

Schererville's John Mallee enjoying run with Marlins

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BY GEORGE CASTLE Times Correspondent | Posted: Tuesday, July 13, 2010 12:15 am | No Comments Posted



After 8 1/2 seasons as the minor league hitting coordinator for the Florida Marlins, 41-year-old Mt. Carmel grad and Schererville resident John Mallee is in the big leagues on the bench of the Marlins' parent club. He plans to continue to hold clinics and run his local traveling team, the Indiana Shockers, when he can in the offseason.



81st MLB All-Star Game

National League (Ubaldo Jimenez) at
American League (David Price)

When: 7 p.m. today.

Where: Angels Stadium, Anaheim, Calif.

TV/Radio: Fox (Ch. 32); WMVP-AM (1000).

John Mallee isn't going to big-time his young baseball pupils next winter when he trades his Florida Marlins uniform for that of his Indiana Shockers youth traveling team.

Why should things change just because the Schererville resident was promoted to hitting coach of the parent club after 8 1/2 seasons as the Marlins' minor-league hitting coordinator? Reaching the majors was his ultimate goal as a coach, but the Shockers are his baby as the owner.

One thing will evolve about his cold-weather instruction of the Shockers at Omri 41 Health and Fitness Connection. Mallee, a Mt. Carmel alum, will have the tag of big leaguer behind his hitting counsel. That should get the students' attention -- just as a message from the Marlins' front office to his Schererville residence on June 22 got Mallee's.

"I was home, getting off a trip (to several farm teams)," Mallee said. "I got a call to be in Camden Yards the next day. I stayed up all night and packed. I got off the plane and was named interim hitting coach."

Mallee had been named a Marlins coach in conjunction with the firing of Fredi Gonzalez as manager and the promotion of Edwin Rodriguez from Triple-A New Orleans as his successor. Six days later, the "interim" tag was removed from Mallee's title in unorthodox style during a Marlins-Mets game in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

"(Owner) Jeff Loria came into the dugout the minutes before the first pitch, brought all the team together and said the manager and all the coaches will stay

together rest of the year," Mallee said. "That was the biggest shock. Everything I worked for, the sacrifices my wife (Candy) and kids made, came to fruition."

Baseball certainly is in the 41-year-old's blood, whether playing -- just 115 games in the low minors in 1991-92 in the Phillies system -- or coaching. He's specialized in a lot more of the latter between his offseason Shockers duties and 15 years in the minors in both the Marlins and Brewers organizations.

Mallee had to undergo a transition in coaching emphasis upon his promotion.

"Major league hitters have their own styles," he said. "It's all about approach, getting them ready to hit in the box, understanding the theory behind situational hitting. In the minors, it's more of how to get a good pitch to hit, get a right mechanical swing. Also, just getting acclimated to wooden bats, riding buses. Younger guys are looking to get a swing that works.

"In the majors, it's more approach-oriented, get them ready."

Mallee does not consider 2009 NL batting champ Hanley Ramirez as a student who needs much supervision.

"Hanley does everything so natural," he said. "He just goes out and does his work. His swing is short. In-game he's like Manny Ramirez. He's got a great, great swing.

"The goal is to have (big leaguers) as their own hitting coach. They need to know their strengths and weaknesses in attacking the zone."

During time with the Shockers and other offseason clinic appearances, he starts with taking the pressure off students who are under the gun from anxious parents.

"There's a lot of expectations on kids," Mallee said. "Parents pay for lessons and demand (to know) why they didn't get a hit. All these kids have issues trying to perform at a young age."

That's where a good coach, doubling as a father-confessor, comes into play. Mallee's work truly has no offseason.

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