

# PELICANS FRANCHISE HISTORY

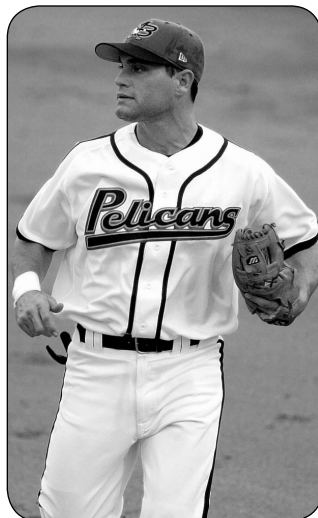
In 1998, a new home for the new ballclub in town was built and was dubbed Myrtle Beach's "Field of Dreams." Baseball was officially back at the beach after a seven-year absence following the 1992 departure of the Myrtle Beach Hurricanes (Advanced-A affiliate of the Toronto Blue Jays). The Pelicans debuted in 1999 and with the team as green as the grass at the new ballpark, the victories began to mount. The newest and freshest team in the historic Carolina League burst onto the scene and made an immediate impact, storming through its inaugural season.

## 1999

The Birds advanced to the Mills Cup Championship in just their first year, squaring off against the Wilmington Blue Rocks (Kansas City Royals). With the championship series all locked up at two games apiece, Mother Nature decided the set with the arrival of Hurricane Floyd. The storm forced the cancellation of the series and ended the '99 season abruptly. The Blue Rocks and Pelicans were crowned as co-champs, an impressive accomplishment for the first-year Myrtle Beach squad.

That championship run was guided by future National League All-Star Marcus Giles. Giles led the Carolina League in batting average (.326), hits (162) and doubles (40), numbers good enough to earn him league MVP honors. Giles' double-play partner on the '99 Pelicans was his future Major League teammate Rafael Furcal. The small-statured shortstop dazzled Pelicans fans, hitting over .400 for the first month of his stay in Myrtle Beach. "Raffy" helped propel the Pelicans to their first championship and promptly found himself

in the big leagues the next season, where he won National League Rookie of the Year honors in 2000. Furcal was the first Pelican in team history to have his jersey number (#2) retired, with that ceremony coming just one year later in 2001.



*Marcus Giles was an N.L. All-Star in 2003 with the Braves*



## 2000

The following year, the Pelicans closed out their unfinished business. With clear weather this time around for the championship series, Myrtle Beach swept the Lynchburg Hillcats to claim the franchise's first outright Carolina League crown. The Pelicans lived by the age-old adage, "pitching wins championships." While the team struggled at the plate, finishing with the lowest batting average in the league, Myrtle Beach's pitching staff dominated the rest of the league to the tune of a league-best 2.51 ERA, more than a full run better than the second-place Salem Avalanche (3.82). Guided by legendary pitching coach Bruce Dal Canton, the pitching staff combined to record 27 shutouts, the most in professional baseball. Hurlers Horacio Ramirez and Christian Parra captained the staff, and finished the season first and second, respectively, in Carolina League wins.

The 2000 Birds finished 36 games above .500 (88-52), establishing a franchise record for wins in a season that would stand until 2008. That impressive mark was the best in the league by 15 games. With two years, two trips to the Mills Cup finals, and two Carolina League titles under their belts, the Pelicans looked toward 2001.



*Christian Parra went 17-4 with a 2.28 ERA in 2000*



**2001**

Year three was the first season the Pelicans did not qualify for the postseason. A respectable 71-67 record placed the club third in the Carolina League overall during the regular season. First baseman Adam LaRoche played his first full season with the Pelicans and showed early signs of his future big league potential, giving Pelicans fans a preview of things to come.

The 2001 campaign was the third and final for the Birds under manager Brian Snitker. “Snit” would later become the first former Pelicans skipper to manage in the big leagues when he took over as the manager of the Atlanta Braves in 2016.

**2002**

After a year absence, the Pelicans were back in the postseason in 2002, this time under the direction of a new field manager. Randy Ingle took the reins in Myrtle Beach after the club’s first three unforgettable seasons under manager Brian Snitker. With Ingle leading the charge, the Pelicans jumped out to a 43-27 record to clinch the first half Southern Division title. With a playoff spot already secure, however, the Pelicans fell behind the Kinston Indians and finished four games out of first in the second half. The K-Tribe steamrolled into the playoffs, sweeping the Pelicans in the opening round on their way to the 2002 Carolina League title.

Aided by another strong season on the mound, the Pelicans finished 79-61. Pitcher Bubba Nelson dealt his way to the best ERA in the league (1.72). Teammate Daniel Curtis was not far behind, finishing with the third-best mark in the circuit (2.53) to go along with a league-high three complete games. Another standout on the mound was future World Series champion, Adam Wainwright, who led the league in

History 

**RAFAEL FURCAL – No. 2 JERSEY RETIRED**



*Furcal is a three-time All-Star and won a World Series with St. Louis in 2011.*

**RAFAEL FURCAL MLB STATS**

Year	Team	AVG	HR	RBI
2000	Atlanta	.295	4	37
2001	Atlanta	.275	4	30
2002	Atlanta	.275	8	47
2003	Atlanta	.292	15	61
2004	Atlanta	.279	14	59
2005	Atlanta	.284	12	58
2006	L.A. (NL)	.300	15	63
2007	L.A. (NL)	.270	6	47
2008	L.A. (NL)	.357	5	16
2009	L.A. (NL)	.269	9	47
2010	L.A. (NL)	.300	8	43
2011	LA/STL	.231	8	28
2012	St. Louis	.264	5	49
2013	St. Louis	DNP (“Tommy John” surgery)		
2014	Miami	.171	0	2

Just 21 years old and in his third professional season, Rafael Furcal debuted mid-year with the Pelicans in 1999. The shortstop batted .293 and stole 23 bases in just 43 games with Myrtle Beach. His arrival helped launch the Birds to a co-Mills Cup championship in their first season of existence.

Furcal advanced to Double-A Greenville in 2001 but played only three games before flying to the major leagues. Just one year after playing on the Grand Strand, Furcal earned National League Rookie of the Year honors.

In 2001 Furcal was invited back to the beach to have his jersey number retired. He became the first Pelican to have his number retired. He is the only player in club history to ever have his number retired by the Birds.

with 9 home runs and 36 runs batted in.

## 2003

After four straight winning seasons to begin franchise history, Pelicans fans endured their first losing campaign in 2003. The Pelicans struggled mightily, sputtering to a 56-82 record. The '03 Pelicans featured a roster loaded to the ceiling with top Braves prospects, but youth and inexperience led to struggles between the lines. The hottest prospect in the Atlanta system at the time, Andy Marte, wowed fans and performed as advertised, batting .285 and ripping 16 longballs.

## 2004

Following the toughest season in team history, the Pelicans were out to rebound in 2004. Myrtle Beach finished the first half with an impressive 40-28 record, but still were 4.5 games behind the Kinston Indians, who surged to the best record among Class A teams nationwide.



*Jeff Francoeur went on to win a Gold Glove with Atlanta in 2007 and hit .261 over his 12-year career.*

A Pelicans pitching staff that included three Carolina League All-Stars, and three others who received promotions during the season, pieced together another fine year on the hill. Blaine Boyer, Anthony Lerew and Matt Wright were all selected to the California/Carolina All-Star Game after strong first-half performances. Fireballer Jose Capellan, whose fastball hit triple digits, nearly tossed a no-hitter in early May against the Frederick Keys, but hit his pitch count after eight innings of no-hit ball, forcing his removal from the contest. The gem was broken up by Keys outfielder Woody Cliffords with a full count and two outs in the top of the 9th inning against reliever Ralph Roberts. Capellan breezed through Myrtle Beach and the rest of the Braves system, winding up in Atlanta by September. Another pitcher who impressed was Kyle Davies, who began the year in Myrtle Beach, tossing his way to a 9-2 record before receiving a promotion to Double-A and eventually Triple-A Richmond.

At the plate, the likes of 2002 first-round draft pick Jeff Francoeur, Scott Thorman, Gregor Blanco and Brian McCann put the pop in the Pelicans lineup.

Francoeur and Thorman both finished the season in Greenville. McCann went on to become the Braves everyday catcher and an NL All-Star. The healthy mix of strong pitching and solid hitting helped push the Pelicans to a 75-63 record, good enough for third in the Carolina League overall.

## 2005

The start of the 2005 season for the Myrtle Beach Pelicans was perfect, at least through the first six innings. Opening Day starting pitcher Chuck James gave the Pelicans' fans hope for a stellar season by tossing six perfect innings to lift the lid on the seventh season of Pelicans baseball on the Grand Strand.

The Pelicans rode the momentum of James' Opening Day start in the season's dawn, winning three of their first four games, but the early season success sizzle fizzled out. A number of injuries, promotions and transactions proved to be too much for the Pelicans to overcome. When the final pitch was tossed in early September, the Pelicans' record stood at 61-79.

Yet, despite the on-field struggles, there were success stories. James wore an Atlanta Braves uniform by





At 14 letters, Saltalamacchia is the longest last name in MLB history.

the end of the year and joined 17 other former Pelicans on the Braves roster in 2005. In late June, the Pelicans received the top '05 Braves draft pick, former North Carolina State University closer Joey Devine. Devine appeared in just four games with the Pelicans before breezing his way to the Major Leagues by the end of the year.

Catcher Jarrod Saltalamacchia (above left) put up massive numbers, hitting .314 with 19 home runs and 81 RBI, prompting *Baseball America* to rate the switch-hitting backstop as the top prospect in the Carolina League. "Salty" became the second Pelican in as many years to be named to that honor, along with Jeff Francoeur. His 81 RBIs broke the club's record for most runs driven in during one season, a record formerly belonging to Marcus Giles' 1999 mark of 73.

Salty wasn't the only one etching his name in the record books. Teammate Matt Esquivel matched the catcher's RBI production with 81 of his own.

## 2006

The 2006 season brought a world of change for the Myrtle Beach Pelicans Baseball Club. Just 10 days into the new year, Capitol Broadcasting Company of Raleigh, N.C. announced an agreement to sell the Pelicans to Myrtle Beach Pelicans LP, a group managed by Greensons Baseball. The new buying group already operated two Minor League Baseball franchises in Pennsylvania: the Altoona Curve of the Double-A Eastern League (sold in 2008) and the State College Spikes of the Class A-Short Season New York-Penn League.

Pittsburgh attorney Chuck Greenberg (pictured, left) headed the new ownership group. "We have had our eye on the Pelicans for some time and we are thrilled to become a part of the dynamic Myrtle Beach community," said Greenberg. "We salute Capitol Broadcasting for establishing an outstanding tradition of fun, affordable, family entertainment and pledge to build on their wonderful foundation for many years to come."



Greenberg joined the Pelicans during the 2006 season.

The Pelicans went into the 2006 baseball season under the ownership of Capitol Broadcasting until May 31, when the sale of the team became official, and Greensons Baseball took over. (Editor's note: Greensons Baseball became Greenberg Sports Group in 2008).

On the field, year eight for the Pelicans featured more ups than downs, and not just in the win and loss columns. During the season, a total of 15 players received promotions to Double-A or higher after starting the year in Myrtle Beach. Before receiving a promotion to Double-A Mississippi in late August, scrappy outfielder Matt Young literally walked his way into the Pelicans record book. Young drew 71 walks, breaking the previous record (67) set by Andy Marte in 1999.

Another Pelicans outfielder made history in 2006 as Carl Loadenthal claimed the Carolina League batting crown with a .323 average. The former Rider University standout became just the second Pelican in franchise history to win a batting title, joining Giles, who hit .326 in 1999. Loadenthal's .323 batting average ranks as the highest single-season average for a left-handed batter in club history.

Second baseman J.C. Holt pieced together a 20-game hitting streak (Aug. 2-23), at the time the longest in franchise history.





*The Pelicans organization moved in a different direction after the 2006 season, introducing a new logo (pictured right) with a blue and gold scheme.*

*It replaced the old gold and green scheme and logo (pictured left)*



Aside from individual accomplishments, the Pelicans as a team posted the third-best record in the league, and the best overall record of any team in the Atlanta Braves minor league system, at 72-68.

Under their new ownership group, the Pelicans re-branded themselves with a fresh and unique look, their first logo change since their inception in 1999. In November, the Pelicans introduced their new look, unveiling a fresh set of logos and upgraded uniforms.

The Pelicans modernized their identity to better connect with the lifestyle and personality of Myrtle Beach. The new look adopted the American White Pelican and South Carolina's iconic crescent moon surrounded by dock rope and the words "Myrtle Beach Pelicans" in a beach-themed script. The Pelicans' new colors, Midnight Blue, Sun Gold and Pelicans Blue, were designed to pay tribute to Myrtle Beach's laid-back Southern charm. The Pelicans are the only professional sports team to employ their unique shade of Pelicans Blue.

The new look ushered in entirely redesigned caps and uniforms, the new home kits featuring white sleeveless tops with Pelicans Blue sleeves and the new "Pelicans" script across the chest. The road uniforms feature gray sleeveless tops with Pelicans Blue sleeves and "Myrtle Beach" across the chest. Both the jerseys and pants have Pelicans Blue and Sun Gold piping. The club also introduced an alternate jersey in Pelicans Blue with "Pelicans" across the chest in Sun Gold. The new home cap features the unique Pelicans Blue color and the American White Pelican head. Road caps will be Pelicans Blue with the letters "MB."



## 2007

Not content with just a new look, the 2007 season brought a revitalization of the Pelicans home park, spearheaded by Greensons Baseball, LP. The group's \$2.5-million investment in the ballpark began with the installation of a brand new, state-of-the-art video board that would bring a big league feel to the Pelicans' ballpark. Then, the Pelicans added the only left-field bleacher seating in the Carolina League and the Pelicans Beach. The boost by Greensons Baseball made the park one of the premier venues in all of Minor League Baseball.

In their first full season under Greensons Baseball, the Pelicans reached new heights. In late May, the Pelicans were awarded the 2008 California/Carolina League All-Star Game. In addition, the Pelicans were a finalist for the prestigious Larry MacPhail Promotional Trophy, awarded to the minor league team that displays extraordinary promotions both on and off the field. The Pelicans' front office staff increased in size from eight to 20 full-time personnel, all with the distinct goal of making Pelicans baseball the best family entertainment option on the Grand Strand. The club added positions such as director of promotions, director of community relations and director of in-game entertainment.

On the playing field, individuals garnered most of the attention. Jordan Schafer was a machine at the plate, amassing a minor-league-leading 176 hits in 136 games. He finished fifth in the Carolina League with a .289 batting average and fifth in the league with 52 extra-base hits. Schafer's sparkling season earned him Pelicans team MVP honors. In 2007, power came by way of the franchise's career home run king, Isiah "KK" Ka'aihue. His total of 22 was just one shy of the single-season franchise record set by Mike Hessman in the team's inaugural 1999 season. Ka'aihue also hit for average, batting at a .298 clip,

good for fourth-best in the Carolina League. The other steady force the lineup was Roberto Alvarez, who finished with a .291 batting average, sixth-best in the league. The Pelicans were the only team to have three players finish in the top ten in the league in batting average.

Although the big three stole the spotlight at times, Quentin Davis literally tried to steal it back, swiping 37 bases in 2007, three shy of the Pelicans' franchise record at the time.

Overall, despite the efforts of manager Rocket Wheeler, the inexperience and ever-changing clubhouse doomed Myrtle Beach from a postseason run. The club stumbled to a 59-80 record, placing them last overall in the Carolina League Southern Division.



2007 Pelican Jordan Schafer played six seasons in the Major Leagues.

## 2008

The Pelicans 10th Anniversary season became one of the most remarkable seasons in the franchise's brief history on the Grand Strand. Rocket Wheeler returned to Myrtle Beach for a third season at the helm and guided the team to a sweep of the first and second half titles in the Southern Division and the franchise all-time wins record (89). Wheeler's Pelicans also broke the franchise record for wins in the first half (45).

The Pelicans hosted a venue attendance record (6,599) when it hosted the 2008 California-Carolina League All-Star Game in June. Myrtle Beach first baseman Ernesto Mejia highlighted the festivities by winning the Home Run Derby, besting teammate Brandon Hicks in the semifinals of the sudden-death showdown.

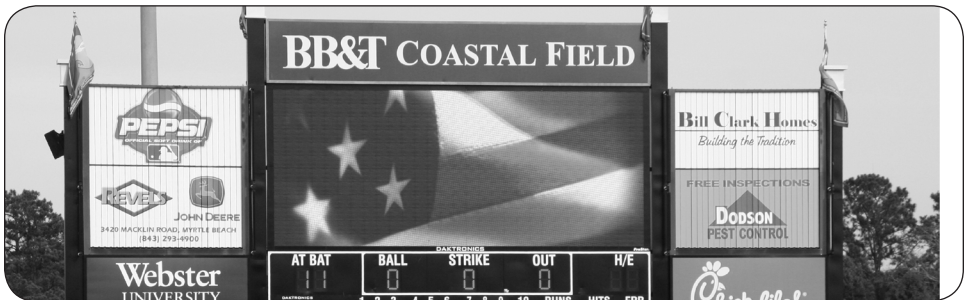
With their first-half title, the Pelicans ended a four-year run of first-half championships for Southern Division rival Kinston. The moment was made sweeter when the Birds claimed the title at Grainger Stadium in Kinston. With the first-half crown, Myrtle Beach also ended the longest active playoff drought in the Carolina League.

With the second-half title also in hand, the Pelicans matched up with the wild card winning Winston-Salem Warthogs (Chicago White Sox) in the divisional series.

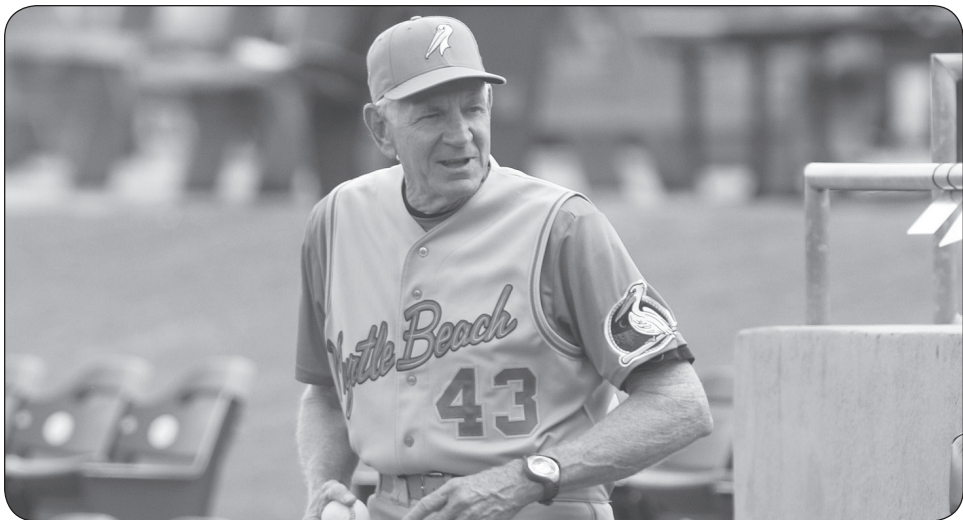
Myrtle Beach ended the Warthogs' season by winning the series two-games-to-one. It would be the final games the Warthogs would play, as the club was renamed the Dash after the season.

Unfortunately for the Pelicans, a depleted bullpen was unable to get them through their Mills Cup Championship matchup with Potomac. With the series tied at a game apiece, the Pelicans took a three-run lead to the bottom of the ninth inning of game three but the Nationals forced extra-innings with a dramatic three-run rally and won the game in 10 innings. The Pelicans lost the series the following night.

The 2008 season will also be remembered as a tremendous time of loss for both the Pelicans and Braves organizations. In May, the only pitching coach in franchise history, Bruce Dal Canton, left the team after



Pictured in 2009, the Pelicans 2007 renovation project included a brand new video board.



being diagnosed with esophageal cancer. It marked the first time that Dal Canton wasn't in the Pelicans dugout. Unfortunately, he would not return. Dal Canton lost his battle with cancer after the season. The Pelicans retired his number 43 on Opening Day of the 2009 season.

The 2008 Pelicans were a record-breaking unit. Boasting the most prolific offense in franchise history, the Pelicans broke notable offensive marks: team batting average (.260), runs scored (764), home runs (153) and doubles (298). Additionally, Mejia broke the single-season records for doubles (47), RBIs (93) and at-bats (519).

Outfielder Willie Cabrera was named 2008 Myrtle Beach Pelicans MVP. Cabrera, a fiery outfielder from Los Angeles, batted .290 with 16 home runs and 78 RBI and was the vocal leader in the Birds' clubhouse.

Southpaw Scott Diamond led the Birds' pitching staff to the lowest ERA in the league (3.48) and was named Pelicans Pitcher of the Year. A league-best six Pelicans were midseason all-stars and a circuit-leading five were postseason selections. Wheeler was named Carolina League Manager of the Year and Minor League Manager of the Year by *Baseball America*, while Pelicans General Manager North Johnson was voted Carolina League Executive of the Year. The hardware continued to pile up when head groundskeeper Chris "Butter" Ball took home his third consecutive Sports Turf Manager of the Year award for maintaining the finest playing surface in the league. To cap off the season, the Pelicans were awarded the Myrtle Beach Chamber of Commerce's 2008 Community Service Award, representing the culmination of the team's re-dedication to its outstanding fan base and the Myrtle Beach community.

## BRUCE DAL CANTON

*"Bruce was one of the greatest individuals to ever come through this park"*

- Mike Snow, Pelicans Facility Operations Manager

**B**ruce Dal Canton served as Pelicans pitching coach from the team's inception in 1999 until 2007. He passed away in 2008 from esophageal cancer at 66 years of age. In 2009 the Pelicans' home clubhouse was named in his honor. His uniform number, 43, is retired and painted on the building's roof.

Dal Canton played 11 seasons in the Major Leagues, two with the Atlanta Braves, the club he also spent his entire 26-year career with as a coach. Dal Canton coached at every level, from rookie ball to the Major Leagues, and was the Atlanta Braves pitching coach from 1987-1990.

Signed by the Pirates out of an open tryout, Dal Canton left a career as a school teacher to pursue his baseball dream. He began playing at Double-A in 1966 and debuted in Pittsburgh just a season later. Over his career, Dal Canton went 51-49 with a 3.67 ERA.

Dal Canton began coaching in 1982 with the Braves Class A-Advanced Carolina League affiliate in Durham, NC. He also served as the Roving Pitching Coordinator throughout the Atlanta system. Within six years, Dal Canton was coaching in the Majors. Throughout his career, he worked with John Smoltz, Tom Glavine, Mark Wohlers, Pete Smith, Steve Avery, Kevin Millwood, John Rocker, Kerry Ligtenberg and most every arm that famously went on to help the Braves win 14 straight National League East titles.



## 2009

With the bar set to perhaps its highest high after 2008, the Pelicans were tasked with following up a season that exceeded expectations in nearly every measurable category. On the field, the '09 season began with anticipation and question marks as a young Pelicans squad arrived in Myrtle Beach highlighted by the top two prospects in the Atlanta Braves minor league system: outfielder Jason Heyward and first baseman Freddie Freeman. The pair did not disappoint in their few months on the Grand Strand. When both were promoted to Double-A Mississippi just before July 4, Freeman was the team's leading everyday hitter with a .302 batting average, and Heyward battled through minor nagging injuries to post a .296 average with 10 home runs and 31 RBIs. The Georgia native would ride the momentum of his productive Pelicans season and further success at Mississippi and Triple-A Gwinnett to Minor League Player of the Year honors from USA Today and *Baseball America*.

The 2009 season was marked by the inexperience of a youthful roster still learning to compete in the Carolina League. The Pelicans set marks for most losses in a first half (42) and a season (84), but the team did experience its share of highlights as well. Myrtle Beach hosted its first Fourth of July home game to the tune of a near-capacity crowd of 5,681 and a 3-2 comeback victory over the Salem Red Sox. Outfielder Cody Johnson, a 2006 Braves' first-round draft pick, smashed team records all season while blasting 32 home runs, nine more than any other Pelican had ever hit in a single season in club history. In addition, Johnson became the first Carolina Leaguer to crack the 30-homer plateau since Daniel Peoples did it for the Kinston Indians in 1997. Johnson and Heyward were named to the 2009 California-Carolina League All-Star Game in Lake Elsinore, California, and Johnson was named to the Carolina League's Postseason All-Star team as well.



A Pelican back in 2004, Brian McCann made an encore appearance in 2009.

The Pelicans hosted a pair of Major League rehab appearances by key Braves during the '09 season as well. In late April, suffering from vision blurriness, former Pelican catcher Brian McCann returned to the Grand Strand, where he played in two games, doubling twice in six at-bats. July brought a pair of starts by two-time American League All-Star Tim Hudson. Recovering from Tommy John surgery, he threw 4.2 innings on his eventual road back to the big leagues.

On a late-season Saturday night in September, Pelicans manager Rocket Wheeler etched his name atop the Myrtle Beach record book as well. A 5-4 Pelicans win over Winston-Salem on September 5 made Wheeler the winningest manager in Pelicans history. The victory the Pawley's Island resident past former Pelicans skipper Randy Ingle, whose 271 wins now rank second in franchise history.

The 2009 season ended on a bittersweet note. On September 15, the club bid farewell to its mascot and beloved "Home Run Dog," Dinger. The longtime mainstay had taken on a lighter role in recent seasons with his younger brother Deuce taking over duties as the club's canine ball caddy, but Dinger still left an indelible mark on the franchise. Upon the announcing of his passing, the Pelicans front office was flooded with cards, gifts, and well-wishes from fans across the nation.

Better news arrived just 10 days later, however. The Pelicans announced that they had been awarded the 2010 California-Carolina League All-Star Game, just one season after hosting the contest for the first time in 2008. Myrtle Beach became the first Carolina League repeat host of the ASG since the

## NOTABLE REHAB

Year	Player	Age
2000	Steve Avery	30
2002	Mark DeRosa	27
2007	Ryan Drese	31
2008	Tom Glavine	42
	Mike Hampton	35
2009	Tim Hudson	33
	Brian McCann	25
2015	Jorge Soler	23
2017	Willson Contreras	25





Pelicans franchise came into existence in 1999.

## 2010

The 2010 campaign started with a bang, with the team playing host to the Wilmington Blue Rocks in front of a near-sellout crowd in a 4-1 Pelicans victory. The Pelicans made history a month later, when phenom pitching prospect Julio Teheran made his Carolina League debut. Throwing game two of a twin-bill against Winston-Salem on May 19th, Teheran whiffed 12 Dash batters in seven innings of work while allowing just one run. It was the middle of a long day though, as the Pelicans split the day's doubleheader with what turned into a 20-inning, 4-3 loss. The game was one inning shy of the Carolina League record.

Even with some struggles on the field, the first half was punctuated by a few outstanding pitching performances. At one point, the Pelicans boasted a starting rotation of four of the top five pitching



*Julio Teheran (Myrtle Beach) and Gregory Infante (Winston-Salem) walk the concourse at the All-Star game, hosted by the Pelicans.*

prospects in the Atlanta Braves' minor league system: Teheran, Randall Delgado, Arodys Vizcaino and J.J. Hoover. At that time, FanGraphs named the Pelicans rotation as the most talented in Minor League Baseball. From that list, Hoover, Teheran, and Delgado were each selected to represent the Pelicans in the 2010 California-Carolina League All-Star Game in Myrtle Beach on June 22. Vizcaino was named to the South Atlantic League All-Star Team before his call-up to Myrtle Beach in the second week of June.

After a troublesome first half, the Pelicans were a stronger ballclub entering the second half with a loaded pitching staff and an offense gaining traction behind added lineup anchors Mycal Jones, Mike Jones and Dan Nelson. June ended with a 3-4 record in the first week of the second half, and the Pelicans kept the bar set near the .500 mark for nearly the rest of the way. Behind their "big three" all-star rotation stalwarts of Delgado, Hoover and Teheran, the Birds did their best to stifle Carolina League lineups and remain in the hunt for the second-half Southern Division title. The stable was quickly plundered, though. Before July was done, the Birds lost two of their big guns when Delgado and Teheran were promoted to Double-A Mississippi. Hoover joined the duo after an August promotion.

After finishing 17 games out of the running in the first half, the Pelicans reasserted themselves contenders in the second half. Following a July 12 doubleheader sweep of the Wilmington Blue Rocks, the Pelicans remained within three-and-a-half games of first place for nearly the rest of the second half. Myrtle Beach's last road trip, however, was the club's downfall. The Pelicans suffered a three game sweep at Winston-Salem during their August 27 series. The Pelicans would be eliminated before their final home stand.

## 2011

The 2011 season brought a new era as the Pelicans began a new partnership with the Texas Rangers. The Birds' first season as the Rangers' Class Advanced-A affiliate was a great success, with the club winning the Southern Division first-half title and qualifying for the postseason for the first time since 2008.

On March 29, the Pelicans kicked-off the affiliation change, hosting the reigning AL champs for a preseason



exhibition game against the Coastal Carolina Chanticleers. The Rangers won 6-2 in front of a sellout crowd.

In his first season with Myrtle Beach, Jason Wood made his managerial debut, piloting an Opening Day roster that featured eight of *Baseball America's* top 30 Rangers' prospects.

Neil Ramirez got the Opening Day start for the Pelicans and took a no-hitter into the fifth. He didn't stay in town for long, as he was promoted to Triple-A Round Rock after just one start. Robbie Erlin dominated for the first two months of the season, putting up a 2.14 ERA with 62 strikeouts and only five walks in 54.2 innings, earning a promotion to Double-A Frisco. Robbie Ross was the league leader in wins at the break and was named an All-Star for the third straight season. The lefty was promoted to Double-A August 2, but was still named Carolina League Pitcher of the Year. Finally, Barret Loux made his professional debut in 2011, skipping all lower levels and starting with Myrtle Beach at High-A. In 109 innings, Loux racked up 127 strikeouts to rank second in the league.

It was a historic day on May 3, when the Birds rocked Potomac 20-6, surpassing the 20-run mark for the first time in three years. Catcher Zach Zaneski had a record-breaking game, setting the Pelicans' single-game record with seven runs batted in and tying the club record with five hits and four runs scored. Jared Prince also scored four runs to tie the team record and Strausborger got into the record books by tying the club mark with two triples. A day later, the Pelicans got a remarkable performance on the pitchers' mound, as Joe Wieland took a no-hitter into the fifth inning. He struck out 13 Nationals in six shutout innings.

June 12 was the longest day of the season for the Pelicans, playing a 23-inning marathon against Kinston. It was the longest contest in the 66-year history of the Carolina League. The extra innings were highlighted by spectacular relief performances from Zach Osborne, who put up four scoreless innings, allowing two hits and striking out six, while Chad Bell, who struck out eight and held the Indians to one hit in five shutout frames. In the bottom of the 23rd inning, six hours and 27 minutes after the first pitch, Kinston's Casey Frawley singled off Kasey Kiker to score Roberto Perez with the winning run and beat the Birds 3-2. Zaneski caught all 23 innings for Myrtle Beach.

The first-half race came down to the final weekend. With the help of Wieland's pitching on June 17 against Frederick, the Birds came out on top to edge the Indians by two games and clinch the club's first playoff berth since 2008, setting off a wild celebration in front of the home fans. The Pelicans enjoyed playing in front of that crowd, going 23-9 on the Grand Strand in the first half.

The Birds finished a half-game behind Frederick for the best overall first-half mark in the CL at 40-29. They scored the most runs in the Carolina League (312) and allowed the fewest (246), giving them the best run differential in the circuit by far (+66). The offense, guided by hitting coach and 13-year minor league skipper Julio Garcia, also led the league in on base percentage



Rocket Wheeler won 331 games in five seasons with the Pelicans.

**LONG CAROLINA LEAGUE GAMES**

Date	Innings	Result
*June 12, 2011	23	Kinston 3, Myrtle Beach 2
July 5, 1998	21	Wilmington 3, Danville 2
April 18, 1967	20	Tidewater 5, Kinston 5
May, 19, 2010	20	Winston-Salem 4, Myrtle Beach 3
August 8, 1966	19	Lynchburg 4, Kinston 3
August 14, 1967	19	Winston-Salem 13, Greensboro 12
August 28, 1967	19	Greensboro 3, Lynchburg 1
July 24, 2011	19	Myrtle Beach 3, Winston-Salem 2

\*The Pelicans game with the Indians lasted six hours, 27 minutes.



and was second in batting average.

Under the tutelage of pitching coach Brad Holman, who worked with many of the hurlers at Low-A Hickory in 2009 and 2010, the pitching staff led the loop in ERA with a 3.14 mark. They racked up the most strikeouts and allowed the fewest home runs. The staff finished the half in second place in the league in opponent batting average and walks per nine innings. The team defense excelled as well, making only 60 errors in 69 games, tied for the fewest errors in the league.

Four Pelicans received All-Star nods and a trip to Modesto, California on June 21. Joe Wieland was tabbed with the start for the CL team and was dominant in a 1-2-3 first inning, retiring the side on six pitches, all of them for strikes. Robbie Ross also tossed a 1-2-3 inning, posting two strikeouts as he dealt to a familiar face behind the plate. Catcher Zach Zaneski, center fielder Ryan Strausborger and Mike Olt were also named to the All-Star Team.

Olt was a headliner for Myrtle Beach, winning Rangers Minor League Player of the Month for April and

**YEARLY PITCHING LEADERS**

YEAR	WINS	LOSSES	ERA (Min. 114 IP)	SAVES				
1999	Will Fleck	10	Will Fleck	10	Derrick Lewis	2.40	Ryan Greene	16
2000	Christian Parra	18	Horacio Ramirez	8	Christian Parra	2.28	Brad Voyles	19
2001	Trey Hodges	15	Jung Bong	9	Trey Hodges	2.76	Matt Gawer	14
2002	Chris Waters	13	Roman Colon	8	Kenny Nelson	1.72	Kevin Barry	26
2003	Macay McBride	9	Matt Coenen	10	Macay McBride	2.95	Ralph Roberts	8
			Zach Miner	10				
2004	Blaine Boyer	10	Blaine Boyer	10	Blaine Boyer	2.98	Glenn Tucker	21
2005	Jake Stevens	10	Kelvin Villa	10	Jake Stevens	4.93	Manny Acosta	7
2006	Matt Harrison	8	James Parr	8	Kelvin Villa	3.83	Moises Hernandez	10
	Kelvin Villa	8						
2007	Moises Hernandez	10	Jairo Cuevas	12	Jairo Cuevas	3.55	Sung Ki Jung	22
2008	Scott Diamond	12	Ryne Reynoso	6	Kyle Cofield	3.26	Bryan Dumesnil	12
2009	Erik Cordier	7	Richard Sullivan	12	Erik Cordier	3.87	Cory Gearrin	17
2010	J.J. Hoover	11	Matt Crim	11	Randall Delgado	2.76	Luis Avilan	9
2011	Robbie Ross	9	Wilfredo Boscan	12	Robbie Ross	2.26	Ryan Kelly	9
2012	Randol Rojas	9	Randy Henry	9	Kyle Hendricks	2.82	Ben Rowen	19
2013	Nick Martinez	10	Alec Asher	7	Alec Asher	2.90	Ryan Harvey	8
			Nick Martinez	7				
			Victor Payano	7				
2014	Andrew Faulkner	10	Victor Payano	8	Sam Wolff	3.37	Jose Leclerc	14
	Luis Parra	10						
2015	Jonathan Martinez	9	Jen-Ho Tseng	7	Jonathan Martinez	2.56	Jasvir Rakkar	16
2016	Jonathan Martinez	12	Zach Hedges	8	Trevor Clifton	2.72	Ryan McNeil	22
2017	Adbert Alzolay	7	Thomas Hatch	11	Thomas Hatch	4.04	Pedro Araujo	10
2018	Tyson Miller	9	Bryan Hudson	11	Tyson Miller	3.54	Tyler Peyton	10

YEAR	INNINGS PITCHED	APPEARANCES	WALKS	STRIKEOUTS				
1999	Scott Sobkowiak	139.1	Ryan Greene	44	Derrick Lewis	81	Scott Sobkowiak	161
2000	Christian Parra	157.2	Brad Voyles	39	Christian Parra	56	Christian Parra	163
2001	Trey Hodges	173.0	Matt Gawer	42	Matt Butler	48	Jung Bong	145
2002	Chris Waters	182.2	Kevin Barry	47	Adam Wainwright	66	Adam Wainwright	167
2003	Macay McBride	164.2	Ralph Roberts	44	Matt Coenen	62	Macay McBride	139
2004	Blaine Boyer	154.0	Glenn Tucker	48	Matt Wright	58	Matt Wright	133
2005	Jake Stevens	148.0	Wes Letson	41	Jake Stevens	62	Jake Stevens	102
2006	James Parr	134.2	Michael Nix	36	Charlie Morton	54	James Parr	90
2007	Jairo Cuevas	132.0	Kevin Gunderson	44	Jairo Cuevas	71	Jairo Cuevas	116
2008	Ryne Reynoso	131.1	Nicholas Fellman	44	Kyle Cofield	66	Ryne Reynoso	105
2009	Erik Cordier	121.0	Tommy Palica	41	Erik Cordier	74	Cole Rohrbough	100
2010	Matt Crim	149.2	Angelo Paulino	41	Matt Crim	59	Randall Delgado	120
2011	Robbie Ross	123.1	Trevor Hurley	38	Kasey Kiker	52	Barret Loux	127
2012	Kyle Hendricks	130.2	Jimmy Reyes	41	Randol Rojas	37	Kyle Hendricks	112
					Wilmer Font	37		
2013	Alec Asher	133.1	Ryan Harvey	42	Victor Payano	57	Alec Asher	139
2014	Luis Parra	137.2	Jose Leclerc	42	Victor Payano	90	Victor Payano	86
2015	Daury Torrez	134.1	Jasvir Rakkar	38	Josh Conway	31	Jen-Ho Tseng	87
					Tyler Skulina	31		
2016	Jonathan Martinez	131.0	Ryan McNeil	44	Jonathan Martinez	43	Trevor Clifton	129
2017	Thomas Hatch	124.2	Pedro Araujo	44	Thomas Hatch	50	Thomas Hatch	126
2018	Tyson Miller	127.0	Tyler Peyton	38	Bryan Hudson	58	Tyson Miller	126



continuing his stellar play for the first half. He cracked ten home runs to rank third in the league and led the circuit in on-base percentage and walks. His season was interrupted on June 6 against Winston-Salem, when he suffered a broken collarbone in a collision at home plate. He missed more than two months due to the injury.

Outfielder Jared Prince also found a way to leave his mark, marching into the Carolina League record books in painful fashion. He was hit by a pitch 30 times to equal the single-season record. Prince, who started 4-for-45, batted .301 the rest of the way to finish at seventh in the league in hitting (.282). Prince made the year-end Carolina League All-Star Team and was voted by his teammates and coaches as the Pelicans' Most Valuable Player

The Pelicans went into the playoffs as Southern Division first-half champions, battling Kinston for a trip to the Mills Cup finals. Justin Grimm got the Game One start, tossing six innings of one-run ball, while catcher

**YEARLY BATTING LEADERS**

YEAR	AVG. (Min. 376 PA)	HITS	HOME RUNS	RBI
1999	Marcus Giles .326	Marcus Giles	162 Mike Hessman	23 Marcus Giles
2000	Travis Wilson .275	Travis Wilson	133 Cory Aldridge Troy Cameron	15 Cory Aldridge 15
2001	Ryan Langerhans .287	Ryan Langerhans	129 Jaeme Leal	15 Ryan Langerhans
2002	Bill McCarthy .305	Richard Lewis Bill McCarthy	135 Kelly Johnson 135	12 Bill McCarthy
2003	Andy Marte .285	Andy Marte	132 Andy Marte	16 Andy Marte
2004	Brian McCann .278	Gregor Blanco	116 Brian McCann	16 Brian McCann
2005	Jarrold Saltalamacchia .314	J. Saltalamacchia	144 J. Saltalamacchia	19 J. Saltalamacchia Matt Esquivel
2006	Carl Loadenthal .323	J.C. Holt	125 Van Pope	15 Van Pope
2007	Isaiah Ka'aihue .298	Quentin Davis	129 Isaiah Ka'aihue	22 Quentin Davis
2008	Willie Cabrera .290	Ernesto Mejia	142 Ernesto Mejia	21 Ernesto Mejia
2009	Donell Linares .287	Donell Linares	145 Cody Johnson	32 Donell Linares
2010	Mike Jones .282	Mike Jones	105 Gerry Rodriguez	13 Gerry Rodriguez
2011	Jared Prince .282	Jared Prince	136 Mike Olt	14 Jared Prince
2012	Christian Villanueva .285	Odubel Herrera	142 Christian Villanueva	10 Brett Nicholas
2013	Rougned Odor .305	Trever Adams	130 Kellin Deglin	12 Trever Adams
2014	Nick Williams .292	Christopher Bostick	124 Joey Gallo	21 Preston Beck
2015	Chesny Young .321	Chesny Young	129 Jacob Rogers	12 Jacob Rogers
2016	Gleyber Torres .275	Yasiel Balaguert	140 Yasiel Balaguert	19 Yasiel Balaguert
2017	Tyler Alamo .281	Tyler Alamo Jesse Hodges	120 Eddy Martinez 120 Tyler Alamo	14 Jesse Hodges 14
2018	Jhonny Pereda .272	Jhonny Pereda	120 Jhonny Pereda Tyler Alamo	8 Jhonny Pereda 8

YEAR	RUNS SCORED	DOUBLES	TRIPLES	STOLEN BASES
1999	Marcus Giles 80 Jason Ross 80	Marcus Giles	40 Jason Ross	13 Jason Ross
2000	Travis Wilson 62	Travis Wilson	33 Ryan Langerhans	7 Junior Brignac
2001	Ryan Langerhans 66	Adam LaRoche	31 Damien Jones Ryan Langerhans	3 Ryan Langerhans 3
2002	Richard Lewis 82	Bill McCarthy	26 Adam Stern	10 Adam Stern
2003	Andy Marte 69	Andy Marte	35 Gregor Blanco	7 Gregor Blanco
2004	Gregor Blanco 73	Brian McCann	35 Gregor Blanco	9 Onil Joseph
2005	Jarrold Saltalamacchia 70	Jarrold Saltalamacchia	35 Carl Loadenthal	4 Josh Burrus
2006	Van Pope 78	Van Pope	31 Steven Doetsch	4 J.C. Holt
2007	Jordan Schafer 70	Jordan Schafer	34 Quentin Davis	11 Quentin Davis
2008	Ernesto Mejia 93	Ernesto Mejia	47 Gorkys Hernandez	6 Gorkys Hernandez
2009	Cole Miles 64	Donell Linares	32 Cole Miles	7 Cole Miles
2010	Cole Miles 55	Mike Jones	20 Cole Miles	9 Cole Miles
2011	Ryan Strausborger 71	Jared Prince	30 Ryan Strausborger	9 Ryan Strausborger
2012	Odubel Herrera 72	Brett Nicholas	33 Odubel Herrera	6 Odubel Herrera
2013	Luis Sardinas 69 Trever Adams 69	Rougned Odor	33 Drew Robinson	7 Luis Sardinas Rougned Odor
2014	Christopher Bostick 81	Preston Beck	33 Chris Garia	11 Chris Garia
2015	Mark Zagunis 78	Victor Caratini	31 Pin-Chieh Chen Mark Zagunis	5 Pin-Chieh Chen 5
2016	Charcer Burks 71	Charcer Burks	28 Rashad Crawford	8 Jeffrey Baez
2017	Trent Giambrone 65	Jesse Hodges	26 Daniel Spingola	6 Robert Garcia
2018	Andruw Monasterio 52	Wladimir Galindo	21 Aramis Ademan	3 Roberto Caro





Portions of Season Three of HBO's "Eastbound and Down" were filmed at TicketReturn.Com Field.

## Who Are The Myrtle Beach Mermen?



HBO's hit series 'Eastbound & Down,' which concluded in late 2013, filmed both during the 2011 summer and February 2012

at TicketReturn.Com Field at Pelicans Ballpark. The show's star, Kenny Powers (played by Danny McBride), made his return to American professional baseball with a fictitious team known as the Myrtle Beach Mermen, the Double-A affiliate of a Major League team simply dubbed 'Texas.'

Filming for the season brought a full host of stars to Myrtle Beach, including Danny McBride, Jason Sudeikis, Matthew McConaughey, Will Ferrell and Val Kilmer.

Vinny DiFazio cranked a two-run homer to give the Birds the opener, 4-1. Kinston came back to take Game Two and even the series before the set shifted to Kinston. The K-Tribe knocked out the Pelicans with 7-0 and 9-2 routs to win the best-of-five series three games to one.

## 2012

For the second straight season, Jason Wood's Myrtle Beach Pelicans were impressive on the mound. With a 3.28 ERA — the team's best mark since 2002 — the Pelicans boasted a 3.30 ERA in Wood's first two seasons. Brad Holman, the Pelican's pitching coach during that stretch, was promoted to Triple-A Round Rock during the offseason.

The Pelicans finished 74-65, including a 38-31 second half that launched the team into the postseason.

Five pitching contributors on the 2012 squad enter 2013 at big league camp. Wilmer Font, who had made his MLB debut the previous September, was on the 40-man roster along with Roman Mendez; Cody Buckel and Nick Tepesch arrived as non-roster invitees.

With Buckel, Tepesch, Mendez and Font making regular starts in the first half, the Pelicans boasted a 3.14 earned run average in April and an even stingier 2.31 clip in the month of May. Kyle Hendricks was efficient out of the rotation for the Pelicans, compiling a 2.82 earned run average in 20 starts before being shipped to the Cubs as part of the Ryan Dempster deal in July.

Also included in that July 31 trade was infielder Christian Villanueva, who was one of the most productive members of an offense that struggled to score runs. The Pelicans amassed 1,587 total bases, the lowest in a single season in franchise history. The Myrtle Beach offense mustered 3.84 runs per contest and was shutout 11 times in 139 games. Villanueva's 10 home runs paced a Pelicans bunch that stroked a league-low 68 round-trippers.

Despite its offensive struggles, the Pelicans were able to return to the postseason for the second straight year. The Birds finished .500 or better in every month of the second half, including a 17-12 mark in June

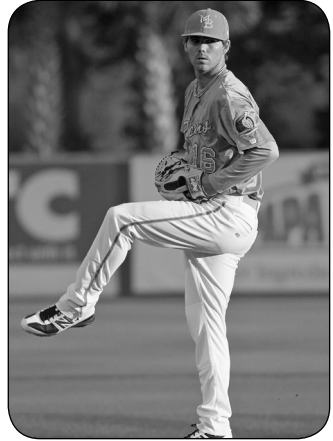


(first half ended June 17).

Because Winston-Salem posted the best record in the first and second half in the Southern Division, the Dash hosted all three postseason matchups with the Pelicans in the opening round. In 2012, the divisional series adopted a best-of-three format after being best-of-five for several years.

The series opened favorably for the Pelicans, who scored four sixth-inning runs and snatched game one by a 4-1 final. Tomas Telis tripled and knocked in three runs, while Luke Jackson struck out eight over five innings to claim the win. The Pelicans took a 2-1 lead into the sixth inning of game two before the Dash took control.

The Pelicans would score just one more run in the series. A three-run seventh sparked the Dash to a 5-3 series-evening triumph. Facing elimination, the Pelicans were blanked in game three, falling by a 9-0 margin with all of the game's runs coming in the second and third frames.



*Cody Buckel made easy work of Carolina League batters on his way to the Nolan Ryan Pitcher of the Year Award*

## 2013

The Pelicans continued to impress under the Rangers umbrella and the direction of third-year skipper and eventual 2013 Carolina League Manager of the Year, Jason Wood. The Pelicans would advance to the postseason for the third consecutive season for the first time in team history. They were also the only Carolina League team to make the postseason in each of the previous three campaigns and the only Rangers affiliate to do so as well.

Yet for the third straight year, the Birds couldn't make it out of the first round of the postseason. The eventual champs, the Salem Red Sox, swept the Pelicans with a pair of one-run wins.

The club was powered, once again, by the pitching staff. The Pelicans recorded the highest ERA of the Wood era, but it was still the Carolina League's second-lowest ERA (3.71).

Alec Asher made the jump from Spokane for his first full professional season, leading the team and the circuit with 139 strikeouts. He also ranked among the league leaders in ERA (fourth, 2.90), WHIP (fourth, 1.20), and wins (tied for seventh, nine). Asher posted the most innings of any Pelicans hurler (133.1). Jackson was the club's Opening Day starter and also got the nod for the Carolina League in the Carolina-California League All-Star Game before his first promotion to Double-A on August 1.

Nick Martinez had the league's third-lowest ERA (2.87) and 10th-most strikeouts (105). Texas promoted him along with Jackson on the same day.

The Rangers' first selection in the 2013 draft, RHP Alex "Chi Chi" Gonzalez, would fill one of those vacancies in the rotation and make his final five starts of the season with Myrtle Beach, allowing just one run over 12.0 IP in his last three regular season outings.

### RECENT MILLS CUP WINNERS

*1999	Myrtle/Wilmington	2006	Kinston	2013	Salem
2000	Myrtle Beach	2007	Frederick	2014	Potomac
2001	Salem	2008	Potomac	2015	Myrtle Beach
2002	Lynchburg	2009	Lynchburg	2016	Myrtle Beach
2003	Winston-Salem	2010	Potomac	2017	*Down East/Lynchburg
2004	Kinston	2011	Frederick	2018	Buies Creek
2005	Frederick	2012	Lynchburg		
<b>*Hurricane Floyd</b>					



The Pelicans' offense was led by its middle infield combo of second baseman Rougned Odor and shortstop Luis Sardinas.

The 19-year-old Odor ranked among the CL leaders in batting (third, .305), doubles (tied for fifth, 33), and stolen bases (tied for fifth, 27) despite spending the final month of the season with Frisco.

Sardinas, who also joined Odor in Frisco in August, had the sixth-best average (.298) and tied for the fifth-most stolen bases (27) in the CL.

The Pelicans finished the season with the second-most wins in the Carolina League and had four different win streaks of at least six games, including a season-best eight games from May 7-14.

In addition to Jackson, the Pelicans had Asher, Martinez, Odor and Sardinas selected to the Carolina League-California League All-Star Game in San Jose, California.



*Luke Jackson dominated the Carolina League in 2013 on his way to an August promotion to Double-A.*

## 2014

In what turned out to be the final year of the Pelicans in the Rangers system, the club posted one of its best years in franchise history. The best first half winning percentage in team history (.647) propelled the Pelicans to the playoffs for a fourth straight season, and the team made the Mills Cup Championship for the first time since 2008, only to fall to the Potomac Nationals.

With the most dominant offense in the league from start to finish, the Pelicans tore out of the gates with a 40-18 start despite an 0-4 opening series. Behind soon-to-be league MVP Joey Gallo, the Pelicans clubbed their way to victory. The slugger blasted 21 home runs in just 58 Carolina League games before his promotion to Double-A. The total was enough to pace the league all season, and it was the most homers in a single-season by a Pelicans since 2009, when Cody Johnson hit 32. Gallo homered three times in a game twice, something no Pelican had ever done. But he wasn't the only one with power. The team hit 111 long balls in 2015, the fourth-most in team history, and recorded the first 100-homer season for the franchise since 2009. Jorge Alfaro (13), Nick Williams (13), Preston Beck (11) and Christopher Bostick (11) all knocked out double-digits bombs.

The team could run as well. The Birds stole 154 bases, the most in team history and by far the most in the league that year. Chris Garia, an unheralded minor leaguer entering the season, set the club's single-season stolen base record with 45 and might have had more had he not been injured the last two weeks of the year.

As was the case every year in the Rangers-era, the Pelicans were not too shabby on the hill either. The Pelicans placed a league-best and franchise record eight players on the mid-season All-Star team, three of whom were pitchers: starters Andrew Faulkner and Alex "Chi Chi" Gonzalez, and reliever Alexander Claudio joined position players Alfaro, Beck, Gallo, Garia and Williams. Faulkner spent most of the year near the top of the league in wins (10) and ERA (2.07), and did not allow a home run until his final High-A start on July 21, the latest of any qualifying pitcher in Minor League Baseball. Gonzalez took a no-hitter into the fifth inning on multiple occasions, and Claudio was dominant during 2015. He finished the season in Arlington with the Texas Rangers, marking only the second time that a player spent time with both the Pelicans and the Rangers in the same season.



The staff was second in the league in ERA for the year (3.43), and the bullpen blew just 14 saves all season, anchored by Jose Leclerc (14-for-16 in saves) and Abel De Los Santos (8-for-9).

The Pelicans ran away with the first half crown with a 44-24 record, 11 games up on second-place Salem. As was often the case during the four-year run with the Rangers, promotions hurt the Birds in the second half.

Despite the promotions of Gallo (June 8), Keone Kela (May 10), Odubel Herrera (May 12), Gonzalez (June 8), Will Lamb (June 16), Claudio (June 25), Hanser Alberto (July 4), Alfaro (August 4) and Nick Williams (August 15), the Pelicans scratched and clawed their way to the second-half title. It was only the third time that the Pelicans had won both the first and second halves (2000, 2008), and they did it by finishing the season without their top three home run hitters, and three of their top five RBI producers.

The Pelicans avenged their 2014 series loss to Salem despite a heartbreaking Game One loss in extra-innings on a controversial home run call.

After winning back-to-back games to beat Salem 2-1 in the series, the Birds opened with a win against Potomac in the Mills Cup Championship Series. However, the P-Nats tied things up at one game apiece before heading back to Virginia for the final three games. There, Potomac outpaced the Pelicans in 12-7 and 5-1 wins to take the series, 3-1.

The 2014 year also saw a near-record number of former Pelicans make their big league debuts. Second to only the 2005 season (14), 2014 featured 13 Pelicans to make the Show for the first time.



*Despite only 58 games in the Carolina League, third baseman Joey Gallo captured the league's MVP, joining Marcus Giles (1999) as the only Pelican to win the award.*

## 2015

The Pelicans' first year as a Cubs affiliate was a hit throughout the Grand Strand. Myrtle Beach captured the first-half Southern Division title en route to the best regular season record in the Carolina League by six games. The campaign culminated with a Mills Cup Championship for the first time since 2000, the Pelicans' third total and second outright title.

A wobbly April left Myrtle Beach at 10-9, but eventual Carolina League Manager of the Year Mark Johnson was able to steady the club's path as soon as the calendar flipped to May. The Pelicans began the month by winning 13 of the 16 games, including each the first five contests. Myrtle Beach finished the month 21-7 behind a torrid pitching staff backed by an airtight defense; the Pelicans surrendered more than four runs in just seven contests throughout the month, including each of the last 11.

That would prove to be a theme throughout the season. Myrtle Beach finished with a 3.01 ERA, the club's best since their 2000 championship season and the Carolina League's top mark since at least the 2005 season. Pelicans pitchers surrendered just 1035 hits in 2015 (7.9 H/9), the fewest among any team in the circuit. Myrtle Beach also issued only 339 walks in 1183.0 innings (2.6 BB/9), the second-fewest among any staff in the Carolina League.

At the forefront of the effort were a pair of Mid-Season All-Stars in Duane Underwood Jr. and Jonathan Martinez. The latter led the league in ERA at 2.56, surrendering just 82 hits in 116.0 frames to post a 9-2 record. Underwood Jr. finished 6-3 with a 2.58 ERA. Right-hander Jen-Ho Tseng also finished in the top 10





in the league in ERA at 3.55, registering a 7-7 record in 119.0 innings.

Myrtle Beach also received outstanding starting performances from Paul Blackburn (7-5, 3.11 ERA), Tyler Skulina (3-6, 3.11 ERA) and Daury Torrez (10-6, 3.75 ERA), but the staff's dominance was truly an amazing display of depth. Jasvir Rakkar (2.98 ERA) finished second in the league with 16 saves, and all but one of the 20 pitchers who tossed at least 15.0 innings posted an ERA below 4.00, with 13 compiled marks below 3.00.

While the club's pitching and defense starred, the Pelicans' patient offensive approach helped knock out talented starters early from games to reach the underbelly of opponents' bullpens. Myrtle Beach scored the second-most runs in the league (581) while also ranking second in both on-base percentage (.333) and slugging percentage (.365).

Mark Zagunis earned both Mid-Season and Postseason All-Star nominations, finishing second in the league in both OBP (.406) and walks (80), third in runs scored (78) and eighth in batting average (.271). Utility man Chesny Young also earned Postseason All-Star honors by being setting a Carolina League record with a 44-game on-base streak from June 6 through July 25. Young was the only player in the circuit to post an average above .300 at .321, 24 points higher than the second-place hitter. He finished second in total plate appearances per strikeout (10.27), third in OBP in .394 and in a tie for third in hits (129).

Jacob Rogers finished in the top-five in the league in home runs (12), batting .249/.347/.399 while Jeimer Candelario hit .270/.318/.415 in 82 games before earning a promotion to Double-A Tennessee.

The Pelicans sailed to the first-half division title with a 41-28 record. They went 40-29 in the second half to finish in second before taking care of Winston-Salem with a pair of one-run victories in Games 2 and 3 of the Southern Division Championship Series.

Myrtle Beach earned another one-run victory of Wilmington in Game 1 of the Mills Cup Championship Series before blanking the Blue Rocks 2-0 in Game 2. With Game 3 tied 2-2 with two outs in the bottom of the ninth, Pin-Chief Chen rolled a walk-off single to left to give the Pelicans a series sweep and their first championship in 15 seasons.

**History**



**2016**



*A walk-off single by Pin-Chieh Chen gave the Pelicans a sweep in the Mills Cup Championship Series over Wilmington and their first championship since 2000.*

Myrtle Beach's second season as a Cubs affiliate was just as big of a hit as their first, with the Pelicans becoming the Carolina League's first outright back-to-back champions since the Winston-Salem Spirits, who were also a Chicago Cubs affiliate at the time, did so in 1985-86. In addition to earning the fourth title in Pelicans history, the Birds participated in their third consecutive Mills Cup Championship series, the Carolina League's longest run since Frederick went to three straight Mills Cup Finals from 2005-07.

Making the postseason for the sixth straight year took some heavy lifting. On July 21, the Pelicans found themselves with a 49-48 overall record. Three days later, right-hander Zach Hedges, who posted a sparkling 2.89 ERA in 16 starts, was promoted to Double-A Tennessee. On that same day, Myrtle Beach scratched shortstop Gleyber Torres and center fielder Rashad Crawford from the lineup. Both those key, up-the-middle players were traded on July 25 in a package that netted the Cubs left-hander Aroldis Chapman.

Despite losing three of their best players, the Pelicans took off. After the 24th, including the postseason, the Birds went 38-11 (.776). Myrtle Beach's 46-23 second half record was their best in club history and tops in the league in any half since Kinston went 47-23 in the first half of the 2006 campaign. The Pelicans' second half Southern Division Championships marked their fourth straight season with at least one division title and helped Myrtle Beach to their sixth consecutive winning season at 82-57.

During their second half ride, the Pelicans enjoyed arguably their most successful month in club history. Myrtle Beach finished August with a 22-5 record, their most victories in any month of recorded Pelicans history (through the 2005 season). In fact, the Birds tied with Short Season Class A Eugene, also a Cubs affiliate, for the best record in all of professional baseball during the month. Finishing behind the pair of Cubs affiliates was the Cubs themselves, with a mark of 22-6.

Myrtle Beach nipped Salem 2-1 in a decisive Game 3 of the SDCS for a berth in the Mills Cup Championship Series with the Lynchburg Hillcats. After losing Game 1 by a score of 4-3 in 12 innings, the Pelicans won 8-3 in Game 2 to even up the series. The Birds' pitching was masterful in a 7-0 shutout in Game 3, which put them on the precipice of their second straight title. In Game 4, right-hander James Pugliese whiffed seven in 4.1 scoreless innings of relief, and a three-run seventh inning propelled Myrtle Beach to a 5-3 win and the Mills Cup title.

Strong pitching and defense were constants for the Pelicans throughout the 2016 campaign. The Pelicans finished with the Carolina League's best ERA (3.47), while also issuing the fewest walks (411) and allowing the fewest home runs (65) and the second-fewest hits (1,176). Right-handed starter Trevor Clifton took home a number of honors, including both the Carolina League and Chicago Cubs Minor League Pitcher of the Year. The Maryville, Tenn., native led the circuit in ERA at 2.72, nearly a full run better than second-place Jordan Stephens of Winston-Salem. Clifton also paced the league in batting average against (.225) and WHIP (1.16) while coming in third in strikeouts (129). Among starters, the right-hander also placed third in strikeouts per nine innings (9.8).

The Pelicans were led offensively by first baseman Yasiel Balaguert and infielder David Bote. The former finished the season with 96 RBIs, the most ever in a campaign for a Myrtle Beach hitter. Over the year's final 49 games, including the postseason, Balaguert batted .318/.360/.521, driving in 41 runs. The Chicago Cubs' Minor League Player of the Month for August, Bote led all of the organization's farmhands with a .367



*Trevor Clifton was named both the Chicago Cubs' and the Carolina League's Pitcher of the Year.*



average and 16 runs scored during the month. His 15 extra-base hits were tied for the most in the system. The Longmont, Colo., native closed the regular year riding a 27-game on-base streak, the longest of any Pelican during the season, batting .365/.434/.583 with 21 RBIs during that stretch. He only continued to rake in the postseason, batting 15-for-26 (.577/.677/.769) with nine RBIs in seven playoff games en route to winning the Carolina League's postseason Most Valuable Player award.

The 2016 season also saw some special moments with Pelicans alumni. On May 17, the Atlanta Braves named former Myrtle Beach skipper Brian Snitker their interim manager, making Snitker the first former Pelicans skipper to pilot a club in The Show.

## 2017

While their 2017 campaign did not end in a championship, Myrtle Beach did tie a Carolina League record with their seventh consecutive postseason appearance.

On May 24, the Pelicans were just 23-22, sitting in third place in the Southern Division, 4.0 games behind Buies Creek. The Birds then went on to rattle off 17 victories in 21 games to win the division, becoming the first team in all of Minor League Baseball to clinch a postseason spot with their 3-0 triumph over Frederick on June 14.

The Birds wound up finishing with the circuit's best first-half record at 43-27. However, Myrtle Beach cooled considerably in the second half, with the club's 30-40 mark tying for the league's second-worst record over the final 70 games. Still, though, the Pelicans registered their seventh consecutive winning season with a 73-67 overall record.

Nonetheless, the second half still had several memorable moments. On August 24, the Pelicans edged Down East 5-4, marking the 2,000th victory in manager Buddy Bailey's legendary career. That triumph made the Madison Heights, Va., native the 11th minor league skipper to ever reach the 2,000-win plateau, and the first since Johnny Ligon did so during the 1990 campaign with the High-A Lakeland Tigers.

Just a few weeks later, with Hurricane Irma bearing down on the southeastern United States, the Carolina League shortened the Mills Cup Playoffs, canceling the Mills Cup Championship Series. Thus, the circuit's title would be split between the winners of the now-best-of-three Southern Division Championship Series and Northern Division Championship Series.

Just before Game 1 of the SDCS, the Chicago Cubs announced that star catcher Willson Contreras would begin an injury rehabilitation assignment with the Pelicans. Contreras wound up going 1-for-4 over two games, but it wasn't enough for Myrtle Beach, which was swept 2-0 by Down East in the rain-shortened series to end the season.

Thirteen different former Pelicans would make their major league debut during the 2017 campaign, tied for the second-most in a single season in club history (2014, 14). That included right-hander Dillon Maples, who began the campaign on Myrtle Beach's Opening Day roster. The Sanford, N.C., native became the first Myrtle Beach alumnus since Alex Claudio in 2014 to play for the Birds and make his debut in The Show in the same season.



*In 2017, manager Buddy Bailey became the 11th minor league skipper to reach 2,000 career victories.*



## 2018

All good things must come to an end, and it was an impressive streak that concluded in 2018 as the Birds failed to make the playoffs for the first time since 2010. After tying the Carolina League record with seven-straight appearances in the postseason in 2017, it was a struggling offense that held the Pelicans back in the franchise's 20th season.

The Myrtle Beach offense set nine new lows in the history of the Pelicans, including batting average (.232), hits (1,013), runs (468), at-bats (4,360), total bases (1,393), doubles (173), home runs (55), extra base hits (249) and RBIs (409). The offensive woes were somewhat offset by a stellar pitching staff that managed a 3.51 ERA, which placed third in the Carolina League.

In terms of the pitching staff, the highlight of the season was an incredible performance by Keegan Thompson on June 14. On a Thursday night in Myrtle Beach, Thompson threw seven brilliant, perfect innings with eight strikeouts. Due to a high pitch-count, he was removed from the game after the seventh, but that did nothing to diminish the dominance that he displayed on the hill in Pelicans Ballpark.



*Keegan Thompson threw seven perfect innings on June 14th before being removed due to a high pitch count.*

While mound saw most of the highlights for the Pelicans in 2018, there were plenty from the bats as well. On May 29th, Tyler Alamo broke a 2-2 tie in the bottom of the 10th inning against Winston-Salem with a walk-off grand slam. It marked the third straight season that the Birds had knocked a grand slam against the Dash. That was one of six walk-off wins for the Pelicans in 2018.

The Pelicans were paced on the offensive side by catcher Jhonny Pereda, who burst on the scene to hit .272/.347/.363 over the course of 122 games. Coming into the season, Pereda had only started 149 games at catcher over his last four seasons. Pelicans' manager Buddy Bailey, who convinced the Cubs to let the catcher start in Myrtle Beach over going back to South Bend, started him behind the plate 83 times, and it paid off. The 23-year-old threw out 38 percent of base runners to go along with his stellar offensive numbers.

Pereda was one of three mid-season All-Star selections for the Pelicans, with the other two being top-Cubs prospect and shortstop Aramis Ademan and reliever Tyler Peyton.

On the hill, Tyson Miller (3.54 ERA) and Alex Lange (3.74) placed sixth and seventh, respectively, in Carolina League ERA over their 23 starts apiece. Miller led the league in strikeouts (126), WHIP (1.09) and batting average against (.220) on the season.

Even with the strong staff, the Pelicans finished seven games out of first place in the first half and 15.5 out in the second half.

On the major-league side of things, seven former Pelicans made their way up to Chicago and other big league teams. Billy McKinney (New York Yankees), Pedro Araujo (Baltimore Orioles), David Bote (Cubs), Gleyber Torres (Yankees), Duane Underwood Jr. (Cubs), James Norwood (Cubs) and Ryan Cordell (Chicago White Sox) all made it to The Show in 2018.

