

Fielding Dreams, Part III

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The partnership between Tulane Law School and the Urban Youth Academy is the brainchild of Eddie Davis (pictured), a local baseball legend who went from McDonogh 35 High School in New Orleans to Long Beach State University in California and homering in the College World Series all the way to the Los Angeles Dodgers farm system. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

SABERMETRICS

Davis and Feldman are introducing Alfred and the other young students to sabermetrics, a world of statistics and analytics. Popularized by Michael Lewis' book *Moneyball: The Art of Winning an Unfair Game* and the 2011 movie based on it, sabermetrics—"the search for objective knowledge of baseball"—is an essential part of the modern game.

Sabermetrics goes far beyond the basic statistics that casual fans know, like batting average and earned run average, instead using complex stats such as wOBA, weighted on-base average, FIP, fielding-independent pitching, and WAR, wins above replacement. These are the new gold standard for compiling data and objectively analyzing player performance.

“I never knew this side of baseball existed before I came here,” Alfred said. “I like it. It makes baseball more fun. You get to see every side of the game. For me, I get to play it. I get to see how the management side goes down. It’s just amazing.”

As an off-season project, Davis said, participants such as Alfred will compile their on-base plus slugging, OPS, from their year playing youth and high school baseball and then compare it to Major League players to see where they fit in terms of professional baseball salaries.

Alfred’s father loves the program, the exposure his son is getting and the different skills he is learning. “This place is amazing; it’s a phenomenal program,” said Alfred Ripoll III, who played against Eddie Davis in high school. “There are so many more careers inside the game, where you are not actually playing. There’s field maintenance, the legal side of it, sports management and the executive side—ownership—if you are so blessed.”

Eddie Davis agreed. “It keeps them into the game, which is what we want.”

Fielding Dreams appeared first in the June 2016 issue of Tulane magazine. Read the full article as a [PDF](#) or revisit [Part I](#) and [Part II](#) on New Wave.

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