

Former Tide pitcher wins Hutch Award

McGowan now a reliever for Marlins

By Mike Riddle

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Miami Marlin relief pitcher and Long County native Dustin McGowan recently received the 2016 Hutch Award.



The award is given by the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center to a Major League player who exemplifies the spirit and courage of the Fred Hutchinson, a former player and manager, who died in 1964 from cancer at age 45.

McGowan was a standout player for Long County from 1996-2000. He was a first-round pick by the Toronto Blue Jays, selected 33rd in the 2000 MLB draft. While playing in the minor leagues, his 2004 season was cut short by an injury that required Tommy John surgery on his right elbow. McGowan also discovered he was a diabetic, and began pitching while wearing an insulin pump.

Despite the setbacks, Baseball America named him the #1 prospect in the Blue Jays farm system in 2005. That July, McGowan was called up to debut with the Blue Jays. McGowan continued to pitch for Toronto, but also continued to have medical issues, resulting in more surgeries and setbacks.

Despite the hardships, McGowan maintained a positive attitude and was productive for Toronto, until he was released in 2015. During the early part of that year, McGowan played briefly for the Los Angeles Dodgers and Philadelphia Phillies, until being signed by the Miami Marlins as a relief pitcher after the season. McGowan finished the 2016 season with a 1-3 record, a 2.82 ERA, having 63 strikeouts in 67 innings of action.

A news release from the award organization said that after moving to Miami, McGowan and his family toured the area discovering the Diabetes Research Institute. He and his wife Jilly also learned their oldest daughter, 7-year old McKensy, also had type 1 diabetes. The family got involved, helping encourage other families and children with diabetes.

McGowan and his family host receptions at the institute, sign autographs, take pictures with kids to help motivate them into living their lives to the fullest. He also hosts young patients and their families to nights at the ball park.

"Since his arrival in Miami, McGowan has not only been a steady arm for the Marlins, but also an inspiration to the community," the organization wrote on its website.

On Jan. 25, McGowan will receive the award at Safeco Field, where Hall of Famer Jim Rice will be the keynote speaker.

On Dec. 12, the Marlins resigned the 34-year old McGowan to a one year \$1.75 million contract.