

## BRIGHTLIGHTS

[Dan Meyer]

## Meyer re-invents himself in the major leagues

BY DAVID DRIVER

In September 2008, Dan Meyer ('02) thought his Major League Baseball career might be over.

He had just made another start on the mound for the Oakland Athletics and had allowed seven earned runs in less than four innings against the Kansas City Royals. He finished the season with a 0–4 record, a 7.48 ERA in 11 games and four starts for the A's. Even worse, the former Diamond Duke felt that Oakland, who traded Atlanta for him after the 2004 season, had given up on him at the ripe age of 27.

"Oakland put me on the back burner; I struggled and just didn't feel right out there," Meyer says.

Seven months later, the left-handed pitcher was back in The Show with the Florida Marlins. He made an opening day roster of a major league team for the first time as a pro, and he also had a new life exclusively as a relief pitcher as the Marlins got off to the best start in the franchise's history.

Despite an 0–6 record in his first 19 major league games with Atlanta and Oakland, Meyer had a stretch of 10 straight scoreless outings for the Marlins early in the 2009 season. In his first 25 games he had an ERA of 2.35 and allowed just 14 hits in 23 innings with six walks and 24 strikeouts. Opposing hitters had a pitiful average of .171 against him.

The only thing missing was his first major league win, but Meyer was just glad to be back in the majors. "It was amazing. It was a great feeling. I had never been part of opening day," says Meyer, who turned 28 in July 2009. "My goal all spring was to make

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— DAN MEYER ('02)



**Dan Meyer ('02) hurls one from the mound for the Florida Marlins. The lefty finished the 2009 season with a 3–2 record and a respectable 3.09 ERA in 71 appearances.**

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Meyer picked up his first MLB win on June 12 in a 7–3 win over the Toronto Blue Jays when he took over in the bottom of the seventh for starter Ricky Nolasco in Toronto. He pitched one inning and did not allow a hit or a run; his ERA dropped to 2.30. Florida scored five times in the top of the eighth to break a 2–2 tie and give him the win.

Meyer recorded his first big league save in his first chance on June 24 against the Orioles. A week later, he got his second major league win against the Nationals. He did not allow a run in 10 straight games through early July and was 2–0 with an ERA of 1.95 by July 3.

He finished the 2009 season 3–2 with a respectable 3.09 ERA and logged two saves in two tries with 71 appearances out of the bullpen for the Marlins.

Longtime JMU head coach Spanky

McFarland remembers Meyer as being a tall, skinny kid in the fall of 1999 when he came to Harrisonburg from New Jersey. "He just got better and better; he worked hard in the weight room. His fastball went from the upper 80s to 93 or 94 mph," McFarland says. "He is a good alumnus. He really stays in touch and comes back in the fall for the alumni game."

Meyer says the Marlins players have "... great chemistry. We have a lot of fun. People question our bullpen, but our bullpen has done great. Things have worked out perfectly." Describing a 2006 surgery where a small piece of bone was removed from his pitching shoulder, Meyer says, "Baseball-wise they couldn't diagnose it. It took them a year and a half to figure it out."

According to industry leader *Baseball America* magazine, Meyer began the 2009 season as the No. 27 prospect in the Florida system. That was significant as he had already appeared in 19 major league games.

During his 2000–02 JMU career, Meyer struck out 90 batters in 97.2 innings as a junior, and both of those numbers rank in the top 10 for single-season marks. He has kept in touch with several of his former teammates including Mitch Rigsby ('03),

Pat Cunningham ('02), Eddie Kim ('03) and Nic Herr ('00). Some of his former teammates were on hand when the Marlins played at Washington early in 2009. "I see those guys every year," Meyer says. "We play golf together."

Drafted by the Atlanta Braves in 2002, Meyer worked his way up through the minor league system with stops in Danville, Rome (Ga.), Myrtle Beach, Greenville and Class AAA Richmond before he made his major league debut with Atlanta in 2004. He pitched in just two games for the Braves that year and was traded to Oakland prior to the 2005 season. Meyer spent all of 2005 and 2006 in the minors with Class AAA Sacramento in the Oakland system. He made it to Oakland in 2007 and split time between Sacramento and Oakland in 2008.

"I feel like I am getting back to my old self as a top prospect," Meyer says. **■**