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### Delmarva Shorebirds Official Game Day Magazine

2018

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# HOMESTAND PROMOTIONS

#### APRIL 5 Thursday, 7:05 p.m. vs. Asheville Tourists

Magnet Schedule Giveaway – The first 5,000 fans through the gates will receive a 2018 Shorebirds magnet schedule brought to you by 88.7/92.5 The Bridge.

*Kiss 95.9 Thirsty Thursday* — Enjoy 16 ounce cans of Miller Lite and Coors Light; as well as, 16 ounce Pepsi fountain drinks for just \$2. Thirsty Thursdays are presented by University Village.

Maryland Pride Thursdays – Back for a second season, the Shorebirds players will be wearing Maryland Flag themed jerseys each Thursday during the 2018 season. All fans are encouraged to wear Maryland themed gear and join the fun! The jerseys will be auctioned off at the end of the season.

#### APRIL 6 Friday, 7:05 p.m. vs. Asheville Tourists

**Top Prospects Schedule Poster Giveaway** – The first 1,000 fans in attendance will receive a poster highlighting the Orioles top prospects who have played for your Delmarva Shorebirds. The poster giveaway is in partnership with the Maryland State Highway Safety Work Zone Safety.

Hit the Books #1 – The Shorebirds will honor students all season long through the HTB program sponsored by Dr. James M Crouse at the Brace Place. Tonight the Shorebirds will be hosting children from select Wicomico County schools.

Orange Fridays – The Shorebirds players will be wearing orange themed jerseys each Friday during the 2018 season. All fans are encouraged to wear orange gear and join the fun! The jerseys will be auctioned off at the end of the season.

Frogav 99.9 Big Beer Fridav – 32 ounce Miller Lite and Coors Light draft beers are only \$6.

#### APRIL 7 Saturday, 7:05 p.m. vs. Asheville Tourists

**Q105 Fireworks** – Come out and watch the Shorebirds light up the sky with their first fireworks show of the season. **Hit the Books #2** – The Shorebirds will honor students all season long through the HTB program sponsored by Dr. James M Crouse at the Brace Place. Tonight the Shorebirds will be hosting children from Sussex County schools.

Ocean City Night — The Delmarva Shorebirds and Jolly Roger have partnered for Ocean City Night at Arthur W. Perdue Stadium. Ocean City Night offers fans an opportunity to get a taste of Ocean City before the season kicks off! The pregame activities will take place from 4pm-6:30pm and feature Jolly Roger, Scopes, K-Coast, DJ Bigler, and Ocean City Organizations (OCHMRA, Chamber of Commerce, Town of Ocean City). The perfect way to kick-off the summer and baseball season!

#### APRIL 8 Sunday, 2:05 p.m. vs. Asheville Tourists

Sherman Emoji Back Pack Giveaway – The first 1,000 fans in attendance will receive a back pack featuring a Sherman Emoji.

Hit the Books #3 – The Shorebirds will honor students all season long through the HTB program sponsored by Dr. James M. Crouse at the Brace Place. Tonight the Shorebirds will be hosting children from Eastern Shore Virginia schools and The Salisbury School.

Strike Out Hunger Sunday – Bring two canned food items to the Shorebirds box office and receive an upper reserve ticket for \$3. All collected items will be donated to the local area food banks.

Kids Run the Bases - All kids get to run the bases after the game presented by Chili's Grill & Bar.

#### APRIL 9 Monday, 7:05 p.m. vs. Hickory Crawdads

**47 ABC Two Buck Monday** – Enjoy \$2 upper reserved tickets, \$2 hot dogs and \$2 16 ounce fountain Pepsi products presented by Wicomico Heating & Air Conditioning.

#### APRIL 10 Tuesday, 7:05 p.m. vs. Hickory Crawdads

Town Night Tuesday — Town Night Tuesdays will give the local residents, businesses, schools & dubs an opportunity to enjoy a night out at the ballpark while raising money for a cause or charity within their neighborhood. Each homestand the Shorebirds' will feature a different town with a portion of proceeds donated to that night's cause or charity.

#### PRIL 11 Wednesday, 10:35 a.m. vs. Hickory Crawdads

Silver Sluggers Wednesday – Become part of the coolest club on the Eastern Shore. If you are 55 or over you can join the Shorebirds Silver Slugger program sponsored by Peninsula Home Care. Each Wednesday you will have a chance to win prizes throughout the night while playing baseball bingo.

Field of Dreams Game #1 – The Shorebirds will be using the power of baseball to educate area students in reading, writing, mathematics, anatomy, and geography. Each student will receive an educational booklet that highlights the different aspects of baseball and how educational fundamentals can help solve day to day problems. The Field of Dream game is sponsored by Chesapeake Health Care.

### THESHOREBIRDS.com/TICKETS



1AMES M. CROUSE DOSSER















### BUCK BRITTON

By: Will DeBoer



### Britton the Latest Young Buck to Take Reins in Sally League

As the Delmarva Shorebirds' hitting coach in 2017, Buck Britton got a chance to see a youth movement going around the South Atlantic League. Multiple organizations invested in managers who could very well still be playing the game. Managers in Charleston, Lexington, and West Virginia were all in their thirties; Kannapolis' Justin Jirschele turned 27 two weeks into the season. While Britton, 31, didn't know any of them personally, the Shorebirds' new manager felt fortunate to be part of the recent Class A trend.

"It's great just to have an opportunity to stay in the game," said Britton on the phone from the Orioles' Spring Training complex in Sarasota, Florida. "For a lot of guys when they get done playing, there's kind of a lull and it takes them years to get back in the game. But to have an opportunity to jump right into it right after I stopped playing, I'm super blessed for sure."

Britton, who spent seven of his nine playing seasons in the Orioles system, made the transition from player to coach last year, serving as hitting coach under longtime Shorebirds skipper Ryan Minor. Rumors of a general shakeup in the Baltimore farm got to him around New Year's, and after consulting with Minor and other team officials, Britton accepted the head Delmarva job. The hire became official in late January at the Shorebirds Hot Stove Banquet.

To outsiders, going from appearing on lineup cards to filling them out yourself in the span of two years could seem like whiplash. Britton, though, feels jumping right into the coaching game helped to streamline the shift.

"Having that opportunity right away helped a lot," said Britton. "I've been around the game for so long, and we have such a good group of coaches down here. I've got a ton of good guys that I can lean on that I actually played for in my career. So having those relationships has made it a smooth transition for sure."





# Team Physicians of the Shorebirds

David M. Roe, MD Edward J. McGinnis, MD Thomas A. Brandon, MD Pasquale Petrera, MD John J. Greco, MD Eric H. Franks, MD James A. Trauger, MD Richard Kang, MD Jason M. Scopp, MD Florian Huber, MD Anthony J. Adrignolo, MD Scott C. McGovern, MD Adam J. Mandel, DO Eric Jamrok, DPM

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# COVER STORY CONT...

Britton learned much under Minor, who will manage the Frederick Keys in 2018, most significantly how to evaluate players who, in a different world, could have been his teammates.

"As a player, it's hard when you've got to worry about 30 guys as opposed to just one," said Britton. "I think the biggest thing was just learning to understand players, what get guys going, and how to evaluate in an unbiased opinion. You're not evaluating yourself against somebody anymore, you're evaluating what you see."

With long stints playing under Ryan Minor, as well as Gary Kendall in Bowie and Ron Johnson in Norfolk, Britton is more than ready to lead in the Orange and Black.

"[Director of Player Development] Brian Graham has been a staple in my career since I got drafted, too," said Britton. "I've pretty much played for every manager that we have in the organization. I can say that really every one of them has had a hand in my career."



Britton married his longtime girlfriend Silvana during the winter, and the two have been staking out for a house in Sarasota, from where his new wife's family hails. Between that and preparations at his other Sarasota abode, this offseason has been one of change for Britton. Now, with perhaps his biggest Opening Day approaching, he finds solace in the thought of getting back to baseball.

"Your whole life, at this time of year you're kind of anticipating baseball," said Britton. "I don't know what I'd be doing if I didn't have baseball. So it's just getting back to the grind of things with your team, the 25-to-30 guys in the locker room. I think that's the most exciting thing, watching guys grow as players as the season goes on."

Not to say there won't be some changes in the air, especially concerning the viewing habits of the team on the bus.

"We're going to cut the Seinfeld down to a minimum," joked Britton of returning pitching coach Justin Lord's favorite show. "We're young guys, we've got to get something for the next generation."







# 2018 ORIOLE PARK PROMOTIONS





### **GROUPS IN ATTENDANCE**

### APRIL 5TH:

MID ATLANTIC SHOCKERS 88.7 THE BRIDGE MARDELA MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STRINGS ABC CHESAPEAKE SHORES

#### APRIL 6TH:

Perdue Kennard Elementary School

#### **APRIL 7TH:**

DELMARVA ACES OCEAN CITY FISHING CENTER BRANDON'S EAGLE SCOUT CEREMONY SALISBURY GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH EVAN'S 7TH BIRTHDAY

#### **APRIL 8TH:**

HAYDEN'S 5TH BIRTHDAY

#### **APRIL 10TH:**

PERDUE MARINER MIDDLE SCHOOL APRIL 11TH:

POCOMOKE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL WESTSIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL EPWORTH CHRISTIAN SCHOOL SEAFORD CENTRAL ELEMENTARY SALISBURY REHAB AND NURSING CENTER BEAVER RUN SCHOOL CAPE HENLOPEN SENIOR CENTER MILTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SOMERSET INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DOVE POINTE DELAWARE MENTOR



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# PROMOTIONAL SCHEDULE

### April

- 5 Magnet Schedule Giveaway Sponsor - 88.7/92.5 The Bridge
- 6 **Top Prospects Poster Giveaway** In Partnership With - MD Department of Transportation
- 7 Fireworks #1
- 8 Sherman Emoji Backpack Giveaway
- 11 Field of Dreams Game #1 Sponsor - Chesapeake Health Care
- 20 Tyler's Balancing Act
- 21 Fireworks #2
   Sponsor Dr. Susan Vickers at Seaside Smiles

   Scout Night
   Sponsor Dr. Susan Vickers at Seaside Smiles
- 22 HBCU Classic (DE State vs. UMBC)
- 24 **Bark in the Park** Sponsor - Johnson-McKee Animal Hospital
- 26 Field of Dreams Game #2 Sponsor - Chesapeake Health Care

#### May

- 1 Bark in the Park Sponsor - Johnson-McKee Animal Hospital
- 3 Field of Dreams Game #3 Sponsor - Chesapeake Health Care
- 4 S Trooper Manny Bobble Head Giveaway Sponsor - Mountain Dew
- 5 Fireworks #3 Sponsor - DE State Education Association

# WEEK DAY PROMOTIONS



### 47 ABC 2 BUCK MONDAY

Enjoy \$2 upper reserved tickets, \$2 Hot Dogs, and \$2 fountain Pepsi Products all game long! Sponsored by Wicomico Heating & Air.



#### SILVER SLUGGERS WEDNESDAY

Play baseball bingo and win prizes courtesy of Peninsula Home Care Maryland & Peninsula Home Care at Nanticoke.



#### KISS 95.9 THIRSTY THURSDAY

16 ounce cans of Miller Lite & Coors Light beer and 16 oz. fountain Pepsi products are just \$2.00.



#### FROGGY 99.9 BIG BEER FRIDAY

32 ounce Miller Lite & Coors Light draft beers are only \$6.



#### Q105 FIREWORKS SATURDAY

Stick around for the fireworks show after the game!



#### STRIKE OUT HUNGER SUNDAY

Bring two canned food items to the Box Office and receive a upper reserved ticket for just \$3.

### THESHOREBIRDS.com/TICKETS

# COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT



The Delmarva Shorebirds unveiled the Delmarva Shorebirds 2017 Community Relations Annual Report during the 17th Annual Hot Stove Banquet, held on January 25th at the

Wicomico Youth and Civic Center. The report highlighted much of the community impact made by the Shorebirds throughout the year, including involvements with youth baseball, youth education, donations, community events, and social responsibility. To view the 2017 Annual Report visit www.theshorebirds.com.







During the banquet, Community Foundation of the Eastern Shore President Erica Joseph highlighted the partnership between CFES and the Shorebirds through the Fly Together Fund. Through their charitable fund at CFES, the Shorebirds have been able to increase their community impact by making grants to local organizations. Through the 650+ funds like the Fly Together Fund, The Community Foundation has been able to foster over \$67 million in



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grants to the community since 1984. These charitable giving accounts can by created by individuals, families and organizations. For more information visit CFES.org



The Community Foundation of the Eastern Shore connects people who care to causes that matter. We are a 501c3 nonprofit and have provided more than \$65 million in grants and scholarships to the local community since 1984. We collaborate with individuals, families, and businesses to match their charitable interests with community needs and strengthen nonprofits through grants and resources. To learn more visit CFES.org or call 410-742-9911.



The Eastern Shore Baseball Foundation recently inducted six new members for 2017. The six new members were voted on by the Board of Directors from nominations received by July 15 from members and the public.



The new members include; John W. "Jack" Bennett Stanley A. "Lee" Daniels, Jr. James Lloyd "Jimmy" Gates Edward M. "Butch" Greene, Jr. Nathaniel "Bucky" Speaks *and former Delmarva Shorebird* Tyler Townsend

Nomination forms can be picked up at the Eastern Shore Baseball Museum located at the main entrance of Arthur W. Perdue Stadium.



### THESHOREBIRDS.com/TICKETS

### SEASON TICKET HOLDER

To kick off the season, Ed and Dawn Howes are our first 2018 Season Ticket Holders in the spotlight. First attending games in individually, Ed and Dawn became mini plans holders, and after one season became full season ticket holders. Entering their 3rd season with season tickets, on January 25, 2018 at the Shorebirds annual Hot Stove Banquet, Ed and Dawn were honored by the Shorebirds as the 2017 Fans of the Year (pictured from that night). Each



year the Shorebirds Fan of the Year award goes to a fan(s) who not only is a great supporter of the team, but also helps volunteer their efforts to assist the Shorebirds in any way.

"Ed and Dawn have been tremendous supporters of the Shorebirds throughout the last several years, and this award is certainly well deserved," said Chris Bitters. "Between helping out the team during several Christmas events and hosting players during the summer and offseason, they have continuously been tremendous with our organization in helping any way that they can"

In addition to being season ticket holders, the Howes are also the host family for Shorebirds players. Last season, Ed and Dawn opened their home to Alejandro Juvier, Gerrion Grim, Daniel Fajardo, and Aaron Myers. Not only do they host during the season, but throughout this offseason they also hosted Fajardo and Christian Alvarado.

"Hosting players during the Shorebirds seasons has been fantastic, but we also really enjoyed having Danny and Christian stay with us during the offseason as well", said Dawn. "They've become our family now, and got to experience many aspects of American lifestyle that they've never been able to experience before."

"Throughout the offseason we were able to introduce them to our Halloween, having fun with scaring trick-or-treaters, carving pumpkins, and experiencing winter. In fact, during the offseason was the first snow they've been able to experience, and trust me you do not want to get into a snowball fight with a baseball pitcher and catcher!"

"We are expecting 3 new family members for 2018, and are extremely excited to get to know them and their families, as often times they will travel to Salisbury during the season to visit and attend some games. When they do, it's a great experience to get to know them not just as a relative of a Shorebirds player but as a member of our family too."







# 2018 GAME SCHEDULE

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SUN	MON	TUES	WED		FRI	SAT			
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8 2:05	<b>9</b> 7:05	<b>10</b> 7:05	<b>11</b> 10:35	12	13	14			
ASH	HIC	HIC	HIC	LWD	LWD	LWD			
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HAG	HAG	HAG	GBO	GBO	GBO	LWD				



Home Game Away Game 10:35 AM Game Fireworks

- DEL Delmarva Shorebirds GBO Greensboro Grasshoppers
- HAG Hagerstown Suns
- HIC Hickory Crawdads
- KAN Kannapolis Intimidators
- LWD Lakewood BlueClaws
- WVP West Virginia Power
- ASH Asheville Tourists
- AUG Augusta GreenJackets
- COL Columbia Fireflies
- CSC Charleston RiverDogs
- GVL Greenville Drive
- LEX Lexington Legends
- ROM Rome Braves

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# GAME PAGE





#### MYSTERIOUS WORD:

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### ALUMNI UPDATE

By: Will DeBoer

### Delmonico's South Side Ascension Marks Shorebirds Milestone

The Delmarva Shorebirds have been in operation since 1996 and have sent around five former players to the major leagues each year. In 2017, seven players completed their path from The Shore to The Show, and in August the ticker reached triple digits. The honor of being the 100th Shorebird to make it to the bigs fell to 2012 alumnus and current White Sox outfielder Nicky Delmonico.

Delmonico made his big league debut at Guaranteed Rate Field on August 1, going 1-for-4 with a run scored in Chicago's 8-4 loss to Toronto. Over the next two months he proved to be a pleasant surprise for the mostly hapless Pale Hose, batting .262 with nine home runs, 23 RBIs, and



a more-than-respectable .856 OPS over 43 games. While Chicago had been long eliminated from the postseason, Delmonico's walk-off home run over the Angels on September 27 allowed the Twins to clinch a wild card berth, officially burying Mike Trout and company.

The son of a longtime Tennessee head coach and brother of a former Dodgers farmhand, the younger Delmonico became the Orioles' sixth-round pick out of Knoxville's Farragut High School in 2011, foregoing a scholarship at Georgia to sign for over \$1.5 million. Baltimore held him out of action until 2012, when he made his professional debut with Delmarva.

Delmonico, then a top-10 prospect in the O's system, was a revelation Ryan Minor-led Shorebirds, batting .249 with 11 home runs and 54 RBIs over 95 games. His bat earned him a spot in the South Atlantic League All-Star Game, where he went 2-for-4 with a double and two runs and earned MVP honors at Charleston's Joe Riley Park. An injury derailed the final month of his season, but Delmonico

Continued on page 23



# SHOREBIRDS SCORECARD

#	PLAYER NAME	Pos	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	AB	R	H	BI
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# **VISITORS SCORECARD**

#	PLAYER NAME	Pos	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	AB	R	H	BI
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	TOTALS	R/H								$\nearrow$					
#	PITCHERS		W-L	IP	K	BB	H	R	ER	WP	CAT	CHER		P	В







**DNR.MARYLAND.GOV/FIREWISE** 

SOUTH ATLANTIC LEAGUE AFFILIATE

### Northern Division



Delmarva Shorebirds Baltimore Orioles Arthur W. Perdue Stadium

Greensboro Grasshoppers Miami Marlins First National Bank Field



Hagerstown Suns Washington Nationals Municipal Stadium



Texas Rangers LP Frans Stadium Kannapolis Intimidators

**Hickory Crawdads** 



Lakewood BlueClaws Philadelphia Phillies First Energy Park



West Virginia Power Pittsburgh Pirates Appalachian Power Park















### Southern Division

Asheville Tourists Colorado Rockies McCormick Field

Augusta GreenJackets San Francisco Giants SRP Park

Charleston Riverdogs New York Yankees Joseph P. Riley, Jr. Park

Columbia Fireflies New York Mets Spirit Communications Park

Greenville Drive Boston Red Sox Fluor Field

Lexington Legends Kansas City Royals Whitaker Bank Ballpark

Rome Braves Atlanta Braves State Mutual Stadium





# WELCOME BACK



Dear Delmarva Shorebirds Fans:

Welcome back to Arthur W. Perdue Stadium! The 2018 season promises more of the same great play and memorable moments that you have come to expect when joining your family and friends for an enjoyable night out at an affordable price. Every game delivers future memories for both young and old alike as you spend quality family time together watching the Major League stars of tomorrow in action today.

Delmarva Shorebirds Chief Executive Officer Tom Volpe, President Pat Filippone, General Manager Chris Bitters and the outstanding Shorebirds staff hope to make baseball at Arthur W. Perdue Stadium your choice for summertime entertainment in 2018. The Shorebirds staff will be showcasing special events and new promotions for your enjoyment this season as you watch the emerging stars in the Baltimore Orioles organization display their abilities and talents for you.

I would like to thank each of you for your support of the Delmarva Shorebirds and the South Atlantic League. Please enjoy the friendly environment of Arthur W. Perdue Stadium and bring your family and friends to cheer on the Shorebirds as they compete for the Northern Division and South Atlantic League Championship.

I look forward to seeing you at the Shorebirds' games in 2018.

Sincerely. Eric Krupa, Presid

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### ALUMNI UPDATE CONT...



appeared to have his role in the Baltimore future secured.

After starting the 2013 campaign in Frederick, however, Delmonico suddenly found himself as trade fodder; the Orioles shipped him to Milwaukee as part of the deal that brought closer Francisco Rodriguez to Camden Yards. He spent an injury-plagued season-and-a-half in High-A Brevard County before the Brewers released him in early 2015. Undeterred, Delmonico signed with the White Sox less than a week later; after early-season rehab and a brief stint in Kannapolis, he made his way to Double-A Birmingham and parlayed a strong second half into a spot in the Arizona Fall League.

Expectations were high for Delmonico in 2016, and he did not disappoint. He batted .338 with a 1.073 OPS over his first two months Birmingham, blasting his way to Triple-A Charlotte before Memorial Day. In 2017 he earned a non-roster

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Spring Training invite to the White Sox and was one of the Knights' brightest starts in the early get-go, representing the International League in the Triple-A All-Star Game in Tacoma, Washington.

Chicago had seen all they needed; Delmonico's winding road to The Show finally came to its climax. Coincidentally, the Shorebirds – his first ball club – played at White Sox-affiliated Kannapolis that night.

By becoming the first former Shorebird to make it to the majors via the White Sox, Delmonico etched his name as the 100th Shore-to-Show success story. A month later, Chance Sisco and Tanner Scott cracked the Orioles roster to make it 101 and 102. At the going rate, Delmarva will celebrate its 200th major leaguer sometime around 2038; by then, we may be talking about Delmonico as one of the greats to ever take the field at Perdue Stadium.





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# Q & A ~ CHRIS BITTERS

With the 23rd season of Delmarva Shorebirds baseball just around the corner, Shorebirds radio voice Will DeBoer sat down with general manager Chris Bitters to unpack goings on at Arthur W. Perdue Stadium in 2018.

- WD: The term "offseason" is kind of a misnomer, but about when does it really occur to you that the new season is about to begin?
- CB: I'd say a couple weeks out is when things really hit you that "we're here." There's always a lot to get done in a short period of time, particularly in the northern markets that we're in when weather's a factor.
- WD: What sorts of new experiences will fans have when they come to Perdue Stadium in 2018?
- CB: I think when you talk about experiences, you'll talk about some of the promotional things we've done. The staff has done a tremendous job of getting out of our comfort zone. I think when fans get to see our promotional schedule, they should be impressed with the variety. Our staples like fireworks are there, our bark in the park has been expanded, but the new stuff is stuff we haven't done for the last several years. One thing we're doing that's unique and different is the Ticket Amnesty nights. Basically, if a fan has a ticket they were unable to use, for any reason, they can trade those "dead tickets" in on that day for an upper reserved ticket. There will be one in the first half and one in the second half. We're really excited to give fans an opportunity to take advantage of those things.
- WD: Maryland Pride Thursdays were a big hit; will we be bringing those jerseys back?
- CB: Yep, we're doing Maryland Pride on Thursdays again; we'll have a different jersey, a different look, but still the Maryland theme. Orange Friday jerseys will be back too. And we have one night that we're not going to disclose yet in August that fans can look forward to.
- WD: Does a Mike Seidel appearance come with flood insurance or something? Seems like that would be a good investment.
- CB: I don't think so! We're not giving away umbrellas that night, but if you have bad weather, you can throw Mike's bobblehead in your front yard and pretend that he's broadcasting from your house.
- WD: It always seems like it's the biggest nights and promotions of the season that are most threatened by rain; is there some sort of good weather dance that's been passed down from MiLB generation to generation?
- **CB:** I think if there were, you'd be seeing the 160 or so general managers out there dancing on a regular basis, especially in the Midwest and on the East Coast. Sometimes it's the luck of the draw. You do the best you can with the weather, and fortunately we do have a field that drains tremendously well. It helps that we're all expert tarp-pullers as well.



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# PLAYER FEATURE

By: Will DeBoer



### Dietz Hoping to Anchor Rotation in Delmarva Return

When Matthias Dietz broke camp last season, he carried the biggest spotlight of anyone to move into the clubhouse at Arthur W. Perdue Stadium. A second-round pick the year before, the Oriole brass had pegged him as the headliner in the Delmarva Shorebirds' rotation.

By and large, the season did not go according to plan for the then-21-year-old. Dietz racked up just three wins over 26 starts in 2017, posting a 4.93 ERA and averaging just under five innings per outing. While showing flashes of what made him a top-15 prospect in the Baltimore system, the Orland Park, Ill. native could never quite keep the engine clean for an extended period of time.

The Orioles went pitcher-heavy with their draft strategy again last June, spending four of their top five picks on young arms. That, plus his season-long hiccup, conspired to drop Dietz off the Orioles' top 30 list over the offseason. Dietz, now 22, is expected to return to the Shorebirds in 2018, but with the spotlight dimmed, it might be the perfect time to regain his mojo.

"It's going to be alright," said Dietz after his 2017 debut in Greenville. "I was happy to get the first start out of the way. I felt a little jacked up in the first inning, but I settled down and got through."

After beginning the season on the three-inning diet he had established in Aberdeen in 2016, Dietz worked his way up to four, five, and six innings over his first month in the South Atlantic League. He notched a handful of quality starts over the first two months, but his breakthrough came in late May at Hagerstown. Dietz held the vaunted Suns offense in check for 6.2 scoreless, two-hit innings, walking five but striking out seven.

"I was kind of effectively wild," said Dietz to MiLB.com writer Michael Peng after his Nolan Ryan-esque no-decision. "That added pressure at the same time, which was almost helpful because you're really focusing in and making sure you don't make a bad pitch."

Following another up-and-down month, Dietz finally earned his first career win with five innings of three-run ball in Hickory in early July; not the numbers, he admitted, he had envisioned for his first W, but after six previous quality starts without anything to show for it, it was definitely welcome and well-earned. He didn't have to wait long for win number two, anchoring a shutout against Rome with six scoreless three-hit frames in his next turn on the bump, jump-starting the Shorebirds' stretch of eight wins in 12 games.

Dietz's third win of the season came in his ninth and final quality start of the year came against rival Lakewood in mid-August; he allowed one run on three hits in six innings in Delmarva's twilight victory. Dietz closed the year with a solid effort against West Virginia at home, surrendering four runs in six innings.

# PLAYER FEATURE CONT...



With a stocky build and blonde locks poking out from under his cap, Dietz is still an intimidating presence on the mound. His plus fastball, which features the occasional late break, still plays to his advantage; when his control was on, he gave opposing batters fits. Once he shakes the control issues that plagued him throughout 2017 – there were only three starts in which he did not walk a batter – Dietz should be a valuable asset to the Shorebirds rotation in 2018.

Dietz started the home opener at Perdue Stadium last season. It remains to be seen whether he

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will get the bump for Opening Day against Asheville this year, but whenever he takes the mound this month, Dietz will be locked in and ready for his redemption tour through the Sally League.





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