

Neville baseball tournament to honor former Tiger Altick

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Neville's annual baseball tournament will hold a little bit more meaning now.

The Tigers will host the Trey Altick Louisiana Prep Classic starting Thursday, with the name change to honor the former Tiger who lost his life in a tragic boating accident May 20, 2008.

The idea to rename the round-robin tournament, which feature 45 teams in two tiers — Classes 4A and 5A and Class 3A and below — came mostly from gastroenterologists Dr. Collins Coon and Dr. Johnny McHugh, the event's two main sponsors.

Neville coach Tim O'Neal, St. Frederick coach Paul Guerriero and Altick's par-

ents, James and Helena, designed the logo and came up with the new name.

"We wanted to do anything we can to keep the name around and keep him in everybody's memory," O'Neal said of his former shortstop and third baseman. "This is the best high school tournament in the state, and it's neat to have him associated with it. It means everything in the world."

O'Neal said Altick, who would now be a senior, was one of the favorites he's ever coached and someone he talks about with his team at

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various times throughout the season.

When Altick died following his sophomore season, his former classmates and teammates honored him by wearing "TA" and "7", his baseball number, on their jerseys and on caps.

"It's been weird not seeing him out here playing baseball, the game he loved," senior third baseman Garrett Reno said. "I guess we're kind of used to it now, and we really talk about it anymore, but it's understood."

Junior catcher and first baseman John Reeves spoke at Altick's funeral as one of his oldest friends.

Reeves, who then attend-

ed Ouachita Christian, said he and Altick were at each other's houses every day and even had plans to hang out the week of Altick's death.

He said a baseball tournament is about the best way to honor his good friend.

"I don't really think he wants anybody, wherever he is, to be sad all the time," Reeves said. "He was always happy when I was with him. I know we're honoring him, and I think we'll play some of our best baseball for him."

It will also be a good way to honor his parents, who still support their son's friends and Neville athletics.

Reno said he still goes to their house to watch football games and catch up, as does Reeves, although he said he struggled for a while to be near Altick's three sis-

ters, who resemble him in so many ways.

"I know they're at most of the home games," senior catcher Max Campbell said of Helena and James. "He loved baseball, and this is one of the bigger tournaments in the state, so I think he'd be very proud to have his name associated with it. We're definitely going to try to honor him in every way we can, and we always keep him in our hearts."

West Ouachita, Ouachita and Ruston are the other hosts of the 20 teams in the 4A-5A bracket, while St. Frederick, OCS, Sterlington, Mangham and Cedar Creek will host the Class 3A and below bracket's 25 teams.

St. Thomas More, East Ascension, Denham Springs, Destrehan and Catholic are

some of the teams coming to play, along with 2009 Class 2A state champion Evangel Christian Academy, 1A champion Northlake Christian and Class C state title-holder Claiborne Christian.

O'Neal said he still keeps in touch with the Alticks, as do Drs. Coon and McHugh.

Nearly every local team hosting the tournament with Neville also had players who were friends with Altick through travel ball and summer leagues, and O'Neal said every school was supportive of the name change.

"It just reminds us to play the game as hard as we can because you never know what's going to happen," Reno said. "You can't take anything for granted. It's a huge privilege to play in this tournament for him."