

# Dean at the Den

## *Former Tiger great returns to the LSU baseball team and spends a day supporting a local business*

August 1, 2012 by Jeff LeJeune

It turns out former LSU slugger Blake Dean loved LSU and Baton Rouge just a little too much to stay away.

Dean, who retired from professional baseball after three years with the Los Angeles Dodgers organization this past spring, will be donning the purple and gold again in 2013 as a student assistant coach. He recently took time out to sign autographs at Denicola's Tiger Den on Sherwood Forest Boulevard.

"I just wasn't enjoying it," Dean said of playing professional baseball. "I decided to just leave it behind instead of looking back ten years from now and wishing I had earlier."

The Florida native with the sweet swing is one of the greatest players ever to put on a Tiger uniform. He was the Tigers' starting first baseman in 2010 after playing the three previous seasons as an outfielder and designated hitter. He finished No. 2 on the school career total bases list with 575, the career RBI list with 260, and the career hits list with 332. His 63 doubles rank third, 56 home runs rank fourth, and 223 runs rank fifth on the all-time LSU list.

After leading LSU to the 2009 national championship, Dean surprised everyone by spurning the Twins, who selected him in the tenth round of the draft, to come back to play for the Tigers in his senior season. Now just three years later, his passion for LSU and Baton Rouge is evident again.

"I just love the people here. It's a great place," said Dean. "I don't know what I'll be doing yet on the (baseball) staff, but I'll be willing to help in any way I can."

Despite dedicating all four years of his eligibility to Coach Paul Mainieri and the Tigers, Dean fell a little short in finishing his degree. It turns out that was a blessing in disguise, because with 18 hours to take to graduate, he is eligible to be a student assistant on Mainieri's staff in 2013.

"Blake is a great guy," said Dennis Denicola, owner of Denicola's Tiger Den. "It's great that he's back and able to come by and sign autographs for people. And he'll be a great addition to that baseball team, just based on his reputation alone."

Denicola is an avid LSU fan, and he has combined his passion for the Tigers with 40 years of professional experience in upholstery to create unique designs of officially licensed LSU furniture and other items. He is the man former Tigers, including Shaquille O'Neal, go to when they are looking for custom made LSU memorabilia.

"This place is unreal," Dean said of the vast array of items available at Denicola's. "Everywhere you look is something new and great. I could spend all day in here just looking at the stuff."

Somebody obviously loves the purple and gold. It'll be great to see him in that dugout again next season.