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Answering the Call: Eric Yardley '13, MLB Postseason Pitcher

Tara King Goldman, Author

Setting a goal, adapting and working hard is the blueprint of Eric Yardley. Raised in Richland, WA. Yardley played as an infielder at Richland High School. He graduated as valedictorian with a 4.0 GPA, all while winning two baseball state championships in 2007 and 2009.

Committing to Seattle University's baseball team, Yardley majored in humanities with a minor in mathematics. Originally, he had intentions of becoming a math teacher and a coach on the side, but as time progressed, this would not be the career path he followed.

In his first year as coach in 2008, Donny Harrel had his mind set on rebuilding Seattle U's baseball program and recruited Yardley. Coach Harrel is a player's coach, with a degree in social psychology. He is uniquely able to carefully pick recruits who strive for nothing short of perfection. Yardley's versatility as a two-way player, pitching and infield, made him a great addition to the team. However, Yardley struggled his first two years at Seattle U.

Before his junior season, Coach Harrel called Yardley and advised him to change from high arm slot pitching to submarine-style-sidearm delivery— otherwise he would not have a spot on the team. Submarine style pitching is a deceptive pitching style that few can execute well. At first, Yardley was not excited about switching because making such a drastic change can be a "death sentence" considering the drastic differences between the two styles. Adapting to the new pitching style took hard work. Yardley spent several sleepless nights throwing balls against walls in order to perfect his new pitch.

Yardley was not an overnight success. It took him seven years in the minors under the San Diego Padres minor league system until being called up to the Majors in 2019. At the end of the season he was released and then signed by the Brewers in 2020 as a relief pitcher. Yardley attributes his success to having coaches who believe in him and being able to stay "focused on working hard and going out and competing every day," said Yardley.

Game time means being ready. As a relief pitcher, Yardley never knows when he will be called up. When the phone rings in the dugout, it's time to go.

Despite the COVID-19 protocols in place, Yardley was able to enjoy the 2021 season. Yardley's season highlight was striking out Detroit Tigers Miguel Cabrera, future Hall of Famer and one of the best hitters in two decades. He also met up with fellow Seattle U alum and Detroit Tiger pitcher, Tarik Skubal, class of '18. The biggest thing Yardley missed was the fan interaction.

During a phone interview, Yardley recalled what it's like to play in the MLB playoffs

"It was pretty emotional. From where I started and where it has come to and to pitch well in the playoffs. I am forever grateful," Yardley said.

Yardley's story is unique. It is an example that sometimes when we take on new challenges, it may require us to switch our angle if we want to reach our goals. Yardley has never forgotten where his career started and still makes an impact on Seattle U's baseball program.



Andrew Mori