

THE CALL-UP

Durham Bulls announcer Neil Solondz has been broadcasting in the minors for close to a decade. Are the pros next?

• Like a player who feels he has proven himself at the zenith of minor league baseball, play-by-play man Neil Solondz RC'92 patiently waits for his big break. "There may be many paths on the mountain, but there is only one mountaintop," says Solondz, sounding more like Gandhi than Vin Scully. In his seventh season calling Durham Bulls games in North Carolina, Solondz works for the Triple-A team made famous in *Bull Durham*, the 1988 hit movie about the romantic entanglements of a fan (Susan Sarandon) with a hotshot pitcher (Tim Robbins) and his washed-up catcher (Kevin Costner). In



Neil Solondz

reality, the Bulls, who are the top affiliate of the Tampa Bay Rays, were winners of the Triple-A national championship in 2009.

Beginning his broadcasting career at WRSU, the Rutgers student radio station in New Brunswick, Solondz took to the road upon graduation and landed sports broadcasting stints in locales such as New Jersey, Delaware, and Iowa; along the way, he got a preview of upcoming stars who now dominate major league baseball, including Ryan Howard of the Phillies and Evan Longoria of the Rays.

Each year, Solondz mails countless DVDs and CDs of his work to entice a major league club or broadcasting company, waiting for that one call. He figures his best shot is with a team in a small media market such as the Pittsburgh Pirates or Kansas City Royals. "Durham is a great place to live and work, and baseball is the ultimate challenge in sports broadcasting," he says. "Anyone can call a highlight, but how well you build to the moment is what makes a great play-by-play man."