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SWARTHMORE COLLEGE BULLETIN

SPRING 2015 / ISSUE III / VOL. CXII

BY THE NUMBERS



The Moneyball-like work Sam Menzin '12 does creates “a good kind of pressure—one that makes winning that much more rewarding,” he says. Photo by Rebecca Cook.

Sam Menzin '12 takes the pitch to the big leagues

Since his days on the Little League diamond, Sam Menzin '12 has dreamed of a career in professional baseball but understood that, realistically, his chances of making it to the majors as a baseball player were slim to none.

At age 13, a gift from his father opened his eyes to a different path to the big leagues.

“My dad gave me a copy of *Moneyball*,” says Menzin. The groundbreaking 2003 book details how front-office executives for the small-budget Oakland Athletics baseball team created an unorthodox analytical approach to field a championship-caliber team.

“The book awakened me. It showed me that there was a way to make it to the majors that wasn’t on the field.”

Now 24, just three years after graduation, Menzin is the baseball operations analyst for the Detroit Tigers, one of Major League Baseball’s most successful teams in recent years.

In his job, Menzin uses advanced statistics and analytics to help the Tigers maintain an edge on opponents. Whereas the average baseball fan is familiar with statistics such as ERA and RBI, Menzin views the game from a different perspective.

“The ultimate question for us is ‘who will perform better in the future?’ ” he says. “Any metric we use is trying to answer a valuable question and predict future performance. I think our decision makers are tremendous at consuming large amounts of data, whether that is scouting information, statistical breakdowns, medical records, etc. Their ability to merge those data streams and make personnel decisions is why they have been so successful over the years.”

Menzin provides statistical analysis on Tigers players and their opponents, which the team’s general manager, scouting department, and coaching staff use. His favorite part of the job is using analytics to help the Tigers with player evaluations used for trades, free-agent signings, player procurement and contract negotiations.

“I’M DOING EXACTLY WHAT I’VE ALWAYS WANTED TO DO.”

“I enjoy the science of roster construction,” he says. “It’s interesting to see how a roster comes together and what makes a winning team.”

There has been no shortage of winning in Menzin’s time in Detroit; since he arrived in 2012, the Tigers have enjoyed postseason play every season, including the 2012 World Series.

Menzin’s basepath to the world of Major League Baseball began when he was a student at Swarthmore. A four-year member of the Garnet baseball team, Menzin was introduced his junior year to local sports agent Rex Gary (son of Sam Gary ’48) through the Garnet coaching staff. The two became friends, and Menzin began interning in Gary’s office in Media, Pa.

“Rex taught me everything about the baseball business,” says Menzin, who was working with Gary at the 2011 baseball

winter meetings when he first interviewed with the Tigers. “I’m where I am today because of Rex.”

Menzin still gets curious looks and an all-too-familiar question when he explains his job to family and friends. “So, you’re like Brad Pitt from *Moneyball*?” they ask, referring to the 2011 Academy Award–nominated film based on the book that changed his life 11 years earlier.

“I tell them I’m not the Brad Pitt character—I’m more like the Jonah Hill character,” he adds, referring to Pitt’s chubbier, less-glamorous sidekick in the movie.

Movie marquee recognition aside, Menzin is grateful for his good fortune: “I’m doing exactly what I’ve always wanted to do.”