

## From The Class of 1998

RICHARD CUICCHI

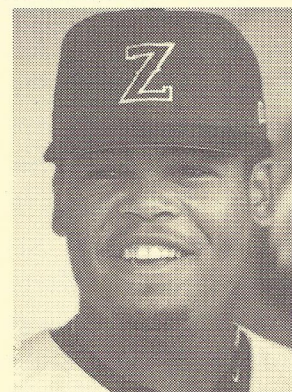
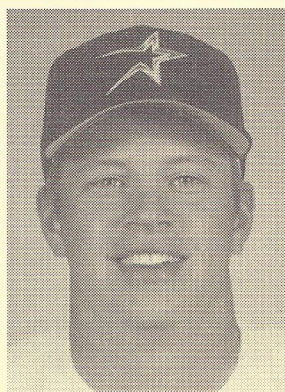
*Editor's Note: Local baseball researcher Richard Cuicchi has made a study of the group of 207 players who made their major league debut in the 1998 season. Cuicchi's report gives the reader an insight into where modern major leaguers are coming from and what they do early in their careers. Here are some facts taken from Richard's report, which was presented at a recent local chapter meeting of SABR (Society for American Baseball Research.) Reprinted in part by permission.*

- **207** players appeared in a major league game for the first time in 1998: **115** in the National League, **92** in the American League.
- **160 (77%)** of the 207 players making their major league debut in 1998 were born in the **United States**. The **Dominican Republic (15)** and **Puerto Rico (12)** were the countries with the next most players.
- The tiny country of Aruba supplied two major league rookies last year, **Sidney Ponson** and **Radhames Dykhoff**.
- Three more Cuban defectors entered the major leagues in 1998: They were **Rolando Arroyo**, **Orlando Hernandez** and **Vladimir Nunez**.
- The recent movement of Asian pitchers into American baseball continued with the addition of **Masato Yoshii** and **Jin Ho Cho** at the major league level. Neither played at the minor league level in the USA prior to their major league debut.
- In 1998 **57%** of the players who made their big league debut attended college for at least a year. **Miami** and **Florida State** each provided four players. The **University of Southern California** and **Wichita State** three each.
- A number of 1998 rookies had played on the same teams in college. Following are some of the most notable of these:

Players	College	Yr.
Gary Rath, Carlton Loewer	Miss. State	'94
Jeff Tam, Jonathan Johnson, Doug Mientkiewicz	Fla. State	'93
Jonathan Johnson, J.D. Drew, Doug Mientkiewicz	Fla. State	'95
Alex Cora, Jay Tessmer	Miami	'95
Ryan Minor, Russ Ortiz, Steve Connally	Oklahoma	'95
Geoff Jenkins, Gabe Alvarez	U.S.C.	'95

• When **Jay Payton** debuted on September 1, 1998 for the Mets, he became the fourth member of the 1994 Georgia Tech team (College World Series runners-up) to reach the major league level. The others were **Nomar Garciaparra** (1996 Red Sox), **Jason Varitek** (1997 Red Sox), and **Brad Rigby** (1997 Athletics).

• **Travis Lee** and **J.D. Drew** were selected as the Golden Spikes Award winners in 1996 and 1997, respectively. This award is given annually to the college player of the year. Both Lee and Drew debuted in the majors in 1998.



*Mitch Meluskey (L) and Daryle Ward made their major league debuts in 1998.*

The following 1998 rookies were first team College All-Americans as named by *Baseball America*.

### All-American

Year	Player	College Team
1993	PaulLoDuca	Arizona State
1994	Shane Monahan	Clemson
1994	Jay Payton	Georgia Tech
1994	Gary Rath	Mississippi State
1995	Marlon Anderson	South Alabama
1995	A.J. Hinch	Stanford
1995	Geoff Jenkins	Southern Cal
1995	Jonathan Johnson	Florida State
1996	Seth Greisinger	Virginia
1996	J.D. Drew	Florida State
1996	Robert Flick	Cal St. Northridge
1996	Travis Lee	San Diego State
1996	Braden Looper	Wichita State
1997	J.D. Drew	Florida State
1997	Troy Glaus	UCLA
1997	Matt Anderson	Rice
1997	Jim Parque	UCLA

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