



St. Croix Orthopaedics co-founder Meisterling, fellow physicians have had a special bond with the fun-loving St. Paul Saints since the team's inception in 1993.



SCO Celebrates a Saintly Milestone

By Bryan Horwath
Sports Writer

In these past 15 years, the Saints have become synonymous with outdoor baseball fun in an area that seemed to be starving for it ever since the Twins moved to the Metrodome in the early 1980s.

With a pig mascot bringing in new baseballs after every half inning, a manager who just might cameo in a sumo wrestler's suit and the audacity to give away Michael Vick rubber dog toys to fans at the gate in 2007, this is an organization that, well, likes to have a good time.

One person who has had an up-close look at many of the most colorful moments of the team's first 15 years is St. Croix Orthopaedics co-founder Dr. Robert Meisterling.

Before that first season in 1993, Meisterling contacted the Saints to inquire about a possible partnership and he has been the official team physician for the club ever since.

"It's been a lot of fun," Meisterling said. "It's really a first-class organization and we've been happy to work with the Saints. We've also been really lucky that we haven't had any really serious injuries."

Also partnering with St. Croix Orthopaedics is OSI Physical Therapy. Both are East Metro mainstays and both work together to provide stability for the musculoskeletal health of the Saint's players.

SCO physicians are on hand at Midway Stadium to conduct player physicals in preparation for the new season.

Also working with the Saints are SCO physicians Dr. Andrea Saterbak, Dr. Nicholas Weiss, Dr. Michael Meisterling and Dr. Steven Meletiou.

Although he has handed over much of his responsibility with the Saints to other St. Croix Orthopaedics physicians,

Dr. Andrea Saterbak works with a Saints player in the training room at Midway Stadium.



Meisterling has many good memories.

“Of course it has been great to be around Mike Veeck and (Saints co-owner) Bill Murray,” Meisterling said. “I remember a lot of the players and Marty Scott, who used to manage the team, and I became friends and would golf together. One of the things I really remember is working with the players.”

In an era of multi-million dollar contracts and suspicions of steroid use around every corner, Meisterling said the players he worked with were usually a far cry from that other baseball world.

“Most of those guys knew they weren’t going to be stars or even probably make it to the majors at all, but they still were great guys,” he said. “They were just holding on and trying to extend their dream – just really nice people.”

Saterbak enjoys her time working with the team.

“It’s a very fun experience to work with an independent baseball league,” she said. “Some players come in from college careers, some are actually coming from the major leagues and trying to get back. The mixture of personalities of the players has been really interesting. It’s always fun.”

Whether it’s a woman pitcher (Ila Borders in 1997), former local World Series hero (Jack Morris in 1996) or a 1980s big league icon (Darryl Strawberry in 1996), the Saints have quite a streak going when it comes to drawing card players.

Lately, the Saints – who switched from the Northern League to the American Association in 2006 – haven’t had as many big names on their roster, but they still pack them in at Midway Stadium.

Before sending his career into a drug-induced downward spiral, Strawberry was arguably the most feared hitter in Major League Baseball for a time with the New York Mets in the early and mid-1980s.

After falling out of baseball altogether, Strawberry started a comeback bid with the Saints in 1996 and spent part of the summer blasting home runs deep into the St. Paul night at a furious pace.

Strawberry caught on with the New York Yankees during the 1996 season and helped them win a World Series title that year.

“For excitement, there was nobody like Darryl Strawberry,” Meisterling said. “Every time he came up, you knew something was going to happen. It was just electric when he stepped to the plate that summer.”

Meisterling also said he will never forget the time Scott was ejected from a game for ar-

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guing with a umpire and came back on the field in a sumo wrestling suit – you wouldn’t expect the Saints not to have those – to take on his rival manager, who was also ejected.

“It was just hilarious,” Meisterling said. “The whole crowd just went nuts. I thought that was great and it was totally unscripted. Unfortunately, the umpires didn’t like it too much.”

In the early years, Meisterling rarely missed a game at Midway (someone from SCO is present at every Saints home game) and said he still follows former Saints players in the majors.

“It’s been 15 years and a whole lot of great memories,” Meisterling said. “It was never about money or anything like that. We don’t get paid. Bill Murray used to call me Dr. Pro Bono and I used to joke with people in the organization that I was after the pig on the payroll.”

Pig on the payroll? Hey, doctor, don’t be giving those folks over in St. Paul any ideas. □

