

## Former Mountaineer Now With Braves

Written by Brandon McGinnis  
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When Appalachian State University baseball student-athletes play their final game at Beaver Field at Jim and Bettie Smith Stadium, rarely can they say that

their next stop would be a major league ballpark. However, that has been the case for former Mountaineer standout, David Port.

While at Appalachian, Port not only succeeded on the diamond, but also in the classroom. Port recorded one of the highest grade point averages on the baseball team, along with achieving a 4.0 in the 2011 fall semester. Port also assisted in the athletics marketing department, helping to design team posters and schedule cards. Port was also involved with the design of last season's baseball uniforms and locker-room graphics.

Despite his talent for graphic design work, Port entered college not knowing exactly what route he would take academically.

"David did not come into Appalachian knowing what he wanted to major in and we spent several hours discussing his interests, strengths and goals," Jean Roberts, the director of Appalachian State's learning assistance program and Port's academic advisor, said. "I remember discussing the GAIT major and I knew we found his passion and future."

Since graduating from Appalachian State in 2012 with a bachelor's degree in graphic arts and imaging technology (GAIT) and a master's in media productions, Port drives to Turner Field everyday. His daily journey to Major League Baseball's Atlanta Braves is not for pleasure but for work, as Port was hired right out of Appalachian as a production trainee and is part of the game entertainment crew for all Braves' home games.

Every day is a new experience for Port and another dream come true. Growing up in the heart of Braves Country in Dunwoody, Ga., Port has been a lifelong baseball fan and cheering for the Braves is second nature for the former relief pitcher.

"Baseball was always a passion for me," Port said. "My parents used to tell me stories of how I used to crawl to the tee and put a ball on top, then start to crawl around the bases."

Port is responsible for graphics, videos and any other features for Turner Field's videoboard, the largest high definition screen in the world. One feature Port is proud of is called "Inside Looks," where Port interacts with the current Braves roster to feed information to the fans that attend each game. Inside Looks gives the casual fan more information about the players they will be watching at the stadium. Whether it is an interview about the previous day's game or a funny story from a player's childhood, Inside Looks gives the fans an interaction with Braves' players they did not have before.

"Before the game, I talk to about one or two players for the feature," Port said. "It's a pretty remarkable experience."

Port's experience started with an eye-opening occasion. The first day he was on the job, his supervisor told him that they would be interviewing Hall-of-Famer Hank Aaron. Since that memorable first assignment, Port has been able to work with more Braves greats, including Tom Glavine and John Smoltz.

After finishing his career at Appalachian with a 3-0 record in 63 appearances, Port has not forgotten about his roots and those who helped him along the way to his dream job. -He credits the University, academically and athletically, for the hard worker he has become.

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“Playing a sport at Appalachian teaches you traits such as discipline and time management,” Port said. “While learning these traits, you meet so many different people along the way and I wouldn’t change that experience for anything.”

While Port won’t take the mound in a Major League game, his hard work, dedication and realistic approach to his athletic career have helped him to reach the point he is at today.

“David was a very good athlete, but he approached college with the idea that his future must include something besides professional baseball,” Roberts said. “I think that is one reason he was such a good student. He decided early that he had to do both successfully.”

**Photo Courtesy: David Port, ASU Athletics**