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Wearing uniform number 63, the new Devil Ray took the mound to face Royce Clayton. Firing nearly 100-mile-an-hour pitches to his catcher, John Flaherty, Jimmy Morris struck out Clayton.

After the game, Flaherty gave the ecstatic pitcher a souvenir (which he still has) and a welcome:

Hey, old guy. You might want this. Welcome to the major leagues.

Could the second-oldest rookie in the history of the major leagues sustain his hard-throwing streak *and* maintain his health?

Two nights later, against the Anaheim Angels, Morris was a star again. Jim Edmonds, Mo Vaughn and Tim Salmon were three big hitters making a combined salary of \$16.1 million that year. Morris set them down in order.

After the season, the new Devil Ray pitcher was sent to the Arizona fall league. Only top prospects were invited.

Morris performed amazingly well: He had a zero Earned Run Average and his fastball "timed hotter than one hundred miles an hour." He was trying to get a position known in the business as "situational lefty" - when a left-handed pitcher is called on (usually in the clutch) to pitch to a left-handed hitter.

It was Larry Rothschild, the Tampa Bay manager, who informed Morris of the team's decision for the 2000 regular season:

*The competition for the role of "situational lefty" in the bullpen was strong, and when I boarded the team plane for Minneapolis, where the [2000] season was to begin, I believed that management had other plans for me. But somewhere over northern Florida, Larry Rothschild walked past me in the aisle and casually said, "You're on the twenty-five," meaning the twenty-five man roster. I was a major-league ballplayer. (*The Rookie*, pages 273-74.)*

Morris pitched in the Devil Rays' first game of the 2000 season - on April 3rd - against the Minnesota Twins. He struck out Jacque Jones to end the game. The Devil Rays won, 7-0.

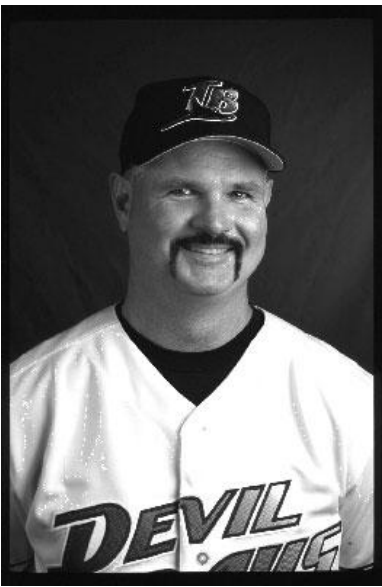
But Jimmy's moments of glory would soon come to an end. His 36-year-old body was afflicted with his old nemesis - an elbow injury.

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

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/JIM-MORRIS-TAMPA-BAY-DEVIL-RAY-Rookie-The>

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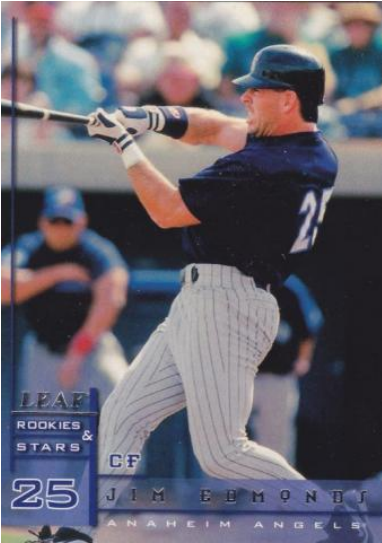


Jimmy Morris - Tampa Bay Devil Ray Pitcher

Image of Jimmy Morris, as a Devil-Ray pitcher, online courtesy [the Tampa Bay Rays](#).

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Jim Edmonds

Image online, courtesy "Cards on Cards" blog.

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Mo Vaughn

Image online, courtesy Orange County Register's "Angels Blog."

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Tim Salmon

Image of Tim Salmon, playing as an Angel, online courtesy Anaheim Angels.

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Larry Rothschild

Image of Larry Rothschild online, courtesy Tampa Bay Devil Rays.

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Jacquie Jones

Image online, courtesy Minneapolis Twins baseball organization.

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