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Big leaguer, new to Franklin, to assist at baseball clinic

Zobrist will join Dickey, Price in event for youth coaches

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FRANKLIN — Ben Zobrist will talk about middle-infield techniques at Saturday's Big League Coaches Clinic at D1 Sports Training.

And if somebody were to ask him if he's ever turned a triple play, he'd likely smile broadly and share a fond memory.

Zobrist, a Tampa Bay Rays shortstop who recently moved to Franklin, combined with Dioner Navarro to turn the first catcher-to-shortstop-to-catcher triple play in Major League history against Seattle during Zobrist's rookie season in 2006.

"That was awesome," Zobrist said. "Some people gave that to me on video. To know that I'm going to go down in the history books in a good way like that is good. It's pretty crazy."

The first out came when Seattle's Raul Ibanez struck out with runners on first and third in the first inning. Adrian Beltre tried to steal second, but Zobrist tagged him out as he retreated to first.

Jose Lopez tried to score from third, but Navarro tagged him out at the plate on a throw from Zobrist for the second triple play in Rays' history.

Zobrist will join former Montgomery Bell Academy and University of Tennessee star R.A. Dickey, who is now with the Seattle Mariners, and former Vanderbilt University star David Price, who's now a Tampa Bay pitching prospect, as instructors at the clinic for youth coaches and parents. Other instructors are Minnesota Twins bench coach Steve Liddle, Major League umpire Chuck Meriwether and Houston Astros infield prospect Drew Sutton.

Infielder learns ropes

"I teach regularly at Showtime Sports Academy (in Cool Springs), and I've done baseball camps over there, mostly with kids," Zobrist said. "It's definitely a pleasure for me."

Zobrist's wife, Julianna, is a Belmont University graduate, and that's how they wound up in Middle Tennessee. She is a Christian music singer and songwriter.

Zobrist, 26, will leave Feb. 15 for spring training, where he will battle Jason Bartlett for the Rays' starting job at shortstop.

"Every year, I feel like I get a little better," Zobrist said. "Last year was a really down year stats-wise for me, but I really feel like that helped me a lot as far as learning some things I needed to learn before I was really going to be able to excel."

Zobrist was the Rays' opening-day starter at New York in Yankee Stadium, but he was sent down to Triple-A Durham in May after struggling at the plate. He was recalled by Tampa Bay on July 29, but an abdomen strain sidelined him for the final six weeks of the season after he hit .155.

"I was kind of rehabbing it still at the beginning of the offseason, but now it's totally healed," Zobrist said. "I hurt (my oblique muscle) swinging the bat."

Originally drafted by Houston in 2004 out of Dallas Baptist University, the switch hitter was traded to Tampa Bay two years later and made his Major League debut later that season.

He hit .224 with 18 RBIs in 52 games during his rookie season.

Price, the No. 1 draft pick last June out of Vandy, will join Zobrist at spring training.

"It sounds like he's got the right mindset, and he's ready to get up (to the Major Leagues) as soon as possible," Zobrist said.

"From what I've heard and from what I've seen as far as his demeanor, I think he's definitely got a shot to get there soon."
