

HAVING A BALL

FEBRUARY 23, 2017 546 0

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Off the field, Atlanta Braves infielder Chase d'Arnaud is making a name for himself in music...

Balancing career and family life can be a challenge for most of us. But trying to advance two high-profile, high pressure careers can be even more forbidding. Still, Chase d'Arnaud seems to be pulling it off.

A utility infielder for the Atlanta Braves, d'Arnaud, who lives in Midtown, had a breakout 2016 with a career-best .245 batting average and .335 slugging percentage.

His other gig—lead singer, rhythm guitarist and songwriter for the Chase d'Arnaud Band—also caught fire last year. The band cut its first album, *Seven Ghosts*; performed before thousands at the Bonnaroo Music Festival; and played local venues including iconic Eddie's Attic. And all the signs point to an even bigger season in 2017, on the field and on the stage.

"I have a good team of people around me helping keep baseball and music in balance," d'Arnaud says. During the season, he works with other musicians, writing, rehearsing and recording. "After playing on the field, I come home, shut off baseball and focus on music. It's easy to overthink baseball, and music provides an outlet."

A California native, d’Arnaud says he was playing baseball and music before he was 5 years old. “I remember being 3 with a bat in my hand, Dad putting the baseball on the tee and my cranking out a swing as best I could.”

His mother was an opera singer, and music was a major part of family life. “She would have us singing arias in the car with her,” particularly Phantom of the Opera. Chase sang the male roles, and his brother, Travis—the New York Mets catcher—did the female parts. “He had a higher voice than my mom at the time, so he could hit all the notes,” d’Arnaud says with a laugh.

D’Arnaud started out playing the violin and took up the guitar in a band with some high school baseball teammates. After graduating from Pepperdine University in 2008, he was drafted by the Pittsburgh Pirates. He played with the Pirates and the Phillies before coming to the Gwinnett Braves as a free agent during the 2015-2016 off season. After Gwinnett manager Brian Snitker took over the Atlanta Braves, d’Arnaud and his music soon followed.

He describes his musical genre as “Americana: singer/songwriter, country and rock. I don’t think the first album that came out was the best representation of what is to come,” he says. A new solo album is due in early 2017, “about the time spring training begins.”

D’Arnaud plans to continue performing and writing during baseball season. “It’s easier when we’re playing at home: After a day game, I can do a show somewhere,” he says. In addition to Atlanta gigs, he also hopes to perform during road trips.

He adds that he has a positive outlook about the future in sports and music. “People ask me all the time which I would rather do. With baseball, the body starts to break down after age 35. But I can do music for a very long time. So I’m glad I’m getting into it when I am.”

Regardless, d’Arnaud says his music career will not interfere with baseball. “I’ve made it clear to the Braves organization that baseball is my first priority. They don’t have to worry about [music] distracting me”.

“In fact, they are starting to understand that it helps me. I sing at third base; I sing at shortstop; I sing in the batter’s box. And I play well while I’m doing it.”

The Braves apparently agree. Snitker and other team managers were in the audience for his first show at Eddie’s Attic.

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STORY: Bobby L. Hickman

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