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Professional Pitchers Look Past Home Plate Toward Degrees

Winthrop University

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Professional Pitchers Look Past Home Plate Toward Degrees

Quick Facts

- Looking to finish what they started when they came to Winthrop in 2003, Slowey and Leroux want to earn a bachelor's degree and have returned to the university to take on their remaining coursework.
- Getting the degree for both pitchers will help them fill a void in the off-season when they want to be productive.



Kevin Slowey, left, and Chris Leroux

ROCK HILL, S.C. - College roommates [Kevin Slowey](#) and [Chris Leroux](#) left Winthrop early in 2005 after getting drafted to play professional baseball.

They're in the Major Leagues now, Slowey pitching for the [Minnesota Twins](#) and Leroux recently acquired by the [Pittsburgh Pirates](#) as a reliever.

Slowey is considered to be one of the Twins' top young pitchers. Known for his exceptional control and command of the strike zone, the right hander recently signed a one-year, \$2.7 million contract with the Twins organization.

Leroux, a right-hander from Canada, played for the Florida Marlins before getting picked up by the Pirates last fall. Management liked his 6-foot-6 height and strength, his strikeout rate and ability to induce ground balls.

Looking to finish what they started when they came to Winthrop in 2003, Slowey and Leroux want to earn a bachelor's degree and have returned to the university to take on their remaining coursework.

But considering a baseball player's schedule, it might get a little complicated. The baseball season stretches from February's spring training to October when the year wraps up for most teams.

Slowey, who wants to earn a business degree and Spanish minor, estimates it may take him two years to finish his degree. He is taking two courses this semester – an economics course and a writing course. Living with Leroux in Charlotte during the off season, Slowey commuted to Winthrop twice a week for classes. His economics professor, [Bob Stonebraker](#), has agreed to work with him on writing a series of papers on concepts and then on an independent study.

Stonebraker doesn't mind helping Slowey because he knows how much Slowey enjoys learning. Slowey tutored two other baseball players in a previous economics class he took from Stonebraker.

"When we spoke before this semester started, I reminded him how he had helped those two get through my class. He replied: 'Yes, but they both have their degrees, and I don't.'" Stonebraker said. "That impressed me. Here's a guy who will be earning \$2.7 million next year, and he's telling me that two friends and former teammates who never will experience their Major League dreams, have something he wants: a Winthrop degree."

The Pennsylvania native would love to use his future degree to either coach on the college level or possibly take baseball to other countries. "I don't see myself as someone who is defined by baseball. I enjoy the game and the moment," he said of performing before thousands of fans, but he is definitely looking toward the future when he won't be on the mound pitching.

Leroux isn't taking courses this semester but is working with sport management professors to figure out a plan.

He completed some courses in the fall of 2008 and has worked with [Curt Laird](#), assistant chair of the Department of Physical Education, Sport and Human Performance, on an independent study. Laird said Leroux is a good student who never comes into class with a "big league" attitude but is respectful and down to earth.

"He has stuck with it all of these years. He just has a great attitude about it," Laird said.

Both of Leroux's parents are teachers so he knows the importance of his degree. He doesn't see himself in front of the classroom but knows that as a people person who loves the game he wants to stay involved in sports, possibly in broadcasting. He played basketball in high school and once worked as a high school referee.

Getting the degree for both pitchers will help them fill a void in the off-season when they are looking past home plate for ways to be productive.

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