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*Photos courtesy of Jak Kerley, Dano Keeney and the Pittsburgh Pirates.*





May 4, 2021

Dear Grasshoppers Fans,

On behalf of our entire staff, I would like to welcome you to beautiful First National Bank Field and the 16th year of Greensboro Grasshoppers Baseball. This year promises to be another great season, with excitement both on and off the field. We have worked incredibly hard to provide you, our fans, with the best affordable family entertainment possible.

All of this would not be possible without the participation of our corporate partners and friends. Please make a note of who these people are and support them with your business. First National Bank has made a very significant investment in Greensboro and we are excited to begin our fourth year with them as our naming rights partner.

We begin this season with many COVID-19 related restrictions in place and ask for your compliance with these matters.

If there is ever anything we can do to enhance your experience, please do not hesitate to let us know. You are the reason we are here, so please have fun and come back often to visit.

Go Hoppers!!

Sincerely,

Donald C. Moore  
President/General Manager



# ALL IN GOOD TIME

## KIERAN MATTISON'S JOURNEY TO GREENSBORO

By Jeff Mills

It took an extra 13 months, but at last Kieran Mattison is ready to settle into his role as manager of the Greensboro Grasshoppers.

All in good time.

That seems to be the mantra for a lot of things in Mattison's life so far.

Call it what you like. Divine intervention. Providence. Kismet. Destiny. God's will.

Mattison's journey from teen-aged three-sport star at Westside High in Anderson, S.C., to the dugout at First National Bank Field in Greensboro has taken him around the world in search of himself and his place in the game he has grown to love.

There was a time he thought he might be through with baseball. But even then, the game called him back.

"I went to France in 2012," Mattison says, "and it had nothing to do with baseball. My brother and his family were living in Paris, and I went to spend some time with my nieces and to pursue a master's degree. I get there, and my brother says, 'Hey, man, they have a league of their own over here. I could introduce you to the Paris University Club president.'"

It wasn't long before Mattison -- whose first name is pronounced KAI-ruhn -- was managing the club team and pitching as its bullpen closer.

"It was different," Mattison says. "We practiced three or four times a week and would play doubleheaders on Sundays."

He ended up playing and coaching for France's national team. And then, while he was still living in Paris and working on his degree, the Pittsburgh Pirates called in December of 2014 to offer him a coaching job on the staff at Class-AAA Indianapolis.



Photo courtesy of West Virginia Black Bears

"You know, it's funny," Mattison says. "I went to Paris to go back to school and figure out what I wanted to do with my life. God a plan for me, and it brought me back to baseball."

### NOMADS

Mattison arrives in Greensboro with three previous stops as a manager in the Pirates' system, short-season gigs with the Dominican Summer League Pirates, the West Virginia Black Bears and the Bristol Pirates.

Mattison's 2018 Bristol team finished 34-33, the first winning record for the franchise in 10 years and its first Appalachian League playoff appearance in 16 years.



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# BALLPARK GUIDE



As you are probably expecting, events are going to look a little different than in years past. With your help, we can still provide the same amazing experiences you have grown accustomed to over the years.

The safety and well-being of the community, guests and staff is of the utmost importance to the Greensboro Grasshoppers. We will continue to follow the guidance of national, state and local agencies in the development of our COVID-19 policies. It is our intent to do everything to ensure the health and safety of our guests and ballpark staff and make sure First National Bank Field meets or exceeds all recommended standards. Please help us keep our events safe by following these new policies when you visit us this summer. We respectfully ask that you do not attend an event at First National Bank Field if you feel unwell or if you have been knowingly exposed to COVID-19 in the 14 days prior to an event.

*We're so glad to have you back!*



## **ACCESSIBLE SEATING**

Accessible seating is available behind the back row of the seating bowl in sections 101, 102, 103, 106, 107, 108, 109, 112, and 114. To purchase accessible seating in advance, please call 336.268.2255 or stop by the First National Bank Field Box Office.

## **ALCOHOL**

Beer is available at all concession stands including the Bud Light Grandstand Bar; limit two beers (or two glasses of wine) per person, per purchase. North Carolina law prohibits the selling to or purchase of alcohol to minors under the age of 21. Each customer must present valid picture identification at the time of purchase. All beer sales will conclude with the first pitch of the middle of the 8th inning on a regular basis, however, Grasshopper management reserves the right to discontinue beer sales without notice and/or refuse the sale of beer to any individual. A Grasshoppers' staff member will gladly help arrange a ride for anyone who needs one. Alcohol is not permitted in Section (114).

## **AUTOGRAPHS**

Due to Covid-19 league protocols, players are not permitted to sign autographs.

## **ATM**

There are ATMs located next to the Hoppers Yard souvenir store, behind Section 108.

## **BABY CHANGING AREAS**

Baby changing tables are located in the Family Restroom behind Section 112 on the main concourse and also in the restrooms located throughout the ballpark.

## **BEVERAGES, FOOD & CONTAINERS**

No food, drinks, coolers or containers may be brought into First National Bank Field.

## **CONDUCT**

No abusive language or any behavior that can be viewed as offensive to others will be tolerated anywhere at First National Bank Field. Fans are strictly prohibited from entering the playing field at any time. Failure to adhere to First National Bank Field policies will result in ejection from the stadium.

## **CUSTOMER SERVICE**

If you have any questions about First National Bank Field or need assistance, please visit our First National Bank Guest Services booth, located on the concourse behind Section 110.

## **FAMILY SECTION**

The Cone Health Family Section is located in Section 114 near the Rotary Play Park and designed for families and young children. Alcohol and inappropriate behavior are not permitted in this section.

## **FIRST AID**

Guilford County EMS and the Greensboro Police Department are on duty patrolling stadium areas at all times during the games to ensure your safety. Should you need assistance, please notify a Grasshoppers staff member or visit the First Aid Station, located behind Section 112 on the first base side.

## **GATES OPEN**

Gates at First National Bank Field open :30 minutes prior to game time.

## **GIFT CERTIFICATES**

Gift certificates for Grasshoppers merchandise and tickets can be purchased in any increment at The Hoppers Yard souvenir shop.

*continued on page 6*

## **GROUP OUTINGS**

There's never been a better way to entertain a group! Bring the whole gang out for great food and family entertainment at First National Bank Field! Call 336.268.2255 to speak with a Group Sales representative today!

## **HANDICAP PARKING**

Handicap parking is available in the Edgeworth Street lot, located behind the Bud Light Grandstand Bar. For your convenience, we suggest purchasing your game tickets in advance, as there is no game ticket outlet available at that entrance.

## **KID'S PLAY AREA**

The Rotary Play Park is located down the first base line and is specially designed to be kid friendly! For the safety of our play park guests, children must be 54" or under to enter. No food or drink is permitted inside the play area. Parents should not leave their children unattended.

## **LAWN SEATING**

Lawn seating is on a first come, first served basis. Fans are welcome to bring blankets into the lawn areas at First National Bank Field, however, lawn chairs, large umbrellas, wagons, carts, and balloons are not permitted.

## **LOST AND FOUND**

Items can be turned in to, or retrieved from, the First National Bank Guest Services booth located behind Section 110.

## **LOST PARENTS/FOUND CHILDREN**

Children who have lost their parents will be escorted by a staff member to the First National Bank Guest Services booth, located behind Section 110. Parents who have lost their child may ask any First National Bank Field employee for assistance.

## **PAGING**

Paging services are available in the case of an emergency. If you need a fan paged, please speak to a representative at the First National Bank Guest Services booth.

## **PARKING**

Several parking lots surround the stadium on Grasshoppers game days, ranging from \$4-\$6.

## **RAIN POLICY**

### ***IF THE GAME IS DELAYED***

Play will continue as soon as weather and safety permits. In the event five innings of one game are not completed, the game will be suspended or postponed and tickets can be exchanged as listed below. If five or more innings have been completed, it is considered an official game.

### ***IF THE GAME IS OFFICIALLY POSTPONED***

Your ticket can be exchanged for any remaining 2021 regular season home game, based on availability. Your ticket must be exchanged at the Grasshoppers Box Office for a ticket of equal value, subject to availability. There will be no refunds issued.

## **RE-ENTRY**

For your safety, re-entry is not permitted into First National Bank Field, except in the possibility of a rain delay and the need to socially distance our fans.

## **RESTROOMS**

Restrooms are located throughout the concourse and are handicapped accessible. A family restroom is located on the first base side, behind section 112.



SECURITY

All fans and their bags will be screened upon entering First National Bank Field. For the safety of all guests, the following items are prohibited:

- Any outside food and beverage
- Weapons of any description, including firearms (weapons carried with a permit are also prohibited)
- Knives of any size
- Canes, chains or sticks of any length (non-medical use canes)
- Fireworks or any explosive
- Illegal drugs
- Laser pointers
- Pets (except service animals)

SMOKING

First National Bank Field prohibits smoking, including the use of e-cigarettes, vaporizers and other similar devices except in designated smoking areas. Smoking is allowed only in designated areas in the Bud Light Grandstand Bar and at the suite level bar.

SUITE ACCESS

Fans with tickets for seats on the suite level or the Party Decks may use the stairs on either end of the concourse or the elevator located behind Section 107. Please retain your ticket to ensure your access to those areas.



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# COACHING STAFF



## KIERAN MATTISON • FIELD MANAGER

Mattison is in his fifth season as a manager in the Pirates organization. He spent the 2019 season with Bristol and led the club to a 34-33 record, with a postseason berth for the first time since 2002. He led the West Virginia Black Bears to a 32-44 record in 2018 and guided the DSL Pirates to a 36-34 mark in 2017.

The former right-handed pitcher attended East Carolina University and was signed by Kansas City as a non-drafted free agent in 2002. Kieran pitched for five minor league seasons in the Kansas City, Cleveland and Los Angeles (NL) organizations, in addition to playing in various independent leagues and in the Chinese Professional Baseball League through 2010.



## MATT FORD • PITCHING COACH

Ford is in his first year with the Hoppers and eighth season with the Pirates organization. He spent the 2019 season as the Rehab Pitching Coach and previous two years as Pitching Coach with Bradenton after serving in the same capacity with the West Virginia Power in 2016.

Ford was Toronto's third-round selection in the 1999 First-Year Player Draft and made his professional debut with Medicine Hat in the Pioneer League that summer. As a former left-handed pitcher, he posted a 2.37 ERA with Dunedin in 2002 and was selected by Milwaukee in the Rule 5 Draft in December 2002. Ford made his Major League debut with the Brewers on April 2, 2003 and pitched a scoreless inning of relief.



## RUBEN GOTAY • HITTING COACH

Gotay is in his first year with the Hoppers and first full season with the Pirates organization. Prior to joining the Pittsburgh Pirates in 2020, he was with the Phillies organization.

He played professionally for 17 years (2001-2017), including parts of four seasons in the Major Leagues with the Royals (2004-05), Mets (2007) and Braves (2008). As a former infielder he compiled .255 batting average, 12 homers and 77 RBI in 316 big league games. Gotay was originally selected by Kansas City in the 31st round of the 2000 First-Year Draft.





### **BLAKE BUTLER • DEVELOPMENT COACH**

Blake joined the Pittsburgh Pirates in 2020. The 2021 season will be his first full season as a Developmental Coach. Butler was born in Greensboro, NC and is a 2013 graduate of Southeast Guilford High School. He went on to play for the College of Charleston and was selected by the Cincinnati Reds in the 15th round of the First-Year Player Draft.

Butler made his professional debut with the Arizona League Reds in 2015. He spent the 2016-17 seasons playing with Daytona in the Florida State League.

**PHOTO  
NOT  
AVAILABLE**

### **VICTOR SILVA ATHLETIC TRAINER**



### **HENRY TORRES STRENGTH & CONDITIONING**

## **2021 HOPPERS**



### **FRANCISCO ACUNA #7**

**Infielder • Bats: Right • Throws: Right**  
Born: 01/12/00 • Hometown: Stockton, CA  
Pirates Acq: 27th Round • 2019

*continued on page 12*

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### **PITTSBURGH PIRATES (MLB)**

PNC Park at North Shore  
115 Federal Street  
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[www.mlb.com/pirates](https://www.mlb.com/pirates)

**Manager: Derek Shelton**

Hitting Coach: Rick Eckstein  
Pitching Coach: Oscar Marin  
First Base Coach: Tarrik Brock  
Third Base Coach: Joey Cora  
Bench Coach: Don Kelly  
Bullpen Coach: Justin Meccage

### **MINOR LEAGUE AFFILIATES**

#### **INDIANAPOLIS INDIANS (AAA)**

Victory Field  
Phone: (317) 269-3542  
[www.milb.com/indianapolis](https://www.milb.com/indianapolis)

#### **ALTOONA CURVE (AA)**

Peoples Natural Gas Field  
Phone: (814) 943-5400  
[www.milb.com/altoona](https://www.milb.com/altoona)

#### **GREENSBORO GRASSHOPPERS (High A)**

First National Bank Field  
Phone: (336) 268-2255  
[www.gsohoppers.com](https://www.gsohoppers.com)

#### **BRADENTON MARAUDERS (Low A)**

LECOM Park  
Phone: (941) 747-3031  
[www.milb.com/bradenton](https://www.milb.com/bradenton)



# ALL IN GOOD TIME

## KIERAN MATTISON'S JOURNEY TO GREENSBORO

*continued from page 2*

"It was an awesome experience in a lot of ways," Mattison says. "Short-season lets you get to know guys coming in with experience from different systems. You're working with guys who have been in the organization and are coming from extended spring training, and you're working with a lot of college guys who have just been drafted and are getting their first taste of pro ball. As a manager, I want to make their experience as good as possible, to give them a good foundation to understand what pro ball is like. And, also, I want to give them every chance possible to get off to a good start in their pro careers."

Mattison was all set to manage the Grasshoppers last spring ... and then the global coronavirus pandemic stopped all Minor League Baseball seasons before they started.

So instead of a summer in the dugout, it was a season of virtual coaching, a lot Zoom meetings to talk with players and fellow coaches.

And time -- precious time -- with his wife, Salia, a nurse practitioner who was pregnant with the couple's first child. Their daughter, Morgan, is 9 months old now.

"It was a blessing to be there, and spend time with them," Mattison says. "Normally, I wouldn't have got to spend that much time during the baseball season. ... The pandemic changed my outlook. I re-prioritized my life, reconnected and grew in my spiritual life."

Kieran and Salia were born nomads. His baseball life taken him, well, everywhere. He's played or coached for teams in 13 U.S. states, with side trips to Canada, Nicaragua, Taiwan, France and the Dominican Republic. Meanwhile, Salia's father was in the Coast Guard and the family moved often throughout the South.

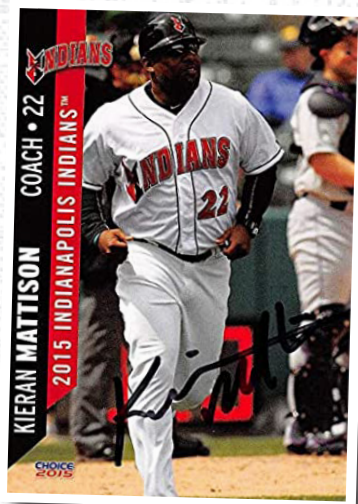
The couple has settled in Orlando, Fla., at least for now.

"We met online at Match.com," Kieran Mattison says. "We both thought we were too cool for school, but both of us had friends who talked us in to trying it, and now here we are. God has a plan, you know?"

### THE JOURNEY

Teaching the game wasn't in Mattison's original plan. He wanted to play.

Mattison pitched three seasons at East Carolina, going 5-1 with a 4.21 ERA in 41 games out of the Pirates' bullpen. He was 2-0 with a 2.00 ERA in 22 games as a senior, signing as an undrafted free agent with the Kansas City Royals.



*continued on page 30*



## ANDRES ALVAREZ

**Infielder** • Bats: Right • Throws: Right  
Born: 03/29/97 • Hometown: San Diego, CA  
Pirates Acq: 22nd Round • 2019



## BRAXTON ASHCRAFT #51

**Pitcher** • Bats: Right • Throws: Right  
Born: 10/05/99 • Hometown: Robinson, TX  
Pirates Acq: 2nd Round • 2018



## BEAR BELLOMY #18

**Pitcher** • Bats: Right • Throws: Right  
Born: 11/29/96 • Hometown: Scott Depot, WV  
Pirates Acq: 28th Round • 2019



## MICHAEL BURROWS #50

**Pitcher** • Bats: Right • Throws: Right  
Born: 11/08/99 • Hometown: Waterford, CT  
Pirates Acq: 11th Round • 2018



## OMAR CRUZ #26

**Pitcher** • Bats: Left • Throws: Left  
Born: 01/26/99 • Hometown: Hermosillo, Son, Mexico  
Pirates Acq: Trade • 2021





# GREENSBORO GRASSHOPPERS ROSTER

As of May 4, 2021

**MANAGER** Kieran Mattison #24

**HITTING COACH** Ruben Gotay #12

**PITCHING COACH** Matt Ford #52

**DEVELOPMENT COACH** Blake Butler #31

**ATHLETIC TRAINER** Victor Silva

**STRENGTH & CONDITIONING** Henry Torres

#	PITCHERS	B/T	BORN	HT	WT	HOMETOWN	ACQUIRED
51	Ashcraft, Braxton	RHP	10/05/99	6'4	206	Robinson, TX	2nd Rd., '18
18	Bellomy, Bear	RHP	11/29/96	6'2	220	Scott Depot, WV	28th Rd., '19
50	Burrows, Michael	RHP	11/08/99	6'1	192	Waterford, CT	11th Rd., '18
26	Cruz, Omar	LHP	01/26/99	6'1	200	Hermosillo, Son, Mex.	Trade '21
41	Ford, Grant	RHP	03/11/98	6'1	191	San Jose, CA	5th Rd., '19
37	Garcia, Oliver	RHP	01/08/98	6'3	213	San Francisco de Marcoris, DR	Free Agent '15
49	Kobos, William	RHP	08/03/97	6'0	211	Charlotte, NC	19th Rd., '18
38	Leonard, Garrett	RHP	09/25/96	6'1	196	Fort Mill, SC	15th Rd., '19
28	Manasa, Alexander	RHP	01/06/98	6'4	208	Farmington, MI	11th Rd., '17
43	McGough, Trey	LHP	03/29/98	6'2	178	Johnstown, PA	6th Rd., '19
39	Melendez, Cristofer	RHP	09/16/97	6'3	230	Azua, D.R.	Trade '18
45	Mlodzinski, Carmen	RHP	02/19/99	6'2	232	Hilton Head, SC	CBA Rd., '20
15	Priester, Quinn	RHP	09/15/00	6'3	207	Cary, IL	1st Rd., '18
27	Roberts, Austin	RHP	07/27/98	6'1	218	Sacramento, CA	8th Rd., '19
48	Selby, Colin	RHP	10/24/97	6'1	221	Chesapeake, VA	16th Rd., '18
17	Thomas, Tahnaj	RHP	06/16/99	6'4	220	Freeport, Bahamas	Trade '18

#	CATCHERS	B/T	BORN	HT	WT	HOMETOWN	ACQUIRED
23	Koch, Grant	R/R	02/05/97	6'0	197	Fayetteville, AR	5th Rd., '18
29	Shockley, Dylan	R/R	04/10/97	5'10	195	Rio Grande, OH	34th Rd., '19
35	Wilkie, Kyle	R/R	10/20/97	5'11	199	Cumming, GA	12th Rd., '19

#	INFIELDERS	B/T	BORN	HT	WT	HOMETOWN	ACQUIRED
7	Acuna, Francisco	R/R	01/12/00	5'6	161	Stockton, CA	27th Rd., '19
--	Alvarez, Andres	R/R	03/29/97	5'8	170	San Diego, CA	22nd Rd., '19
2	Gonzales, Nick	R/R	05/27/99	5'10	195	Vail, AZ	1st Rd., '20
10	Peguero, Liover	R/R	12/31/00	6'1	160	Higues, D.R.	9th Rd., '19
44	Shackelford, Aaron	L/R	10/16/96	5'9	220	Murrieta, CA	14th Rd., '19
19	Triolo, Jared	R/R	02/08/98	6'3	207	Austin, TX	Comp B Rd., '19
5	Valdez, Jesus	R/R	12/29/97	6'0	173	Nizao, D.R.	Trade '18

#	OUTFIELDERS	B/T	BORN	HT	WT	HOMETOWN	ACQUIRED
14	Frazier, Matthew	L/R	01/12/98	6'2	212	Fresno, CA	3rd Rd., '19
36	Gorski, Matthew	R/R	12/22/97	6'3	209	South Bend, IN	2nd Rd., '19
22	Herman, Jack	R/R	09/30/99	5'10	190	Berlin, NJ	30th Rd., '18
25	Macias, Fabricio	R/R	03/11/98	6'0	186	Saltillo, Coahuila, Mexico	Free Agent, '18
34	Sanchez, Lolo	R/R	04/23/99	6'0	172	Santo Domingo, D.R.	Free Agent, '15



# ROME BRAVES ROSTER

As of May 3, 2021

**MANAGER** Kanekoa Texeira (50)

**COACH** Angel Flores (16)

**HITTING COACH** Danny Santiesteban (38) **ATHLETIC TRAINER** Jesus Aviles

**PITCHING COACH** Bo Henning (32)

**STRENGTH & CONDITIONING** Tyler Enns

**COACH** Bobby Moore (1)

#	PITCHERS	B/T	BORN	HT	WT	HOMETOWN
51	Crouse, Marrick	R/R	05/02/97	6'3	200	Dana Point, CA
18	Daniels, Zach	L/R	04/21/97	5'11	160	Robins, IA
36	DeVito, Ricky	S/R	08/21/98	6'3	195	Staten Island, NY
22	Diaz, Indigo	R/R	10/14/98	6'5	250	N. Vancouver, BC, Canada
34	Elder, Bryce	R/R	05/19/99	6'2	220	Decatur, TX
25	Gordon, Tanner	L/R	10/26/97	6'5	215	Champaign, IL
39	Huntley, Coleman	R/R	03/10/93	6'4	230	Grass Valley, CA
11	Kalich, Kasey	R/R	04/25/98	6'3	220	Victoria, TX
9	Lawson, Tanner	L/L	10/25/96	6'1	190	LaPlace, LA
15	Noguera, Gabriel	L/L	05/31/96	6'2	175	Guarenas, Venezuela
20	Puckett, A.J.	R/R	05/27/95	6'4	200	Walnut Creek, CA
26	Rangel, Alan	R/R	08/21/97	6'2	170	Sorona, Mexico
27	Riley, Trey	L/R	04/21/98	6'3	205	Edwardsville, IL
54	Santos, Lisandro	L/L	07/24/98	6'1	170	Santiago, Dominican Rep
37	Schwab, Davis	L/L	01/27/97	6'4	230	Overland Park, KS
14	Shuster, Jared	L/L	08/03/98	6'3	210	New Bedford, MA

#	CATCHERS	B/T	BORN	HT	WT	HOMETOWN
99	Brown, Logan	L/R	09/14/96	6'0	195	Mt. Vernon, IN
19	Estrada, Rusber	R/R	06/05/95	6'0	215	Guacara, Venezuela

#	INFIELDERS	B/T	BORN	HT	WT	HOMETOWN
12	Ball, Bryce	L/R	07/08/98	6'6	240	Mason City, IA
8	Delgado, Riley	R/R	02/22/95	5'10	175	Miami, FL
2	Josephina, Kevin	S/R	10/02/96	6'0	170	Willemstad, Curacao
23	Langhorne, Brett	L/R	06/14/96	6'3	210	Richmond, VA
55	Milligan, Cody	L/R	12/23/98	5'10	185	Denver, CO
5	Philip, Beau	R/R	10/23/98	6'0	190	Sacramento, CA
30	Saunders, Garrett	R/R	12/03/96	6'0	190	Bonaparte, IA

#	OUTFIELDERS	B/T	BORN	HT	WT	HOMETOWN
7	Bermudez, Jose	S/R	07/09/97	6'2	160	Maracaibo, Venezuela
33	Franklin V, Jesse	L/L	12/01/98	6'1	215	Seattle, WA





**GRANT  
FORD #41**

**Pitcher** • Bats: Right • Throws: Right  
Born: 03/11/98 • Hometown: San Jose, CA  
Pirates Acq: 5th Round • 2019



**MATTHEW  
FRAZIER #14**

**Outfielder** • Bats: Left • Throws: Right  
Born: 01/12/98 • Hometown: Fresno, CA  
Pirates Acq: 3rd Round • 2019



**OLIVER  
GARCIA #37**

**Pitcher** • Bats: Right • Throws: Right  
Born: 01/08/98 • Hometown: San Francisco de Macoris, DR  
Pirates Acq: Free Agent • 2015



**NICK  
GONZALES #2**

**Infielder** • Bats: Right • Throws: Right  
Born: 05/27/99 • Hometown: Vail, AZ  
Pirates Acq: 1st Round • 2020



**MATTHEW  
GORSKI #36**

**Outfielder** • Bats: Right • Throws: Right  
Born: 12/22/97 • Hometown: South Bend, IN  
Pirates Acq: 2nd Round • 2019

# IT'S BEEN 613 DAYS...

**BASEBALL IS BACK AFTER A LONG, LONG COVID WINTER.**

by Jeff Mills

The winter of our discontent dragged on and on and on.

There's been no Greensboro Grasshoppers baseball at First National Bank Field since a 7-0 loss to the Rome Braves on Aug. 29, 2019.

That's a stretch of 20 months between then and opening day 2021.

That comes out to 613 long days (thanks for nothing, Leap Year) of a Baseball Winter in our city. It's the longest Greensboro has been without a pro ballgame since the old South Atlantic League returned here in 1979.

All this wrought by the global coronavirus pandemic, which changed life as we know it in the early months of 2020.

But at last, we are made glorious summer by the sunrise of baseball's return. Sort of.

After all, much has changed between then and now.

"I always thought one of the great things we do here is create a great atmosphere for the fans," says Donald Moore, the Hoppers president and general manager. "And I hope we can still create a great atmosphere without all of the things we've grown accustomed to. ... But the fact that people can get out in public again and go to a ballgame, it just feels normal again. And that's a big deal. That can be a big uplift for all of us."

But lest we forget, 2021 is a whole new ballgame.

"This year," Moore says, "we're dealing with things, and talking about things, and making decisions based off of terms and words that we didn't even know existed the last time we played a baseball game here back in August of 2019. So many things have changed."

Among the changes ...

## **TICKETS, PLEASE**

For just the second time since the downtown ballpark opened in 2005, ticket prices are going up by \$1.

It's still a bargain. Sixteen years ago, a single-game lawn ticket cost \$6, a box seat down the lines cost \$9 and a premium seat in sections between the dugouts cost \$10.

This year those seats cost \$8, \$11 and \$12. By comparison, those same seats in Winston-Salem this year cost \$9, \$15 and \$17; in Durham \$12, \$15 and \$26; and in High Point, which has not announced prices for 2021, the pre-pandemic costs were \$10, \$12 and \$14.





Gates will still open at 6 p.m., but first pitch has been moved up to 6:30 p.m. most evenings. That allows for earlier finishes during the work week.

"It's been a long, tough 20 months. It hasn't been easy," Moore says. "But we're still going to do everything we can to keep it fun, keep it affordable, keep it entertaining. We're going to do the best we can."

## NEW LEAGUE

Greensboro's franchise was part of the low Class-A South Atlantic League ever since 1979.

But now the South Atlantic League no longer exists.

When the pandemic hit, Major League Baseball and Minor League Baseball were in the midst of negotiating their Professional Baseball Agreement. With the minors crippled by the virus, MLB announced a "One Baseball" plan, which for all intents and purposes was a hostile takeover.

All 11 existing minor leagues were scrapped, more than 40 teams were eliminated and the remaining 120 reassigned.

The Hoppers landed in the new High-A East league's South Division along with the Winston-Salem Dash, Hickory Crawdads, Asheville Tourists, Rome (Ga.) Braves, Greenville (S.C.) Drive and Bowling Green (Ky.) Hot Rods.

"It's the first time we've played Winston-Salem since 1968, and that will be neat," Moore says of the new rivalry. "We play them 12 here and 12 there."

"We're playing predominantly teams we're accustomed to seeing: Asheville, Hickory, Rome and Greenville were all in the South Atlantic League with us. But there are outliers this year, too. The league has got five (North Division) teams up in Maryland, New Jersey, Delaware and New York, and we've got a couple of series against those."

The Hoppers remain an affiliate of the Pittsburgh Pirates, but now play one level higher up the minor-league ladder than before the pandemic.

Chances are, most fans won't notice the difference, as the distinction between Low-A and High-A competition is very slight. It's still about player development, and most of the players are in their early 20s.

## ON THE FIELD

One big difference because of the pandemic is fan interactions with the players will be curtailed, at least to start the season.

**"IT'S BEEN A LONG,  
TOUGH 20 MONTHS.  
IT HASN'T BEEN  
EASY, BUT WE'RE  
STILL GOING TO DO  
EVERYTHING WE CAN  
TO KEEP IT FUN, KEEP  
IT AFFORDABLE, KEEP  
IT ENTERTAINING.  
WE'RE GOING TO DO  
THE BEST WE CAN.**

**- DONALD MOORE**

*continued on page 20*

# 2021 SCHEDULE



PROUD HIGH-A EAST AFFILIATE OF THE PITTSBURGH PIRATES

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## MAY

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1
2	3	HIC 6:30PM	HIC 6:30PM	HIC 6:30PM	HIC 6:30PM	HIC 6:30PM
HIC 2:00PM	OFF	ROM 6:30PM	ROM 12:00PM	ROM 6:30PM	ROM 6:30PM	ROM 6:30PM
ROM 2:00PM	OFF	@HIC	@HIC	@HIC	@HIC	@HIC
@HIC	OFF	WIL 6:30PM	WIL 6:30PM	WIL 6:30PM	WIL 6:30PM	WIL 6:30PM
WIL 6:30PM	OFF					

## JUNE

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		WS 6:30PM	WS 12:00PM	WS 6:30PM	WS 6:30PM	WS 6:30PM
WS 2:00PM	OFF	@HIC	@HIC	@HIC	@HIC	@HIC
@HIC	OFF	@WS	@WS	@WS	@WS	@WS
@WS	OFF	GVL 6:30PM	GVL 12:00PM	GVL 6:30PM	GVL 6:30PM	GVL 6:30PM
GVL 2:00PM	OFF	@BG	@BG			

## JULY

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				@BG	@BG	@BG
@BG	OFF	ASH 6:30PM	ASH 12:00PM	ASH 6:30PM	ASH 6:30PM	ASH 6:30PM
ASH 2:00PM	OFF	@ROM	@ROM	@ROM	@ROM	@ROM
@ROM	OFF	@GVL	@GVL	@GVL	@GVL	@GVL
@GVL	OFF	WS 6:30PM	WS 6:30PM	WS 6:30PM	WS 6:30PM	WS 6:30PM

## AUGUST

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
WS 2:00PM	OFF	HIC 6:30PM	HIC 12:00PM	HIC 6:30PM	HIC 6:30PM	HIC 6:30PM
HIC 2:00PM	OFF	@WS	@WS	@WS	@WS	@WS
@WS	OFF	BG 6:30PM	BG 6:30PM	BG 6:30PM	BG 6:30PM	BG 6:30PM
BG 2:00PM	OFF	@ASH	@ASH	@ASH	@ASH	@ASH
@ASH	OFF	HV 6:30PM				

## SEPTEMBER

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			HV 6:30PM	HV 6:30PM	HV 6:30PM	HV 6:30PM
HV 6:30PM	OFF	@JS	@JS	@JS	@JS	@JS
@JS	OFF	@HV	@HV	@HV	@HV	@HV
@HV						

All dates, times and opponents are subject to change.

### NORTH DIVISION

ABD Aberdeen IronBirds • BAL  
BRK Brooklyn Cyclones • NYM  
HV Hudson Valley Renegades • WY  
JS Jersey Shore BlueClaws • PHI  
WIL Wilmington Blue Rocks • WSH

### SOUTH DIVISION

ASH Asheville Tourists • HOU  
BG Bowling Green Hot Rods • TB  
GBO Greensboro Grasshoppers • PIT  
GVL Greenville Drive • BOS  
HIC Hickory Crawdads • TEX  
ROM Rome Braves • ATL  
WS Winston-Salem Dash • CWS







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MAY 11 • 25	JUNE 1 • 22	JULY 6 • 27	AUGUST 3 • 17 • 31
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JULY 9 • 30	AUGUST 6 • 20
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MAY 9 • 16 • 30	JUNE 6 • 27	JULY 11	AUGUST 1 • 8 • 22	SEPT. 5
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\*May 30 and September 5 games will be at 6:30pm with fireworks to follow, courtesy of First National Bank!



\$2 soda (16oz.) and water (12oz.) and discounted drafts (16oz.) (\$2 domestic and \$3 craft)!

MAY 6 • 13 • 27	JUNE 3 • 24	JULY 8 • 29	AUGUST 5 • 19	SEPT. 2
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PRESENTED BY CONE HEALTH

MAY 8 • 15 • 29	JUNE 5 • 26	JULY 10 • 31	AUGUST 7 • 21	SEPT. 4
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OR CALL 336.268.2255**

# IT'S BEEN 613 DAYS...

BASEBALL IS BACK AFTER A LONG, LONG COVID WINTER.

*continued from page 17*

Players will enter the ballpark through the center field gate, and will be limited to the field, the dugout, and the clubhouse and batting cages below the stadium seats.

That means players won't be allowed to sign autographs, and no players will be in the seating bowl behind home plate charting pitches.

It also means the Hoppers won't be allowed to do popular on-field skits and promotions between innings -- think sumo wrestling or build-a-burger -- or have ceremonial first pitches.

MLB's virus protocols also mean the players will use the clubhouse in shifts, rather than allowing everyone in at once. And road trips will require three buses to allow for distancing, rather than one.

Moore and his staff must follow MLB's virus rules, too. And that's odd for a franchise that has prided itself and caring for the players who call Greensboro home for the summer.

"It's different for us, too," Moore says. "When it comes to our staff, no one is going to be allowed on the lower level with the players and umpires unless they are what Major League Baseball considers 'covered individuals.' What that means is a covered individual submits themselves to routine Covid testing, and also that when they're away from the ballpark they refrain from being in any crowd of 10 or more. It's strict, but I understand. I've chosen not to do that, so for the first time in my 20-year career, I won't go downstairs into the clubhouse area. I probably won't get to know the kids as well, and I'll really miss that."

## DOG GONE

The most popular goodwill ambassadors for the Hoppers franchise have been the family of black Labrador retrievers that have been a part of the game experience since Miss Babe Ruth's debut in 2005.

That will end this season, and there will be no dogs on the field.

Babe's niece, Miss Lou Lou Gehrig, filled the bat-dog role for the last eight seasons. Lou Lou died in October at age 9.

"No dogs this year, and that's the end of an era," Moore says. "That wouldn't have been allowed this year, anyway. Basically, no one is allowed on the field this year other than players, coaches and umpires."



Miss Babe Ruth





**JACK  
HERMAN #22**

**Outfielder** • Bats: Right • Throws: Right  
Born: 09/30/99 • Hometown: Berlin, NJ  
Pirates Acq: 30th Round • 2018



**WILLIAM  
KOBOS #49**

**Pitcher** • Bats: Right • Throws: Right  
Born: 08/03/97 • Hometown: Charlotte, NC  
Pirates Acq: 19th Round • 2018



**GRANT  
KOCH #23**

**Catcher** • Bats: Right • Throws: Right  
Born: 02/05/97 • Hometown: Fayetteville, AR  
Pirates Acq: 5th Round • 2018



**GARRETT  
LEONARD #38**

**Pitcher** • Bats: Right • Throws: Right  
Born: 09/25/96 • Hometown: Fort Mill, SC  
Pirates Acq: 15th Round • 2019



**FABRICIO  
MACIAS #25**

**Outfielder** • Bats: Right • Throws: Right  
Born: 03/11/98 • Hometown: Saltillo, Coahuila, Mexico  
Pirates Acq: Free Agent • 2018



**ALEX  
MANASA #28**

**Pitcher** • Bats: Right • Throws: Right  
Born: 01/06/98 • Hometown: Farmington, MI  
Pirates Acq: 11th Round • 2017



**TREY  
McGOUGH #43**

**Pitcher** • Bats: Left • Throws: Left  
Born: 03/29/98 • Hometown: Johnstown, PA  
Pirates Acq: 6th Round • 2019



**CRISTOFER  
MELENDEZ #39**

**Pitcher** • Bats: Right • Throws: Right  
Born: 09/16/97 • Hometown: Azua, DR  
Pirates Acq: Trade • 2018



**CARMEN  
MLODZINSKI #45**

**Pitcher** • Bats: Right • Throws: Right  
Born: 02/19/99 • Hometown: Hilton Head, SC  
Pirates Acq: CBA Rd. • 2020



**LIOVER  
PEGUERO #10**

**Infielder** • Bats: Right • Throws: Right  
Born: 12/31/00 • Hometown: Higuey, DR  
Pirates Acq: 9th Rd. • 2019



# IT'S BEEN 613 DAYS...

BASEBALL IS BACK AFTER A LONG, LONG COVID WINTER.

*continued from page 20*

"That means we're also not allowed to do first pitches, and that our national anthem singers will be pre-recorded. We've had auditions for the anthem, and hopefully we'll get some more school groups or individuals that send those in. Even though they are pre-recorded, I think there will be some neat ones. And any of our on-field skits between innings will be done from the concourse area."

## IN THE STADIUM

Amid all the things that can't be done are plenty that can.

Fans are allowed back in the ballpark at a 30 percent capacity -- roughly 3,300 -- under North Carolina's current Covid restrictions. And there's word out of Raleigh that Gov. Roy Cooper might loosen those come June 1.

In the meantime, fans must wear masks unless eating or drinking, and they must maintain social distance with those outside their own group.

The Hoppers are selling seats in groups of two or four, with those "pods" distanced from one another.

"We're prepared for a season," Moore says. "A lot of things are changing in the way we're doing things. We're having to arrange seats in pods of two or four in the seating bowl to accommodate social distancing. We looked at ticket sales, and the most common way people tend to buy are groups of two or four. We'll have those interspersed with 6-foot distancing in between, so we'll have between 1,500 and 1,600 actual seats available."

On the concourse, concessions stands are open but the Hoppers have put all but one of their "cooking portables" in storage to start the year.

"We're trying to keep the field-side of the concourse along the railing from having any points of sale," Moore says. "And that's to keep distance from people in the seating bowl. We'll still have plenty of points of sale, but everything will be on the back side of the concourse and stretched out."

## FAN FAVORITES

Greensboro's two most popular promotions are back: Thirsty Thursdays and weekend fireworks shows.

"We are going to have Thirsty Thursdays, and we are excited about that," Moore says. "We debated all winter whether that would be something we could have, but the (Guilford County) Health Department assured us they were fine with it."

*continued on page 29*





**QUINN  
PRIESTER #15**

**Pitcher** • Bats: Right • Throws: Right  
Born: 09/15/00 • Hometown: Cary, IL  
Pirates Acq: 1st Rd. • 2018



**AUSTIN  
ROBERTS #27**

**Pitcher** • Bats: Right • Throws: Right  
Born: 07/27/98 • Hometown: Sacramento, CA  
Pirates Acq: 8th Rd. • 2019



**LOLO  
SANCHEZ #34**

**Outfielder** • Bats: Right • Throws: Right  
Born: 04/23/99 • Hometown: Santo Domingo, DR  
Pirates Acq: Free Agent • 2015



**COLIN  
SELBY #48**

**Pitcher** • Bats: Right • Throws: Right  
Born: 10/24/97 • Hometown: Chesapeake, VA  
Pirates Acq: 16th Rd. • 2018



**AARON  
SHACKELFORD #44**

**Infielder** • Bats: Left • Throws: Right  
Born: 10/16/96 • Hometown: Murrieta, CA  
Pirates Acq: 14th Rd. • 2019



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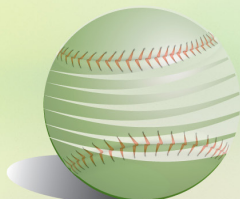
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**DYLAN  
SHOCKLEY #29**

**Catcher** • Bats: Right • Throws: Right  
Born: 04/10/97 • Hometown: Rio Grande, OH  
Pirates Acq: 34th Rd. • 2019



**TAHNAJ  
THOMAS #17**

**Pitcher** • Bats: Right • Throws: Right  
Born: 06/16/99 • Hometown: Freeport, Bahamas  
Pirates Acq: Trade • 2018



**JARED  
TRIOLO #19**

**Infielder** • Bats: Right • Throws: Right  
Born: 02/08/98 • Hometown: Austin, TX  
Pirates Acq: Comp. B Rd. • 2019



**JESUS  
VALDEZ #5**

**Infielder** • Bats: Right • Throws: Right  
Born: 12/29/97 • Hometown: Nizao, DR  
Pirates Acq: Trade • 2018



**KYLE  
WILKIE #35**

**Catcher** • Bats: Right • Throws: Right  
Born: 10/20/97 • Hometown: Cumming, GA  
Pirates Acq: 12th Rd. • 2019



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# IT'S BEEN 613 DAYS...

BASEBALL IS BACK AFTER A LONG, LONG COVID WINTER.

*continued from page 23*

"The biggest concern is that people keep themselves from being close together outside of their own groups for extended periods of time. ... It's a two-way street here. We're going to do everything we can to enforce the rules given to us by the state, the county and Major League Baseball. But at the same time, our fans are going to have to do their share as well so everyone does what they're supposed to."

Fireworks shows are scheduled after every Saturday home game, after four Friday games, and on the Sundays of Memorial Day and Labor Day weekends.

"Sixteen fireworks shows aren't as many as we normally do," Moore says, "but we're a business, too. And we're a business that hasn't brought in any revenue since August of 2019. So we're trying to get our feet back on the ground."

## AMBIANCE

All around the ballpark, the vibe is different than it was when last we gathered.

The apartments across Eugene Street have opened, and Moore expects to see people watching from those windows and balconies.

The First National Bank office building on the corner of Eugene and Bellemeade -- known as "Project Slugger" -- is about 75 percent occupied.

And across Bellemeade stands a new city parking deck, which could open 800 new parking spaces to Hoppers fans.

The bottom line? Baseball is back after a long, long Covid winter.

"We're excited," Moore says.

"We found out in late February that we were going to have a season. That's when we started our selling season, which is extremely late, considering we're starting the first week of May. The feeling I get is people are excited, too. They're still supporting us, even though there's still all this uncertainty out there. ... I think people just want to feel normal again." ♥



*In his career at the News & Record, journalist Jeff Mills won 10 national and 12 state writing awards from the Associated Press Sports Editors, the Society for Features Journalism, and the N.C. Press Association.*

# ALL IN GOOD TIME

KIERAN MATTISON'S JOURNEY TO GREENSBORO

*continued from page 11*

"I had a lot of ups and downs at East Carolina," Mattison says. "Frankly, I wasn't that good to start with, and I had a lot to learn about baseball. Growing up I was a three-sport athlete. Baseball came easy and natural, and I had a lot of success in high school just based on ability. ... I learned how to deal with failure at East Carolina, and I learned so much about the mental part of the game from Keith LeClair."

LeClair was just 40 years old when he died of ALS in 2006, and Mattison, who turns 41 in June, has never forgotten the lessons he learned from his college mentor.

Mattison pitched five seasons in affiliated Minor League Baseball, getting as far as Class-AAA, and he put up decent numbers. The cold, hard stats list him 19-13 with 29 saves and a 3.57 ERA in 126 games.

"I had no idea I was ever going to be a coach. All I thought about was playing," Mattison says. "The scout who signed me with the Royals, Spencer Graham, asked me, 'Have you ever thought about coaching?' At the time, I was offended. 'What, you don't think I can play?' I thought I was on my way to the big leagues. Every player thinks that. You have to. It's part of being a competitor. I didn't want to think about coaching."

Instead, Mattison played six more seasons in independent leagues and overseas.

Those experiences shaped him into the manager he has become.

He was living in Dallas when he took his first coaching job. The Grand Prairie Air Hogs hired him as a player/coach. He held a spot in their starting rotation, and he also was the team's pitching coach.

"I didn't know it at the time, but it was a really good experience," Mattison says. "Because some of the guys I was working with were kids, but some of the guys were the same age as me (28) or older. So I built relationships with guys who had different levels of experience. They were my teammates, but they also respected me as a pitching coach. ...

**"I WANT TO CREATE A STANDARD, AND THEN LET THEM HOLD EACH OTHER ACCOUNTABLE, BEHAVE LIKE GROWN MEN AND GO ABOUT THINGS THE RIGHT WAY. THAT'S PART OF THE EXPERIENCE."**

**- KIERAN MATTISON**

"I saw the impact I was making on young players, and I could start to see myself coaching. I started to think, 'Maybe this is something I would like to do some day.' It's something I enjoyed more than I thought I would."

The same was true of his time in Nicaragua and Taiwan. The lessons there were about being the outsider.



"You're the foreigner there, and you either perform or you go home," Mattison says. "I loved that about Nicaragua, and Taiwan was the same way. In Taiwan, the fans were really into it. The home team could be losing 10-0 and then hit a solo home run, and the crowd would cheer like it was a walk-off to win the World Series."

In Taiwan, the clubhouse was a jumble of different languages.

"It gave me even more of an understanding of what (Latino players) go through, because I've been the foreigner. You know?" Mattison says. "And my first managing job with the Pirates was in the Dominican Summer League."

All of that has prepared me for that moment when I would manage here. My experiences help me understand my players' experiences, and I go out of my way to make sure everyone in the clubhouse feels welcome and included and part of the team. Because I want my team to act as one."

## EPILOGUE

And now the latest step in Kieran Mattison's baseball journey begins here in Greensboro, with his team limited by Major League Baseball pandemic rules.

His players' bubble limits them to field level, dugout and clubhouse. No signing autographs. No charting pitches in the seats. No one allowed in the ballpark more than five hours before first pitch.

"I don't think it will interfere with the teaching aspect too much," Mattison says. "The main thing is to make sure we stay within the protocols set down by Major League Baseball, follow the rules so we can stay safe and stay on the field. Baseball is a game about making adjustments, and these guidelines are just another adjustment."

Mattison wants to see his players commit to one another. He expects fundamentally sound baseball. He wants his guys to have fun and learn as they go.

"Ideally, I want the guys to manage the clubhouse themselves," Mattison says. "I want to create a standard, and then let them hold each other accountable, behave like grown men and go about things the right way. That's part of the experience. And if I need to have conversations with certain guys from time to time, well, then we'll have those conversations. But I want the guys to create an environment where they can be themselves."

It's an approach that's worked for Mattison. All in good time.

*In his career at the News & Record, journalist Jeff Mills won 10 national and 12 state writing awards from the Associated Press Sports Editors, the Society for Features Journalism, and the N.C. Press Association.*



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