

Brooklyn, Born & Raised: Gaetano Giunta and His Italian Heritage

By Corey Scheiner

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For Gaetano Giunta, the New Jersey Jackals' crafty infielder, being Italian is not just something with which to identify.

It's a lifestyle.

Giunta, or "GG" as he has come to be known, grew up in a family-based, Italian neighborhood in Brooklyn, NY. In the Giunta household, everything was Italian. Italian food. Italian language. And Giunta's Italian-American grandmother, who was sure to teach a young GG a little bit of both.

"My whole lifestyle is basically Italian based," says a beaming Giunta.

Because of his grandmother's influence, Giunta was able to speak Italian when he was younger. Unfortunately, when he headed off to college at the University of Bridgeport, Giunta was not home much and lost much of his previous knowledge. However, thanks to his grandmother and the neighborhood he grew up in, he still can understand the language.

"The neighborhood I come from is a very family, Italian based town [where] everybody's close, everybody knows everyone," he adds. "[They're all] good people, and when you grow up around good people, you become a good person."

For high school, Giunta attended Bishop Ford in Brooklyn, the first Catholic institution he had ever attended. Not only did Catholic school make his life a little easier—Giunta loved not having to pick out a new outfit each day—but this also became a "second family" for Giunta.

"Again, it was a small school, everyone knew each other, and I literally became the person I am today from there," he says. "Sports wise, growing up wise, being a person in general. Bishop Ford Friars—one of the best parts of my life."

The Friars baseball team has the unique opportunity to play at Brooklyn's legendary Parade Grounds. Joe Torre, Willie Randolph, and Manny Ramirez are among notable alumni who have played on the hallowed grounds

For Giunta, it's always a great experience when you play on a field that also hosted MLB players—especially one well known. "It's our home field, so we took pride in playing there, took pride in the field, and cherished the chance to live up to the expectations of big leaguers," Giunta says.

Now he's playing against former MLB players. He hit his first home run of the season on

Friday against former Toronto Blue Jays pitcher Gustavo Chacin.

“Were you shocked too?” Giunta asked me with his contagious laugh and smile.

I was.

In his first professional season, Giunta has been a spark-plug at the leadoff spot and off the bench for New Jersey. The speedy infielder has seen time at second base, third base, and shortstop.

Italian Heritage Night at the ballpark was July 10th. He celebrated by scoring the game-tying run in an eventual 5-2 Jackals victory.