

Big League Dad, Jamie Moyer on IMG Baseball Academy Programs and the Pendleton School



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Sons follow in Moyer's footsteps
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CLEARWATER, Fla. - Jamie Moyer has spent a quarter-century in professional baseball and pitched nearly 4,500 innings. He has been participating in spring-training camps since 1985. It seems Moyer's entire adult life has been spent on a baseball field.

So what did he do on a recent Friday night out?

He stood behind a chain-link backstop at a high school field down the street from the Phillies' training complex and took in a game, of course.

"This is the highlight of my day," the Phillies pitcher said. "I love watching my kids play."

On a chilly late February evening, Moyer, wearing jeans and a red St. Joseph's University pullover, watched his oldest son, 17-year-old Dillon, play shortstop for the Pendleton School in a game against Clearwater Central Catholic High School.

Dillon's road to the leadoff spot in Pendleton's lineup started last spring when he visited the school in Bradenton, Fla., with his parents and younger brother, Hutton, 15. At the time, the family made its home in Seattle, and Dillon and Hutton, the eldest of seven Moyer children, were immersed in school and athletics there. Dillon was a blossoming quarterback with a chance to start at O'Dea High School. Hutton was a soccer standout.

But it was their first athletic love - the one inherited from their father - that drew the Moyer boys to Pendleton. "We got in the car after visiting the campus, and Dillon said, 'I'd give up football to play baseball here,'" Jamie Moyer said. "His brother chimed in, 'Me, too.' "

Pendleton is an independent college preparatory school affiliated with IMG sports academies. It sits on IMG's 300-acre campus, which is bursting with academic and athletic activity. The school has about 450 students, most of whom spend their afternoons specializing in a sport. The IMG academy offers programs in tennis, golf, basketball, soccer, swimming and baseball.

Old enough to appreciate their father's success as a major-league pitcher, and inspired by his career, Dillon and Hutton Moyer wanted to pursue a concentrated program in baseball. After weeks of careful thought, Jamie and Karen Moyer decided to let their boys chase their baseball dreams, even if it meant moving the entire family from one corner of the country to another.

The Moyers bought a home in Bradenton, and the boys enrolled at Pendleton and the IMG baseball academy in the fall. Dillon, a junior, plays for the varsity team. Hutton, a freshman, is an infielder on the junior varsity.

"They love it," Jamie said. "We're here to allow them to grow as baseball players and see where their skill takes them." Both boys aspire to play baseball in college.



ERIC MENCHER/Staff Photographer Dillon Moyer (#26-Phillies' pitcher Jamie Moyer's son), who plays for Pendleton, a baseball team at the IMG Academies, with his teammates before a game against Clearwater Central Catholic. (Eric Mencher/Staff Photographer)

"We've been around it our whole life," said Dillon, a strapping 6-footer with a nice right-handed stroke. "It's in our blood."

Jamie Moyer, 46, was raised in the Philadelphia suburbs, graduated from Souderton High School, and attended St. Joseph's. The Pendleton-IMG baseball program has a rich Philadelphia flavor.

Kevin Sharp, a 30-year-old Levittown native who played at Temple and was an assistant coach for the Owls and then at St. Joe's, is the head varsity coach. Another Bucks County native, Steve Frey, is the pitching coach. Frey pitched eight seasons in the majors, including 40 games with the Phillies in 1995 and 1996.

There are 62 players at the baseball academy, from seventh graders to postgraduates. They get instruction from six full-time coaches in a professional-style program.

If you want to be a ballplayer - and have \$41,000, which includes room and board - the IMG academy is the place for you. Tuition at the Pendleton School runs an additional \$15,000.

"We're here to make you the best possible player you can be," Sharp said. "It's a proving ground for students who aspire to excel at a sport."

Academic classes at Pendleton run from 7 a.m. to noon. The baseball portion of the day runs throughout the school year, from 1:15 to 4:30 in the afternoon. In that time, players practice, work on conditioning and lift weights. There are even sessions designed to work on the mental side of athletics.

Pendleton plays 25 games as an independent in the Florida High School Athletic Association. It also plays in a number of tournaments around the state. The schedule includes in-house games and a fall program, bringing the total to about 85 games a year.

"Our kids play every day," Sharp said. "Our philosophy is, the only way you'll get better is through game settings."

Being able to play every day in warm weather was a big draw for the Moyers. "Spring baseball in Seattle is tough," Jamie said. "You don't get a lot of repetitions because of the weather. And being around the game as long as I have, I realize how important reps are."

The ultimate goal of the baseball program is to produce a player who can succeed in the game beyond high school, either in college or the professional ranks.

"I spend a lot of time on the phone with college coaches," Sharp said. "I tell them, 'If you're getting a graduate of this program, you're getting an absolutely college-ready player, physically and mentally.'"

Ten of the 14 seniors on last year's team went on to play college ball and two were drafted by major-league teams.

The 19 players on this year's varsity come from nine states and three foreign countries. Among the seniors who will play college ball next year, one is headed for the University of Miami and another for Brown. The team has several players who could go high in the draft.

Dillon Moyer, who gets A's and B's in school, aspires to play Division I college baseball in a warm climate. He and his father visited schools in California in January.

"Dillon is a definite Division I prospect," Sharp said. "He's a throwback player. He makes every play. He can handle the bat. He's savvy and mature. He has the best instincts I've seen in a kid his age. You can tell he's been around the game his whole life."

"Last year, our shortstop [Tyler Pastornicky] was drafted in the fifth round by Toronto. We had a huge hole there, and it was a concern because we have three pitchers who are Division I prospects and draft candidates. We needed someone to come in and make every play behind them. That's Dillon."

Jamie Moyer played baseball, basketball and golf at Souderton High. He says he believes in the concept of the old three-sport athlete but is fully behind his boys' decision to specialize. "As long as they keep up their grades," he said with a laugh. Moyer knows that he's a big reason his sons decided to focus on baseball and see where it will take them. He has had a tremendous career - 246 wins and counting - and a storybook return to his hometown that included winning the World Series last year. His family shared in every step of the journey, including the victory parade.

What son wouldn't want to try to follow in those footsteps? "It was so great when the Phillies won the World Series," Dillon Moyer said. "All Dad's hard work paid off. His dream came true and ours did, too."

http://www.philly.com/philly/hp/news_update/20090307_Sons_follow_in_Moyer_s_footsteps.html



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