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In May of 2000, the Devil Rays were playing the Yankees in New York. Paul O'Neill was at bat. The game was tied, bottom of the tenth. There were two outs, but the bases were loaded.

O'Neill bats left-handed. Jim Morris had been hired for just this moment. He was a "situational lefty." Rothschild made the bullpen call: Bring in Morris.

It should have been a moment of glory. Morris had performed well in similar situations since opening day.

Lefties were hitting only .167 against me.

But that's when Morris was not in pain. As he walked to the mound, to face O'Neill, he was not in top form:

I jogged to the mound feeling less than perfect and fearing something was wrong. A stiff back and a tired, sore elbow had been dogging me since our new pitching coach decided to have me throw in the bullpen on game days, believing that it would improve my control. In the last five days I'd been up and throwing nine times. And now I couldn't get loose. (The Rookie, page 275.)

Nor could he do his job.

He walked in the winning run. Two days later he was back with the Durham Bulls. His elbow needed surgery again. In November of 2000, the Devil Rays released him and the L.A. Dodgers picked him up.

While playing with the Dodgers, Jim wrote his book, *The Oldest Rookie*. Suffering from tendinitis, however, he was soon forced to retire.

Morris has never been a hard-throwing, major-league pitcher again. Instead, he is on the speaking circuit, motivating others to believe in themselves and to follow their dreams.

He and Dennis Quaid (who plays Morris in *The Rookie*) were made honorary Texas Rangers. Jim, who is pleased with the mostly accurate movie, made a cameo appearance in it. He plays an umpire.

Morris says that he is happy his major-league career ended so soon. He pitched in 21 games; had a 0-0 win/loss record with no "saves" to his credits; had an Earned Run Average of 4.80 and struck out 13 in 15 innings.

Away from home, for months at a time, he did not see his family. Living his lifelong dream, Morris let his marriage suffer. Had he remained in the majors, he knew he risked losing what meant the most.

And that, in the end, would have cost too much.

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

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

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

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





Dennis Quaid as "The Rookie"

Image, as described above, online courtesy MLB.com.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Dennis-Quaid-as-The-Rookie->



Jim Morris - The Rookie

Clip from a [2004 speech](#) to the National Autobody Congress and Exposition - online, courtesy NACE.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Jim-Morris-The-Rookie>