



A Tale of Two JDs: Jordan Danielson's Rise to Bullpen Dominance

If you followed the Saints, or the North Star League for that matter, from 2005-2016, you are probably familiar with longtime D-C pitcher, Jordan Danielson. You also probably just know him simply as "JD". In high school, JD posted very good numbers as a starter, tallying a total of 91 innings for the Chargers and posting a 9-4 record with a 2.77 ERA. Naturally, he would take on a starting role on the Saints pitching staff in 2006 (after a limited role on the 2005 squad). For six years, JD held his own in the starting rotation, but that would not come without peaks and valleys. Today we're going to dive deep into JD's transition from innings-eating starter with consistency issues, to full-time, lights out closer.

The Numbers

Before we can have some fun with Diesel's prime years, we need to start from the beginning. In his rookie season (2005), JD logged a modest 7 innings. However, he was perfect during those innings, giving up not a single run, earned or unearned. He also struck out 7 and scattered 5 hits without walking a single batter. Following his fantastic rookie season, he would log 224 more innings, almost exclusively in a starting role. However, during his six-year stint in the rotation, averaging a 4.59 ERA and striking out 8.65 batters per 9 innings. His lowest ERA came in the 2010 season, where he posted a 4.18 ERA. Although he wasn't leading the league with these numbers, he was still a very quality starter.

After the 2010 season, JD made the switch to become a bullpen arm. The improvement was immediately noticeable in 2011, where he recorded 38.1 innings in 16 relief appearances. His numbers that season included a 2.11 ERA (a career low at the time), and 40 strikeouts (2.5 K/BB ratio, 9.39 K/9). This would be the first of what we have dubbed his "prime" years, spanning from 2011-2013. During that stretch, he tallied 99.1 innings, held an abysmal 1.90 ERA, and struck out an astonishing 11.05 batters per 9. He improved his ERA each year during the three-year run, recording a 1.71 ERA in 2012 and a 1.23 ERA (his all-time career low) in 2013.

When comparing his time as a starter to the second half of his career, it is obvious that JD thrived in the closer role. His ERA was 1.82 earned runs lower on average as a reliever, and he both raised his strikeout rate while lowering his walk rate. When the pressure was on, there was no one the Saints would rather hand the ball over to.



2012 State Championship

It wasn't just known to his home team how dominant he was during his resurgence as a reliever. Other teams across the North Star League took notice as well, which is why when the Maple Lake Lakers went on their historic state tournament run in 2012, they drafted JD to bolster their bullpen. Although they wouldn't call on his services until the final weekend, JD made his first appearance of the tournament against Fergus Falls. With the Lakers down 3-0 with one out left to get in the third inning, JD took the ball and cruised through 5.1 innings of shutout relief, striking out 4 while only allowing 3 baserunners. Maple Lake scored 4 unanswered runs, giving the team, and JD, the win. Just a mere 12 hours later, JD bounced back to pitch another 3.2 innings in relief against 2020 state champion Fairmont. He struck out 4 more, and kept his perfect ERA for the tournament, helping the Lakers to a 6-4 win and a state title. His total numbers for the state tournament: 2 appearances, 9 innings pitched, 5 hits, 8 strikeouts, 2 walks, and 0 earned runs.

Conclusion

JD had a very notable 12-year career, and his second half was when he shined brightest. He ranks second all-time in career saves (12) for the Saints, but it's worth noting that whether it was a big lead or small, he was getting the ball in the 9th to lockdown the game. He finished his career ranked 10th all-time in team history with 435 innings pitched, 9th all-time with 410 strikeouts, and 10th all-time with a career 1.29 WHIP.

He would probably be upset if we didn't talk about his work with the bat... in 82 at-bats, JD recorded 19 hits (.232 AVG), including 4 doubles! He would also let you know that he was very slick with

the glove at second base when called upon and could show off his wheels on the basepaths when a pinch runner was needed.

Beyond his performance on the mound, it is important to note that JD provided invaluable guidance while working with younger pitchers on the team, including current pitchers Jordan Flick and Tyler Zweibohmer. He was always excited to dedicate time to youth baseball in Dassel-Cokato, whether it was working with kids during Saints Rookie League on Saturday mornings, or dedicating time to serving on the DCBA board. It's safe to say that you wouldn't find a better late-innings horse, or teammate, than Jordan Danielson.