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Up Close: From the diamond into the rough of the capital

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UP CLOSE

From the diamond into the rough of the capital

Tommy Andrews (left) and Will Miller, bound by baseball, now play for Speaker John Boehner.

When you see Speaker of the House John Boehner anywhere in Washington, D.C., chances are **Tommy Andrews '09** is with him.

The Cincinnati native is on his fifth year working for Boehner, a career path he began as an unpaid intern starting two months after graduation. From there, Andrews was promoted to staff assistant, then to legislative correspondent, senior staff assistant, and finally, to his current position, special assistant to the Speaker.

"Anytime he leaves his office, I am on his hip. He could be on the House floor and have 40 different conversations with members of Congress, so it is my role to take notes and help—he can't take it on all at once," Andrews says.

But Andrews's role extends beyond sessions of Congress. "I serve as the conduit

between all of the staff and the Speaker when he is not here. It is like being the quarterback, anticipating movements when every minute of the day is accounted for."

Andrews points to an unusual source for his skills: Furman baseball, where he played first base and outfield. "You balance schoolwork with the time commitment of travel and practice," he says. He also credits Furman baseball with another reason he's able to handle the intensity of Washington: his colleague **Will Miller '12**.

Miller was a freshman when Andrews was a senior, but the two had struck up a friendship through baseball. As a political science major, Miller was interested in D.C. but as a centerfielder, he was more focused on professional baseball. "The draft was in June so I wasn't

really looking for jobs. But when the draft came and went without me, I was lost. The phone rang from a 202 number and it was Tom on the line. He was offering me [the chance] to come to D.C. and apply for an internship with the Speaker's office," Miller says. "Of course I was going to go."

As an intern, Miller closely followed the "school of Tommy" and took every bit of advice he would give, namely, "Never say no," and "Always be a guy who can find solutions."

Miller claims the difference between his remaining a nameless intern and becoming a key employee emanates from the intersection of Andrews's advice and, well, the Speaker's trash can:

"I noticed when the Speaker finished fixing his coffee, he always left sweetener packets on the counter. I took Tommy's

advice to heart and went to the Container Store to spend eight dollars on a small trash can for the counter. It was there for a week before the Speaker noticed it, but when he did, it blew his mind. 'That is the kind of problem solving we need,' he said. That was a Thursday morning, and I was hired full time that afternoon. You can't deny the timing."

Political science professor Danielle Vinson says, "Over the last few years, one of the most rewarding parts of my trips to Washington has been learning from these guys through what they are seeing and doing. Their stories give me a fresh perspective that helps me better understand the things I teach."

Vinson remarks, in particular, on Andrews's and Miller's generosity, especially "their enthusiasm for meeting with individual students who are interested in working on Capitol Hill."

Miller says the service attitude stems directly from baseball coach Ron Smith. "He always reminded us to put others before yourself and said if you do, you are destined to have success. That is the kind of attitude you need to have on Capitol Hill, always trying to work for something bigger than ourselves." (Seasoned politicians could take note of this philosophy.)

While one might think the experiences the two men have had—access to powerful legislators (and brushes with the president)—might make them jaded to the dazzle of the nation's capital, Andrews quickly corrects that assumption.

"When I pull up to work every day, there is still a shock and awe factor. The view from my desk is the National Mall, and I am never going to have another view like that in my life." **F**

—Kate Dabbs '09