

Tampa Bay Rays Pitcher Drew Smyly, Father Buy Beef 'O' Brady's In Maumelle

by [Jan Cottingham](#) on Monday, Dec. 1, 2014 12:00 am



For Todd Smyly, father of Tampa Bay Rays pitcher Drew Smyly, going in with his son to buy the Beef 'O' Brady's franchise in Maumelle wasn't much of a stretch, for a lot of reasons.

Reason No. 1? It's right across Maumelle Boulevard from the elder Smyly's home.

Reason No. 2? Drew, who pitched for Central High and the University of Arkansas, played all his American Legion ball in Maumelle, Todd Smyly said, and he and the baseball teams often ate at Beef 'O' Brady's, a casual dining, full-service restaurant, after games. He has warm memories of the place.

Reason No. 3? The Beef 'O' Brady's franchise is all about the community, CEO Chris Elliott said, and Todd Smyly said that's exactly how he sees his restaurant: a community sports pub, a place friendly to youth sports and other family-oriented activities. And having a professional ballplayer as a co-owner fits the sports emphasis.

Smyly speaks highly of Rebecca Jones, who opened Beef 'O' Brady's in Maumelle in 2003 and built its family-friendly reputation along with a loyal following. Jones died in June 2013, leaving the restaurant to her sons.

"I came over here and I'd tell the guys, because I live across the street, 'Look, man, if you ever think about selling the place, call me first,'" Smyly said. Eventually, they called. Smyly talked to his son, and Drew said, "Dad, let's buy the place." Todd Smyly has been operating it since June.

Drew Smyly, who lives in Dallas in the off season, said he also had fond memories of the restaurant and called it a good project for his father. He visited it a couple of weeks ago and praised the renovation that his father oversaw.

Todd Smyly declined to disclose how much he and Drew had invested in Beef 'O' Brady's, which markets itself as "a franchise of family sports pubs," but said the restaurant under Jones did about \$1 million in annual sales, maybe a little more.

He was a college coach before moving to Maumelle about 20 years ago at the behest of his brother, Randy Smyly, who held the Waffle House franchise in Arkansas at the time. But Randy Smyly's partners bought him out. "He walked away a wealthy guy and I was stuck at Waffle House," Todd Smyly said.

Todd was hired as general manager for Pilot Travel Centers, working there for 13 or 14 years until the Beef 'O' Brady's opportunity came along. Randy Smyly went on to open a sports memorabilia business in Little Rock called Eagle Classics, further strengthening the family's sports-restaurant connection.

There's also a coincidental geographic link between the Smyly clan and Beef 'O' Brady's. The restaurant chain, which has 209 locations in 23 states, is headquartered in Tampa, where Drew now plays, after having been traded to the Rays by the Detroit Tigers. And back in his coaching days at St. Leo University in St. Leo, Florida, Todd Smyly was a customer of the original Beef 'O' Brady's in Tampa.

Elliott, the chain's chief, said the company would like to expand in Arkansas beyond its four current locations — Batesville (which opened this year), Bentonville, Fort Smith and Maumelle. "Small towns in Arkansas are perfect for Beef 'O' Brady's, and the ones that we have there do quite well," Elliott said.

Elliott elaborated: "Beef 'O' Brady's, for the most part, is a single proprietor, family-owned business. The brand is very community-oriented. It works very well in medium- and small-sized towns or the suburbs of larger towns. We're a chain but it doesn't really act like a chain. The individual owners have a lot of input. We're huge on the community side of things. It just works in those kinds of places."

The Maumelle Beef 'O' Brady's is open 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. seven days a week.