

# DRAGONS 2022 SEASON REVIEW: BIG CROWDS, GREAT SUPPORT FOR OUR COMMUNITY

**Dayton, Ohio**—The Dayton Dragons have completed their 22nd season of professional baseball. Here are some of the highlights from this season, on and off the field:

## Attendance

The Dragons averaged 7,935 fans per home date in 2022. That per game average currently leads all Minor League Baseball consisting of 120 teams (two leagues are still playing; final rankings will not become official until September 30). The Dragons full-season attendance total of 444,346 (56 openings) led the Midwest League and all teams below the Triple-A level. The Dragons sell-out streak increased to 1,441 consecutive home dates (the streak was paused when the season was canceled in 2020, and again in 2021 when Minor League ballparks opened with limited capacity due to Covid).

## Community Support and Involvement at New Levels in 2022

Here is a listing of some of the many Dragons community programs, with specifics on each item in the next section:

- Dragons MVP Program
- Celebrate Dayton
- Spotlight on Dayton
- Naturalization Ceremony at Day Air Ballpark
- Dragons Foundation
- Imagination Library
- Home Run for Life
- Veteran's Salute Program
- Hometown Heroes Program
- Community All-Stars
- Fundraising for Culture Works
- Community Blood Center Blood Drive
- Dayton Police and Firefighter Nights
- Captain America Visits Local Hospital
- Family-Affordable Summer Specials
- Dayton Day at the Reds
- Montgomery County Job Fair
- Pink Ribbon Girls Survivor Celebration Night
- Non-Profit Fundraiser Walks at Day Air Ballpark
- Ticketing Fundraiser for Groups
- College Prep Night
- Heater's Recycling Bin Initiative
- *Dayton Daily News* Community Gems



### **Dragons MVP Program**

The Dragons MVP School Program includes over 1,000 fourth and fifth grade classrooms across the Miami Valley. The program completed its 17th year in 2022, impacting over 31,000 students. The Dragons MVP Program is made possible by the generous support of Ohio's 529 College Advantage, Energy Optimizers, Sinclair College, WDTN and Dayton's CW. As part of the program, local teachers select five MVPs based on the criteria put in place by the teacher including performance, effort, citizenship, and improvement. The five MVPs receive four tickets to a Dragons game, access to an exclusive Dragons MVP Zone, an MVP certificate, and a Dragons MVP hat. The Dragons MVP program, along with mascots Heater and Gem, visited six classrooms in the Miami Valley in 2022.



### **Celebrate Dayton and Spotlight on Dayton**

During Dragons games in 2022, the Dragons honored several local teams, organizations, and community contributors on our Celebrate Dayton and Spotlight on Dayton nights at Day Air Ballpark.

#### **Celebrate Dayton 2022**

- Alter High School Girls Basketball (2022 State Champions)
- Dayton Public Schools Valedictorians
- Dawn Abbott, Ohio's School Nurse of the Year
- Citizen Naturalization Ceremony
- Centerville High School Bowling (2022 State Champions)
- Champaign County Special Olympics (two local participants who finished in the top three in the state event)

#### **Spotlight on Dayton 2022**

- Celtic Academy of Irish Dance
- Dwyer School of Irish Dance
- Showboat Cloggers

### **Naturalization Ceremony at Day Air Ballpark**

The Dragons hosted a naturalization ceremony for 25 new citizens who took their oath of allegiance on the field during an inning break of the Dragons game on August 9. The crowd then joined in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance with the newly naturalized citizens. This marked the third consecutive Dragons season in which a naturalization ceremony was held on the field during a Dragons game. Similar events were held during the 2019 and 2021 Dragons seasons.

### **Dragons Foundation**

The Dragons Foundation assists in funding the many Dragons community programs. The Dragons are proud to have initiated these programs that directly promote, recognize, and give back to the community. Many of the Dragons community programs have become traditions in Dayton, and others were new in 2022. The Dragons Foundation assists with the funding of the Dragons MVP Program, Community All-Stars, Hometown Heroes, Home Run for Life, and Veteran Salute among other Dragons programs. Additionally, the Dragons have, for many seasons, worked with charitable organizations to provide free tickets to a game with seating in a Dragons luxury suite for children and their caregivers, complete with catered meals in the suite, souvenirs, and a visit by a Dragons mascot.

### **Imagination Library at Day Air Ballpark**

The Dragons welcomed Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Ohio to Day Air Ballpark from July 22 to Sunday, August 14. During that period, the Dragons provided free books to children under age five who were attending their first Dragons game. As part of the free program, enrolled children receive a book in the mail each month until their fifth birthday. This program is made possible with financial support from the Ohio General Assembly and affiliates across the state as well as Ohio First Lady Fran DeWine. On August 14, the Dragons hosted Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Ohio Day with a sign-up booth, first pitch, and graduation ceremony. The First Lady appeared on the Dragons game broadcast on both television and radio that afternoon to promote the program.



### **Home Run for Life**

The Dragons teamed up with Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield to provide kids battling serious medical conditions with once-in-a-lifetime opportunities during Dragons games. Each honoree took a home run "lap" around the bases during a Dragons game and receives an honorary engraved bat. Dates were May 18, June 22, August 3, and August 31.

### **Veteran Salute Program**

The Veteran Salute program presented by Care Source highlighted five veteran's stories during the season. Veterans were honored at a Dragons game with an in-game ceremony and provided with VIP treatment during their special night. This program is an extension of CareSource's commitment to serve veterans and their families through innovative programs and partnerships to support their health and well-being. Dates were May 8, June 5, June 26, July 24, and August 14.

### **Hometown Heroes Program**

Five times during the 2022 baseball season, the Dragons partnered with the Dayton Development Coalition and Reynolds & Reynolds for a season-long tribute to all service men and women past and present. There were four special spotlights (April 22, May 17, June 12, July 4) that each highlighted a different aspect or organization involved in the military. The season-long celebration wrapped up with American Celebration Night on August 13.



### **Community All-Stars**

The Dragons partnered with Flying Ace Express Car Wash on the Community All-Stars Program, honoring Dayton's best individuals and organizations that are improving the quality of life in the Miami Valley. From firefighters to first responders to volunteers and good Samaritans, these honorees were highlighted during a game with a tribute video telling their story. Community All-Stars honored in 2022 included:

- Culture Works: May 22
- Air Camp: June 2
- Chloe Adkins: July 22
- Crayons to Classrooms: August 10
- EMERGE: September 1

### **Culture Works Spotlight Weekend/Fundraising for Culture Works**

From May 19-22, the Dragons spotlighted Culture Works during games at Day Air Ballpark in support of the annual Culture Works fundraising campaign. Heater and Gem were the honorary chairs of the campaign. Culture Works performers sang the national anthem, threw out honorary first pitches, performed during inning breaks on the field, performed on the plaza, and did interviews during Dragons game broadcasts on television and radio. The Dragons donated a portion of ticket sales that weekend to Culture Works as part of the event. Additionally, 50 percent of the proceeds from the Dragons 50/50 raffle for the entire weekend went directly to Culture Works.



#### **Featured Performers**

- K12 and TEJAS
- Ben Baugham Chalk Art
- Elyse Schmidt, WSU Vocal Student
- Dwyer Irish Dance
- Tatum Jackson, WSU Vocal Student
- The Elements
- Dayton Ballet
- Alyssa Hanson

### **Community Blood Center and Dragons Blood Drives**

The Dragons and Community Blood Center teamed up for a series of blood drives on the ballpark plaza. Blood drives took place on April 1, May 27, and July 22. Everyone who registered to donate received Dragons gear and the new “Giving is Good” t-shirt from the Community Blood Center. More than 200 persons registered and 169 units were received.

### **Dayton Police and Firefighter Nights at Day Air Ballpark**

The Dragons honored Dayton firefighters on August 3, with 50 percent of the revenue from each ticket sold that night going to the firefighter’s charity of choice, the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Members of the Dayton Fire Department served as honor guard in presenting colors for the national anthem. The Dragons honored Dayton police officers on August 10, with 50 percent of the revenue from each ticket sold that night going to the Montgomery County Law Enforcement Memorial Association. Dayton police officer Devin Portis sang the national anthem.

### **Captain America Visits Kids at Dayton Children’s**

The Dragons hosted their first-ever Marvel's Defenders of the Diamond Night at Day Air Ballpark on July 9. The night included an appearance by Captain America, who visited Dayton’s Children’s prior to the game. The Dragons team wore specially designed Marvel “Captain America” jerseys during the game that were autographed and auctioned off to benefit the Dayton Dragons Foundation.

### **Family-Affordable Summer Specials**

In response to rising prices for fans on everyday items, the Dragons announced on July 11 a series of savings-related and fan-friendly promotions for the remaining 21 home games of the 2022 season. Every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday featured \$5.00 lawn tickets, \$2.00 fountain sodas, and a 10 percent discount off every purchase in the Dragons Den Team Store. Friday games featured free collectable posters to all fans at Day Air Ballpark, presented by Drone Express. Also on Friday, the Frisch’s Fun Zone was open for free. Saturday games featured a post-game fireworks shows presented by Associated Builders and Contractors. Sunday games featured \$1 hot dogs, Team Zoom Frisbee Dog performances, free Freeze Pops for children, and Kids Run The Bases after the game, presented by Graeter’s Ice Cream. The Summer Specials added value to every ticket to a Dragons game.

### **Dayton Day at the Reds**

The Dragons joined the Reds in celebrating their connection with the City of Dayton with “Dayton Day at the Reds” on July 27 at Great American Ball Park in Cincinnati. Dragons mascots, the Green Team, and other special guests from Dayton were all part of the evening, with many festivities before and during the game. Dayton Mayor Jeffrey J. Mims Jr. threw out the ceremonial first pitch; Dayton City Manager Shelley Dickstein attended the pre-game lineup exchange at home plate; the Dayton Fire Department served as the color guard for the national anthem; and Dayton Police Chief Kamran Afzal was recognized as the first responder of the game.

### **Montgomery County Job Fair**

The Dragons and Montgomery County hosted a Youth Job Fair on Wednesday, May 11. Students and young adults had the chance to meet with over 50 local companies to learn about current job opportunities.



### **Pink Ribbon Girls Survivor Celebration Night at Day Air Ballpark**

The Dragons and the Pink Ribbon Girls (PRG) hosted a Survivor Celebration on June 21. The Pink Ribbon Girls provide transportation to and from treatment, housecleaning kits, and peer support and education to breast and gynecological cancer patients at their greatest time of need.

The organization has the mission of making sure “No one travels this road alone” and serves anyone regardless of their age, stage, or socio-economic status. The Pink Ribbon Girls attended the game to promote awareness and to celebrate the breast cancer and gynecological cancer survivors they have helped. Proceeds from the Dragons 50/50 for the entire week went towards the services and programs of the Pink Ribbon Girls.

### **Non-Profit Fundraiser Walks at Day Air Ballpark**

The following walks to raise funding for non-profit organizations have taken place or are scheduled for upcoming weeks:

- Epilepsy Walk: May 7
- 2022 Heart Walk: September 18
- Alzheimer's Walk: October 8
- Kettering Health/Making Strides Walk: October 15
- American Foundation of Suicide Prevention Walk: October 16
- Brain Cancer Research Walk: October 22

### **Ticketing Fundraiser for Groups**

The Dragons continued a program in 2022 to allow non-profit organizations to attend a Dragons game as a group, with a portion of the proceeds donated back to the charitable organization. Through this program, over \$116,000 was generated for non-profit organizations in 2022.

### **College Prep Night presented by Day Air Credit Union**

The Dragons and Day Air Credit Union will hold College Prep Night, a FREE educational event for prospective college students, at Day Air Ballpark on September 28. College Prep Night is a one-stop college resource event to guide prospective college students and their parents through the process of planning an educational path. High school students can talk to representatives from colleges and universities from all over the nation. Two \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded.

### **Heater's Recycling Bin Initiative (RBI)**

The Dragons and Montgomery County teamed up for Heater's Recycling Bin Initiative (RBI) Program. This was a free, fun, and educational program for kids and family to learn about household recycling. Hundreds of thousands of cans, glass, cardboard, and plastic have been saved from the landfill thanks to the recycling efforts of participants over the past nine years. All participants will receive up to four Dragons lawn tickets to RBI Night at a Dragons game, exclusive RBI gifts, and will be eligible to win other great Dragons prizes and experiences.



### **Dayton Daily News Community Gems**

*Dayton Daily News* Community Gems recognize those who make our community better, stronger, more vibrant. Honorees are nominated and selected, then celebrated at Day Air Ballpark at a Dragons game.

## **Special Entertainment Events at Day Air Ballpark**

### **University of Dayton Games at Day Air Ballpark**

The University of Dayton baseball team played three games at Day Air Ballpark in 2022, including a victory over the Ohio State Buckeyes on April 12 that drew the largest crowd ever to attend a UD baseball game (over 3,800). The Flyers also played at Day Air Ballpark in a rematch of the 2021 Atlantic 10 Conference championship game with Virginia Commonwealth on April 29 and on May 13 against Richmond.

### **High School Baseball presented by Bob Ross Auto Group**

For the 17th consecutive season, the Dragons played host to high school baseball, as 46 area high school teams played regular season games at Day Air Ballpark. The 24-game schedule was presented by Bob Ross Auto Group and ran throughout April and May. The high schools were able to provide their own PA announcers, cheer squads, national anthem singers, and some schools brought their own radio broadcasters to the ballpark. Participating high schools sell Dragons tickets to help raise money for their programs.

### **Bert Kreischer Comedy Show at Day Air Ballpark**

Comedian, podcast host, and author Bert Kreischer's Fully Loaded Comedy Festival performed at Day Air Ballpark on June 18. The show drew a sell-out crowd of more than 7,900 fans.

## **Other Highlights at Day Air Ballpark:**

### **Great American Beer Tasting presented by Heidelberg Distributing**

On August 20, the Dragons and Heidelberg Distributing Company partnered for the 14th annual Great American Beer Tasting, bringing a wide variety of beers, ciders, and seltzers to Day Air Ballpark for fans to try. Each beer tasting ticket provided 20 four-ounce samples, a raffle ticket for high end prizes, the 2022 t-shirt, a souvenir pint glass with 4 oz. and 8 oz. pour lines, access to activities and games on the field, and more. Designated driver tickets were also available with samples of non-alcoholic beverages.

### **Dragons 5K**

The Dragons hosted their 12<sup>th</sup> annual Dragons 5K on July 16 at Day Air Ballpark presented by Orthopedic Associates. The top three male and female overall finishers received a specially engraved baseball bat and were honored during a special inning break at a Dragons game. Awards were also given to the top three overall males and females in each age group and top three finishing groups. All race participants (including virtual) received four tickets to a Dragons game, Dragons 5K shirt, Dragons hat, and finisher's medal. Following the race, fun activities including face painting, inflatables, and a Dragons 5K photobooth were set up on the plaza.



### **Family Movie Night presented by Donatos Pizza**

On July 15, Day Air Ballpark was turned into the ultimate movie theatre. Fans brought blankets and sat on the outfield grass to watch the family favorite movie *Sing 2* on the Dragons 2,000 sq. ft HD video board. Fans could order a pizza from participating Dayton-area Donatos location to receive a box top form to claim up to five free tickets.

### **Gem City Jersey Introduced**

The Dragons unveiled a new specialty “Gem City” jersey that was worn for several games starting in June and continuing into September. The jersey was available for fans free of charge when they visited a local Day Air Credit Union and opened a new Premium Perks Checking account, opened a loan, moved a loan to Day Air, or purchased a Certificate of Deposit.

### **The Drone Express Dragons Lair at Day Air Ballpark**

The Drone Express Dragons Lair is a full-service group hospitality area at Day Air Ballpark. The Dragons Lair experience features an all-inclusive ticket that includes a ballpark buffet and souvenirs. It comes with game tickets and a buffet featuring grilled hamburgers, all beef hot dogs, smoked pulled chicken, smoked pulled pork, mac and cheese, fresh-baked cookies, and unlimited non-alcoholic drinks. A cash beer and wine bar can be added. Everyone in the group also receives a Dragons hat and Dragons t-shirt.

### **Princess Jade**

Princess Jade, the Dragons princess, returned for the 2022 season. Fans could meet Princess Jade on the plaza before select home games.

### **Retirement Village People, Mini Dugout Dancers, and Special Entertainment on the Plaza**

Two longtime Day Air Ballpark popular entertainment segments, the Retirement Village People and the Mini Dugout Dancers were back in 2022. The Dragons also featured many special pre-game entertainment events on the plaza, including Star Wars night, Petting Zoos, and musical entertainment provided by local school bands, choirs, and groups.

### **Vintage Baseball Game**

On Saturday June 11, before the start of the Dragons game, the Dayton Clodbusters and the Cincinnati Red Stockings played a vintage baseball game with vintage baseball rules and vintage uniforms. Mr. Redlegs was in attendance for the contest, and the Reds Hall of Fame provided a display table.

### **Printed Play Ball! program returned; Fans accessed Digital Dugout**

The fan-favorite *PlayBall!* returned in printed form for the 2022 season with a fresh new look and loads of information about the team. The Dragons also kept the best of the digital version of *PlayBall!* for fans as well. With a scan of a QR code, or by visiting [playball.daytondragons.com](http://playball.daytondragons.com), fans were able to access the “Digital Dugout” where they could view starting lineups, pitching matchups, stats, game highlights and more.



### **Dragons Kids Club**

Young Dragons fans joined the Dragons Kids Club again in 2022. For just \$19.99, members received a replica Dragons home jersey, Dragons lunchbox, Dragons hat, and two (2) Dragons lawn tickets.

### **Kroger Baseball Buddies**

Kids 7-12 signed up at local Kroger stores for a chance to be a Kroger Baseball Buddy. Those picked received the full Dragons experience including a replica Dragons jersey and Dragons souvenirs.

### **Girl Scout and Boy Scout Overnights**

On June 24 and August 5 scouts from across the Miami Valley spent the night at Day Air Ballpark, camped on the outfield grass in stakeless tents. The movie favorites Shrek and Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse were shown on the Dragons giant video board.

### **Dragons 50/50 Raffle**

The 50/50 raffle during Dragons games at Day Air Ballpark raised thousands of dollars for local charities and the Dragons Foundation in 2022.

## **Special Entertainment Nights at Day Air Ballpark in 2022**

- BirdZerk!: June 4
- ZOOperstars: June 5
- Team Zoom Canine Entertainment: April 23, June 25, July 24, August 7, August 14, Sept. 4

### **National Anthem Tryouts**

The National Anthem Tryouts presented by *Dayton Daily News* were held virtually for the 2022 season and saw a 38 percent increase in submissions.



## **New at Day Air Ballpark in 2022**

### **Noah Tune**

The Dragons introduced Noah Tune as the new ballpark organist. He performed at every Sunday home game and at the Vintage Baseball Game on June 11.

### **Coney Corner**

A new food cart on the concourse level included footlong and regular hot dogs with Cincinnati-style homemade chili made in-house by the chef at Day Air Ballpark. Fans enjoyed a different type of sausage featured for each homestand (such as maple brown sugar sausage and pizza supreme brats) with a breakfast sausage available for the Sunday afternoon games.

### **Pepsi Grab & Go with self-serve; Cutwater Cocktails Grab & Go**

Pro Sports Catering introduced a self-service area where fans could select, scan, and pay for their concessions items. The Pepsi kiosk included several brands of soda, energy drinks, Dippin' Dots, Starbucks products, and more. The Cutwater kiosk had several brands of Anheuser-Busch beers as well as cocktails.

# On the Field

- Return of Joey Votto to the Dragons
- Best 50-Game Start in Dragons History
- Future Star Elly De La Cruz Gains National Attention with the Dragons
- Many Top Reds Prospects at Day Air Ballpark
- Home Run Derby, Gold Gloves, and Prime Pitching
- Strong Finish
- New Rules in the Minor Leagues

## Return of Joey Votto to the Dragons

Former Dragon Joey Votto returned to Day Air Ballpark for a two-game injury rehabilitation assignment on May 17 and May 19. When he played in the two games, Votto became arguably the most accomplished player ever to appear in a Midwest League game. The longtime Reds first baseman, who played for the Dragons in 2003 -04, brought a list of accomplishments back to Dayton that now includes six MLB All-Star Game appearances, the 2010 National League Most Valuable Player award, a Gold Glove award, over 2,000 career hits, and over 1,000 career RBI. Votto, al l-star pitcher Luis Castillo, and three other players made MLB injury rehab appearances with the Dragons in 2022, bringing the all-time total number to 41. The 2022 list includes:



<b>Player</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Position</b>
Luis Castillo	April 24	P
Joey Votto	May 17-19	1B
Jake Fraley	May 22	CF
Justin Dunn	June 26	P
Art Warren	August 9, 11, 14	P

## Best 50-Game Start in Dragons History

Over the first two months of the 2022 season, with a roster completely loaded with many of the top prospects in the Cincinnati Reds organization, the Dragons remained at or near the top of the list for most victories in all Minor League Baseball. On June 9, the Dragons record stood at 36-15, marking the best record in franchise history through 51 games (topping the 2007 Dragons, who stood at 33-18). At the time, the Dragons winning percentage of .706 was the second best of the 120 teams in the minor leagues, and they had not lost more than two games in a row since the season began on April 8. Despite a team slump over the final two weeks of the first half that knocked the Dragons out of first place, the team still finished with a first half winning percentage that was second best for any first half in team history, at .591 (record of 39-27), trailing only the 2007 Dragons, who finished 44-26. The 2022 first half record was the fourth best in any half in Dragons history. Circumstances worked against the Dragons, as they became the first Midwest League team since 1992 to post a winning percentage in the first half of .591 or higher but fail to reach the post-season. Exactly 30 years ago, Springfield posted a first half winning percentage of .600 but failed to reach the post-season that year.

### **Future Star Elly De La Cruz Gains National Attention with the Dragons**

Dragons fans got a first-hand look at one of the greatest individual seasons in franchise history in 2022 as infielder Elly De La Cruz gained national attention for his achievements with the team. De La Cruz opened the 2022 season with the Dragons and remained with the club until he was promoted to Double-A Chattanooga on July 22. With the Dragons, De La Cruz was one of the youngest players in the Midwest League. He played in 72 games and batted .302 with 20 home runs. He finished just one home run short of the league lead despite being promoted out of the league with about seven weeks to play in the season. De La Cruz became the first player in Dragons history to hit at least 20 home runs and steal at least 25 bases while batting at least .300.

In a *Baseball America* survey of Midwest League managers, De La Cruz was named the league's "Most Exciting Player," "Best Batting Prospect," "Best Power Prospect," and "Fastest Baserunner." De La Cruz will be a strong contender for 2022 Midwest League Most Valuable Player (the voting results have not yet been announced).

Overall this season combining his time in Dayton and Chattanooga, De La Cruz played in 120 games, batting .304 with 28 home runs, 86 runs batted in, 47 stolen bases, and an OPS of .945. He became the first player in Minor League Baseball to hit at least 25 home runs, steal at least 40 bases, and hit at least .300 in a season since George Springer in 2013. He will get strong consideration for Player of the Year across all Minor League Baseball.



### **Many Top Reds Prospects at Day Air Ballpark**

As mentioned, the Dragons 2022 roster was filled with many of the top prospects within the Reds system. The top name on the list was Elly De La Cruz, who was elevated to Reds #1 prospect during the season by both *Baseball America* and MLB.com. De La Cruz became the first player to be ranked as the Reds #1 prospect while he was playing in Dayton since Homer Bailey in 2005. When the season began, six players on the Dragons roster were ranked among the Reds top 17 prospects by MLB.com. Along with De La Cruz, outfielder Rece Hinds was listed at #9 and was also named by *Baseball America* as the "Best Power Hitter" in the Reds organization entering 2022. Catcher Mat Nelson was ranked as the Reds #12 prospect. Starting pitcher Andrew Abbott was ranked #13, starting pitcher Connor Phillips #14, and infielder Jose Torres #17. Additionally, power-hitting outfielder Allan Cerda was ranked as the Reds #22 prospect, starting pitcher Joe Boyle was ranked #29.

The Dragons opening day roster included a whopping 11 players selected in the first five rounds of the draft. Along with Hinds (2nd round), Nelson (supplemental 1st round), Abbott (2nd round), Phillips (supplemental 2nd round), Torres (3rd round), and Boyle (5th round), the others were pitchers Thomas Farr (5th round), Nick Hanson (3rd round), Evan Kravetz (5th round), and James Marinar (4th round), and infielder Nick Quintana (2nd round). A few weeks later, outfielder Austin Hendrick, the Reds first round draft pick in 2020, joined the Dragons, rated as the Reds #10 prospect by MLB.com. Also added early in the season were starting pitchers Bryce Bonnin (Reds #14 prospect) and Christian Roa (#15 prospect) and outfielder Justice Thompson (#26 prospect).

In the second half, after many of the team's top prospects had been promoted to Double-A Chattanooga, the Dragons received four more top-level prospects. Shortstop Noelvi Marte, who was acquired from the Mariners in the trade involving MLB all-star Luis Castillo, joined the Dragons, ranked as the Reds #2 prospect by both *Baseball America* and MLB.com (behind Elly De La Cruz); Starting pitcher Chase Petty, acquired in spring training from the Twins for MLB all-star Sonny Gray (Reds #9 prospect), infielder Tyler Callihan (#19 prospect), and outfielder Jay Allen II, the 30th overall selection in the 2021 draft (#12 prospect) joined the Dragons as well. By season's end, 18 players who, at some point during the 2022 season, were ranked among the Reds top 30 prospects by MLB.com, had played for the Dragons. In previous years, the average number of Reds top 30 prospects to play in Dayton in a season was six.

### **Home Run Derby**

The Dragons 2022 team was packed with power hitters, and home run balls flew out of Day Air Ballpark at record levels. The Dragons hit 152 home runs in their 128 games, setting a new club record for homers in a season under the guidance of hitting coach Daryle Ward. The club record had been 144 in 2001 in a 139-game season. The Dragons also broke the club record for most home runs at home, blasting 79 at Day Air Ballpark, to break the record of 69 set in 2001 and 2007. For the first time in franchise history, the Dragons had had six players hit at least 10 home runs in a season (Elly De La Cruz, Allan Cerda, Jose Torres, Alex McGarry, Austin Hendrick, Rece Hinds). The Dragons narrowly missed becoming only the second MWL team to lead the league in both home runs and stolen bases in a season since 1988 (Cedar Rapids led in both categories in 2007). The Dragons finished first in the MWL in home runs but finished five stolen bases behind league-leading Peoria (the Dragons played four fewer games than the Chiefs).

### **Gold Gloves**

The Dragons also broke a significant club record for team fielding. With manager Bryan LaHair and bench coach Juan Samuel leading daily defensive drills, the 2022 Dragons committed just 107 errors on the year, breaking the team mark of fewest errors in a season of 113 set in 2021. The Dragons third baseman over the first half of the season, Nick Quintana, was named in Baseball America's survey of Midwest League managers as the "Best Defensive Third Baseman" in the circuit in 2022.



### **Prime Pitching**

For the second straight year, base hits against Dragons pitchers were tough to achieve for opposing hitters. Under the tutelage of pitching coach Brian Garman, Dragons pitchers allowed an opponent's batting average of just .228 in 2022. Over the 2021 and 2022 seasons, the Dragons allowed the fifth fewest number of hits in Minor League Baseball (120 teams) and the fewest in the Midwest League.

### **Strong Finish**

The Dragons went through a transitional period on the field in late June and July as their top players were promoted to Chattanooga and replaced with younger prospects. By season's end, 64 players had appeared in at least one game for the Dragons, a club record. The young additions eventually adjusted to their new level of competition and the team had a tremendously strong finish, offering optimism for 2023, when many of those same players will return to Dayton. The Dragons went 12-3 over their last 15 games and 16-5 over their last 21 contests. Over the last 15 games, the Dragons led the MWL in team batting (.279), runs (98), extra base hits (54), and stolen bases (40). The Dragons finished with a winning full-season record for the second straight season, going 67-61. They were 65-55 in 2021.

### **Rule Changes in 2022**

Minor League Baseball adopted several big rule changes in 2022, all of which were picked up by the Major Leagues for the 2023 season. The most noticeable change was the addition of a pitch clock to encourage a quicker pace of play. Pitchers are now required to deliver each pitch within 14 seconds of receiving the ball when the bases are empty, and within 18 seconds with runners on base. Pitchers are now limited in the number of unsuccessful pick-off throws they can make to a base. The third pick-off throw must result in an out, or the runner will be awarded the next base via a balk. These changes led to clear changes in the average length of a game throughout the league, including games at Day Air Ballpark. In 2021, the average nine-inning game in Dayton lasted three hours, seven minutes. In 2022, the average fell to two hours, 37 minutes, a drop of exactly 30 minutes. The average number of pitches thrown per game was nearly the same from 2021 to 2022.

Defensive positioning rules now require at least two infielders on each side of second base, with at least four infielders positioned on the infield dirt. Additionally, the size of each base has been increased from 15” to 18”. All of these changes are coming to Major League ballparks next season and will remain in place in the Midwest League as well.

Also in 2022, the league name reverted to Midwest League, as it had been for more than 50 years before changing to High-A Central League for the 2021 season only.

## Season Review

The Dragons season began on April 8 and concluded on September 11. Here are some of the facts and statistics:

### Dayton Dragons 2022 Recap

Final Record: 67-61

First Half: 39-27 (2<sup>nd</sup> in East Division)

Second Half: 28-34 (4<sup>th</sup> in East Division)

Final Attendance: 444,346 (56 dates)

Per Game Attendance Average: 7,935

The Dragons finished as the #1 ranked team in attendance in all of Single-A baseball for the 22nd straight season. They finished as the #1 ranked team below the Triple-A level (Single-A and Double-A) for the 16th straight season. At the conclusion of the Dragons season, they ranked in the top 10 for all classifications of Minor League Baseball for the 22nd straight year (Triple-A teams are still playing).

## Dragons Award Winners

### Midwest League Player/Pitcher of the Week

Player	Batter/Pitcher	Dates
Joe Boyle	Pitcher	5/23-5/29
Elly De La Cruz	Batter	7/4-7/10
Tyler Callihan	Batter	8/29-9/4

### Midwest League Player/Pitcher of the Month

Player	Batter/Pitcher	Month
Joe Boyle	Pitcher	May

### Dragons Cincinnati Reds Minor League Player/Pitcher of the Month

Player	Batter/Pitcher	Month
Andrew Abbott	Pitcher	April
Rece Hinds	Batter	May
Joe Boyle	Pitcher	May
Elly De La Cruz	Batter	June

### Dragons All-Star Game Participants

Player	Game	Date
Andrew Abbott	SiriusXM All-Star Futures Game (Los Angeles)	July 16
Elly De La Cruz	SiriusXM All-Star Futures Game (Los Angeles)	July 16

## Dragons on Baseball America's Midwest League "Best Tools" Survey

Minor League Baseball's trade publication, Baseball America, conducted a survey of Midwest League managers of the "best tools" in the circuit:

Most Exciting Player:	Elly De La Cruz
Best Batting Prospect:	Elly De La Cruz
Best Power Prospect:	Elly De La Cruz
Fastest Baserunner:	Elly De La Cruz
Best Defensive Third Baseman:	Nick Quintana

Baseball America also released the results of their surveys in other leagues. The following players who finished the season with the Dragons but had played in other leagues earlier in the season were recognized:

Best Power Prospect (Northwest League):	Noelvi Marte
Fastest Baserunner (Florida State League):	Jay Allen

## 2022 Dragons Team Leaders

### Batting

Batting Average:	Justice Thompson, .247 (qualifier: minimum 345 plate app.) Elly De La Cruz, .302 (non-qualifier: 306 plate app.)
Home Runs:	Elly De La Cruz, 20
Runs Batted In:	Elly De La Cruz, 52
Stolen Bases:	Elly De La Cruz, 28
Games Played:	Jose Torres, 107

### Pitching

Victories:	Jake Gilbert, 5
Earned Run Average:	None qualified (qualifier; min. 102 IP) Joe Boyle, 2.17 (74.2 IP)
Saves:	Donovan Benoit, 13
Games Pitched:	Donovan Benoit, 33
Innings Pitched:	Thomas Farr, 99.1
Strikeouts:	Joe Boyle, 122

## Dragons among the Midwest League Leaders

### Batters

Home Runs:	Elly De La Cruz, Tied-2nd (20)
Stolen Bases:	Elly De La Cruz, Tied-6th (28)
Extra Base Hits:	Elly De La Cruz, Tied-6th (40)

### Pitchers

Saves:	Donovan Benoit, 3rd (13)
Strikeouts:	Joe Boyle, 9th (122)

## Notable Dragons Performances

**Switch-Hit Home Runs, Times Two:** On July 7 at Day Air Ballpark in the first game of a doubleheader against West Michigan, switch-hitting Dragons infielder Elly De La Cruz hit a home run left-handed and a home run right handed in the same game. It was the first time any Dragons player had belted switch-hit homers in the same game since Henry Rodriguez in 2010. But it did not take another 12 years for a Dayton player to do it again. After a rain-out on July 8, De La Cruz repeated his performance on July 9, with a homer batting left-handed, and another batting right-handed against West Michigan, just 48 hours after he had done it the first time.

**Not Even Billy:** Through the Dragons first 21 seasons, no player had stolen more than three bases in a single game, including the legendary Billy Hamilton, who swiped 103 bags for the Dragons in 2011. But on July 1 at Great Lakes, Dayton's Jose Torres set a club record with four steals in a game. Then, less than two months later, Dragons outfielder Jay Allen II broke Torres' record when he stole five bases in a game on August 27 at Quad Cities.

**Big Night:** The Dragons most dramatic win of the season came in the first game of a doubleheader against Lake County on May 4 at Day Air Ballpark. On that night, the Dragons trailed Lake County 6-1 as they came to bat in the bottom of the fifth inning in a seven-inning game. They pushed across a run in the fifth and Rece Hinds hit a solo home run in the sixth to make it 6-3. In the bottom of the seventh, Jose Torres belted a run-scoring double to make it 6-4, and Elly De La Cruz drilled a double to the fence in right-center to drive in two runs and tie the game, sending it to extra innings. Trailing 7-6 in the bottom of the eighth, Rece Hinds came through with a game-tying single, and Hinds eventually scored the winning run on a wild pitch to give the Dragons an 8-7 win. Dayton won the second game of the doubleheader, 5-1, and improved their record for the year to 18-5.

**Walk-Off Blast:** As of May 20, 2022, the Dragons had gone nearly seven years since their last walk-off home run. Not since Aristides Aquino did it in 2015 had the Dragons enjoyed a game-ending homer at Day Air Ballpark. But on May 20, the Dragons beat Quad Cities in the first game of a doubleheader, 7-1. In the second game, they trailed 3-2 in the final inning and were down to their last out with a runner on first base. Elly De La Cruz delivered a single to keep the game alive, and Justice Thompson drilled a home run to the seats in left field to give the Dragons a 5-3 win, a doubleheader sweep, and a record of 25-11.



**Amazing Start:** Hard-throwing Dragons starting pitcher Joe Boyle did not allow a single hit until the third inning of his *third* start of the season. Boyle did not give up a run until his fifth start, and he did not allow more than one run in any start until July 4, his 13th start of the year. Boyle earned both the Reds and the Midwest League Pitcher of the Month award in May. Through the end of June, Boyle had an ERA of 0.51 and an opponent's batting average of .086 with 90 strikeouts in 55.1 innings. He was promoted to Double-A after his first start in August and finished the year with Chattanooga, joining fellow starting pitchers Andrew Abbott, Connor Phillips, and Christian Roa, all of whom had been part of the Dayton starting rotation, along with Boyle, earlier in the season.

# Dragons in the News

Here are some examples of news stories on the Dragons on television and radio in 2022:

**WDTN TV: Dragons Proud of Their Community Initiatives:**

<https://www.wdtn.com/video/dayton-dragons-proud-of-their-community-initiatives/7589304/>

**WDTN TV: Dragons Providing Fun Family Entertainment:**

<https://www.wdtn.com/video/dayton-dragons-providing-fun-family-entertainment/7589344/>

**WYSO Radio (NPR): Dragons Hold National Anthem Try-Outs:**

<https://www.wyso.org/news/2020-02-25/dayton-dragons-hold-tryouts-for-national-anthem-singers>

**FOX 45: Dragons Announce National Anthem Performers for Opening Night:**

<https://dayton247now.com/news/morning-show/emmanuel-christian-academy-to-perform-national-anthem-at-dayton-dragons-game>

**FOX 45: Dragons Gearing Up for Opening Night:**

<https://dayton247now.com/news/local/two-weeks-from-opening-day-the-dragons-day-air-ballpark-gearing-up>

**WDTN TV: Dragons Green Team Ready for 2022:**

<https://www.wdtn.com/video/dragons-green-team/7590328/>

**WHIO TV: Dragons Set to Open 2022 Season:**

<https://www.whio.com/news/local/dayton-dragons-gearing-up-open-2022-season/IMCUDNRGZNFLHE62GWSL6XSIAY/>

**WDTN TV (Living Dayton): Dragons Display New Gem City Jerseys:**

<https://www.wdtn.com/living-dayton/new-gem-city-jerseys-at-day-air-ballpark/>

**WLW Radio (Lance McAlister Sports Talk): Dragons Broadcaster Tom Nichols Discusses Upcoming Superstar Elly De La Cruz:**

<https://www.iheart.com/podcast/lance-mcalister-20799901/episode/lance-mcalister-with-tom-nichols--99287158/?embed=true>

**WDTN TV (Living Dayton): Dragons Announce Dayton Day with the Reds, Summer Specials:**

<https://www.wdtn.com/video/dragons/7846133/>

**WLW Radio (Lance McAlister Sports Talk): Dragons Broadcaster Tom Nichols Discusses Newly-Announced Baseball Rules Changes:**

<https://www.iheart.com/podcast/lance-mcalister-20799901/episode/lance-mcalister-with-tom-nichols--102068827/?embed=true>

## Social Media

The Dragons continued to expand into social media in 2022. The Dragons Facebook page climbed to over 55,000 “likes” while the Dragons Twitter page jumped to over 23,000 followers, the Dragons Instagram page increased to over 24,000 followers, and the Dragons TikTok page to over 18,000 followers.

## Dragons Broadcast Information in 2022

In 2022, 25 Dragons games were televised live on a major TV “over the air” station, Dayton’s CW (Channel 26). All 128 regular season games were broadcast on radio on WONE 980 AM and the Dragons Mobile App.

# **45 Former Dragons Played in Major Leagues in 2022**

## **Former Dragons who Made Major League Baseball Debuts in 2022 (130 total since 2000)**

Graham Ashcraft (Reds)  
Alexis Diaz (Reds)  
Daniel Duarte (Reds)  
Hunter Greene (Reds)  
Mark Kolozsvary (Reds)  
Nick Lodolo (Reds)  
Chris Okey (Reds)  
Michael Siani (Reds)  
Jared Solomon (Reds)  
Brennan Bernardino (Mariners)  
Narciso Crook (Cubs)  
Jeter Downs (Red Sox)  
Aneurys Zabala (Marlins)

## **Additional Former Dragons Who Played for the Reds in 2022 (14)**

Aristides Aquino  
Jose Barrero  
Stuart Fairchild  
TJ Friedl  
Ryan Hendrix  
Jonathan India  
Joel Kuhnel  
Alejo Lopez  
Tyler Mahle  
Dauri Moreta  
Tony Santillan  
Nick Senzel  
Tyler Stephenson  
Joey Votto

## **Additional Former Dragons Who Played for Other MLB Teams in 2022 (18)**

Tucker Barnhart (Tigers)

Johnny Cueto (White Sox)

Amir Garrett (Royals)

Didi Gregorius (Phillies)

Billy Hamilton (Marlins/Twins)

Michael Lorenzen (Angels)

Packy Naughton (Cardinals)

Wandy Peralta (Yankees)

Tanner Rainey (Nationals)

Miguel Rojas (Marlins)

Jose Siri (Astros/Rays)

Jackson Stephens (Braves)

Robert Stephenson (Rockies/Pirates)

Taylor Trammell (Mariners)

Chad Tromp (Braves)

Justin Turner (Dodgers)

Zack Weiss (Angels)

Jesse Winker (Mariners)

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