



The Natural

Jared Porter '03 has a major league ability for evaluating talent, a practiced skill that's earned him a trip from the back corner of Pickard Field to the front office at Yawkey Way.

By Billy Baker • Photography by Webb Chappell

THERE ARE A LOT OF KIDS WHO WANT JARED PORTER'S JOB WHEN THEY GROW UP, INCLUDING MANY AT BOWDOIN.

And it's easy to see why, because it sounds like a dream, especially for a thirty-three-year-old: director of professional scouting for the Boston Red Sox.

Jared Porter will be the first to tell them that what sounds like a dream job actually is. He watches baseball professionally. He knows he scored.

But it is how he got there that gives those who know him a head-shaking pride. There are a lot of kids who play sports—Jared was the captain of the hockey and baseball teams at Bowdoin his senior year in 2003—and then wanted to work in the field of sports, especially something like a front-office job with the Boston Red Sox. But there was something about Jared that was weirdly born to scout baseball players. His friends use terms like “freakish” to describe his ability to recall seemingly every pitch he's ever seen.

“He has a mental database that anyone else would have to write down,” said Mike Connolly, the Bowdoin baseball coach who brought Jared in as a pitcher from Thayer Academy outside Boston during Connolly's first recruiting class. “There'd be times when he'd be sitting in my office, and we'd bring up an at-bat from high school, and he knew every pitch, the sequence, who was on base. I would say, ‘Give me the top twenty-five players in the Independent School League,’ and he could off the top of his head give me their ability and makeup, who could play and who couldn't, and he was spot-on with his evaluations.”

But being interested in that sort of thing is not rare. Lots of people think they know how to watch sports really well. But when Jared talks to students at Bowdoin—he'll have 100 to 150 come out to listen to him talk about careers in sports—Connolly said they'll all have their ears pricked because not only does Jared represent a dream job, he got it by being a “part of a small population of people in any walk of life that will truly say ‘I am going to follow my passion regardless of the sacrifices because I know in my heart this is what I was born to do.’”

Jared Porter's a big guy with a soft approachability, and as he sits down in his office inside Fenway Park, he's super-nervous about being profiled by the Bowdoin alumni magazine. He doesn't want to get too personal, and he doesn't want to sound like he's bragging. But he's always willing to talk about the work, and how he got to it.

His professional baseball story began the summer after his junior year at Bowdoin, when he got an internship with the Brewster Whitecaps of the Cape Cod Baseball League, a team his father helped run. He was studying history and thinking about law school, but it was on the Cape, working around the best college players in the country and the professional scouting complex that hovers around them, that he first saw what sort of opportunities there were. "You see the coach on the television, and you see the general manager on the television, but you never see this huge supporting cast." And he also saw what was required of that supporting cast, so "I just started going to as many games as I could, watching the scouts, trying to create a feel and a baseline of players," he said.

As he was graduating from Bowdoin, he sent resumes to all thirty professional teams, and, he says he would have taken a job with any of them. He returned to the Cape Cod League for another summer, but he had an informational interview with the Red Sox, heady stuff for a fan from Duxbury on the South Shore of Boston. It was a boom time in the Red Sox organization, with a new ownership group and a young general manager, Theo Epstein, and opportunities were being created. So he was eventually able to land a

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new year-long internship at the Red Sox's winter home in Fort Myers. A year later, he worked his way back to Boston, where he then spent nearly another year as an intern.

"He had an opportunity, but he also had resiliency," said Terry Meagher, who coached Jared as a defenseman on the Bowdoin hockey team and still keeps in close contact with him. "It was about patience, paying your dues, hanging in there. He was an intern for two years while his classmates went on to jobs with salaries that had a lot of zeros after them. That's a lot of macaroni and cheese."

But Jared says that while he made sacrifices, he never suffered a day, because he was so passionate about baseball that he was naturally driven to study the game endlessly. "It was consuming my life, but I wanted it to. I need that passion to have success," Jared said.

Michael Morris, one of Jared's Bowdoin classmates, says

that when you go out with Jared, he's going to have his eye on three or four games at a time. "You can't fake being in love with your job that much," Morris said. And in Jared's current position, which is overseeing the fourteen scouts who focus on the major league level where players can come in and make an impact immediately, it's all about looking for the "undervalued" player, even if that's a player who is already making \$15 million a year. "Jared will look at a pitcher on TV," Morris said, "but he'll see him in an entirely different way. He'll say, 'If we can just get his hand a little higher above his ear and shorten his delivery, we can get more arm speed out of him.'"

Of all the players Jared has helped bring into the Red Sox, his most famous "undervalued" find is Daniel Nava. Jared signed him from a team called the Chico Outlaws for \$1. In his first at-bat in the major leagues, Nava hit the first pitch he saw for a grand slam.

"It's easy to say that, 'Hey, David Ortiz is a great baseball player, we should get him,' but Jared has had success with the Navas of the world," said Steve Greeley, a high school friend who worked as a scout for the Los Angeles Kings for years before becoming the assistant hockey coach at Boston University. "If you look at this Red Sox team that just won it all, it wasn't a bunch of household names. And Jared had a lot to do with putting the team together. If you're not the GM, you're out of the public eye, but trust me—he has a voice in that front office, and he's also a big part of the trades they don't make, the things the media never hears about. It can be just as important to not pull the trigger."

Jared's office at Fenway is cramped and filled with the things he's passionate about: the Boston Red Sox and Bowdoin College. He unabashedly loves the school, stays involved as an alumnus, and his voice is filled with genuine gratitude when he talks about being able to experience the Bowdoin opportunity. On his bookshelves, he's got a few histories of the school sitting next to tomes stuffed with player minutiae by Bill James, a pioneer in the scientific analysis of baseball and now one of Jared's Red Sox colleagues.

When Jared thinks back to his time at Bowdoin, he says it has the feeling of a comfortable blanket. He just always fit in there, felt at home, from the classrooms to the locker



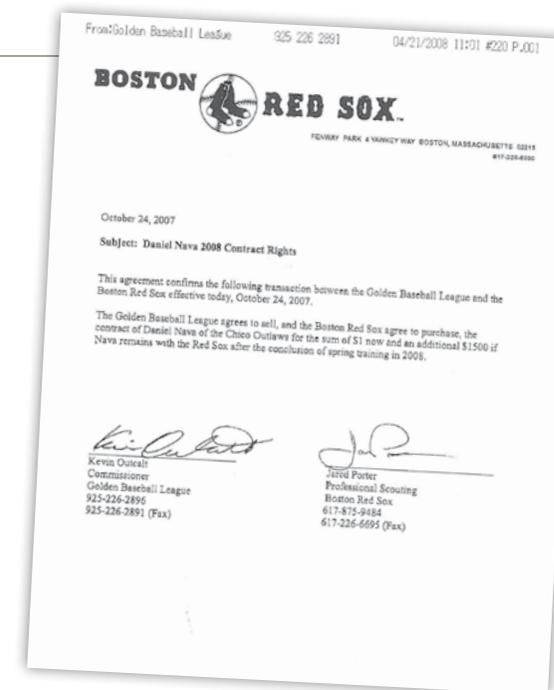
(Above in cap): Jared celebrates the Red Sox's 2013 World Series title with his fellow baseball operations staff. (Above right): The original term sheet, signed by Jared, used to purchase the rights to outfielder Daniel Nava.

rooms to Garrison Street, where he lived with a rotating cast of about a dozen other guys that he still keeps in close contact with. He also trades texts back and forth with Bowdoin President Barry Mills. "He's a Yankees fan, so there's a friendly banter."

And he'll never forget how Bowdoin was there for him when his mother died suddenly one night while he was in college. "It will always be one of the most important places in my life," Jared said.

What's next for him, he says, is hopefully more of the same. He's not trying to do anything except be the best at his current job, but he has progressed so quickly and has so much raw talent for the game that a lot of people think it's only a matter of time before he ends up on the short list for a general manager's job. He's a natural leader, friends say, which is how he ended up as a captain in two college sports. "At Bowdoin," Coach Connolly said, "that's a small and elite list."

Landing a GM gig would be a huge accomplishment, but it's a surprisingly common job title among his family and friends. His wife Katie, a Bates grad, is the daughter of Brian Burke, who is the president of hockey operations for the Calgary Flames and the former GM for the Toronto



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Maple Leafs and U.S. Olympic Hockey Team. And one of Jared's best friends, Ryan McDonough, recently became the thirty-three-year-old general manager of the Phoenix Suns in the NBA.

"There's no question in my mind that Jared will end up a GM," McDonough said. "That team has won the World Series three times in ten years, but they've also completely overhauled their team during that time and remained competitive, and that's not a coincidence. They've scouted and developed well, and Jared has been a big part of that."

McDonough says that Jared has such a natural talent at spotting talent that he'll take a longer look at a college basketball player if Jared likes him.

So when the two friends, who grew up playing with and against each other, got together at the end of the summer for a friend's wedding, they sat down together and drafted a fantasy football team. "We didn't put as much preparation into that," McDonough said, laughing. But, of course, they're at the top of their league.

Billy Baker is a feature writer for the The Boston Globe, where he often writes about the Red Sox. He teaches in the graduate journalism program at Harvard University's extension school and is currently working on a book about jugglers.