

East Coast Sox add longtime MLB scout Willoughby to the organization

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East Coast Sox Baseball is excited to announce that longtime Major League Baseball professional scout Mark Willoughby has joined the organization as Director of Player Development and Placement.

Willoughby will be responsible for evaluating existing and incoming players as well as the implementation of an organizational-wide player development plan. He will oversee the gathering of analytics including videos and the use of the Rapsodo Hitting and Pitching platforms. He also will assist in the recruitment of players with college and MLB scouts who are interested in recruiting and/or scouting East Coast Sox players.

Willoughby, who has more than 26 years of professional baseball experience, worked as a coach for the East Coast Sox 17-U Founder's Club team last summer. He will continue in that role on a modified basis and will assist the organization with player evaluations and feedback, implementation of advanced data and video collection and serve as a liaison between the Sox and college and professional baseball.

“The opportunity to work with a first-class organization, run by first-class people, the chance to impact the lives of young men and the opportunity for growth on and off the field motivated me to pursue this position,” said Willoughby, who is from Hammond, Louisiana. “I would like to thank Greg Sykes, Joe Caruso and Eric DuBose for inviting me to join their organization on a full-time basis, and entrusting me with helping them take the East Coast Sox to another level. God has a plan. Hopefully, together, we’ll see it through to its fullest potential.”

Sykes, the president of East Coast Sox Baseball said Willoughby’s high character and reputation in the baseball community will be a tremendous asset to the organization, which is based in Columbus, Mississippi.

“This is a game-changer for our organization. To be able to give college coaches and professional scouts analytical data that can help them evaluate players from a professional scout side is huge,” Sykes said. “Mark will oversee our video and analytics program that will give our players a huge advantage in their recruitment.

“We are ecstatic to add Mark Willoughby to the Sox family. Mark is one of the most respected baseball guys in the South. His expertise and knowledge will help promote our players. Adding Mark as part of our team strengthens us so we can keep promoting our players and getting them to the next level, whether college or professional.”

The New York Mets drafted and signed Willoughby, a left-handed pitcher, out of Independence High School in Louisiana. He was in the Mets organization from 1985-90. Willoughby went on to attend Southeastern Louisiana University. He then worked as a pitching coach at Oak Forest Academy in Amite, Louisiana (1995-96) and Southeastern Louisiana (1997-98) before becoming a part-time scout for MLB’s Arizona Diamondbacks in 1999. Later that year, Willoughby became a

full-time area scout for the Kansas City Royals. He worked in that organization until 2005 and covered the states of Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee.

From 2005-2019, Willoughby worked as a full-time area scout for the Florida/Miami Marlins. He covered the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and west Tennessee, and was twice named Marlins Scout of the Year (2009, 2016).

Willoughby hopes his life experiences in baseball -- successes and failures -- will help Sykes, Caruso and DuBose make sound, organizational decisions. In addition to on-field development, he will assist players with the recruiting and scouting process and work with them on how to manage expectations.

“I’ve seen a lot of players over the years, and have a fairly good idea of what it takes to reach various levels in the game, be it high school, junior college, Division III, II, I or the major leagues,” Willoughby said. “The earlier you can help a young person to get on the right path -- on and off the field -- the better the chances they’ll have of reaching their highest potential. Most will not play in the major leagues, but the goal is to help them be the best they can be.”

DuBose, a former standout at Mississippi State University who went on to play for MLB’s Baltimore Orioles for five years, said Willoughby has been one of the most respected professional scouts in the Southeast for years. He is confident Willoughby’s reputation for evaluating talent landed him many roles will bolster East Coast Sox Baseball’s player placement and development.

“What a great addition to the Sox organization and family,” DuBose said. “I am looking forward to working with and beside Mark because he has such a great baseball mind and he is an even better man. It is

going to be exciting to see him pour into these young men on and off the field.”

Said Caruso, “Combining Mark's background in baseball and his devotion to his faith in the Lord, the East Coast Sox baseball organization continues to add value to its mission statement of growing players mentally, physically and spiritually.”

East Coast Sox was formed in 2011 by Sykes, Caruso and DuBose. In less than a decade, it has become a nationally known organization, and is recognized by Perfect Game as one of the top programs in the country.

The mission of East Coast Sox Baseball is to lead players closer to Christ through the game of baseball. Focusing on Christ on and off the field allows the staff and coaches to develop young men into spiritual leaders of their household.