

# SEAN MCGOWAN '99

## Baseball

Passing up a full football scholarship to the University of Miami wasn't all that difficult for Sean McGowan. His first love was baseball. Tpigskin recruiting visit to Dennis Erickson's Hurrlicaneland only confirmed it for the Burlington, Massachusetts three-sport star.

"I cancelled four visits after Miami. On the trip, I knew that something was missing for me. If I wasn't going to play college football there, I wasn't going to play it anywhere. Baseball was what made me happy. If there was anything I wanted to be doing year round, it was to be playing baseball," explains Sean.

So Penn State, Notre Dame, Syracuse, Purdue, North Carolina State and yes, Boston College, scratched McGowan from their list of prospective tight ends. Dan Henning's top assistant Jim Reid pursued Sean enthusiastically, but so did baseball coach Moe Maloney. McGowan accepted Moe's invitation and developed into the most formidable hitter in Boston College baseball history.

"Only BC respected me enough to make two separate offers. The others only offered football, with time away from practice to play baseball," relates Sean. "And a lot of people doubted my decision to go to BC. They told me I wouldn't get enough exposure playing here. Well, that argument got shot down."

McGowan's Boston College career is reminiscent of another guy with Boston ties – a fellow named George Herman Ruth. Sean, like The Babe, started out as a pitcher. He played in 21 of the team's 42 games in his freshman year of 1996 and had only 20 at-bats and six hits; none of them home runs.

Maloney moved Sean to first base prior to the following season. He also told the young man that it was time to stop relying solely on his considerable talent; he also had to work much harder to on his strength and endurance during the off-season.

Sean got the message. "I worked my body like I'd never worked it before between my sophomore and junior years. BC took my game to a completely different level," he said.

The hitting records that Sean established at the Heights speak for themselves. In his senior year of 1999, he set the single season marks for home runs (25) and RBIs (70) and tied the mark for runs scored (70).

He holds the Eagle career records for home runs (53), RBIs (184), and batting average (.402), even though he was a full-time batter for just three seasons.. At the time of his graduation, Sean's 206 hits was also the all-time



Sean, Katie, and Drew McGowan

BC standard. The runner-up in career home runs, Steve Langone, had 30 round-trippers. The next-highest RBI total is Jason Delaney's 157.

Peter Hughes coached McGowan in that remarkable senior season of 1999 when the Eagles rebounded to a 26-21-1 mark, their first winning campaign in six years.

"Sean had raw power, but he could also hit for average. He had excellent hand-eye coordination too. It was that combination – the power plus the hand-eye coordination – that set him apart. He didn't strike out very much. If they pitched him away, he could go to the opposite field. If they pitched inside, he could hit for power," said Hughes.

McGowan sounds a bit like Ted Williams when he speaks of his drive to master the difficult art of hitting baseballs against all types of pitchers.

"It's an advantage for a hitter to be able to use the whole park and not be more successful against certain types of pitchers," said Sean.

"I like to think that I developed my own personal style of hitting, but I probably patterned myself after batters like Nomar Garciaparra and Wade Boggs. Those guys really 'got it.' They took pride in not just hitting for power, but for average. Derek Jeter is another one who can do a lot of different things depending on the situation."

Sean is the youngest – by far – in an athletic family. His father Don played semi-pro football. Brothers Glen, Donnie, and Kevin and sister Michele all surpassed him in age by more than ten years. Sean frequently tagged along through high school locker rooms and along the sidelines as mascot of his brothers' teams. Early on, he saw the value of weight lifting and physical conditioning in athletic success.

By the time he got to Burlington High, Sean never had an off-season. There was football in the fall for coach Shawn Maguire. In the winter he was a hard-shooting defenseman for former Eagle goalie Bob Conceison's hockey team. In the spring, he developed his hitting and pitching talents for Jim Curtin, another BC grad and coaching legend.

Sean's multiple sport endeavors kept him close to home in Burlington. He never left town to play for regional all-star or traveling teams in baseball or any other sport. There was always the next season on the immediate horizon.

"I got good advice from my parents. They told me not to worry about over-showcasing myself. They said that good things happen to good people, and they were right," he says.

"I'll never forget walking off the field at the end of my last game at BC. It hit me like a ton of bricks – that my BC career and a big part of my life was over. I wish I could trap that senior year in a bottle. Not just for me, but for the season we had as a team. That year was a stepping stone for BC baseball and for BC athletics," he concludes wistfully.

Sean was a third team All-America Division I selection in 1999 and was drafted by the San Francisco Giants in the third round. He played four years of pro ball, with stops in Oregon, California and Louisiana. He wound up his career with the Red Sox organization in Sarasota and Portland. Sean had developed shoulder problems after the Giants tried to make him an outfielder. The Sox helped him with surgery and rehabilitation, but finally released him in 2004.

That decision was just fine with Sean. The following day his wife, the former Katie Pandolfo, delivered Drew, their first child. Sean stowed away his gloves and bat, put together a resume, and landed a job selling computer storage gear for EMC. He recently moved to Oracle Corporation, where he is responsible for the company's large corporate accounts in Boston.