

# DELMARVA SHOREBIRDS PLAY BALL

FLY TOGETHER

ISSUE 2

DELMARVA  
printing



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# 2020

**DELMARVA SHOREBIRDS OFFICIAL GAME DAY MAGAZINE**

**CLASS-A AFFILIATE OF THE BALTIMORE ORIOLES**

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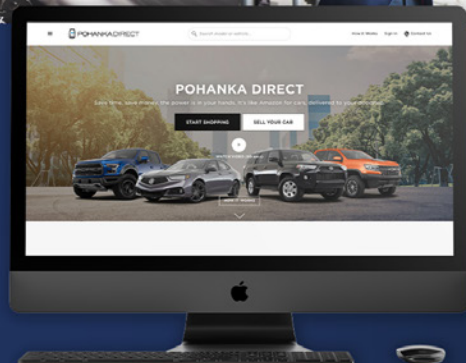


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## WEEKDAY PROMOTIONS

### SUNDAY

### Strike Out Hunger Sunday & Kids Run the Bases

**Perdue Strike Out Hunger Sunday** - Bring two canned food items to the Shorebirds Box Office and receive an upper reserve ticket for \$5.

**Kid's Run the Bases** - All Kids runs the bases after the game presented by Chili's Bar and Grill.



### MONDAY

### 47 ABC \$3 Buck Mondays

**47 ABC Three Buck Monday** - Enjoy \$3 upper reserved tickets, \$3 hot dogs and \$3 fountain Pepsi products presented by Wicomico Heating and Air Conditioning.



### TUESDAY

### Wag Your Tail Tuesday & BOGO Book Exchange

**Wag Your Tail Tuesday** - Bring a pet donation item and the Shorebirds will allow your dog free entry into the stadium courtesy of Concord Pet Foods and Supplies.

**Valvoline BOGO Book Exchange** - Bring two new books & purchase an upper reserved ticket to get one upper reserved ticket for free courtesy of Valvoline.



### WEDNESDAY

### Silver Sluggers Wednesday

**Silver Sluggers Wednesday** - Play baseball bingo and win prizes courtesy of Peninsula Home Care every Wednesday at Arthur W. Perdue Stadium. Don't forget to join the club, as all Silver Sluggers get admission to 10 select games for just \$25.



### THURSDAY

### Thirsty Thursday & Maryland Pride Thursday

**KISS 95.9 Thirsty Thursday & Maryland Pride Thursday** - Come to Perdue Stadium and show your Maryland Pride as every Thursday the Shorebirds will wear special Maryland Pride Jerseys, while you sit back, relax, and enjoy special pricing on Coors Light and Miller Lite.



### FRIDAY

### Big Beer Friday & Orange Friday

**Big Beer Friday & Orange Friday** - Every Friday home game, the Shorebirds will be wearing specialty orange jerseys that are custom made just for the Shorebirds, while you sit back, relax, and enjoy special pricing on Coors Light and Miller Lite.



### SATURDAY

### Q105 Fireworks Show

**Q105 Fireworks** - Every Saturday night is Q105 fireworks night at Arthur W. Perdue Stadium and you do not want to miss out. Come with friends and family as we host the best fireworks on Delmarva every Saturday night.







By: Will DeBoer

### Rockfish Revisited: Ingle, Sweet Share Memories of Maryland Fall League

Since Arthur W. Perdue Stadium opened in 1996, the Delmarva Shorebirds have been its only permanent tenant. If things had gone a little differently in 1998, however, there could have been another baseball team calling Salisbury home through the end of October.

The Maryland Fall League came into being at a time when Major League Baseball aimed to establish another postseason prospect circuit like they had in Arizona. The powers that be chose four sites to house teams: Bowie, Frederick, Wilmington, Del., and Salisbury. The name of Perdue Stadium's new fall boarders? The Delmarva Rockfish.

"I tell you what, we had some really good players," said Randy Ingle, the longtime minor league sage and manager of the Rockfish in 1998. "I would say there were at least 8-10 players on that club that played in the big leagues at some point in time. So it was a good league, a lot of good young talent and prospects, and it was a fun time."

Ingle, flanked by four-time NL batting champion Bill Madlock as a coach, indeed had a few gems in their collection of prospects from seven different major league organizations. David Eckstein played 10 years in the majors, winning World Series with the Angels in 2002 and taking Series MVP honors for the Cardinals in their 2006 title run. Aubrey Huff won a Silver Slugger Award with the Orioles in 2008 and helped the Giants win world championships in 2010 and 2012. Jake Westbrook pitched 13 seasons in the bigs, and former Shorebird manager Ryan Minor's brother Damon eventually played four years for the Giants.

The Rockfish's true standout in 1998, though, was future All-Star Milton Bradley, who led the league in hitting at .330. While Bradley's skill served as a forerunner to his 12-year major league career, so did his reputation for a less-than-cool head. Late in the season he got into an altercation with umpire Matt Schaeffer, resulting in a suspension that cut his fall short.

The Delmarva Rockfish finished their only season with a 21-20 record, while the Frederick Regiment claimed the Maryland Fall League's only championship. One of the young Regiment front office staffers who got to celebrate a championship in his first season in pro ball? Current Shorebirds assistant GM Jimmy Sweet.

"I just remember the baseball, it was great baseball," said Sweet. "You were getting the best-of-the-best of High-A baseball, plus each team was allowed five Double-A players."



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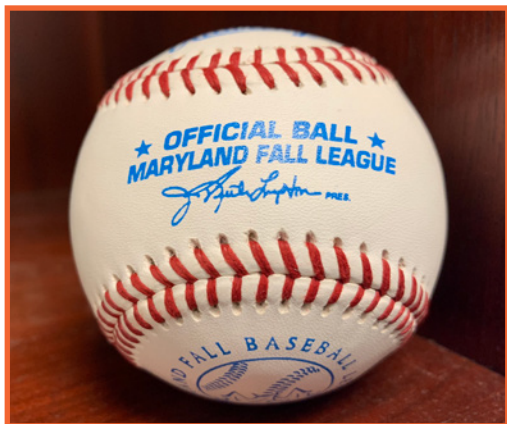
The baseball was outstanding; it was definitely a fun time as a fan.”

Even in the midst of that maiden voyage, there were signs that the MFL wouldn’t get a sequel. Financial issues from low attendance, coupled with chilly weather in late October, forced the league to fold.

“The first three weeks of the season it was perfect weather,” said Sweet. “But when you invest the money into these players that major league teams do, you don’t want to have anything happen due to the weather.”

Thus, the Rockfish, the Regiment, and the rest came to an unceremonious end. The Shorebirds retained various bits of team apparel for over a decade; in 2012 the team played one game as the Rockfish and auctioned off the jerseys. The rest of that lone season over two decades has since been mothballed to memories, consigned to the knowledge bank at the Eastern Shore Baseball Hall of Fame.

Meanwhile, as the Shorebirds prepare for their 25th season, Arthur W. Perdue Stadium maintains its reputation as one of the top venues in the South Atlantic League and a worthy capital of baseball on the Eastern Shore.



“I’ve always liked that ballpark,” said Ingle, who finally returned to Perdue Stadium in 2017 as manager of the Rome Braves; last season he became the development supervisor for the Asheville Tourists and made it back to Salisbury in late April. “[Being there] brought back a lot of good memories from 1998, and from 2001 [as Danville Braves manager]. It’s a nice ballpark, and I really enjoyed my time there.”



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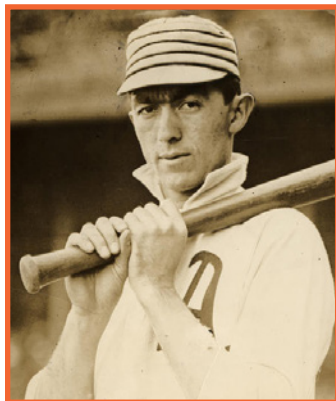




## ALUMNI UPDATE: HOME RUN BAKER

By: Will DeBoer & Eric Day

### Hall-of-Fame slugger of old made lifelong home in Trappe



While his career totals in the namesake category can be surpassed by modern sluggers in two years, Frank “Home Run” Baker made the most of the game as it was played in the Dead Ball Era, and then some. He became a member of Connie Mack’s vaunted “\$100,000 Infield” on the Philadelphia Athletics, led the American League in round-trippers for four straight seasons, and won three world championships in the process. For Baker, who could have been a Hall-of-Famer for his nickname alone, the story of his baseball life began and ended on, and often took detours through, the Delmarva Peninsula.

John Franklin Baker was born and raised in Trappe on the Eastern Shore. He inherited his father Franklin’s athletic prowess, which he got to show off as a pitcher and an outfielder for Trappe High School. In 1905 his performance on the mound attracted attention from a scout named Preston Day, who recommended him to Buck Herzog, manager of a semi-pro team in nearby Ridgely. Herzog, whose baseball path would cross with Baker’s multiple times on the game’s grandest stage, moved the 19-year-old to third base. Baker would never play a professional game at any other position.

Baker eventually joined another semi-pro team in Baltimore, the Sparrows Point Club, in 1906, and soon after returned to the Eastern Shore to play in Cambridge. While with Sparrows Point, he caught the attention of the New York Giants, who arranged a trial run for him with the then-minor league Baltimore Orioles (Class-A Eastern League) in 1907. It did not go well: Baker only managed two hits in 15 at-bats and was released with the verdict of “could not hit.”

Fortunes reversed for Baker in 1908, who put up excellent numbers for the Reading (Pa.) Pretzels of the Class-B Tri-State League. A’s owner-manager Connie Mack was

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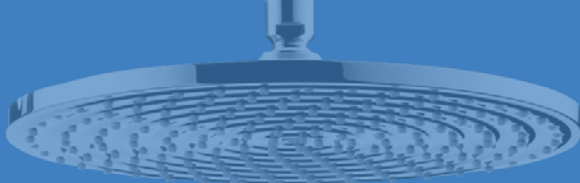
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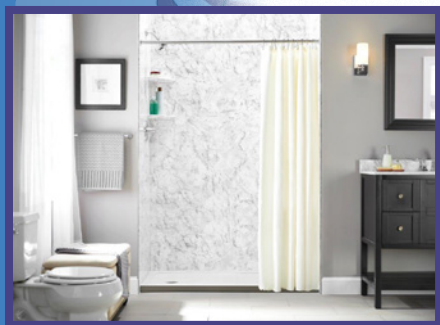
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# CFES Grants Support Fight Against COVID-19



PRMC Nurses receiving care packages from Operation We Care that was funded by a Community Foundation of the Eastern Shore grant from the Emergency Response Fund.

Community matters most during the tough times, and as always, the Eastern Shore has rallied together through recent events. The Emergency Response Fund at the Community Foundation of the Eastern Shore has received invaluable support from local businesses and donors. These generous gifts have allowed CFES to rapidly respond to critical needs in our community. Likewise, fund holders such as the Shorebird's Fly Together Fund have used their charitable funds to direct grants to causes they champion and help in times of need.

Grants through the Emergency Response Fund have recently provided food, shelter, and necessities for the homeless and needy families, care packages for frontline healthcare workers and first responders, PPE mask production, and countless other resources that have aided in the pandemic recovery. In times of great need, generosity makes a difference.

*The Community Foundation of the Eastern Shore connects people who care to causes that matter for the common good of the Lower Eastern Shore. We are a 501c3 nonprofit with an inspiring history of fostering charitable endeavors, and have provided over \$84 million in grants and scholarships to the local community since 1984. We collaborate with individuals, families, and businesses to match their charitable interests with community needs and strengthen local nonprofits through grants and resources. We are devoted to improving our regional community and believe in the power of philanthropy. Learn more at [CFES.org](http://CFES.org)*



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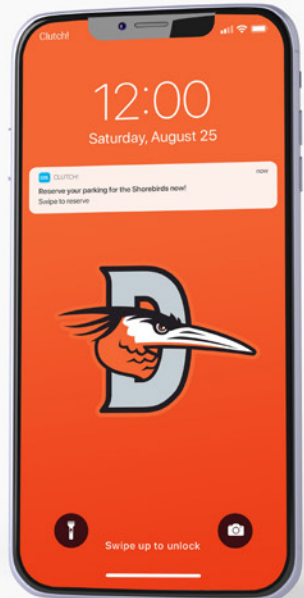
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## TICKET HOLDER SPOTLIGHT

### Rick Bosse, Guy Burd, & Jack Murphy

Rick Bosse, Guy Burd, and Jack Murphy are our Ticket Holders in the Spotlight! Attending games since 2015, Bosse and Burd have been Shorebirds mini plan members since 2018. Neighbors in Millsboro, DE, in 2019 they recruited Jack Murphy to join them in the luxury level, and hope to bring in more from their street to enjoy Shorebirds baseball!

Bosse retired a few years ago after working 42 years for the Baltimore Gas & Electric Company. While living in Baltimore, he also worked for several seasons as an Orioles usher. "After building my house in Millsboro, I've loved getting to know folks in the area, especially when it comes to baseball," said Bosse.

Burd had attended Shorebirds games for a few years before getting to know his neighbors, and helped introduce them to Perdue Stadium. He especially enjoys the player jersey auctions, with around 10 in his collection. "My first jersey was a Fourth of July one, and I love that they all go to good causes. Some of my favorites over the years have been the Independence Day, Christmas, and can't forget about the Scapple jerseys!" Rick and Guy also play in the Delmarva Olde Tymers Softball league of Delmarva, and are looking forward to getting back on the field!

Murphy's first season as a mini plan member came last season in 2019, and as so many fans did, enjoyed the excitement of the season from start to finish.

"We started the year off at the Meet the Team event, and it was a great experience getting to know players and coaches to kick off the year." "I asked our manager (Kyle Moore) about analytics in baseball, and he gave an in depth response of the importance of implementing it at the minor league level, and it was quite enjoyable seeing a lot of it throughout the year." As a grandfather, Murphy especially loves to see kids around the ballpark enjoying baseball as much as he does.



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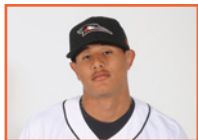




## SILVER ANNIVERSARY TEAM HEADSHOTS



**WILLIE HARRIS - 2B**



**MANNY MACHADO - DH**



**CALVIN PICKERING - 1B**



**RYAN MINOR - 3B**



**NICK MARKAKIS - RF**



**JASON FRANSZ - LF**



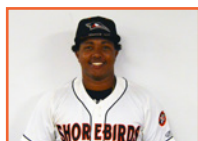
**CHANCE SISCO - C**



**ZACH JARRETT - CF**



**ORLANDO CABRERA - SS**



**YERMIN MERCEDES - C**



**TREY MANCINI - 1B**



**ADAM HALL - INF**



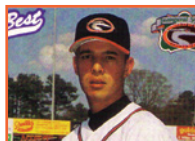
**BRANDON TRIPP - OF**



**GRAYSON RODRIGUEZ - P**



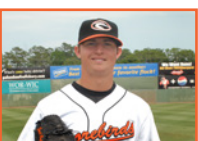
**ALEX WELLS - P**



**JAVIER VAZQUEZ - P**



**DYLAN BUNDY - P**



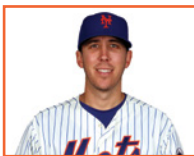
**ZACK BRITTON - P**



**JOHN MAINE - P**



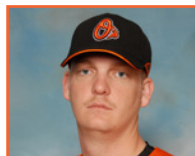
**RYAN KOHLMEIER - P**



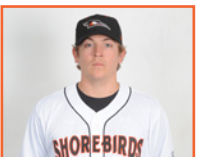
**SCOTT RICE - P**



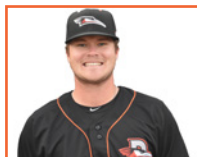
**DEREK BROWN - P**



**ROMMIE LEWIS - P**



**JIMMY YACABONIS - P**



**ZACH MATSON - P**



## SILVER ANNIVERSARY TEAM ROSTER

POS	STARTING LINEUP	B/T	YEAR(S)	OPS	HOMETOWN	HIGHEST LEVEL
2B	Willie Harris	L/R	'99-'00	.759	Cairo, GA	MLB (12 Years)
DH	Manny Machado	R/R	2011	.859	Hialeah, FL	MLB (8 Years)
1B	Calvin Pickering	L/L	1997	.949	St. Thomas, USVI	MLB (5 Years)
3B	Ryan Minor	R/R	1997	.932	Canton, OH	MLB (4 Years)
RF	Nick Markakis	L/L	2004	.842	Glen Cove, NY	MLB (14 Years)
LF	Jason Franz	R/R	2004-05	.935	Newport Beach, CA	A+
C	Chance Sisco	L/R	2014	.854	Corona, CA	MLB (3 Years)
CF	Zach Jarrett	R/R	2018	.779	Hickory, NC	AA
SS	Orlando Cabrera	R/R	1996	.731	Cartagena, COL	MLB (15 Years)

POS	RESERVES	B/T	YEARS	OPS	HOMETOWN	HIGHEST LEVEL
C	Yermin Mercedes	R/R	2015-16	.896	La Romana, D.R.	AAA
1B	Trey Mancini	R/R	2014	.779	Winter Haven, FL	MLB (4 Years)
INF	Adam Hall	R/R	2019	.780	Hamilton, Bermuda	A
OF	Brandon Tripp	L/R	2007	.908	Artesia, CA	AA

	STARTING ROTATION	Hand	YEARS	ERA	HOMETOWN	HIGHEST LEVEL
	Grayson Rodriguez	RHP	2019	2.68	Nacogdoches, TX	A
	Alex Wells	LHP	2017	2.38	Newcastle, AUS	AA
	Javier Vazquez	RHP	1996	2.68	Ponce, P.R.	MLB (14 Years)
	Dylan Bundy	RHP	2012	0.00	Tulsa, OK	MLB (5 Years)
	Zack Britton	LHP	2008	3.12	Panorama City, CA	MLB (9 Years)
	John Maine	RHP	2002-03	1.48	Fredericksburg, VA	MLB (8 Years)

	RELIEF PITCHERS	Hand	YEARS	ERA	HOMETOWN	HIGHEST LEVEL
	Ryan Kohlmeier	RHP	1997	2.65	Salina, KS	MLB (2 Years)
	Scott Rice	LHP	2002-03	2.98	Simi Valley, CA	MLB (2 Years)
	Derek Brown	RHP	1997-98	1.85	Hagerstown, MD	AAA
	Rommie Lewis	LHP	2002	2.15	Seattle, WA	MLB (2 Years)
	Jimmy Yacabonis	RHP	2014	1.07	Elizabeth, NJ	MLB (3 Years)
	Zach Matson	LHP	'17, '19	2.79	Fayetteville, MO	A+



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looking for a third baseman to replace veteran Jimmy Collins, and Baker looked like the right candidate. Mack purchased Baker's contract, and the latter made his debut on September 21 against the White Sox. He hit .290 with three doubles over the final three games of the year.

The 1909 season saw Baker installed into Mack's everyday lineup. He blossomed in the brand-new Shibe Park, which housed both the A's and the National League's Phillies, smashing the stadium's first home run over the right field fence on May 29. The blast was one of four homers for Baker in his official rookie season, but it was his speed – Baker led the AL with 19 triples – that made the most impact for an A's team that just missed out on the pennant.

By 1910 the A's were ready to take the American League by storm thanks to an elite core known as the \$100,000 Infield. Baker joined first baseman Stuffey McInnis, second baseman Eddie Collins, and shortstop Jack Barry in perhaps the greatest infield ever assembled; the group's nickname came from its speculated market value, which would equal approximately \$2.7 million in today's money. The foursome would dominate the Junior Circuit with powerful offensive numbers, with each member leading the league in at least one major category for the next five seasons.

Despite a lukewarm regular season in 1910, Baker caught fire in his first World Series, batting .409 with four extra-base hits and four RBIs in a five-game series win over the Chicago Cubs.

Still known simply as Frank, Baker earned his famous nickname in the 1911 World Series. That year saw the A's pitted against the New York Giants, the team that scouted and gave up on Baker four years prior. In a remarkable twist of fate, Baker's third base counterpart on the Giants was his first semipro manager, Buck Herzog. The Giants wasted no time trying to get into Baker's head – in Game 1 New York outfielder Fred Snodgrass intentionally tried to spike his arm, resulting in a few minor cuts. Baker internalized the slight, and much like Michael Jordan during his Last Dance at the end of the century, it



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#	PLAYER NAME	Pos	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	AB	R	H	BI
	TOTALS	R/H													
#	PITCHERS		W-L	IP	K	BB	H	R	ER	WP		CATCHER		PB	

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#	PLAYER NAME	Pos	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	AB	R	H	BI
	TOTALS	R/H													
#	PITCHERS		W-L	IP	K	BB	H	R	ER	WP		CATCHER		PB	

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**2. YARD** Keep a green, mowed lawn at least 30 feet around all sides of the house.

**3. MAINTENANCE** Keep roof, gutters and yard free of leaves, twigs and other debris.

**4. ACCESS** Clear driveway 12 feet wide, 14 feet high for emergency vehicles.

**5. DECKS** Remove debris. Enclose underneath with lattice, backed with wire screen.

**6. HOUSE** Use fire resistant materials when replacing roof or siding.

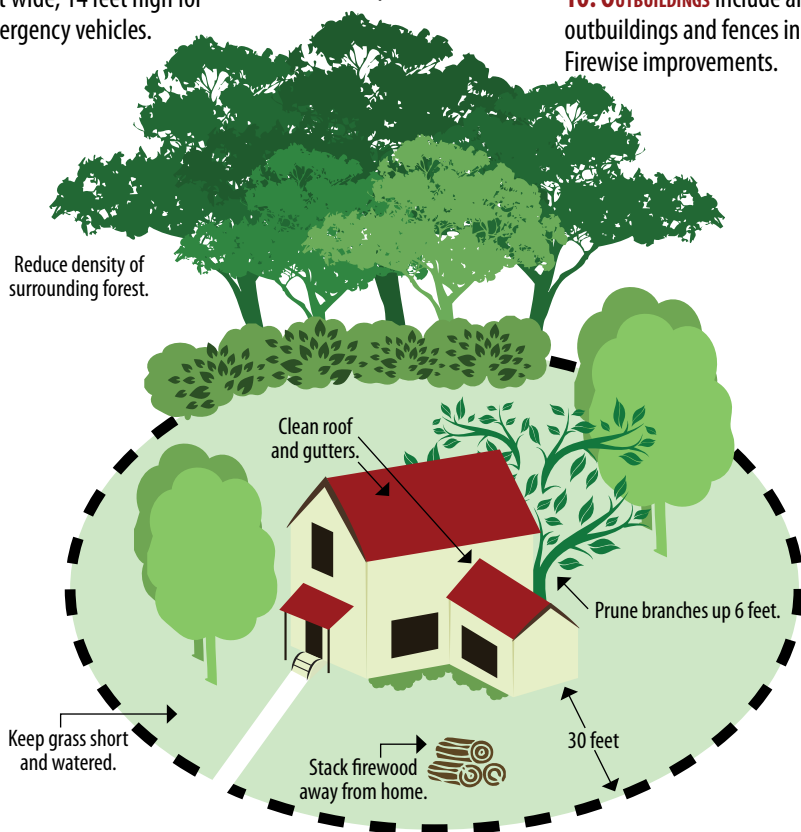
**7. LANDSCAPING** use Firewise plants and mulch. Keep ornamental plants 30 feet

from house. Space plants so fire can't spread.

**8. FOUNDATION** Clear flammables and keep landscaping 4 feet away from house.

**9. FIREWOOD** Move firewood pile at least 30 feet away from any buildings.

**10. OUTBUILDINGS** Include all outbuildings and fences in Firewise improvements.



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was all the motivation he needed.

In Game 2 with the score tied 1-1 in the bottom of the sixth, Baker hit a go-ahead two-run homer off future Hall-of-Famer Rube Marquard, powering the A's to a 3-1 win. The next day in Game 3 at the Polo Grounds, Baker came to bat in the top of the ninth with his team down 1-0 and the legendary Christy Matthewson on the mound. Unphased by the certified October hero, Baker cracked a game-tying home run to force extras; the A's won 3-2 in 11 innings, dealing Matthewson his first World Series loss. Philadelphia went on to win the series in six games, thanks largely to the hero the press dubbed "Home Run" Baker.

Baker lived up to his nickname, leading the AL in home runs every year from 1911 to 1914, pounding a grand total of 42 with a career-high 12 in 1913. Aided by a stellar supporting cast he also led the league in RBIs in 1912 and 1913 and finished in the top 11 in MVP voting all four years, losing out to future Hall-of-Famers (Ty Cobb, Tris Speaker, Walter Johnson, and his teammate Eddie Collins) each time.

After missing out on the pennant in 1912, Baker and the A's again beat Herzog and the Giants in the 1913 Fall Classic; Baker hit another home run off Rube Marquard in Game 1 and batted .450 with seven RBIs over the five-game series. The next year Philadelphia won another AL pennant but ran into the Boston Braves in the World Series, who completed their "Miracle" turnaround with a four-game sweep.

After the 1914 season, financial troubles forced Mack to finally cash in his \$100,000 infield. He sold off his best players, including Baker, who after holding out for the entire 1915 season and playing semipro ball close to home saw his contract purchased by the New York Yankees.

Though the Yankees of the late 1920s best embodied the "Murderer's Row" image, Baker and his teammates originated the nickname in 1919. That year New York led the AL with 47 team home runs, including 10 from Baker.

Tragedy struck in 1920 when Baker's wife Ottilie died of scarlet fever. Frank sat out the major league season before playing a few local semipro games later that year and returning to the Yankees in 1921. By then, the man nicknamed Home Run had taken a backseat to the man who personified the home run. Babe Ruth led New York to its first

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## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT CONT...

two AL pennants in 1921 and 1922, and a diminished Baker retired from the majors after the 1922 World Series in which he took just one at-bat. He finished his big-league career with 96 home runs.

After remarrying and returning home to the Eastern Shore, Baker became the player-manager of the Easton Farmers of the Class-D Eastern Shore League in 1924; the 38-year-old hit the final six home runs of his storied career that season. That same year he discovered and signed a 16-year-old slugger from Sudlersville named Jimmie Foxx. Connie Mack came calling that summer, and Baker sold Foxx to his old boss, thereby touching off another great Philadelphia A's dynasty.

Displeased with the low \$2,000 price Easton received for the future Hall-of-Famer, the Farmers fired Baker in 1925. Out of pro baseball for good, he settled down on his farm in Trappe and became a model citizen of that community, joining the Trappe Town Board and also serving as director of the State Bank of Trappe, tax collector, and volunteer firefighter. He especially loved duck hunting, a hobby he took up every offseason from baseball and enjoyed through the rest of his life. Baker died in 1963 at age 77 following a stroke and was buried at Spring Hill Cemetery in Easton.

After years of egregious snubs, Baker finally earned induction into Cooperstown through the Veterans Committee in 1955. It came as no surprise to original inductee Walter Johnson, who called Baker "the most dangerous hitter I ever faced." Admired and respected by peers and historians alike, famed sabermetrician Bill James ranked him the fifth-greatest third baseman of all-time in 2001.

While Baker no doubt would have appreciated the recognition from James and others, the man who so often returned home to the Eastern Shore, in good times and in bad, received his highest honor nearly 40 years after his passing. In 2002, the town of Trappe named Home Run Baker Park in his honor.



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## Q&A WITH RYAN FULLER: PART 2

During a recent episode of the podcast One Flew Over the Shorebirds Nest, Delmarva radio voice Will DeBoer chatted with incoming Shorebirds hitting coach Ryan Fuller. Part I of this insightful conversation appeared in PlayBall! Issue 1.

**WD:** What made this the season to transition from private instructor to an affiliated organization?

**RF:** It's a pretty crazy world. [In addition to work at The PIT] I was a high school English teacher for the past five years...and to be totally honest with you, professional baseball wasn't even on my radar. I enjoyed being around kids, I've been obsessed with the baseball swing from a really young age, and it's something that I'd really enjoyed. The past few years when I saw more and more private instructors getting picked up for affiliated ball, it was just kind of like, "is this something that could happen?" The hiring season came around in October, I started getting a few phone calls, and I was lucky enough that the Orioles reached out, and when [Director of Player Development] Matt Blood pitched me on everything that was going on, it was incredibly hard for me to say no. I'm so happy to be part of the organization now, and just being part of it has been amazing in the short time I've been on board.

**WD:** You grew up in a really rich baseball territory in Southeastern Connecticut. Who did you root for as a kid?

**RF:** Connecticut is very unique; we have the option of Red Sox or Yankees, and usually it's split right down the middle of Connecticut, and I'm on the side closer to Boston, so that makes me a Red Sox fan. I got to really enjoy the good times for the Red Sox growing up – a lot of World Series, a lot of success, and that also goes for the Patriots as well. We'll see how we do without Tom Brady for the next few years, but it's been a really nice way to grow up being a winner.

**WD:** You also grew up in a time when nearby Norwich had a Double-A team in the Eastern League; did you go to many Navigators/Defenders games?

**RF:** Yeah, that was when it was Nick Johnson and Alfonso Soriano, all the great homegrown Yankees guys. Those were some of my first memories of baseball, going to that stadium when I was younger; it was new and it was beautiful. And unbelievable teams; I've got a ton of balls still that are autographed by guys like Soriano. It's pretty cool, and getting into professional baseball, I always wondered if I'd be able to play at these stadiums closer to home. Hopefully someday we'll be able to get over to the Double-A field in Hartford, which is a crown jewel of Minor League Baseball right now.



*Part III of this conversation with Ryan Fuller  
will be available in PlayBall! Issue 3*

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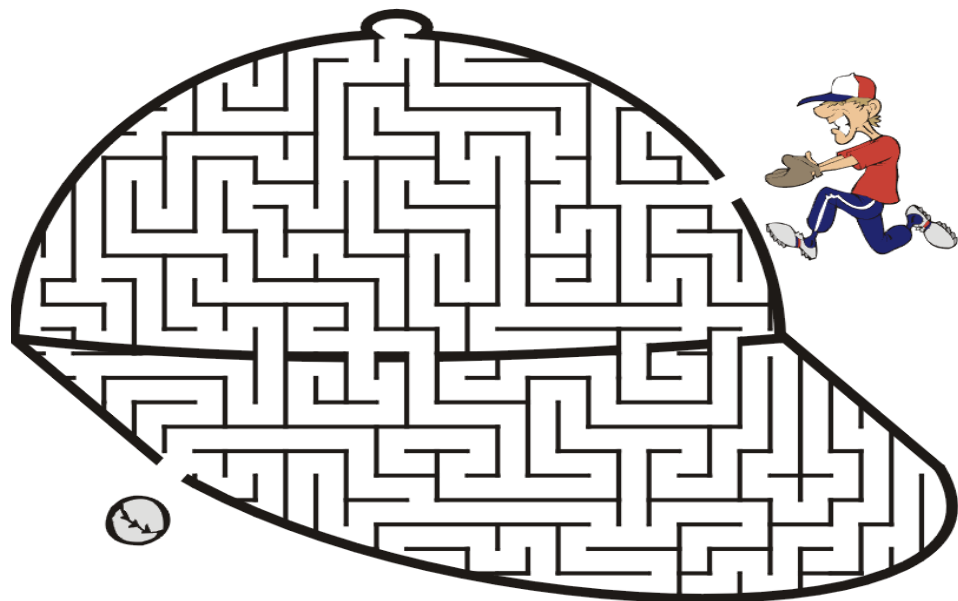
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By: Will DeBoer

### **Silver Anniversary Team: Calvin Pickering, First Base**

First base sluggers are attracted to this infield corner like a seagull to Thrashers fries. Some of the Shorebirds' most prolific home run hitters have been housed at first base over their first 24 seasons. While Perdue Stadium has seen more than its fair share of major league talent at first, our expert panel congregated around a former SAL champion whose historic campaign still serves as the benchmark for Delmarva's big boppers.

#### **First Base: Calvin Pickering, 1997**

122 games, .311/.394/.554, 88 R, 31 2B, 25 HR, 79 RBI, .949 OPS

In an era when home run records seemingly fall like dominos, the Delmarva Shorebirds' has stood untouched for nearly a quarter century. Calvin Pickering set a power-hitting standard in the franchise's second season that has rarely been approached since.

"I didn't even know it was still standing, to be honest," said Pickering over the phone of his 25 home runs during the 1997 season, plus four more in a magical postseason run that reeled in Delmarva's first South Atlantic League championship. "I'm surprised it's still up with all the good players that have come through there."

Indeed, the most serious threat to Pickering's reign came from one of his teammates. That summer, the St. Thomas-born first baseman had the perfect counterpart on the other corner of the infield, third baseman Ryan Minor. With Pickering from the left side of the plate and Minor from the right, the Shorebirds' Bash Brothers kept Sally League pitchers up at night all season.

"It started back when we were together [with Bluefield] in the Appalachian League," said Pickering of his foil, who finished the regular season one dinger behind his teammate. "They made it a point that we were the top prospects in the system, and they kept us together all the way up. We always tried to push each other and be the best on the field. We challenged each other, and we were definitely the best one-two punch coming up at that time."

For their first season in the Baltimore system, Delmarva featured not just that one-two punch but most of a lineup that propelled the Bluefield Orioles to the Appy League



title the year before. Under manager Tommy Shields, the Shorebirds won 77 games in the regular season and made it to an eight-team SAL postseason, the first of just three seasons the league used that playoff format. After dispatching Hickory and Charleston (WV), Delmarva swept Greensboro in the championship series, with Pickering homering in the ninth of the clincher.

"We were like brothers, we did



everything together on that team,” said Pickering, whose summer in Salisbury including a team whitewater rafting session. “We knew what we had, and the other teams out there realized that we were that good. [In spring training] we said, ‘We’re gonna win another one, especially if they keep this team together.’ And they kept us together, that whole team for that whole season.”

The ring was just the cherry on top of a monster offensive season for Pickering. He still ranks top-five in franchise history in batting average, slugging, extra-base hits, total bases, and runs scored. Only once since '97 has any Shorebird besides Minor seriously challenged Pickering's 25 home runs; Jason Fransz fell three short in 2005, and nobody else has ever hit more than 20.

Pickering kept up the pace the next year, winning Eastern League MVP with Bowie and making his debut with the Orioles that September. He played 95 major league games for four teams across five seasons, including cracking an Opening Day home run for the Royals in 2005, before retiring from the game in 2008 after brief stints in Korea and independent ball.

Always interested in “spreading the knowledge,” Pickering spent one season as hitting coach for the Aberdeen IronBirds in 2015. He now works as a corrections officer in Riverside, Calif., and has passed on a love of the game to his 14-year-old son Jacob. Perhaps it will take a second-generation Pickering to finally top this storied Shorebirds record.

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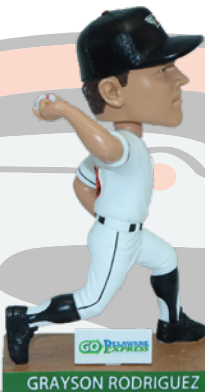




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