



2007

Senators Baseball



Former Senator Cla Meredith set the Padres scoreless inning record in 2006. Cla did not surrender a run in 28 consecutive appearances, a span of 33 2/3 innings from July 18-Sept. 12.

Cla Meredith the wonder from down under.

There have been relief pitchers, such as Kent Tekulve and Dan Quisenberry, who threw with a similar down-under motion, but there is only one Olise Claiborne Meredith III.

"My dad and grandfather have that name," Padres reliever Cla Meredith said, grinning. "It's a family name, German, I think. I've never heard of anybody else with it. When I was little, I always dreaded the first day of school, because I knew every teacher was going to botch it. As I get older and more mature, I take some pride in it." Cla derives from Claiborne and is pronounced Clay, but teammates call him "Claw" to avoid confusion with Clay Hensley. Hensley has seniority on Meredith, who was acquired on May 1 from Boston along with catcher Josh Bard for Doug Mirabelli in a swap that is paying major dividends. By any name, Meredith is starting to carve out an identity with a sidearming motion he developed as a kid playing the infield.

"I grew up in Richmond [Va.] watching Cal Ripken field ground balls with that nice, easy, nonchalant throw to first base," Meredith said. "It was something I could do pretty well, playing shortstop and second base." Acquired by the Padres in a May 1 2006 trade with the Boston Red Sox, the same trade that brought catcher Josh Bard to San Diego. As a rookie, posted a National League-low 1.07 ERA among relievers (at least 50.0 IP). He also held opposing batters to a league-low .170 among relief pitchers. He did not surrender a run in 28 consecutive appearances, a span of 33 2/3 innings from July 18-Sept. 12. That streak set a new franchise record, starter or reliever, eclipsing Randy Jones' 30-inning scoreless streak. The 33 2/3 straight scoreless innings also tied Orel Hershiser's mark in 1984 for the second-longest such streak by a rookie since 1970. It now stands as the longest scoreless stretch by a rookie relief pitcher in the live-ball era (1920 **He began pitching in high school, but didn't become serious about it until he played in the same summer Clark Griffith League in northern Virginia that had made a catcher out of Bruce Bochy a few decades earlier.** Meredith shares with his manager a calm, relaxed manner Bochy ascribes to their Southern roots. Meredith became something of a sensation throwing his sidearm fastballs at Virginia Commonwealth University, where he's the career ERA leader at 2.52 -- surpassing VCU teammate and longtime friend Sean Marshall, who starts for the Chicago Cubs.

Selected in the sixth round of the 2004 First-Year Player Draft, Meredith made it to the Major Leagues quicker than any pitcher from that draft except Oakland's Huston Street, but gave up seven earned runs in 2 1/3 innings for the Red Sox last season. While he wasn't sure what to think when the Red Sox sent him to San Diego, he now understands "it was a great opportunity, because it put me in a better situation."

"It's nice to have pitchers with different looks in the bullpen," Bochy said. "Cla's got good command of his sinker and slider, on both sides of the plate. He's not just throwing it; he knows where he's putting it. He's tough on right-handers when he's locating. You go back to Tekulve, Quisenberry, those guys throw a lot of innings. They don't put a lot of stress on their arm."