a natural athlete, Mike has developed a nine-handicap game (that’s a really good handicap). His goal is to get a six handicap. He said he wants to improve so that he can play in local tournaments. Interestingly, Mike used to golf left-handed, but switched to golfing right handed when he realized that golf is not a left-handed sport as it’s hard to find clubs. However, he still putts left handed.





One of Mike's more memorable golf trips was at the spectacular PGA West, located near Palm Springs, California. This 2,200-acre resort features six incredible golf courses, including the new Greg Norman course. Mike said he was able to play a different course every day. He has also been fortunate to play

several times at the private Castle Pines Golf Club, which hosts The International each year. Located in a Denver suburb, the Jack Nicklaus-designed course provides a hilly up-and-down golf adventure among Ponderosa pines, boulders and scrub oak.

When asked where he would travel if he could travel anywhere, Mike quickly replied, Scotland to play the famous Old Course at St. Andrews, the home of golf. The game has been played here since at least 1457 when it was popular enough for King James II to ban it because it interfered with archery practice. Since that time golf has become hugely popular, but St. Andrews remains the birthplace and the center of modern golf.

While many know of Mike's athleticism, few people know of his love for live theater. He first went to a touring Broadway production out of curiosity, plus he added he wanted to break the mold of being known as the typical jock. He became an instant fan. "It's a great source of entertainment," he said.

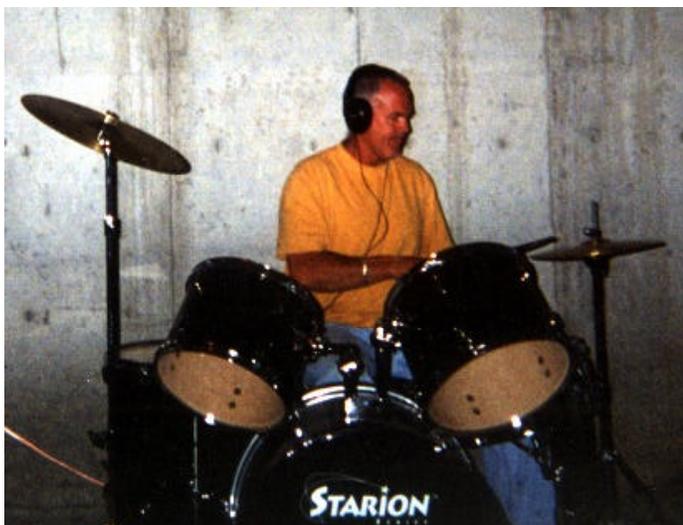
Mike shared he liked *Miss Saigon*, the sixth longest running show in Broadway history, and one of the greatest stage successes ever with more than 28 million people seeing it worldwide. Set in 1975 during the final days leading up to the American evacuation of Saigon, *Miss Saigon* is the story of two young lovers torn apart by the fortunes of destiny and held together by a burning passion and the fate of a small child.



Mike, enjoying a day of golf with Kevin McNicholas

However, he added his favorite production has been *The Phantom of the Opera*. In this musical, a disfigured musical genius, hidden away in the Paris Opera House, terrorizes the opera company for the unwitting benefit of a young protégé whom he trains and loves. Experts estimate that over 52 million people have seen the show.

Another surprising secret about Mike involves his musical talent. He plays the drums. Self-taught, Mike practices in his basement. His favorite drumming music is Kid Rock rapper tunes with its trademark good-time raucousness beat. He likes to play his own thing, too.



Mike spares his neighbors by drumming in the basement

All types of music appeals to Mike. He particularly likes big band, hard rock and country tunes. A favorite way for Mike to relax is to listen to instrumental music.

Mike is also an avid Denver Broncos fan. An original franchise of the American Football League, the club reached the National Football League's pinnacle by capturing its first world championship in Super Bowl XXXII (1997) and a year later, the team followed-up on this feat by winning its second Super Bowl title. He professes he enjoys the pre-game tailgate parties almost as much as watching the game. He joins other family members in the parking lot to grill 'dogs and nosh on other tasty tidbits.



Mike, tailgating before the game



Mike's home outside of Strasburg



A Colorado sunset from Mike's front yard

The personal side of Mike

Mike said he lives a simple life. He has never been married, but hopes to be one day. He shared he's considering internet dating.

Mike lives in the country. After many years of living in a town home in the heart of Denver, Mike decided to leave the hustle and bustle of the city and make an investment in buying a custom ranch house on three acres outside the town of Strasburg. Even though he has acreage, he has neighbors nearby and has developed friendships with many.

Another reason Mike said he bought the house was to improve his golf game. He can work on developing a souped-up swing and improving his short game without leaving his yard.

Mike thinks it's pretty neat to live near a small town, (Strasburg has approximately 1,400 residents). Mike said he enjoys participating in the town's old-fashioned Christmas celebration with its horse-drawn carriage rides, barrel fires and festive-decorated stores.

Christmas is Mike's favorite holiday. He fondly remembers growing up and going downtown to admire the decorated windows of the big department stores. He even enjoys Christmas shopping. He claims he can go shopping and not buy anything because he likes to be part of the festive atmosphere.

The Godfather is one of Mike's favorite books as well as movies. This epic saga depicts how a younger son rises to take over the family business, which has become a violent and illegal empire. He shared he that he's intrigued by the Mafia and also enjoys watching the television



Mike with his nephew Shayne

show, Sopranos, a drama series featuring a mob boss as he faces challenges from his life at home and work as well as from within his immediate family, other mob families and law enforcement.

Mike considers himself a family man even though he's not married. He said his nieces and nephews are the kids he does not have -- yet. "I have a lot of fun with them," he added. A favorite activity is to invite his nieces and nephews over to his house and for an afternoon of playtime. With their favorite uncle, the kids get to ride an ATV, hit golf balls, help plant flowers and trees and enjoy the fresh country air.

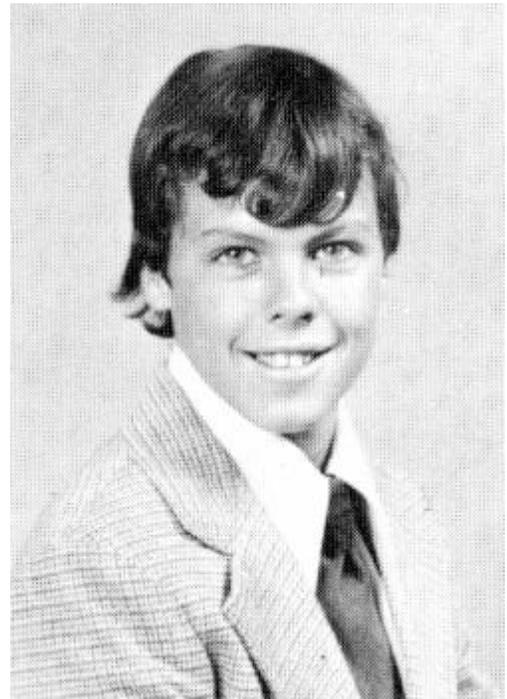
Mike as a youngster

His brother, Marty, says Mike was a macho man while growing up. Marty shared that Mike's nickname when he was younger was "Studley Dudley." When

asked if Mike got into mischief as a youngster, Marty quickly replied, "He never got caught, dammit."

Even though Mike demonstrated talent on playing fields, he didn't avoid the books. His brother, Marty, recalled Mike used to study by pacing back and forth while twirling a pencil on a string. Marty said it was annoying as hell, but it worked because Mike got good grades.

As an athlete, Mike exhibits a natural grace – most of the time. Brother Marty shared a few embarrassing moments when Mike was a klutz.



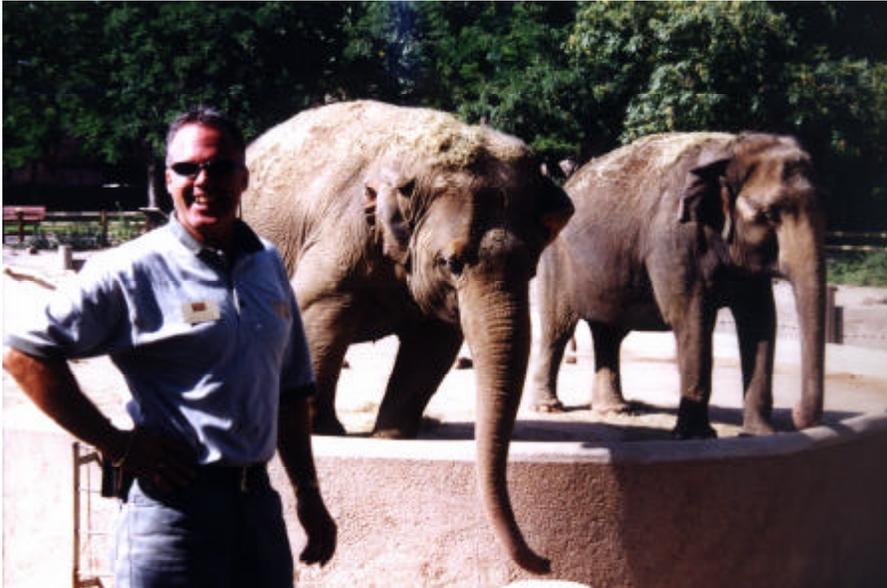
As a high school student, Mike earned extra money working private parties. At one party for the AAA baseball team, the Denver Bears, Mike was passing hors d'oeuvres among the guests who were mingling both inside the house and outside on the patio. For most of the evening, staff left the patio door open. However, at one point, someone slid the door shut, Mike didn't realize it and walked right into the glass door – dropping the tray.

Another funny incident involved hot dogs and the Stock Show. Marty and a buddy were serving food on the cafeteria line when suddenly they saw hot dogs flying everywhere, even hitting customers. When coming through the swinging door, Mike tripped and dropped a large warming pan filled with hot dogs. An embarrassed Mike quickly jumped up while looking around, glaring at anybody who was laughing. Meanwhile Marty kept telling his friend, "Don't let Mike see you laugh, he'll 'kill' us if he sees us laughing."

An early start in the zoo “biz”

When Mike was a youngster, one of the many jobs he was hired to do was to sell programs and novelties at Mile High Stadium. When he entered high school, his summer job was to drive the train at the zoo. He added it was great because he didn't have to look for a summer job.

After 14 years at the zoo, Mike still enjoys it. He has enjoyed getting to know and developing relationships with both the KM and zoo staff. The naturally friendly Mike said he particularly likes to get to know the kids who work for the operation. He takes the time to talk to them to learn about their lives. “It’s a lot of fun,” he added.



He said that after a hectic workday, he likes to go outside and walk around the zoo, as it's a great way to relax. While walking the grounds, Mike tries to stop by the elephant exhibit, as these massive creatures are his favorite. He said he's amazed at how gentle they are as well as their ability to remember. He enjoys watching the elephants “play” with the ball and occasionally squirting water on patrons.

For Mike, his philosophy is straightforward: “I live my life simple. I respect people and I believe you can never have enough friends. Also, you have the opportunity each day to do something and you need to take advantage of that opportunity because in seconds, it can change.”