

Darryl hits 600 with plenty left in the tank

GLEN MCCULLOUGH

glenm@thechronicle.com.au

BASEBALL: Winx is not on show this weekend but Toowoomba's own version of the wonder mare will be celebrated tomorrow when Darryl Luchterhand takes to the field for game number 600 in Toowoomba Rangers' colours.

Luchterhand's marathon innings hits the magical milestone when Rangers host Narangba in their round two GBL Division Three clash at Commonwealth Oval from 2pm.

It's the latest achievement for a man who has not only worked unselfishly to ensure Rangers' success as a club since joining it in 1992, but for a player, coach and administrator admired in international baseball circles.

Luchterhand began his baseball days in Brisbane as an A-grade pitcher and C-grade coach with Windsor All Stars.

But after answering a call from his late father Ian to join Rangers in an A-grade player-coach role for the 1992-93 season, an incredible journey for Luchterhand and Toowoomba baseball had begun.

Luchterhand tomorrow joins team-mate Mick Locke (640) in the Rangers "600" club and this week he retraced some of his early and more memorable steps at the club.

"Dad brought me back to coach the A-grade side from Windsor in the 92/93 season, the same year Buzz Brown joined us," Luchterhand said.

"It wasn't really a career advancement. No disrespect to where Rangers were at the time but I had been playing A grade in Division One.

"I was actually going out with Karen (wife) at the time and I was up here every second weekend anyway, so I thought I'd come on up and give it a go.

"I did miss a few seasons along the way when I moved back to Brisbane for work and playing again for All Stars.

"But I eventually moved back through work and I've been here full-time since."



I'M HAVING A BALL: Darryl Luchterhand is preparing to play his 600th game for Rangers Baseball Club tomorrow.

Photo: Nev Madsen

Luchterhand credits a former mentor with stoking his coaching passion.

"I was lucky enough to have a bloke at All Stars called Ted Roebuck who had mentored me," Luchterhand said.

"I have a lot to thank Ted for and I'm certain what he'd been able to teach me helped Rangers win the Division One premiership the first time I came to the club.

"I've coached the club for a lot of years and have been heavily involved in coaching juniors.

"My daughter (Taylee) played juniors for us and I pretty much coached her from under 14s up to 20s.

"I've always been pretty much coaching director at the

club from day one.

"And when dad passed way, it was a natural progression to take over running the club."

Luchterhand said the camaraderie surrounding baseball and the Rangers' club made it a hard sport to walk away from.

"The friends I've made just through playing at Rangers is amazing," Luchterhand said.

"I'm planning on going overseas next year with my wife and catching up with some of the guys who have played for us over the years is something I'm looking forward to.

"That's the beauty of this sport.

"Even opposition teams and players share a bond.

"I've got so many goodwill messages this week from guys

I've played against about my 600th which is pretty special.

"We've had so many quality guys come through Rangers and it's continuing.

"I'm just proud to be able to play for this club and that's what it's about.

"That's what I try to instil into our young guys.

"It's not all about playing on the field. It's about playing for the Rangers' jersey.

"Players want to get their names on our honour board. That's what it means to a lot of guys. Not only to me.

"If we didn't love it, we wouldn't be doing it.

"I could be out on the golf course. But I'm still here and I wouldn't have it any other way."