



September 19, 2008

MONTGOMERY'S MATT SPRING HONORED WITH ERIK WALKER COMMUNITY CHAMPION AWARD

ST. PETERSBURG, FL—Matt Spring has been named the winner of the second annual Erik Walker Community Champion Award. The award recognizes a Rays minor league player who exemplifies teamwork, sportsmanship and community involvement, attributes exhibited by Rays minor league pitcher Erik Walker, who died tragically in October 2006 in a canoeing accident.

Spring, a catcher who played the entire season with the Montgomery Biscuits (AA), will be recognized at the Rays minor league awards ceremony at Tropicana Field prior to the Rays-Twins game tonight. Spring will receive a trophy and a check for \$2,500 to be awarded to the charity of his choice.

This summer, Spring volunteered in the Alabama Summer Reading Program at the Community Center in Prattville, Ala., where he read baseball-themed books to children ages 6 to 12. He also volunteered to field questions for two Junior Press conferences put on by the Biscuits, morning programs which allow schoolchildren ages 10 to 13 to "cover" a game and write a story afterward.

"Additionally, Matt volunteered for our *Montgomery Advertiser* Autograph Area regularly and was always one of the first to meet and greet fans," said Montgomery General Manager Greg Rauch. "He's always been very outgoing and has been a very good asset to the face of the Biscuits."

Spring, 23, was a fourth-round selection by the Rays in the 2004 June Draft. He is a native of Arizona.

Walker was drafted by the Rays in June 2006 and had just completed his first professional season with the Hudson Valley Renegades in the New York-Penn League when his life was cut short on October 26, just 11 days after his 23rd birthday.

Each of the Rays six minor league affiliates nominated a candidate for the award. Nominees embodied the qualities of Erik, recognized as someone who was a great teammate, a caring person and who enriched the lives of people in need and inspired others to do the same.

This year, the Rays will recognize the other five finalists by donating \$500 in each player's name to the charity of his choice. The other five finalists were: Josh Johnson (Durham), Chuck Tiffany (Vero Beach), Stephen Vogt (Columbus), Tyler Hauschild (Hudson Valley) and Joey Dettrich (Princeton).

Past Winners: Erik Walker Community Champion Award

2007 Pat Cottrell, Vero Beach

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The Tampa Bay Rays have proudly represented Major League Baseball in the Tampa Bay region since 1998. The organization and its foundation are committed to building a strong community bond through meaningful interaction and charitable contributions.