

He's not class aa now, just class

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Ahh, the '97 Sea Dogs. Five players hit at least 20 home runs. Millar is the only player still with Florida. Kotsay is with San Diego, Ryan Jackson with Detroit's Triple-A team, the Toledo Mud Hens. Josh Booty, who never could shake the football bug or learn to hit a breaking ball, is a third-string quarterback with the Cleveland Browns. John Roskos is a cop in Albuquerque, N.M.

Millar remembers the intense Roskos grounding out to shortstop, running over first base and not stopping until he reached the bullpen in right field.

He remembers Roskos, disgusted with a performance in Norwich, sticking the top of his head in the toilet and flushing.

He remembers tightly-wound Ralph Milliard destroying the sink and toilet in the dugout bathroom at Hadlock. "All you saw was the pipe," Millar said.

If you play baseball, you will fail. The minors are where you learn to deal with failure. Millar remembers.

The Marlins are out, but never the memories

Portland Press Herald (Portland, ME) September 19, 2002

Standing behind a podium placed on home plate at Hadlock Field, inches from where Charles Johnson crouched and Kevin Millar wagged his bat, the general manager of the Boston Red Sox spoke of hope and promise and a future as glorious as Wednesday's sun-kissed afternoon.

"We expect this is going to be one of the more enduring relationships in all of minor-league baseball," said Mike Port, his words punctuated by a familiar lighthouse rising above the center-field fence, a foghorn bellowing and fireworks piercing the late-summer air.

The Sea Dogs and Red Sox made it official Wednesday. Hadlock Field is now part of the pipeline to Fenway Park. Instead of traveling from Maine to western Canada to south Florida on their climb to the major leagues, and disappearing from the radar screen of casual Sea Dogs fans, the players who succeed in Double-A can move to Triple-A and the American League without ever leaving New England.

Portland to Pawtucket to Boston. Makes perfect geographic sense.

"Hey, Mr. Henry!" yelled an exuberant young man wearing a replica Red Sox jersey to the assemblage from Boston, which did not, on this day, include the majority owner, John Henry. "We love you! Great job!"

Welcome to Red Sox Nation, where blind loyalty and October angst intermingle.

Wednesday was a celebration, a new beginning. It also marked the end of a nine-year marriage. A marriage with a honeymoon that seemed to last for two, three, even four years before sputtering.

The Sea Dogs and Florida Marlins could not have gone on. That was obvious last winter when the new Marlins owner, Jeff Loria, fired the last vestiges of the former regime and installed the staff he had hired with the Expos.

(By the way, did anybody notice how Dave Huppert and Frank Cacciatore, who were to have been the manager and hitting coach of the Sea Dogs, helped guide Harrisburg to the Eastern League finals while the Sea Dogs missed the playoffs for the fifth straight year?)

But before we dump Florida's teal for the navy blue and red of Boston, let us remember what we have lost.

For pure baseball fans, no matter their favored team, we have lost National League rules, where pitchers bat, where strategy matters, where double switches delight (or infuriate) those who score the game.

Because the Red Sox are an American League club, the Sea Dogs and their opponents will use designated hitters for the pitcher.

Had that always been the case, we never would have witnessed Antonio Alfonseca's ridiculously improbable light-tower home run, nor the batting prowess of Livan Hernandez, Michael Tejera and Josh Beckett.

Bunting will be rare at Hadlock now, as well as an appreciation for the pitcher who, with everybody expecting a sacrifice, could pull back his bat and slap a grounder through an infield in motion.

So we lose some subtleties. New players will come, talented ones, say Red Sox officials, who vow to rebuild a minor-league system with few ripe fruit on its vine.

Perhaps we will again see a catcher like Johnson unfailingly throwing out the trail runner on an attempted double steal. Or see an outfielder like Mark Kotsay scaling the fence to steal a home run.

Lou Lucca throwing off the wrong foot. Mike Redmond slapping another soft hit-and-run single to right.

Utilityman Joe Aversa covering left field like the morning dew.

You fall in love with people, not laundry. And these are some of the players who won the hearts of Sea Dogs fans. No matter what happens with the Red Sox, no matter if a former Sea Dog hits the Series-ending homer that brings Boston its first title since 1918, there will not be a moment like the one that ended the '96 season.

From the last out in the top of the ninth until Harrisburg's inevitable championship-clinching 6-1 victory, more than four thousand Sea Dogs loyalists remained on their feet, cheering, right through the changeover, right through Adam Duritz singing "I believe . . ." over the loudspeakers, right through a walk to Aversa and outs by Redmond, Jason Robertson and finally, Ralph Milliard.

It was a moment like no other at Hadlock, a sustained ovation that brought tears to the eyes of Manager Carlos Tosca and a lump to the throat of everyone not wearing a Senators uniform.

"If they didn't have a score on the scoreboard," Pookie Wilson said that night, "you could have sworn we were winning."

In a sport where history matters more than in any other, the Sea Dogs should be proud of theirs. As they make over

Hadlock in red and navy blue, don't forget to leave a little teal. For old times' sake.

Intercontinental Cup opens with Cuba's 5-0 win over the Netherlands

AP Worldstream November 9, 2002 | LUIS R. VARELA, Associated Press Writer

Dateline: HAVANA Cuba beat the Netherlands 5-0 in the opening Intercontinental Baseball Cup match Friday.

Barbaro Canizares brought in Cuba's first run in the sixth inning with a hit into right field against losing pitcher Patrick Beljaards.

The Cubans gained their other four runs in the top of the eighth inning in which Eduardo Paret batted a solitary home run and Yoval Duenas brought two others to home plate with a double.

Right-handed Cuban pitcher Jose Ibar, after overcoming some difficulties in the first two innings, prevented the Netherlands from making a single run, striking out 13 hitters and permitting only three hits.

Relief pitcher Jose Luis Lazo wound up the ninth inning without problem.

"The Cuban batters are very difficult because of their power," left-handed Dutch pitcher Beljaards said. "I have studied them well and know that they use different tactics to make things difficult."

An error by Ralph Milliard opened the doors to let Canizares bring into home plate the single run that Beljaards permitted.

Relief pitchers Dave Drayer and Lester Victoria then went on to allow the Cubans to get the other four runs.

Right fielder Dirk Kyoosier made two defensive plays with catches that prevented possible home runs and gained the applause of thousands of fans.