

RYAN DEMPSTER

SPORTS CELEBRITY GUEST SPEAKER AT

MELD'S SPORTS CELEBRITY EVENT - THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 25

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Ryan Dempster played in Major League Baseball (MLB) for five different teams during his career, having a nine-year run with the Cubs from 2004-12. It seemed to be the atmosphere that brought him the most comfort, and consequently produced his best run of consistent success. Dempster served as both a starter and a closer in Chicago, recording 85 saves from 2005-07.

As a pitcher, he has been a starter for 11 of his 15 seasons but also a closer for four seasons. He was an All-Star at the age of 23 then again when he was 31. Dempster is widely known for his laid-back attitude, constantly joking with fans and teammates, and is said to be a positive contribution to a team's clubhouse.

In 2004 he signed with the Chicago Cubs and appeared in 23 games, all out of the bullpen. In 2005, Dempster was named the closer for the Cubs. He collected 33 saves in 35 opportunities, the best save percentage in the league; in both blown saves, he collected the win. He is the only Cub and one of just three players ever to both start a game and collect 30 saves in the same season. In 2005, the Cubs signed him through 2008. He emerged as one of the team's most consistent relievers in 2007. Following the 2008 season, Dempster re-signed with the Cubs for four years.

In 2009 Ryan's daughter Riley was born with 22q deletion syndrome, a genetic condition that can cause a wide range of health and developmental disorders. Approximately 1 in 2,000 babies are affected by 22q, making it second only to Down syndrome in rate of occurrence. 22q often goes undiagnosed for weeks, months, or even at all. 22q can manifest itself in 180 different ways, from affecting swallowing, breathing and speech to heart defects, hearing loss and learning disabilities. No two children are affected the same way.

This was just five days before the Cubs started their season. Dempster had to find a way to help care for his fragile newborn daughter while dealing with the travel demands that baseball brought. Sometimes the baseball field is a place to get away, but not always," he said. "The times it was toughest, when I was struggling a little bit, I felt like maybe my emotions, I wore them on my sleeve a little bit. "I kept it inside for such a long time and felt like I needed to get it out, not just for myself but for the other families."

"We were really blessed to go through what Riley went through having the money and with connections and resources that a lot of people don't have," Dempster said. "It was always like we felt a little responsibility to help those parents and those kids." As a result, Dempster started the Dempster Family Foundation because he wanted to help raise awareness of this genetic disease.

In 2012 Dempster was traded to Texas Rangers then in 2013 signed a contract with the Boston Red Sox. Dempster was part of the 25-man active roster for the postseason making 3 relief appearances and won his first championship title when the Red Sox beat the St. Louis Cardinals in the 2013 World Series.

In 2014, Ryan Dempster officially called it a career, retiring from active competition after 16 seasons in MLB. However, after spending the 2014 season working as an analyst for MLB Network, it should come as no surprise that Dempster would not be distancing himself from baseball. Instead, he joined the Chicago Cubs front office as a special assistant to president of baseball operations Theo Epstein and general manager Jed Hoyer.

Dempster's new role includes spending time with the club during Spring Training, visiting the club's Minor League affiliates during the season, and working some scouting assignments both at the professional level and leading up to the MLB Draft.

"I got to go out on top and win a World Series. Now I am on the other side in the front office and can help get a World Series here to Chicago with the Cubs, because that's what I dreamt about as a player and that's what I want as a front office member."

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