

**“Playing Eaton Baseball was, and always will be, a privilege”** Major Jimmy Reeman, ‘88 Reds’ Graduate and The Top Graduate from F16Fighter Pilot School and Leader of First-Strike Missions in The War on Terror

As much of a privilege as it is to play Eaton Baseball, there is hardly any greater privilege, and honor, than to be Eaton’s starting shortstop. This position is almost always filled with the Reds’ best athlete, and most often the Reds’ fiercest competitor, and leader of the infield and typically leader of the entire team. Putting on the Eaton pinstripes is a great honor; running out on the field as Eaton’s starting shortstop is an even greater honor that has been entrusted to only a handful of players over the past three decades. The Reds’ history is filled with lore and legend of players who simply willed their way to victory and accomplished truly unbelievable feats. Many of these ghosts of the past were Reds’ shortstops.

### Reds’ Shortstops

Mondragon, Jackson, Wallace, McLavey, Payne, Noblitt, Trujillo, Souther, Yarber, Meyers, Kundert, Martin, Sutter, Herzberg, Cordova, Mi. Anderson, Ma. Anderson

Jake Mondragon’s presence was immediately felt after transferring to Eaton, taking over the shortstop position as a sophomore and leading the Reds defensively throughout the regular season and postseason, and then performing State Tournament heroics of legendary nature, driving in the winning run in the bottom of the 7<sup>th</sup> inning in a must-win game as the Reds advanced to go on to win the State Championship. Mondragon then moved to 2<sup>nd</sup> base and continued an historic career for the Reds as their leadoff man and top on-base percentage player as a junior and senior.

Seth Jackson’s 4-year career, beginning at second base and then shortstop, started with 2 doubles and an RBI and run scored in the 4-1 State Championship Game win as only a freshman, and went on to include heroics such as winning the 2010 Legion B State Championship Game with a triple, double and two singles en route to one of the Reds’ greatest comebacks. Jackson was one of only two Reds that started each game throughout the Reds’ 60-game win streak.



Mondragon is swarmed by teammates after walk-off hit in 7<sup>th</sup> inning comeback win in elimination game of 2012 State Tournament.



Jackson takes away a would-be single up the middle and turns it into a routine out.

Tyler Wallace’s name is in the record books—actually, it’s atop every single major offensive record in Eaton history—batting average, slugging percentage, home runs, RBIs, hits, and total bases. Wallace played a nearly flawless season at shortstop for the 2009 undefeated Reds, and had two of the most prolific seasons as a hitter in Colorado history. In leading the Reds at the plate to back-to-back State Championships, Wallace racked up numerous honors, including 1<sup>st</sup> Team All-Colorado and 1<sup>st</sup> Team All-American by CBS Sports’ MaxPreps, and was drafted by the Colorado Rockies.

Bo McLavey was the only player in Class 3A or above to be an all-state shortstop and all-state pitcher, leading the Reds to the State Championship in 2008. McLavey typified Eaton shortstops as being tougher than nails, willing himself to the first season in Reds’ history as a junior in 2007 in which a shortstop didn’t commit a single fielding error. Brent Payne

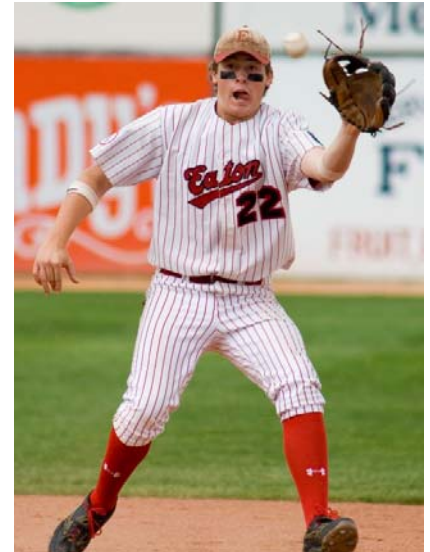
gloved everything at shortstop in 2006, and was flawless throughout the 2006 State Tournament. Payne and then-second-baseman McLavey turned double plays routinely throughout the season en route to the 2006 State Title Game.



A direct descendant of Braveheart's Sir William Wallace, T-Wall provided heroics that included a 7<sup>th</sup> inning, 2-out, 2-run home run to keep the Reds undefeated in 2009

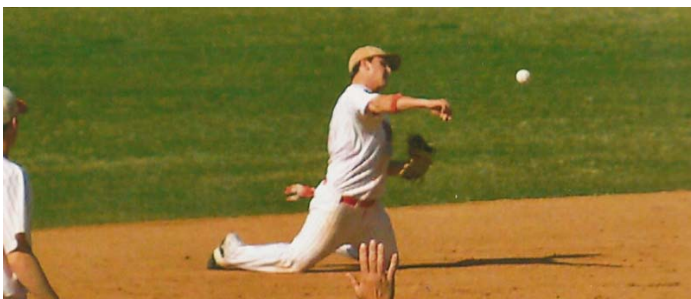


McLavey throws out a Brush hitter on St. Patrick's Day 2007, with an undershirt that reads "Fight Me, I'm Irish"

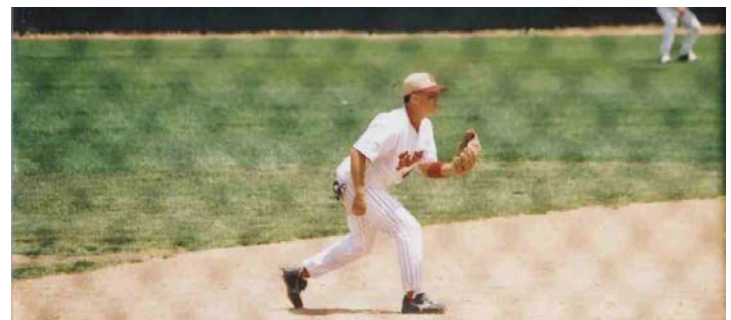


Payne stretches to the bag while receiving a throw from McLavey to turn a double play during 2006 State Championship Game

No one knows State Championship Games like Josh Noblitt, who owns 6 State Championship Rings from spring and summer State Championships, and led the Reds to a remarkable streak of 33 consecutive wins in the face of elimination. Born with a club foot that required multiple surgeries and had doctors promise he would never even be able to compete in sports, Noblitt didn't just play, he excelled as few ever have at shortstop, on the mound, and at the plate, leading him to be selected for the Top 50 Game at Coors Field as one of the very top shortstops in the entire state at all levels. Before Noblitt, Branden Trujillo was the man at shortstop. Trujillo won the State Championship every season he played for the Reds, both in spring and summer seasons, manning shortstop in 2002 and 2003 and leading the Reds offensively as well. Trujillo turned an amazing unassisted double play to end a scoring threat in the 1<sup>st</sup> inning of the 2002 State Championship Game before the Reds then went on to 10-run the heavily-favored opponent.



Noblitt throws out a hitter at 1<sup>st</sup> base on a hit & run in which he had to dive back toward leftfield after first breaking to cover 2<sup>nd</sup> base



Trujillo prepares to make a play during the 2003 State Championship Victory for the Reds

Scott Souther led the Reds in 2001, and was perfect on all 11 plays he had at shortstop during the 15-inning State Championship win, which he then secured by taking the mound and throwing out the would-be winning run on an attempted steal of home, and then struck out the final batter of the game for the 3-2 win. Josh Yarber led the Reds to the State Championship Game in 2000 as the Reds' shortstop, making all 16 plays that were hit or thrown in his direction throughout the State Tournament. While Souther and Yarber started at shortstop for only one year, prior to them was Jeff Meyers, who held the spot for all 4 years, becoming only the 2<sup>nd</sup> Red to do so. After a rare blowout loss to end the season in 1997, Meyers led the Reds' sophomore players to meet with Coach Danley immediately after the game and promised him this would never happen again. And it didn't happen again, as the Reds won the 1997 Legion Title for the

first time, and then rattled off 45 consecutive wins to set the state record while completing an undefeated season in 1998. Throughout this postseason stretch, Meyers never committed a single fielding error; batters were simply out before they left the batter's box if they hit it anywhere near him. During the Reds' first two State Championships in 1994 and 1995, Jeff Kundert was the man at shortstop. While Kundert might not have had a .960+ fielding average like many of the Reds' shortstops, put him in a close game and he made every play. Kundert completed three double plays in the 2-1 win in the 1995 State Championship Game as the Reds played perfect defense to secure the win.



Souther leaves shortstop to take the mound to secure a Reds' victory in a tradition known to most Reds' shortstops/relief pitchers



Yarber shows his range to make a catch in short leftfield in the 2000 State Semifinal victory



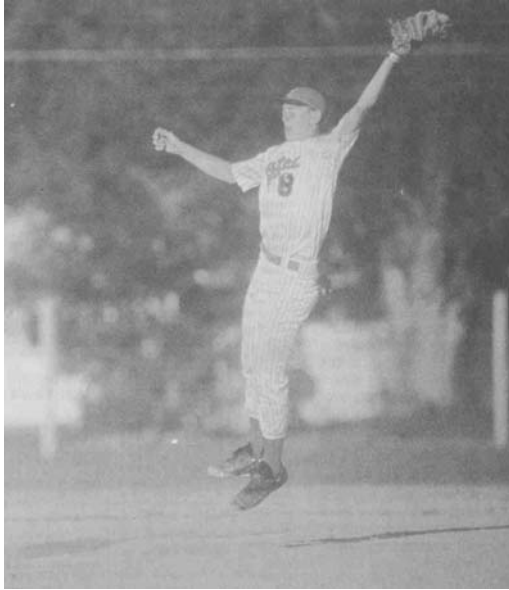
Meyers completes one of his many double plays turned throughout a 4-year career at shortstop



Kundert scores the go-ahead run after tagging up from 3<sup>rd</sup> base in the bottom of the 6<sup>th</sup> inning of the 2-1 State Championship victory in 1995

Prior to Kundert, Cory Martin was the Reds' shortstop and star player. His exploits on the mound will be what he's best remembered for, but he led the team on defense on the rare occasions that he wasn't leading the Reds on the mound. The only man other than Meyers to hold the shortstop spot for all 4 years was Jeff Sutter, who led the infield from 1988-1991. If you think that seeing the Reds play exceptionally well under pressure is a recent phenomenon, then you never saw Sutter (and those before him) man shortstop. Throughout 4 State Tournaments, Sutter made only one error. Two pitches after that throwing error, he made an exceptional diving play to turn an unassisted double play to end the inning without allowing a run. Maintaining that type of perfection for 4 tournaments is unheard of, and certainly served as the standard by which all shortstops after Sutter would come to be measured. Sutter learned to play shortstop from Mike Herzberg, who manned the position from the time he was a sophomore in 1985 through his senior year in 1987, making him one of only 2 Reds to ever hold the spot for 3 seasons. Herzberg too flirted with perfection, making only one State Tournament error in his career as well. Keep in mind, the Reds consider any game played after districts as part of the State Tournament (including all Regional games), so this equated to up to 4 games per season at the time (and now up

to 8 games), with numerous fielding and throwing attempts per game. Also, Reds' shortstops prior to the 1997 season played on an all-dirt infield with rocks scattered throughout the infield, making these feats truly unbelievable.



Martin stretches to catch an errant throw at the Reds' old home field



Sutter tags out a Brush runner in league action



Herzberg scores the winning run in the 1985 Regional Championship



Cordova catches a throw as the Reds 10-run Valley

Prior to Herzberg, Paul Cordova fielded shortstop for the Reds in 1984. Cordova followed in Herzberg's shoes as a leadoff hitter, and led the Reds to win the first 17 games of the season in 1984.

The only other Red to play shortstop and bat leadoff in the same season was Mike Anderson, who manned shortstop in 1982 and 1983. A natural centerfielder (he would go on to play in the minor leagues as an outfielder), Anderson moved to shortstop simply because he was the best athlete the Reds had on the field. Anderson's move to shortstop only occurred after his older brother, Mark Anderson, graduated in 1981 after leading the Reds' infield for three seasons.

Mark Anderson was nearly perfect in the State Tournament as well, recording only one error in 3 trips to State. These trips to the State Tournament were 3 of the first 4 such trips for the Reds, who now have made 31 trips to State since 1972, including 27 consecutive. Anderson's team in 1979 won the Reds 4<sup>th</sup> league championship; the Reds now have 35 league titles.



Mike Anderson (left) celebrates 1983 State Semifinal victory



Mark Anderson slides safely into the plate during the 1979 Regionals

Many of these shortstops were also known for their exploits on the mound. Wallace threw a devastating knuckle curve that simply killed high school hitters and even college hitters in the summer after he graduated. McLavey owns the Reds' postseason record with a 0.35 ERA and is currently pitching in college. Payne went on to pitch and play shortstop in college as well. Noblitt saved more postseason games than any Red in history, allowing the Reds to achieve 33 consecutive victories when facing elimination during spring and summer games, and went on to play in college. Souther earned the victory in the 15-inning State Championship Game in 2001 by striking out the final hitter; he then went on to pitch in college and lead his team into the NCAA tournament before heading to the minor leagues. Cory Martin won the Reds' first State Championship in 1994 as the club's ace and pitched in college as well. Sutter took the mound as well to save important games; none was more important than the 7-5 win in the 1991 State Semifinals where Sutter recorded three quick 7<sup>th</sup> inning outs to send the Reds to the State Championship Game, before Sutter too went on to play collegiately. Prior to playing in college and the minor leagues, Mike Anderson sent the Reds to the State Championship Game from the mound in 1983 as well, picking off a runner at first base to win the State Semifinals; he had also come in relief during the previous game to save a 1-0 Regional Championship Game by stranding the potential tying run on 3<sup>rd</sup> base in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> innings. When it mattered most, the Reds' shortstops left their positions to take the mound and complete a save, battling often not with the best breaking pitches or highest-velocity fastball on the team, but with the true heart of a champion that simply willed the Reds to victory.

Offensively, every one of these Reds batted between leadoff and #5 on the team, with many of them batting in the coveted #3 hole. Each of the Reds' shortstops had huge game-winning hits on multiple occasions, many of them during the postseason and in State Championship Games. It would take dozens of pages to catalog their game-winning accomplishments at the plate, as well as their game-saving plays at shortstop. Such feats were the routine, rather than the exception, for these Reds.

These young men were simply just that – men. They were tougher and more competitive than anyone they faced, and took every game and every play as a one-on-one fight to the finish. They simply did not accept anything short of absolute victory. They led their teams to remarkable championships and win streaks. They won 35 League Championships. They qualified for State 36 times. They won 29 Regional Championships. They played in 21 State Championship Games. They won 11 State Championships. They won over 730 spring games, and over 1,000 summer games as well. And they accomplished all of this within merely 37 years. They earned all sorts of all-league, all-state, and other awards, and nearly all of them earned scholarships to play in college, and a couple have played professionally.

They set a standard over three decades ago that all future Reds would follow, of simply making every play when it mattered most, diving on every ball, sliding into home plate headfirst, wearing the dirtiest, bloodiest uniform on the field, and leading the team on the field and in the dugout. They were simply flat-out studs. And we're just proud and grateful to know them as Eaton Reds.



**17 Reds' Shortstops Spanning 37 Years of Eaton Baseball**

*Mondragon '12*  
*Jackson '10-11*  
*Wallace '09*  
*McLavey '07-'08*  
*Payne '06*  
*Noblitt '04-'05*  
*Trujillo '02-'03*  
*Souther '01*

1979 – 2015

36 State Tournament Appearances  
 35 League Championships  
 29 Regional Championships  
 21 State Semifinal Wins  
 11 State Championships  
 738 Wins, Averaging 20 Wins per Season

*Yarber '00*  
*Meyers '96-'99*  
*Kundert '94-'95*  
*Martin '92-'93*  
*Sutter '88-'91*  
*Herzberg '85-'87*  
*Cordova '84*  
*Mi. Anderson '82-'83*  
*Ma. Anderson '79-'81*