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When a big-league team considers the unthinkable, they want to be sure their scout hasn't witnessed a fluke. Morris had to return to Brownwood the next day to throw fifty more pitches.

The weather looked ominous. If they could quickly complete the practice session, they would beat the rain. But the Howard Payne catcher didn't show up on time. Morris had to throw in the pouring rain. Not one pitch was slower than 96 miles an hour.

Morris accepted the Devil Rays' offer and progressed to their affiliated minor league team, the famous Durham Bulls. At 240 pounds, he had a lot of weight to lose. The hot Carolina weather helped him lose about eight pounds a week.

Morris had a reasonable minor-league season. If he threw a home-run pitch, he shook it off. He had finally combined physical ability with mental toughness:

Either maturity or God's grace allowed me to immediately forget the homer and retire the next six batters in two innings by throwing ninety-eight-mile-an-hour fastballs and a vicious slider. (The Rookie, page 256.)

In the late summer of 1999, Morris finally got what had eluded him his entire baseball-dreaming life: a break. Each major-league team can expand their roster from 25 to 40 as the season winds down. Would he be called-up, to be part of the expanded team?

He'd had a good season, but so had other players. Jimmy, however, also gave the Devil Rays something else - a great story. Press coverage, if he were called-up, would be sensational for both Morris and the team.

On Friday, 17 September 1999, at 10:30 p.m. EDT, two Durham Bull players were called-up to the majors. One was Morris. The other was Steve Cox. They would play for the Devil Rays who were based at Tropicana Field stadium in St. Petersburg, Florida.

The next day the Devil Rays were scheduled to play at Ranger Stadium in Arlington, Texas. They would face the pennant-seeking Texas Rangers.

Jimmy's family could attend. For the first time in his life, the people he loved most would see him wearing a major-league uniform.

Of course, he wouldn't play ... or so he thought.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/JIM-MORRIS-BIG-LEAGUE-PITCHER-Rookie-The>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/JIM-MORRIS-BIG-LEAGUE-PITCHER-Rookie-The>

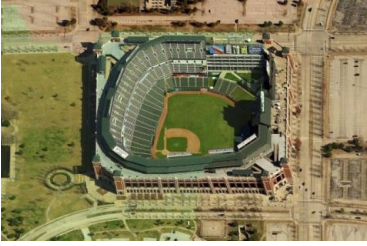


Tropicana Field Stadium, St. Petersburg, Florida

Image online, courtesy the calltothepen.com website.

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Stadium in Arlington, Texas

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Ranger Stadium, Arlington, Texas

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