

= Jake Diekman =

Jacob Tanner Diekman (born January 21 , 1987) is an American professional baseball pitcher with the Texas Rangers of Major League Baseball (MLB) . He previously played for the Philadelphia Phillies . He throws left @-@ handed . Diekman grew up in Wymore , Nebraska , where he attended a high school too small for a baseball team , so he instead focused on golf , playing baseball in the summer for an American Legion team . He played two seasons of baseball in college at Doane College and Cloud County Community College respectively before attending a junior college baseball showcase , at which he was offered a scholarship to play Division I baseball . However , in the 2007 Major League Baseball Draft , the Philadelphia Phillies selected him in the 30th round , and he ultimately signed .

With the Phillies , Diekman began as a starting pitcher and progressed through a few levels of the Phillies ' farm system in his first two years as a starter before adjusting his mechanics and lowering his arm slot to throw sidearm out of the bullpen as a relief pitcher . The adjustment worked , and helped him move through the remaining levels of the Phillies ' farm system and , in 2012 , making his major league debut . Over the next two seasons , he split time between the major league Phillies and their Triple @-@ A (AAA) affiliate , the Lehigh Valley Iron Pigs , though while he was with the major league team , was considered one of the " lone bright spots " in both 2012 and 2013 . Diekman throws a fastball in the mid @-@ 90s (mph) , a slider , and an occasional changeup ; his fastball is among the fastest of any left @-@ handed reliever in the major leagues .

Diekman 's parents have been key parts of his life , especially his mother , who died soon before the Phillies drafted him , and from whom he now draws inspiration . He holds a degree in business administration , and resides in Beatrice , Nebraska in the offseason .

= = Early career = =

Diekman was born to Paul and Billie Diekman in 1987 . He has one brother . He attended Southern High School in Wymore , Nebraska , which was too small to field a baseball team , so Diekman played golf there instead . Eventually , he joined an American Legion baseball team with players from Wymore and several surrounding towns , which Diekman called " the best experience of my life ... so much fun " . Concurrently , he worked full @-@ time at a lawn mower factory to earn money to pursue post @-@ secondary education .

After graduating high school , he enrolled at Doane College , where he pitched for one season . He transferred to Cloud County Community College in Kansas . Following his sophomore season , he attended a showcase at which , with a fastball well over 90 miles per hour (140 km / h) , he drew much interest . He received an offer for a full scholarship to be a Nebraska Cornhusker , which he would have accepted had the Phillies not drafted him in the 2007 Major League Baseball Draft 's 30th round .

= = Professional career = =

= = = Philadelphia Phillies = = =

Between 2007 and 2010 , he pitched in the lower levels of the Philadelphia Phillies ' Minor League system initially as a starter , and subsequently as a reliever . Although he initially saw success in 2007 , posting a 2 @. @ 72 ERA in 10 starts with GCL Phillies and Williamsport Crosscutters , he struggled in 2008 , posting an ERA of 5 @. @ 09 in 27 starts , split between Williamsport and the Lakewood Blue Claws . At the conclusion of both 2008 and 2009 , he pitched in the Florida Instructional League to continue honing his skills on the mound .

He converted from a starting pitcher to a reliever in 2009 , along with several other Phillies pitching prospects . Around that time , he also , at the suggestion of the same minor league pitching coaches who converted him to relief , lowered his release point to his current low angle . Success did not

manifest itself immediately , as he still posted a 4 @. @ 04 ERA in 2009 , his first season in relief , but in 2010 , he cut his ERA to 2 @. @ 91 while splitting time between Lakewood and the Clearwater Threshers , the Phillies High @- @ A affiliate . At the end of the 2010 season , he played for the Mesa Solar Sox in the Arizona Fall League . He spent the 2011 season with the Double @- @ A Reading Phillies , accruing a 0 ? 1 record and a 3 @. @ 05 ERA and 3 saves in 53 games . Thereafter , the Phillies added him to their 40 @- @ man roster to protect him from the Rule 5 draft .

After receiving praise from Phillies ' pitching coach Rich Dubee for his performance in spring training , Diekman opened the 2012 season with the Triple @- @ A (AAA) Lehigh Valley IronPigs . With Lehigh Valley , he posted a 1 ? 0 record and a 0 @. @ 59 ERA with 5 saves in 13 games in the season 's first month . He was added to the Phillies ' 25 @- @ man Major League roster on May 11 , and four days later recorded a win against the Houston Astros in his MLB debut . He finished the year an established lefty specialist , and had a 3 @. @ 95 ERA , though walked 6 @. @ 6 batters per 9 innings , and was erratic in his control .

Entering 2013 , Diekman was expected to be a key part of the Phillies bullpen after his success in 2012 , however he did not break camp with the big league club , beginning the season in AAA . In AAA , he struggled , which delayed his arrival to the major league team until June . While with the big league club , he continued his dominance of left @- @ handed hitters , however was not as good against right @- @ handed hitters (a 150 @- @ point differential in opponent batting average and over 300 point differential in On @- @ base plus slugging (OPS)) . Diekman improved his control , which made him a presumptive member of the 2014 bullpen , as he was one of 2013 's " lone bright spots " for the otherwise dismal Phillies ' bullpen . Ultimately , he did make the Phillies ' opening day roster as a member of the bullpen .

Early in the season , Diekman emerged as a reliable reliever in the Phillies ' bullpen , and was used extensively by manager Ryne Sandberg . As the season progressed , Diekman was more successful against left @- @ handed hitters than right @- @ handed hitters , but was used against both in a variety of situations . On September 1 , 2014 , Diekman was one of four pitchers who combined for a no @- @ hitter in the Phillies ' 7 @- @ 0 win over the Atlanta Braves in Turner Field . By the end of the season , the Phillies had one of the best bullpens in the league , and it consisted predominantly of young players such as Diekman . There was excitement from both Phillies ' personnel and writers that the bullpen could remain solid for a long time because of young pitchers such as Diekman , Ken Giles , and Justin De Fratus . Moreover , Diekman and Giles had potential as closers should the Phillies trade Jonathan Papelbon . Overall , Diekman emerged as a name to be mentioned among the " elite " relievers of the National League , but was overused against right @- @ handed batters , which hurt his statistics .

= = = Texas Rangers = = =

On July 31 , 2015 , Diekman was traded to the Texas Rangers along with Cole Hamels in exchange for Matt Harrison , Nick Williams , Jorge Alfaro , Jake Thompson , Alec Asher , and Jerad Eickhoff . He became an important bullpen piece in the Rangers ' run to the playoffs in 2016 . Diekman and the Rangers agreed to a one @- @ year deal worth \$ 1 @. @ 225 million on January 29 , 2016 , and avoided arbitration .

= = Pitching style = =

A lefty specialist , Diekman throws a fastball in the mid @- @ 90s , a slider at 78 ? 81 , and an occasional changeup to right @- @ handed hitters . His fastball is among the fastest of left @- @ handed relievers in the major leagues . Like most left @- @ handed pitchers , particularly those who throw out of an arm angle similar to Diekman 's , he is tough on left @- @ handed hitters . In 2013 , he held lefties to just a .368 OPS , though allowed a .765 OPS to right @- @ handed hitters . Despite suggestions he remain a lefty specialist , he emerged in 2014 as a favorite middle reliever for manager Ryne Sandberg against both righties and lefties .

= = Personal life = =

Diekman 's maturation was characterized by two parents that were equally loving , but embodied a stark juxtaposition in terms of demeanor . His mother , Billie , was Diekman 's " biggest fan " , and had to order her husband , Paul , to stop pacing , and watch Diekman pitch . However , Billie died at age 57 , just months before the Phillies drafted her son . Diekman has sought therapy to cope with the loss , and meditates thinking about her during " The Star Spangled Banner " prior to each game .

" (After his mother 's death) Diekman started to appreciate the little things . The game slowed down when he had fun . He invoked his mother 's spirit rather than avoiding it . ' The drive and determination she had for all the projects she did , how hard she worked , the dedication she had for her job , ' Diekman said . ' It really paid off . It really came to me . I thought , ' If I have a job , I want to put in the time and dedication like she did . ' ' That is how Billie Diekman 's legacy perseveres . It is why a young man from tiny Wymore , Neb . , will cherish Sunday 's rendition of " The Star @-@ Spangled Banner " at a baseball stadium ... "

Diekman describes his father as his " best friend " , and one who has helped him cope with his mother 's death . Away from baseball , Diekman holds an associate 's degree in business administration from Cloud County Community College , and enjoys listening to music , working out , and playing golf . He resides in Beatrice , Nebraska during the offseason .