

*When you are coaching your son or daughter, there are memories that become lost over time. For many, coaching is just for a season or two, while for others it lasts a lifetime. Outside the Fence was written for those who enjoy baseball and blends the emotional side of coaching with the tenderness of a father's love for their kids.*

## ***Outside the Fence***

By JT Anderson

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JT ANDERSON, DC

# OUTSIDE THE FENCE

A FATHER'S JOURNEY FROM  
COACH TO FAN



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## About the Author

JT Anderson has been in chiropractic practice for over 25 years and has been the team chiropractor for the Denver Broncos, Colorado Crush, and Denver Outlaws. He has traveled to Israel on three separate occasions and has a very personal relationship with Jesus Christ. He enjoys studying and teaching the Scripture and exploring biblical history.

His wife, Bethany, daughter, Elayna, and son, Caden, have lived in Parker, Colorado for many years and have built wonderful relationships in the community.

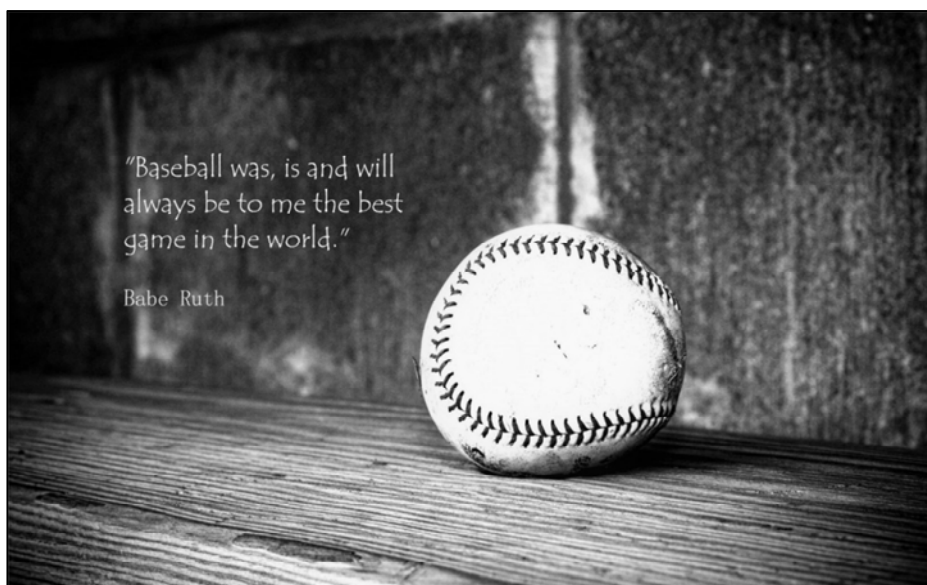
How this book became a reality:

When I was 14, just before my freshman year in high school, I earned a spot on a competitive baseball team as a third baseman. My dad had coached me my entire life, and I remember seeing him on the outside of the fence watching as the team and I were warming up before the game. I thought to myself, “I wish he was able to sit in the dugout or coach first base as he always had in the past.”

Fast-forward many years later, I found myself in the exact same situation with my son, only this time I was on the outside wishing that I were still in. Those bittersweet feelings were what compelled me write a story that would touch other parents and tug on their heart strings. I hope you enjoy *Outside the Fence* and reflect on the memories you’ve created in the past or are creating even today.

Below is a picture of that first game without my dad at the old Lowry baseball complex in Aurora, Colorado. The switch was made from coach to fan.





## **Chapter 1**

### **Change on the Horizon**

In every father's life, when you coach a sport, there comes a day when there is a transition from being on the "inside" to becoming an "outsider." Nobody asks you to give your notice or slides you a pink slip and tells you that your days are done as a coach on the playing field. It just happens, without warning, like it did for my dad all those years ago. And now, I have discovered that this shift has happened to me.

Between my eighth and ninth grade years, I made the All-Star baseball team as a third baseman. While it was an honor and privilege to be picked among some of the better ball players in my area, it was also a life shift for me. My dad has always been there for me, back then and now. Whether it was in life or on the baseball diamond, he was the enduring presence coaching me day in and day out. But that first game



with the All-Star team, I realized that my relationship with my dad had changed. I was fielding ground balls, when I looked over and saw him grasping the chain-link barrier standing between himself and the playing field. I remember thinking to myself, "That's it. He is no longer going to be coaching me. From now on he will be on the outside the fence."

For many years I coached my son's teams, but between Caden's eighth and ninth grade years, I had to pack up my baseball gear, put away my clipboard, and relocate to the bleachers with the rest of the parents. The transition from coach to fan is tough, at least it had been for me. I think I had accepted my new role well, but I still would have jumped at the chance if one of my son's coaches had said, "Hey JT, we could use some help hitting grounders and fly balls to the boys," or, "You coached for a lot of years – what would you do in this situation?" Thus far, it has not happened. Sadly, is it not likely that it ever will. Every week that went by I thought to myself, "Maybe I will be summoned back to the 'inside' where I could use my coaching experience to help the boys and my son once again."

"Dad, do you have time to throw?" Oh, I love hearing those words. "Absolutely," I say with butterflies in my stomach. My 18-year-old son has quite the arm, and I know he can hurt me if I don't focus on each missile that comes my way. It won't be much longer that he will be around to cause me that hand pain, so I always gear up when called to throw and catch his projectiles. I have learned that those moments when your son asks you for your time are more precious than any worldly treasure. The older they get, the more there will be to occupy the hours of their days. Even now there are times when I find myself longing to hear the familiar "Dad" beckoning me from my office.

Harry Chapin's song, "Cat's in the Cradle", follows the story of a father whose son desperately desires his father's attention. Dad, however, is too busy with his own life. The years pass and suddenly the father finds himself lonely and missing his son. He calls him up only to discover that now that his boy has a family of his own, he is just too busy to give time to his old man. That song moved me when I first

heard it, and still pulls on my heartstrings when I hear it. My mind travels to all those boys and girls who had fathers who were too busy to make memories when asked. So many wasted opportunities.

Although my dad traveled for work each and every week, he always made time for me. I do not remember him ever saying he was too busy to play catch or to cheer me on at my sporting activities. Sure, he had to miss the occasional game, but, because he was so available to me, those rare absences have faded from my memory. He was not a rah-rah type of father, nor was my mother. However, inside I knew that they were excited to be there and were proud of my effort.

My most vivid memory was from when I was eight years old. I was new to Colorado, having just relocated from Madison, Wisconsin. My dad walked me to the newly formed Spartan baseball team that was to be my first team sport. It was a spring day with heavy clouds, and I was wearing my black, horn-rimmed glasses. Although I was an athletic kid for my age – a gift from my dad – I was rather skinny and unassuming. He got me settled on the team, then stepped away to the bleachers. From that first day, he established his place in the stands watching and encouraging and directing not just me, but the other kids as well. After a few weeks he was asked to be an assistant coach. That began a six-year run of essentially taking over the coaching responsibilities. Dad would pitch to us and coach third base during games. He was generally only able to make the Thursday practices, but was always there on Saturdays. Back then, Sunday was not a game day. It was set aside, considered to be the LORD's day, a family day, and a day of rest. We never had to experience those exhausting all-weekend tournaments.

Eventually, time caught up and my dad stepped away from coaching. Often after that, when I was on the field, I would look beyond the fence to see him standing there – fingers wrapping the steel loops of the chain-link. It was almost as if he were trying to slip through to encourage and coach the team and me once again. But his time had come to be a fan, outside the fence rather than inside as a prominent figure and coach to our team. Whether as a coach or a fan, my father taught me to work through the tough times and affirmed me

when I succeeded. I never felt that I disappointed him, even during those many times that I felt that I had disappointed myself and let my team down due to an error or a strike out.

The love of sports tends to be generational. When I found out that my wife, Bethany, and I were to have a son, I immediately began thinking of ways to decorate his room. Initially I bought into the traditional baby room décor. But as he got older, I made sure that baseball and other sports began to cover the walls. In fact, the comforter patterned with base paths, gloves, bats, and balls that we gave my son at age five lasted on his bed to just before his 17<sup>th</sup> birthday. But for the most part, as he has transitioned from childhood to teenager and now to a young man his decorative tastes have grown with him. A huge Fathead decal of Target Field where the Minnesota Twins play adorns one of his walls, while scattered across the others are pennants, posters, and framed pictures of his childhood heroes and favorite sports teams. Even the throw rug in his bathroom announced his allegiance to the Twins franchise. His passion for sports he learned from me, and my passion was stoked by my dad.

I don't know about you, but I had a good run playing sports as a kid and even as an adult. Some of the dads and moms that I have met have their own sports histories that carried them through college and even into the professional rankings. I must admit that there are those times when I am talking to friends and I "accidentally" steer the conversation around to my three years playing baseball in a wood bat league starting when I was twenty-nine. It quickly becomes humbling when they turn around and inform me that they played baseball through college and were drafted by a pro team. Why do we do that? I think it is just that it is so hard to leave your heydays behind. Just like the that old Bruce Springsteen song says, "Glory days, well, they'll pass you by".

My dad was an exceptionally good baseball, football, and hockey player in Rochester, Minnesota. In fact, he played baseball and hockey in college. When I was young and even to this day, I never tire of listening to him speak of his youth and his sports successes. I bragged about his prowess throughout my life, even though I never saw him

back then. My most vivid sports memories of my father begin with watching him play softball when he was in his early thirties. To me he was larger than life back then. He played hard, but I never saw him get angry and cuss on the field. Every Friday, families would get together and watch the men of the family play. Then, following the game we would go eat at Godfather's Pizza or some other dining establishment that offered an evening of fellowship and fun.

I remember my mom and dad playing tennis when I was young, and because of their example I picked up a racket myself around the age of nine. The following year I initiated my life-long love for golf. As I tell my kids, "Play sports like tennis and golf, because you can continue those throughout your whole life." Sports brings families together, both building the unity inside a family and creating lasting friendships with other families.

While there are some parents who join in the coaching team, there are many more who are just there to cheer on their little athlete. What a lasting impact that makes on their kids. Of course, some of these kids struggled throwing the ball or batting or running without falling. Some seemed completely disinterested in the game, while others were natural athletes and leaders in their sport.

Tim was one of those natural athletes and leaders. He was a stud in everything he did. But rather than glory in his accomplishments, he also took time to encourage the weaker kids. We played a ton of sandlot baseball, football, basketball, and even street hockey. Tim was always the top pick. He had the best arm, hardest swing, fastest slap-shot, and most accurate jump shot of anyone in our Cherry Creek neighborhood. I was lucky because he lived across the street and took me under his wing. He was two grades older, but since I was held back in first grade, I played baseball and soccer with him for many years. I can remember one amazing soccer performance of Tim's. He won the opening face-off at the midfield stripe, juked to his right, and launched the ball with a mighty kick over the head of the opposing goalie into the back of the net. I had not even gotten my heart rate up before we were ahead 1-0. He continued his domination by scoring two more

goals within five minutes and eventually ended up with five goals total before being pulled in the final period to give some of the other kids a chance to enjoy the game.

Shawn was big. I was twelve when he first came to our baseball team, and I thought we had hit the jackpot. I was right. He was a dominant hitter and an even better pitcher who could make kids whiff in three swings, mowing them down inning after inning. From my position at second base, I watched Shawn manage the game with perfection. Those who found a way to connect with one of his pitches usually hit it to me, because they could not quite get the bat all the way around due to the speed of the ball. At first, I made my fair share of errors on those hits that were rocketed back at me. But then I really began to hunker down, and I found that the stress made me better. I realized that much of the game would be Shawn's pitching and my ability to help the cause by not fumbling a gift that was presented right in front of me. Shawn was a natural leader on the field and in the dugout. He did not brag or belittle others. When someone was struggling, he calmly took them aside and did what he could to help make them better, all at the ripe age of thirteen.

Brett was always humming a tune while playing shortstop out on the diamond. He was a rock next to me at second base and was also my absolute best friend. When he pitched, he threw curve balls that were almost unhittable. Brett could bat right or left depending on the situation and was the best all-around player on the team. When he played at Cherry Creek High School, he started in left field. This was an amazing honor given to the great athletes who have come and gone from that special high school. When it came to basketball, "magic" is all I can say about Brett out on the court. Playing basketball is something that requires touch, coordination, and anticipation. Brett had all three qualities. A natural point guard, he could manage the game with precision. Despite him being a top scorer, he was always ready to accurately pass the ball to other teammates like he had Spiderman webs coming out of his palms. Defensively, his skills caused many turnovers which led to countless buckets on the opposite end.

The difficult thing about coaching basketball is that you only play with five players and the coach must decide on who to play and who to leave on the bench. That is not an envious task. Baseball has more fluidity with nine players on the field at a time, and usually a team of 13-14 kids. You can slide players in and out, satisfying them and their parents. When I was growing up it was important to play all the kids, but participation ribbons were not part of the game. The best players played more than the others – much more – and parents understood. Today, many parents take to the email and social media when they feel their children are being slighted. They lambast the coach for not playing their kid. “I paid good money for my kid to play. How is he going to get better if he’s not in the game?” complained one dad’s email.

Coaching is an onerous calling. It takes balance, couth, self-control, discipline, love, respect, and political savvy to deal with parents, opposing parents, opposing coaches, umpires and referees, and, of course, the varied personalities of your own team. The last time I checked, coaching youth sports is not a paid position. For those who have sacrificed their time, money, and family, my ball cap is tipped to you. I know the commitment because I’ve been there. Getting to a practice early to set up, then staying well past when all the others have left is normal for a coach.

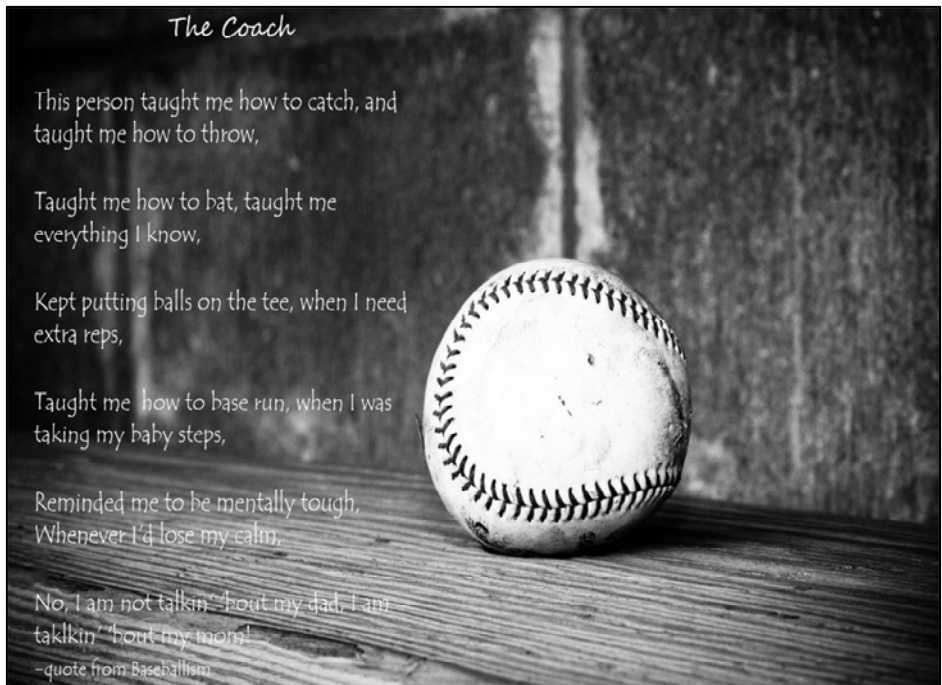
Consider also that not all days are a perfect 72 degrees with a mild breeze. How many times have you spent freezing or boiling just so you can watch your son or daughter play outdoor sports? Can you recall a particularly uncomfortable memory? I can think of many. Playing youth sports in Colorado is an adventure to say the least. Spring baseball includes storms that can dump eight or more inches of wet snow overnight or sting you with pellets of sleet midway through the 5<sup>th</sup> inning after it had been sunny and comfortable 10 minutes earlier. Often, I would see parents who had neglected to check the afternoon forecast huddle together for warmth. Storing heavy coats, gloves, hats, and boots in the car is a wise Colorado move. If there are clouds to the west, a quick run through a Starbucks drive-thru for coffee or hot

chocolate on the way to the game can make the experience of rooting for their child much more bearable. Coaches must tough it out as well. Not all dugouts have covered awnings for protection and the cold wind has no mercy for those who do not dress warmly. How many times do you remember seeing a kid standing on the field without long sleeves, a jacket, or a hat and want to run out to rescue them? But you don't, because you know it is one of those important life lessons that playing sports brings.

Coaching tee-ball and youth baseball is enjoyable and fairly stress free. The goal is to make the game fun for the kids and the parents, while teaching the basic foundations of how to play the game. It is at this level that young players learn about running the base paths, throwing motions, swinging a bat with some coordination, and sliding and getting dirty. They learn that there are nine players on the field, three outs to an inning, and that respect for your coaches, teammates, and umpires is an absolute must. For the most part the games in the youth programs run about an hour or so in length and there are always snacks available after the game. Parents don't worry when their six-year-old makes an error, a strikeout, or a base running blunder. That changes as the game speeds up and the talent starts to rise, and you can begin seeing the "cream rising to the top." I've saved my son's jerseys and some of his hats from those early years, and when I look at the pictures of his youth, often I want to go back in time and relive that innocent, fun period of coaching.

Baseball season begins in the spring and coaches usually will call a parent/kid meeting to get to know one another. The head coach always needs help, and eager parents typically sign up. A designated team mom is a must, and payments are made for hat, jerseys, and pants. When I was young, tennis shoes were fine. These days, Under Armour cleats that cost \$80 or more are the new fashion. The practices are scheduled a few times per week and consist of tossing the ball back and forth in a somewhat organized way, and usually two or three throws are made before one goes horribly wild causing others to duck. Often, the next portion of practice consists of hitting grounders and

working on fielding, including pop flies. Batting is crucial and either a tee is set up or the coach pitches to the team, not too worried about getting drilled by a line drive – at least not yet. Soon enough, the coach is going to want an L-screen to hide behind when adolescent arms begin building strength. The practices can become formulaic, but the formula works and millions of players – from children to the pros – have developed their skills this way. Herding cats is the best way to explain how a coaches' role begins, but practices coalesce to a more solid structure as the players age. The job of coach is tough and often thankless, but men and women do it because of their love for the game and for the players on their team. That is where my story begins.







## **Chapter 8**

### **Be Present**

After a ballgame was over, I loved to go back through it with my dad, talking about every detail that I could remember. We hashed out all the ups and downs, processing through what went right and where I could bring improvement. Caden was quite different. When a game was done, it was done. If he wanted advice, constructive criticism, or a pep talk, he would be the one to engage the conversation. This was a lesson I had to learn over time.

When he was young, I figured that he would want exactly what I had wanted at his age. I would do everything I could to pry as much out of him as I could. I wasn't taking into account that he was his own person and thought differently than I did. When I finally stepped back and looked at his responses to me, I finally had that "a-ha" moment. I recognized all those pre-game and post-game conversations we had where I was doing all the talking and Caden was just there somewhat listening. Rather than looking at the situation as it was, I had been evaluating it by how I wanted it to be. I began backing off, and our drives home began easing up. I learned to pipe down and wait patiently for him to talk to me about the game. Many times, those conversations that I so desperately wanted never came to pass, because he had already moved on and did not want to talk about the game any longer. However, I cherished those days when he did open up. I learned to listen, and soon discovered how much more wonderful it was to listen to my son's voice than to hear my own.

When my coaching career had ended, I often would separate myself while I watched Caden play – staying distant from the other parents. Sure, I would join in conversations between innings and would spend time with my wife and daughter, but I felt that it was especially

important for me to connect with Caden. I wanted him to know that I was there for him. Scanning emails, making phone calls, checking sports scores, and surfing the internet could wait. I remember coaching a young ball player whose dad had extremely helpful insights on what it meant to coach. His wisdom extended to what it looked like to effectively separate being a coach from being a father, and how those two roles can complement each other if approached the correct way. This man had coached his oldest all the way through high school. With his youngest, he decided to let go of the reins and remain on the outside of the fence, allowing his son to be coached by someone else. I gleaned as much valuable information as I could about his past experiences, and the one thing that really stood out was to be present when coaching. But more importantly, as a father I had to ensure that I was present when watching the game, riding to and from the ballpark, and at the dinner table.

This has been a life lesson that I am continually trying to keep my focus on, knowing that the distractions of life can cause those whom you love to feel hurt and unappreciated. How can you become more present in your relationships? Is the phone or social media or television or video gaming pulling you away from family and friends? We are all guilty at times. Being present is something that we can all work on daily.

## **Chapter 9**

### **Kids' Biggest Fans**

When you are inside the fence coaching, it is easier to shelter yourself from the noise and comments of the fans. But sometimes the words leak through, and it can be brutal. It is challenging making sure that the kids are all getting playing time. If one of the parents believes that their child is getting shortchanged with playing time, they are usually quick to verbalize the perceived inequity – often times in language you would not want your worst enemy to hear. The stress builds even more as they get older and the teams become more competitive.

Umpires get it even worse than even the coaches. It seems like they can never please anyone and are target practice for coaches, parents, and fans alike. In 2019 in Lakewood, Colorado, a 13-year-old young man was umpiring a game of seven-year-olds. Some of the parents did not like his calls and let him have it. Other on-lookers stuck up for teenager, leading to an all-out parental brawl on the diamond. Can you recall a parent's rant or someone getting tossed because they went off on the umpire or the other team? Emotions can run high and often they can culminate in anger and embarrassing actions.

I recall one game when a dad got terribly upset when his kid was hit not once, but twice by the opposing pitcher. This grown man came around the fence, pointing his finger menacingly at the young pitcher causing the coaches from both teams to come to the rescue.

Even though there are these occasional incidents where parents let their emotions get away from them, most parents are safe, sane, and under control. That being said, the definition of "under control" can vary from person to person. Did you ever have a fan-dad that dressed the part? They had come to the game decked out in team swag. They

are sporting a uniform ball cap – sunglasses secured snugly to the brim – and a replica jersey, looking like he could step in as coach with a moment's notice? How about that mom who is a little more spirited than the rest, bringing surprised and amused looks from the visiting team's moms while the home team parents avert their eyes in embarrassment? My thought was always, "Go, mom!" Part of sports is allowing yourself to get lost in the game, leaving the rest of the world behind.

What a joy it is to cheer on your kid game after game, season after season. For most parents, they recognize that baseball will never be more than just a way for their kids to have fun and to learn good life lessons. Others, though, carry the hope that maybe this game will turn into something more. The excitement begins as soon as your son throws his first baseball to you and you say to yourself, "This little guy might have what it takes to get to play in the majors someday."

So many dads hinge their hopes on their boy's talents and will do whatever it takes to get them there. They will hire private hitting or pitching coaches, set up tryouts for traveling teams, and download apps to correct a swing or improve throwing patterns. Sadly, the relationship between dad and son can become strained if expectations are not met. Stats show that even the best hitters in baseball fail to hit the ball 70% of the time. If you want to play a sport with a remarkably high success/failure ratio, baseball is not it. Maybe you should consider picking up tennis instead.

I will admit that I was one of those dads who thought maybe baseball would be something Caden would take to a high level. Whether that thought originated in his desires or mine, I don't know. But as the seasons passed by and the surrounding talent began to rise, the reality set in of how extremely rare it is to be able to play baseball into college, let alone all the way to the pros. Once I came to terms with that truth, my thought process changed. I became more relaxed and learned to enjoy the game as I watched my son go through the natural highs and lows of the sport he and I loved.

A baseball glove is one of  
the few gifts you can give  
a 6 year old, 16 year old  
or a 60 year old, and have  
them all equally excited.

—quote from Baseballism





## **Chapter 10**

### **Hard Work**

Hard work will beat talent if talent can't beat hard work. Can you recall a kid who just plain wasn't particularly good? Even though he would give his all every practice, it just never clicked for him. Stevie D. was an intellectual genius and was on my eight-year-old Spartan team and continued through middle school. He was small in stature and weaker than all the other kids, but he never let that get him down. It seemed that at every practice, he was always trying to improve.

In those games when Stevie actually saw playing time, he was relegated to right field in hopes that a ball would never find its way his direction: think of Lupus from the *Bad News Bears* movie. He batted 14<sup>th</sup> out of 14 and was a sure out every time. My father was the designated pitcher, and one day during batting practice an errant pitch plunked Stevie right in the rib cage, dropping him like a sack of potatoes. The poor kid was on the ground writhing in agony for what seemed like an eternity. My dad was with him the entire time with a wry smile on his face. He felt badly, but he also knew Stevie was going to be just fine. It wasn't like he was pitching a ninety-mph fastball to an eight-year-old.

As the years moved forward, Stevie's hard work began to pay off. His positive attitude and refusal to give up led to him becoming an important part of the team. My last season with Stevie was eighth grade. He was solid by then. He still batted last and played right field but gone were the jeers and jokes. Because of his attitude and work ethic, he was one of my dad's favorite kids to coach. I believe that my dad took him under his wing, and he still mentions his name every so often to this very day. If you run into my dad, ask him about Stevie D. and watch him smile.



I had a few Stevie D's on the teams I coached, and I always had compassion and patience for them, at least to the best of my ability. When Caden was 10 years old, I became the head coach of his team and christened our ball club the Twins after my childhood-favorite baseball team, the Minnesota Twins. I ordered cool red sliding pants combined with a blue jersey and hat and a blue belt. The team was colorful, looked great, and never won a single game.

Seven of our twelve kids were not exceptionally talented. They were good kids and I am sure were very skilled in many areas of their lives – baseball was just not one of them. I initially ended up recruiting two dads to help, but by the season's end I had eight fathers trying to keep this team at least semi-competitive. What is interesting is that everyone knew that our team was not very good. We didn't have aspirations to win the championship; we just wanted to win a game. I think that shared challenge brought the team closer together. Everyone felt like they were a part of something bigger than themselves. Caden was the best player on the team and I had him pitch regularly throughout the season. I can remember one game – he struck out fourteen batters in yet another loss, but I was so proud of him and his refusal to give up. Despite being winless, our end of the year party was a huge celebration. We were all so full of memories, laughter, and kudos. That Twins team was my absolute favorite team I have ever coached, and I often think about where those boys are now in their lives. I wonder if that baseball experience still lives on for them as well.

## **Chapter 11**

### **Baseball Cards**

Every week I would race to the store with my allowance money in hand. I knew where to go, and I made a beeline straight there. I was in the store for one reason and one reason only – to buy one of those shiny little packs of baseball cards that were stashed in the small, brightly printed cardboard box. I can still picture the four stacks in each box, never level with each other unless you were lucky enough to be there when a clerk peeled the top off a new one. Oh, the perfection of that newly opened box – it held so much potential, so much promise. Somewhere in those packs were the superstars and the special editions. I just had to pick right. If I happened to come across one of these highly prized cards, I would either tuck it away to admire later or I would use it to make a “trade-of- -century” with a buddy – picking up ten or fifteen or even twenty of his cards for my highly-desired treasure. It was exciting, but there was also so much pressure. If I happened to pull a dud pack, I had no one to blame but myself.

Yes, I was a baseball card collector and still have some great cards to this day. Originally, the cards came in packs of chewing tobacco. Thankfully for the generations of baseball fans since that time, the switch was made to gum. That thin, pink rectangle had a distinct odor that would hit you as soon as the first tear in the packaging was made. Inevitably, the little slab was hard as a rock and could break a tooth if you weren’t careful. The flavor would last about 2 minutes, which in a sense was a blessing. After blowing a couple obligatory bubbles, the gum would be spit into a garbage can or stuck under a desk or tossed into the bushes or carelessly left on the ground to fill the shoe tread of some unsuspecting passerby. Collecting baseball cards was about more than the cards themselves. It was about the experience. I have great

memories of the hours I spent with my pals comparing cards and working trades.

Can you recall some of your favorite player cards? In the 70s and 80s, many looked like they were photoshopped, often to the point that they didn't look real anymore. Others showed off crazy hairstyles and thick mustaches. They wore drab colors like mustard yellow, lime green and faded orange. I think the term "skinny jeans" came from the old-style baseball pants that the players wore. I can remember wearing the same ones. How about the baseball caps? There was no such thing as New Era or any kind of fitted cap back in the day.

I passed on my cards, minus my favorites, to my son. I took great pleasure in watching him spread them out on the floor – organizing them and sorting them into piles based on a secret system that he had developed in his own mind.

Recently I pulled out the boxes and bins with all those cards from our storage room and went through them one more time. I found cards from the primo players like Reggie Jackson, Carlton Fisk, and Steve Garvey. It was surprising to discover the cards from players who never made a big splash on the field, but who later became coaches in the big leagues.

There is the age-old question of do you keep the cards for sentimental reasons, or do you sell them off for the big money? So many of my friends have told me that they were ready to sell their cards, only to discover that their moms had tossed them when they went off to college. Thankfully, my mom knew my love for my collection and never considered throwing them away. Even though I am fairly committed to holding on to my cards, I think I am ready to run them by a card collector to see if they are worth anything. Not that I'd ever sell them...but if the value was really high...still they are a sentimental part of my childhood...but they're just sitting in my storage room...however, maybe my future grandkids will want to see them one day...but I've got a son going to college and a daughter who isn't that far off...hmmmmmm....

## **Chapter 12**

### **Just Like That**

My son was in position to have a breakout junior year in high school and had been told that he had the best camp leading into the spring season on the team. He is an exceptionally good athlete and was penciled in as the leadoff hitter. Winter hit hard in Colorado that year, snowing out the first few games. But sunny Arizona was looming for the scheduled spring break trip for the boys on the team.

I must say my heart swelled with pride at the first game of 2019 on a beautiful field in Glendale. I was sitting with my parents, aunt and uncle, and, of course, my family ready to cheer Caden and the team on. Caden lead off, working the count. He drilled a pitch, slicing away from the centerfielder. For a moment we thought it was going to drop for a double. Not quite. The fielder made a great play for an out. Still, it was solid and promising to start the game.

A few innings later, Caden walked against a lanky lefty, and, with his speed, was given the sign to steal second. A throw-over caught him in a pickle, probably the most exciting play in baseball. Back and forth went Caden, dancing, juking, and finally slamming himself back into the first bag. His landing was awkward but at least he was safe! The game was a good one, tied 3-3 to the end. But the home team had the last say. A man-child, about 6' 4", 230 lbs., with a full beard, absolutely crushed a towering home run deep over the left field fence for a game winning walk-off home run. It was a great game, and nobody hung their head. After all it was the first game of the season, there was no snow, fans were in shorts, t-shirts, and even some flip-flops (including myself).

Following the game, Caden was the last out of the dugout, carrying some of the team's equipment. We greeted him behind home plate.

“Dad, I really jammed my thumb during that pickle,” he said, and I could see the pain in his eyes. I briefly examined the thumb and could see that it was already swollen and starting to turn purple. He came back to my parents’ house in north Scottsdale, and I performed some light physical therapy. Then I wrapped up his thumb with kinesio tape and ice, before he had to make the thirty-minute journey back to the rented house that the team was staying in.

Unfortunately, his thumb injury prevented him from playing in the second game, however he did pinch run a few times. The third and final game, he got in and batted twice. Later he told me how badly the thumb hurt when he made contact with the ball. He could also hardly throw since the injured thumb was on his right dominant hand.

Once he got back to Colorado, the swelling had gone down, and the weather warmed up enough to play outdoors. Life was looking better. Caden started the spring season struggling at the plate and didn’t collect his first hit until the fourth game. He was moved from leadoff down to the fifth batter, and eventually down to the last batter. He couldn’t understand why he was having such a difficult time, and all we could do was encourage him. And even in those times when I would see him wince, he never mentioned the pain he was experiencing with his thumb – not once.

I received a phone call from his coach, who explained that they were going to move Caden down to junior varsity. It was only temporary, he explained, to help him gain some confidence with his batting. I told the coach that he did not need to call me or explain his decision. He replied that he really felt that since Caden was such a solid player and stand-up individual, he wanted to let me know the reasoning behind his decision.

Caden played very well at the JV level for a few games, going 5 for 7 with 7 RBIs and a few stolen bases. He was also able to play centerfield, which is his favorite and best position. Once his confidence had returned, he was brought back up to varsity. Unfortunately, he had lost his starting right field position to a friend of his and was used primarily to pinch run and bat occasionally toward the end of the game. I knew

the frustration was mounting, because he felt he was ready to be reinserted back into the line-up. I spoke to a strength and conditioning coach who worked with a competitive organization called Gameday and asked if he would sit down with Caden and discuss his batting struggles. They met for a few hours over a basket of wings and Caden came back re-energized and focused.

One late afternoon he admitted to me that his thumb wasn't improving, which was the first I had heard anything about his thumb for five weeks. I could see it was tough for him to talk about as he told me how he would often snag the thumb against his right pocket or bang it accidentally against a wall or door, sending sharp pains up his arm. He was even having difficulty writing his homework. I listened in unbelief. All this time he was taking batting practice, fielding, and throwing, and never once had he complained to his coach or to us. That was impressive.

I wrote up a script for a right thumb x-ray and he went to a local facility after school. I had just finished up a round of golf, and when I got home my wife Bethany, with tears in her eyes, met me at the door and said, "Caden's right thumb is fractured." The past 5 weeks came rushing back to me – all that he had gotten done with a fractured thumb. Then my mind shifted to the future with questions about baseball and golf, yard work and other activities that would have to be put on hold. I called a hand physician, Dr. Davis, who is someone I have had a relationship with for over 20 years. He explained that the x-ray made it clear that the ligament had torn a piece of the bone away from a part of the right thumb joint. Caden would be required to have surgery and would be out for 8-10 weeks.

I had to explain to Caden the situation. He was in obvious shock, not able to grasp this diagnosis. But he put his trust in the LORD knowing that all things work out for the glory of God. The surgery went well, and the future was very bright for Caden. I honestly felt that he would come back incredibly strong for his senior year and play baseball at a high level.



## **Chapter 13**

### **Popcorn, Peanuts, Cracker Jacks, and Seeds**

Baseball is rooted in snacks, whether you are in the stands enjoying the game or in the dugout awaiting your next at bat. Gum and sunflower seeds are as much a part of the game as bats and gloves. When I was growing up, there was only one flavor of seeds – David’s Original Sunflower Seeds, roasted and salted. I had pals that were expert seed chewers. They would dump a handful in their mouth, where they would proceed to splice them open individually, separate the seed from the shell, chew the seed, then spit the shell. They had remarkable mouth dexterity. I was a bit lazy for that and did not have the patience for that kind of precision. Whenever I tried the whole inner-mouth separation thing, it would all get mangled. Inevitably, I would give up, chomp the seeds – shells and all – and then spit out a wad of chaos. Sometimes I would swallow the mess, but that would leave me with an upset stomach.

Today, seed roasting and flavoring has become an art. There is a flavor designed to please every palate. You can find salt and vinegar, barbeque, salsa, ranch, and picante. There is mild spice, medium spice, hot spice, and melt your teeth spice. When I was coaching, kids would eat so many seeds their tongues would swell, and they could hardly talk.

One game, when Caden was playing for a competitive team, I decided to pick up the original style Corn Nuts – a snack food made of toasted corn – as a new option to the seeds. He played the game of his life, so it became a ritual for him to eat them during the game. If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.

Once I left coaching, I move to cheering on the team with the families in the bleachers. That is when I learned about all the great



culinary choices that I had been missing while I was in the dugout. Fried chicken, Subway sandwiches, Chipotle, and chips of every flavor. Can you ever remember eating anything healthy at the ball game? It seems that there is an unwritten rule of baseball that the only thing at a game that should be green is the turf on the field. There is a reason why the song speaks of hot dogs, peanuts, and Cracker Jacks.

In 1908, Jack Norworth and Albert Von Tilzer wrote a little ditty that has since become the anthem of baseball. Interestingly, neither of them had ever attended a game before they wrote it. Yet, somehow, they captured the spirit of the game. How many times have you stood during the seventh inning stretch and belted out the following lyrics?

Take me out to the ball game,  
Take me out with the crowd;  
Buy me some peanuts and Cracker Jack,  
I don't care if I never get back.  
Let me root, root, root for the home team,  
If they don't win, it's a shame.  
For it's one, two, three strikes, you're out,  
At the old ball game.

*The People*

The mom who plans the potlucks, The  
players who benefit, The retired ball  
player who gives private lessons, The dad  
working overtime to pay for them, The  
girl on the team, The boys who treat her  
like one of the guys, The grandfather  
who fell in love with a team, The brother  
who slept with his bat, The sister that's  
dragged to his games, The volunteer  
coach who comes straight from work,  
The umpires that put up with him, The  
people who we met through baseball,  
The friends we made because of it.

- quote from Baseballism





## **Chapter 14**

### **“Mask” Quarade**

In November 2019, murmurings of a virus in China began to spread. No one was sure what to make of it. Most people played it off – move along, nothing to see here, no need to panic. How many times have we heard threats of global plagues in the past, only to have them fizzle in the wind? As time went by, though, rather than fizzle this one started to explode. There was a world-wide pandemic in the making and nearly everyone around the globe was about to feel its sting.

During the early weeks of March 2020, my daughter, Elle, was gearing up as a lead in *Mary Poppins*. She is extremely talented and is a natural up on the stage. There was so much community interest in this show that six performances had to be scheduled at the Pace Center in order to accommodate everyone. Showtime came and it more than lived up to the hype. The entire Lutheran High School cast and crew were amazing, and our Elle was a star. Before the performances and then again after, I was greeted by person after person congratulating me on behalf of Elle. I was beaming with pride. Compliments were given, and hugs and handshakes were exchanged. “Social distancing” was still a phrase outside of most people’s vocabulary.

Fast forward one week. Our family had booked a spring break trip to Arizona to watch Caden and his team play ball against teams from other states. A wonderful bonus whenever we travel to Arizona is spending time with my parents. We were excited and ready to go. Then, just like that, the baseball trip was cancelled. The virus was rearing its ugly little head, sending serious shock waves across the country. Undeterred, our family decided to travel to Arizona anyway, and make the most of our spring break without baseball.

After we arrived, Elle and I went grocery shopping to pick up some essentials. When we entered the store, the lines were huge, and some people were wearing masks and latex gloves. What was going on? It took over an hour to check out with our cart-full of groceries. Changes were coming fast! Within two days, restaurants were closed. Then spring training for Major League Baseball was cancelled. Then the NHL, NBA, NASCAR, and every other professional sports league shut down. Our family decided it was best to head back to Colorado, which we did on a flight that was only one-third full.

Soon a stay-at-home order was issued by the government closing churches, schools, businesses, restaurants, and places of social gathering. Was this really happening? It was as if we were living in a bad science fiction movie or a teen dystopian novel. The world economy was tanking fast and unemployment was skyrocketing. Worst of all, people were getting sick and were dying. Thousands, then tens of thousands.

Then the Colorado High School Sports Association issued a statement dated April 21, 2020. It said in part that due to “the inability to ensure operations under the protective guidelines, statewide accountability and public safety through all high school events — that the Association has cancelled all performances, festivals, competitions, regular season and culminating CHSAA-sanctioned spring activities and athletics for the remainder of the 2020 season. Our hats are off to the many seniors that have shown maturity and resolve as their culminating year of high school has been impacted beyond activities and athletics due to this worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. The Class of 2020 will not be forgotten.”

Caden’s senior year of baseball was over before it began. His vision of going out in a blaze of glory was squashed along with those of millions of other students in high schools and colleges all over the world. It was a gut punch to say the least. When I arrived home after hearing the news, I spotted a Class of 2020 sign honoring Caden at the top of our driveway. Memories washed over me like a flood, and then came the tears. I had to pause to collect myself before continuing to

the garage. My son was going to graduate, that was not going to change. It might not be in the conventional way, but it would certainly be memorable. I hurt for those traditions that he would miss out on. But above all, the tears that poured down my face were out of pride. My son was becoming a man. And not just any man, but a man of God, a man of integrity, a man of honor.

Now that high school is behind Caden, the next chapter in his life has yet to be written. This fall it will be off to Grand Canyon University, and he is extremely excited about the possibilities that await him there. I am sure that softball and even playing baseball for a men's over-25 baseball league may be in the cards someday. When he has children of his own, if that is God's will, he will most likely coach in some capacity and get a feel for what it is like to be a dad on the inside of the fence. For me, being the father of a ball player has been an amazing and memorable experience. It has allowed me to make great friends over the years both on and off the field. Time eludes us all, and it really matters what you do between the dashes of your life. As I have become more seasoned in life, I have learned the most important lesson of all and it is found in Joshua 24:15: "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord"

What would I do differently if I could turn back the clock of time? How would I mentor my younger me? Looking back in the mirror, I would tell myself to not sweat the small stuff. All those trivial things that I let become frustrating, annoying, or painful are not worth the emotions that I pour into them – and they certainly are not good for building strong relationships. I would encourage myself to breathe easier, enjoy to the fullest the blessings of encouraging my son, and spend a few extra minutes each day looking around to capture memories that may be forgotten.

Time flies! It seems like yesterday that I was getting ready for one of my first little league games, riding in the back seat with my family to the ballpark. I can recall some of the my more memorable moments on the field – crucial at bats and special plays made at critical moments.

But some of the most special memories surround the interactions with my dad, listening intently and trying to make him proud.

My encouragement to you is to capture memories with your phone or camera and video as often as you can. Originally I used a camcorder, big and bulky. Although the film was very pixelated with way too much motion, I can use those tapes to go back and fill in those gaps that my faulty memory opens. Could I have done more – shot more film and taken more pictures? Of course. But I cherish those recorded memories that I have.

I am thankful that I can hold my head up high and not let regrets or lost memories bring me down. Did I do everything perfectly? Of course not. But I did them to the best of my ability, and that is what gives me peace as I close this chapter of my life. Maybe coaching another little league team is in the cards for me in the future – a way to give back and return to the inside of the fence. This has been my story. I would encourage you to tell yours. Relive past memories, make new ones and cherish the times that you were able to spend both inside and outside of the fence.

## **Chapter 15**

### **Mark's Story**

Coaching your own son is an experience like no other. My story is somewhat different from the traditional “Dad coaching their son’s little league team” and then is finished when son enters high school. I have a picture that was taken years ago that sits on my desk still to this day. It is of my son watching me coach our high school team and he is standing outside the fence watching. This picture has so many meanings, from representing our relationship at the time to a young player looking up to the older players to a kid just wanting to be with his father. For many years, through little league, I felt this picture represented our relationship. A fence put up between us – me coaching at the high school and him off playing in a little league game.

I missed many of his games because of our conflicting schedules. It was never easy getting scores from text messages and updates from my wife on how he was doing. When Blake finally reached high school, the picture finally changed. He was now on the other side of the fence with me. Those four years we had together were some of the most amazing times of our lives. I cannot sit here and tell you it was always easy. There were many trying times, but the time that we got to spend together in the dugout, on the field, and on road trips was nothing short of amazing. I had a first-hand seat in watching my son grow and mature right in front of my eyes.

The last high school game he ever played for our team was one of the toughest days of my life. There was both sadness and elation at the same time. I was his coach watching his successes and a proud father. I am no longer his coach, but as he journeys through his college career at Kansas University, we still talk most nights about the most recent game he has played. There is still a part of me that still believes I am



still his coach. At the same time, I treat each conversation as his father, and I hope that our talks and life lessons will never end. I now have another picture on my desk. This picture is of my son on the field and me standing outside the fence. It has been cool to see our relationship come full circle.

## **Chapter 16**

### **Blake's Story**

Playing for your Dad is something that very few get to do. For as long as I can remember, he had always been a high school coach, so I did not get the chance to play for him until I was much older. Year after year in little league, he was not around because of his conflicting coaching schedule with summer baseball for Cherry Creek. There were many times when he would miss a week or so at a time. I specifically remember winning the championship in a “Father’s Day” tournament one season, and all the other players got to take pictures with their Dads after the game. Since mine was not around, my Grandpa had to take his place and hopped in the picture with me.

After waiting countless games, I finally got the chance to play for my Dad. High school started, and that all changed. Playing for him lived up to everything I expected. Although there were moments, we did not see eye to eye, I would not have traded the experience for the world. When your Dad is a coach, it is easy for other players to believe that the only reason you are on the team and getting playing time is because he favors you. However, Dad always had my back and pushed me to work harder to prove to others that I deserved the playing time. At times in high school, I got frustrated because he would continue to coach me at home about something that happened hours earlier in the game. But looking back, I am glad he did. He has taught me incredible life lessons both in baseball and in life. He has molded me into the player and man that I am today, and I will be forever grateful.



## **Chapter 17**

### **Dennis' Story**

The following is a history of my remembered experiences of the years with my Dad when he was coaching me in my youth. It also an account of how those experiences impacted me as I raised my son in the arena of sports.

To begin, I must go back to my Dad's upbringing in Oklahoma back in the 1930's. He was raised dirt poor, as many were, back in the 20's and 30's, and grew up on a farm in rural Eastern Oklahoma. His past-time, such as it was with the conditions of the time, was baseball. He played with some great standouts in the game and was a particularly good player in his own right. He knew and played with Mutt Mantle (Mickey's Dad) and played against the Dean brothers, Dizzy and Daffy, throughout Oklahoma and Arkansas.

By the time he was 18, he was in the farm system of the St. Louis Browns organization (later changed to the St. Louis Cardinals) and was destined to be called up to the big leagues. Then WWII raised its ugly head. By the end of the war, my Dad had incurred injuries and his baseball playing days were over.

Like many of his peers, he raised three boys to follow in his footsteps. And indeed, he raised us to embrace baseball as he did in his youth! My first memory is when I was seven years-old and he returned from a business trip. I came home from school and there on my bed was a full scale, heavy wool baseball uniform complete with socks and cap – just like the big leaguers! I was so excited that I wore that uniform every chance I got. Even when playing catch with my Dad, and to the practice field to watch him coach my older brothers.

One time, I remember sitting on the bench (naturally wearing my “big league” uniform!) and watching the players practicing. Another kid

on the team convinced me to pour dirt into the drinking jug. When my Dad discovered my deed, instead of whipping the fire outa me, he threw the kid off the team for influencing me to do the deed. Boy was I ever relieved I did not pay the price for that stupid stunt!

Another memory is of my Dad building baseball fields. I remember the construction of the field. Specifically, I recall the grading of the infield with the grader attached to the back of the station wagon. Several of us rode on the grader to provide additional weight. Were we ever a dirty site when finished!

A great memory for me was at the end of the season. For several years, my Dad would take me and a few of my buddies for a trip to Kansas City to watch the Yankees play the Kansas City Athletics, later changed to the KC Royals. Because my Dad knew and played against several known players growing up, he was able to arrange for us to meet and watch up close the warmup sessions of the Yankees. Boy, Casey Stengel was a hoot! What a thrill to meet those guys! He even let us shag balls during their workouts!

Well, over the years I developed more so than my brothers in the sport. My position of choice was catcher, like my Dad. I threw right-handed but batted left-handed just like my favorite player, Yogi Berra. In actuality, my nickname growing up was "Yogi". To this day, I am still referred to by that name when back in the surroundings of Oklahoma. As I developed, I had the good fortune to play against numerous future standouts, including Bobby Mercer, Darrel Porter, and even Johnny Bench who grew up in Binger, Oklahoma.

Having become a decent prospect for a bigger arena, my Dad sent me to a very well-known baseball camp in Chandler, Oklahoma. This was not an ordinary baseball camp. Rather, this was a professional camp administered by former big-league players and was considered to be one of the best environments for the development of potential standouts in the game. The camp was a month long and was complete with lighted fields, manicured diamonds complete with dugouts, and full uniforms. Teams throughout the region would travel to compete

against these "standouts". It was truly the place to go if selected and it was serious baseball!

By this time, my Dad had relinquished coaching duties to better qualified coaches who could develop the skills needed to earn a scholarship to a Division I school. And the school for me was the University of Oklahoma! In fact, another player of note I grew up with and played against was Bo Mitchell, now of Denver who also was in the St Louis Cardinal organization. The baseball field at OU is named after his dad, Dale Mitchell. Dale, who was a lifetime 300 hitter, is remembered as the last strike out of Don Larson's perfect game in the 1956 World Series. Well, unfortunately for me, while I was a big fish in a little pond growing up. My career never developed to the point of making it further than the first year of college ball. I could have transferred to a Division II school and continued my journey, but due to my involvement in the war in Vietnam I decided not to pursue trying to keep it going.

However, my journey did not stop with my Dad. I was blessed to raise a son who followed his Dad and Grandpa in the world of sports. Although he played numerous sports growing up, the sport that "captured" him was Rodeo! That's right, his focus through high school was rodeo. Earning a scholarship in Texas, he became a standout in college rodeo and participated with top riders. He even helped win the National Championship for the school. After his days in college rodeo he turned pro and was on the Pro Rodeo circuit for several years and qualified for the Nationals in Las Vegas. Now that he has "out-lived or survived" that chapter in his life, he has a great family with two baby girls who are being brought up to follow in the footsteps of their Dad, Grandpa, and Great-Grandpa.

Now, I must state the absolute truth of this journey for all to know. The reason for this journey and the level of any accomplishments achieved by my family can be attributed to one overriding source. Our faith in Christ!

I was raised in a semi-religious environment growing up and married a wonderful lady who became a seminary-trained theologian.

She is the Executive Director of Women's Ministry for a megachurch here in Denver and her ministry is one of the largest in the U.S. She is the real reason for any accomplishments and is the center of our family. Both have found success in law and the oil and gas industry. Our son still says, "No sir; no ma'am," but that could be attributed to being a cowboy!

The achievements they both have earned, whether athletically or academically, is totally attributed to the focus with which they were raised. With the steady influence over all the years of walking with the Lord, there is no doubt whatsoever that without that focus the outcomes would not have been the same.

My encouragement to you is to find the Lord, study His Word, cling to His Word, and never look in any other direction but to that of the Cross. We raised our children with these thoughts, and to always remember to focus on an age-old precept we learned many years ago: In our culture, it takes so little effort to be a cut above! Try it with your children, it has worked for us in the raising of our own.

Pray, Praise and Press On! *Jeremiah 29:13*

## **Chapter 18**

### **Gavin's Story**

I had the extreme privilege and honor of being coached by my Dad from tee ball through my high school career. I cannot remember a time where he wasn't there coaching me or cheering me on in some way, shape, or form. There are so many great memories from all those years together, but one of my most cherished memories is when my Dad taught me how to pitch. Anyone who has ever taught their kid how to pitch, you know this is not a 'one and done' deal. I started learning from the stretch, practiced the mechanics every day, then graduated to the full wind up motion. We practiced every day for weeks. Every step of the way he was supportive and tirelessly building me up, pumping me up with confidence, and demanding a positive attitude. I look back on that time so fondly and remember it vividly in my mind. What cemented it in my memory forever was the day when it all came together, and I threw the ball so hard that I scared him. He came home with full catcher's gear the next afternoon! He was so proud of me and all our hard work; words weren't necessary, just the glint in his eyes and the smile on his face. We formed a bond through that experience which would continue to grow as the years progressed. I can proudly say that he is not just my Dad and coach, but one of my best friends.

That is not the end of my story, however. I am a Dad with two sons and a daughter. and my oldest son Blake, is six and his love of the game is through the roof! I always determined I would not pressure any of my kids to play baseball just because it is the game I love most. Blake began hitting off a tee and throwing the ball around the house as soon as his body mechanics would allow him, and his baseball skills became evident. It has been an absolute pleasure to be able to watch his love and understanding of the game grow every single day. When it came



time for him to start playing, I knew I had to coach because over the years I've attended too many games and watched coaches that don't understand basic concepts baseball. They didn't seem to comprehend how to coach the kids correctly or make the game fun for them. As a result, I felt the need to do my part to change that, inspire love for the game, and be a mentor for the kids.

I have only just begun being called "Coach" but having the ability to be part of Blake's baseball story is truly a privilege and blessing. Watching the passion and fire that exists in his eyes as he gets to come out and play a game he adores with his friends and have fun doing so, is something I enormously enjoy and don't take for granted. I know this is for a season in his life and mine and the time will fly by right before my eyes. Before too long, I will be on the outside the fence cheering him on just as my Dad did for me. There will be challenges and it he will have a fair share of bumps in the road. I know from the example my Dad set for me that the best thing I can do is be there to support, encourage and be the greatest fan for my son. My Dad demonstrated the example for me and now I can honor him and continue his legacy by doing the same for my kids. When I sit back and look at my baseball career as a whole, it brings tears of joy to my eyes. I pray for every coach/Dad out there reading this that you're able to do so as well. If not, no worries, you have the power to set the path straight and be the ballplayer, the Dad, and the coach you always envisioned starting now! If you aren't called to coach, be the best cheer leader possible and encourage your kids every day.

## **Chapter 19**

### **Brad's Story**

My story begins when I was 8 years old. I was living in Overland Park, KS and my Dad was the baseball coach for my older brother. I was the bat boy. My brother was an exceptionally good baseball catcher and was one of the best in the area. My Dad pushed him to be better and remember dinners at night with them discussing what he could do to improve his skills. My Dad vocalizes his opinion using harsh words directed at my brother's ability to be a better catcher. Once he began playing high school ball, my Dad stopped coaching, but was still an extraordinarily strong influence on my brother's baseball career. I was still young but witnessed continual verbal abuses pointed at my brother's faults on the field. He was a corporate executive with a fortune 500 company and expected the best. Ultimately, my brother suffered a shoulder injury that prevented him from playing Division 1 baseball and his career was done. The verbal scars remained for many years.

Fast forward to my freshman year in high school. I had been playing baseball at an extremely high level at third base. The high school needed a catcher after the senior catcher busted his ankle. The coach asked me if I would like to move from third base and become a catcher for the varsity team. I was scared but excited about this opportunity. No freshman had played varsity before in my high school. I spent many tedious hours learning the position with no help from my Dad. I was fortunate to have an assistant coach who worked with me and as the spring season started, I was named the starting catcher. Our team was strong with two Division 1 pitchers throwing fast balls over 90 miles per hour. I was a meager 5'6" and weighed 140 pounds but that only fueled my competitiveness and ended the year with a batting average

of .464. I was awarded honorable mention all-league as a freshman. It was a huge accomplishment and a first for my high school.

My parents started to see the talent that I had, and this was the turning point in my baseball career. I played my sophomore year and had a very respectable season. My Dad started noticing my potential and expected me to perform just like my brother. As my high school career continued, I made strides toward becoming the best catcher in the state of Ohio. During those years, unfortunately my parents wanted more from me, the pressure mounting. Again, like my brother, I would have ride homes from games and dinners pointing out all that I did wrong, not focusing on my accomplishments. I was yelled at during games by both my parents if I struck out or did not play to my ability according to their standards. This had a huge effect on my ego. As my senior ended, I felt I could have played Division I baseball, but I was so beat up and drained emotionally by my parents I declined the offers that were provided. I ended my baseball career, distancing myself from my parents to attend college.

I am now a seasoned 51-year-old and have raised two incredible children. My daughter is a national figure skater and my son was in five state championship games while winning three. He finished second team all-state in lacrosse and honorable mention all-state in hockey. I never pushed them, but only provided what they needed to be the best they could be. My discussions after games and competitions was focused on what they did well. Many nights we did not even discuss their events. I had learned from growing up with very demanding parents that if my kids did not perform optimally, they already knew it and did not need my criticism, constructive or not. Both children are thriving academically, socially and athletically. My life lessons, scars and memories of the past has shaped me to become a better father.

I recently lost my mother of 84 years of age. My Dad and I now have a healed and loving relationship and I have forgiven both him and my mom for how intensely they raised me. God has shown me how to become more compassionate and grace giving through the tough times and I will be forever thankful!

## **Chapter 20**

### **Jimmy's Story**

I started playing baseball at the age of six and found success on the playing field early on. In southern California, I had the opportunity to play alongside some incredibly gifted athletes, even some that turned professional. The coaches that were coaching and instructing me throughout my youth and into high school were top notch individuals and cared for me personally. This drove me to be the best coach I could be. My father and mother supported me immensely and always made me feel like I could take on the world.

As we all get older, we understand that our sport careers will end in high school or if we are lucky to make it further, college. I learned a tremendous amount of head knowledge during my time playing; how to treat players with respect and compassion, and I wanted the same in return as I transitioned into coaching. The first order of coaching was how could I motivate my players to work hard for me, and instill respect for the game of baseball and for themselves? I learned to just be myself, love them as players, and let them know how important it is to study hard in the classroom. I found that my tactics worked, and we together won city championships repeatedly. I also built incredible relationships with other coaches, family members and of course, the boys. Twenty years later, I often reach out to those young ball players who are now adults and the memories come flooding back. It was all worth it. I remember thinking if I had a son one day, I would hope a coach would guide him as I had done for my players and be a positive influence in his life.

That dream happened in 2002 when Jacob was born. At a young age, Jake would always pick up a glove and baseball or a football. It was obvious early on that had the right skills sets – the intangibles.

From the first time he put on a uniform, I wanted to spend all the time that I could with my him because I knew it is short-lived. It was enjoyable and I knew that I could give him an advantage that other parents could not. I could be involved personally helping him from an athletic perspective. I knew I had him from age six and before he went high school to be involved, because at some point other coaches would take over. Then I would be sitting behind the fence watching from afar with very little on the field input. I taught him to respect his coaches, his teammates, and the game of baseball the right way. The last thing I wanted to hear was that Jake wasn't a good teammate or didn't work hard or care for others. What was he playing for? I felt he was representing the youth team and eventually the high school logo across his heart and his name on his back of his jersey. He learned to respect his coaches and teammates which makes me enormously proud.

"You spend too much time with your son and coaching," friends often told me, but I knew that the moments would disappear and vanish without warning. I have always told my players and my son, "You earn your wins and you earn your losses – learn from them. Quitting is not an option!" I explained most will have families of their own one day and you cannot quit on them. I was teaching long-term goals. They heard it every day until it became locked in their brains and often a former player will remind me of what I had preached. "Love ya coach" is often exclaimed to me when I we embrace one another.

Baseball was a vehicle for the players and my son to build into their lives. Jake plays high school baseball and has a passion for the game. Our family loves the game and enjoys watching Jake play at a high level. I like to think we have prepared him for his ups and downs, slumps and errors, as well as his successes. I have a heart full of joy knowing I had a hand in making my son's dreams come true on and off the diamond. Life is not all about baseball, but about building long standing relationships. I will be behind the fence in life with my boy until life ends. That is the job as a Dad.

The Task

I can supply you a roof and a  
bedroom to sleep, I can bandage  
your wounds, dry your eyes when  
you weep, I can help you with your  
homework, teach you to read, We  
can have a little talk 'bout the birds  
and the bees, I can work hard, so  
when I'm gone you'll have wealth,  
But I can't swing your bat kid, you've  
got to do that yourself.

-quote from Baseballism





## **Chapter 21**

### **Brian's Story**

I never started out planning to coach my son in baseball. I never wanted to be that “Dad Coach!” Once he began playing, however, I didn’t care for the coaching style that I had seen on the field as I felt they were missing the point in what it meant to coach kids. It is not about wins and losses, it is about teaching the kids the game the right way and making it fun. It is about teaching them to deal with the “on the field failures” and how to bounce back from them. That is why I jumped into coaching and, looking back, I do not regret one minute of it.

My son dealt with all the issues of being the coach’s kid. I was tough on him – probably tougher than any other kid I had coached. He had to listen to all the things I did not like about a practice or a game, whether it involved him or not. He took it like a champ and taught me how to talk and relate to my son – how I cannot let outside forces influence my relationship with him. He was young when we started the journey together, and I think we both learned some incredible lessons in the process. Practicing two or three times a week and spending the entire weekend playing games, road trips to Omaha or Arizona, the time we spent in the truck just the two of us – those are memories that will never be replaced.

I remember following his 7th grade summer season I did not think I had it in me to coach another year. At the end of the season I was having a conversation with my son and another player. We had lost on a wild pitch and our season was over. My son was catching while the other kid was the pitcher. They were both devastated and very emotional. Each blamed themselves. Trying to talk to 13-year-old boys about this lost opportunity was extremely difficult. I did not place the



blame on either kid, but I could tell that they had placed the weight of the world on their shoulders. I explained to my wife; "I think this is it. I am burnt out with coaching." Following the heart-breaking loss, the young pitcher's Grandpa, pulled me aside. He had been a coach and athletic director at high schools in the area for years. Grandpa Joe explained, "You are handling this situation perfectly. These boys will remember playing for you and appreciate what you have taught them during the good times and the bad." That sealed the deal for me. I was back in right then and there! Grandpas can provide valuable wisdom and I will always be thankful for his guidance.

When high school came along, I figured it was time to get out of coaching and let him play for someone else. We spent more time together during those years, when I was on the outside of the fence as a fan, than we had the previous four while coaching. Before high school tryouts we would get to the field early, throw and take infield. We would hit off the tee at home. Whatever it took to make the team, he did it. As he progressed through high school, I found the time we spent in the cage or hitting off the tee became more than just baseball. We were building a great father and son relationship. He opened up, talked to me about his day and what was going on in his world beyond the diamond. His senior year we hit every day. EVERY DAY! Those 10 to 15 minutes a night I will never forget.

Although I cannot say I was pleased entirely with the coaching tactics during his high school career, I believe he got what I wanted him to get out of the game. How to work hard. How to deal with other people. How to come back from failures and keep fighting. Those are the lessons which will serve him the rest of his life and what baseball has meant to me. Carson got the validation he needed; hard work pays off. First team all-conference and honorable mention all-state! The opportunities to continue to play ball in college were there, but he was ready to move forward with the next phase of his life. The journey of coaching my son is complete, but the life lessons will always remain.

As a father who coached his son, the best memory is probably his senior day, when he explained to those listening that his most

treasured memory was playing for his Dad. There is one thing in this world we cannot get back and that is time. God does not give us more time and I am glad I took advantage of it with my son!



## **Chapter 22**

### **Ben's Story— former professional pitcher for the Houston Astros**

My Dad coached me between the ages of 9 through 12 and it was a good bonding experience for us. I have fond memories of car rides to the ball field and driving to the Dairy Queen following a game. He was an encourager and patiently coached me with the insights he had gleaned over the years with the game of baseball. One thing he always made sure of, as a coach, is to not show favoritism to me, even as an all-star player. Another fond memory as a youth was helping my Dad build a baseball complex, getting the fields ready for the opening day or repairing them in the middle of the season. Playing and volunteering always went hand in hand with baseball. After Dad stopped coaching me, he watched me play when his work schedule permitted it. He saw me pitch in high school, college, and then professionally. It was always a comfort to see him in the stands no matter what level I was playing. He was always supportive and never pushy.

When it came time to coach my own kids, I was extremely excited to provide my past baseball experiences and coached baseball and softball for all of them; 2 boys and a girl, through 11 years old. It was just as big of a bonding experience for me and my kids as it was for me and my Dad. There was not a role I did not participate in, from dugout organizer to head coach. I followed my Dad's lead and volunteered on the board of most every league I coached in. It always was a family event when it came time to play baseball and my wife was always rooting us on from the stands. Being competitive was something I always kept in check and realistic, especially with my own kids. I felt that having fun playing the game, including all the kids, was most important and keeping a positive attitude worked better than venting

any frustrations. I had more baseball knowledge than was really needed for the level of competition during my coaching years. I matched new skills and drills with the kids' interests and ability to create a fun environment coupled with a competitive edge on the diamond. I kept it simple until I got the opportunity to be the pitching coach for my son's high school team.

The summer before his senior year he was playing ball with his high school's team. While driving with the head coach to the store for some water he asked if I wanted to be the pitching coach for the next year. I jumped at the chance! I was able to get back on the inside and spend quality time with my son. After finishing my coaching career, I attended as many games for all my kids as I could. I encouraged them and gently gave them coaching tidbits along the way. Becoming the high school pitching coach allowed me to work with older athletes at a deeper level than I had before. My son was not a pitcher, but we spent a lot of time together during practices and games. It was a real blast and our relationship grew because of it. I was not only able to help the pitchers with their mechanics, but also with the mental aspects of the game. Another bonus was being able to coach the catchers on the team, showing them how to work hitters and influence the pitcher's emotions. My Dad set an example for me that I passed on to the next generation and the opportunity to spend time as a coach with kids will never be forgotten.

## **Chapter 23**

### **Randy's Story**

Las Vegas is hot! I had not played there before. The fastballs and the heat are scorching. It was a tough day on the diamond, but we were in Vegas with my team and looking forward to the refreshing pool following the game. My ankle hurt but I had played through it. It was about as close to broken as you could get without being a fracture. I would wrap it up tight before games, take some Tylenol and get after it. Even at 75%, the team still needed me. Looking back, the coach of my team did not understand my desire to be a part of the team at all costs. The year before I had established myself as a core player. I was the designated hitter on the varsity team as a sophomore and was top ten in batting average in the daunting Centennial League of Colorado. I believe I was second or third on the team in overall batting average. My coach was distant and I had lost some respect for him because of the lack of communication and his inability to relate to the players. I began my sophomore year playing on the junior varsity (JV) but my abilities on the diamond caught the eye of the Varsity coaches and was brought up to play for one game. I had one of just three hits for the team off the best pitcher in the conference who was headed to a Division I school. It was a ground rule double to dead center field. I could not believe I did it. But that hit solidified my confidence that I was good – I could play at this level. Then, the next week it was back down on JV. “That’s alright, I thought, I’ll prove myself and find myself back up to the varsity squad.” I had fourteen RBIs in one game – a grand slam, a three-run bomb, a bases loaded triple, another triple with runners on, a double, and an intentional walk. I also pitched a complete game. It was on my birthday and I gave the game ball to my Dad. The opposing coach was furious after the game. “What the bleep

is that kid doing on JV” he asked my coach. Frustration was growing as I deserved to stick with the varsity squad.

“I can keep going, I just have to prove it to them.” During the summer season I batted forth and our team put up video game type of numbers. We went undefeated and won the summer league state championship. During one summer afternoon game we were down in the bottom of the seventh inning. The coach had benched me for the entire game because I had been late. The back story was that he had me mow grass with a crew around town and this one job had me running late to the game. Our team was down 1-3 in the bottom of the seventh, and our best player got injured. I pinch hit for him. With a runner on first I hit a 440-foot home run over the center field fence to tie the game. The game ended in a tie, but not a loss!

Going into my junior year I established myself as a leader on the varsity team, but the coach did not think I could run due to the old ankle injury. I remained the designated hitter although my ankle was strong, and I had made full recovery. My Dad encouraged me to prove myself, keep my head up, mouth shut and eventually the coach would realize I deserved to play on the field. I used his advice as motivation. He also was my protector and remember following a game that I did not get a chance to play on the field, he approached our coach, face red with anger. “Coach, can I talk to you.” I had not seen my Dad that angry, before or even to this day. “Randy’s the best outfielder you’ve got on this team, he’s put in the work, he’s proven himself, his ankle’s damn near broke and he’ll get the job done.” From that time forward, I was penciled in to play in the outfield. Sometimes a Dad needs to be heard and will always be grateful for him.

When my Dad had lost his cool, an emotional moment that he is probably not proud of, I realized that he was my biggest fan. This was a game he loved, and he loved watching his son play. As an adult, I have been able to coach many teams at a high level and will always use the memories to encourage the players and become a positive influence in their lives. All thanks to my Dad!

## **Chapter 24**

### **Bill's Story**

My father coached me, and his father coached him, so of course I was going to coach my son and daughter and teach them the great game of baseball and softball. It is a special time when you can teach the fundamentals of a game to your kids. Swing this way, throw like this, round the bag. If you teach them, then you have confidence they are learning the skills the right way. The fundamentals sometimes cannot be entrusted to a stranger. From our past, our family coaching style was proven, we all had been exceptionally good ball players through the generations. My grandfather even played professionally. The only way to teach your kids how to play well is if you do it yourself and coach them. Or so I thought!

One day my wife came to me and said she wanted the kids to learn how to dance. Not your typical form of dance though, she wanted them to learn more about our Hispanic culture and learn how to dance ballet "Folklorico." I thought to myself, I don't know anything about dancing and I certainly have no clue how to do the Mexican Hat Dance. My kids don't know how to dance, and I can't show them. I am a baseball and softball coach! This is going to be a disaster!

So that summer, we had ball practice and we played our games. My kids were all-stars and I was proud of them. I had taught them how to play and I coached them and now they were shining. A few days a week my wife would also take them to do their dancing. I wasn't involved much however and had scheduled work around coaching the kids' ball games.

A few weeks had passed, and my wife told me that the kids were going to be dancing at a festival and I needed to come watch them. Of



course, I wanted to watch them, but I was nervous. What if they were not particularly good?

When they started to dance, I was so anxious, and I might have even been a little scared for them as well. Within a few seconds however all my stress dissolved, and I was overcome with joy and pride. They were fantastic! They danced as though they had been doing it for years. Their moves were precise and elegant. They were dancing, and I was crying. I had never been prouder of them. They were excelling at something and I had nothing to do with it. They were doing it on their own without any coaching from me.

My kids are much older now and they are very accomplished ball players and I am honored by that. But when I look back at it now, I was never more emotionally touched than when they danced.

## **Chapter 25**

### **Josh's Story**

My baseball story started at a young age; not much different I suppose than most kids. I don't remember it being a long affair that developed over time; I was just in love with baseball from day one. My aunt would take me to the parks and rec baseball starting when I was in elementary school. I remember going to practice, rain or shine, and never ever getting enough of it. I played the game from that time on. I tell everybody I know or anybody who has ever asked about my baseball story that I genuinely believe the good Lord put baseball in my life to give me direction and purpose. Everybody needs a focus and a positive; for me that was being outside, playing baseball.

My baseball playing career was one of solid success. When I was nine years-old my mom remarried and we moved to his hometown of Eaton, CO. If you know anything about high school baseball in the state of Colorado, you are familiar with the Eaton Fightin' Reds Baseball program. As a youth, Eaton kids participated in summer baseball and our teams won many championships. Once we moved to Eaton, I did not have a single season that did not include being a part of that program. In high school I was honored to play in two state championships. I was blessed to be raised in a baseball program run by the one and only Jim Danley; the winningest high school Colorado baseball coach of all time and one of the winningest high school coaches in the United States! Coach Danley's program was storied, and his success was amazing to be a part of. In 44 seasons as Eaton's head coach, Jim Danley's record was 807-163-2; that is a Colorado best for wins and tied for the nation's top prep winning percentage! I look back now and realize how much I learned from him and my coaching reflects the fundamentals and ideals he bestowed upon me. Danley was

intense as he was demanding. As a player, I didn't always appreciate that, but it made me who I became. I was a second-generation Schneider to play for coach. In his early years at Eaton he was also my dad's varsity coach. In 2016, I was devastated to hear a group of disgruntled parents gained enough power and convinced the Eaton Athletic Director and School Board to fire Jim Danley. Over the years Coach and I have stayed close and that relationship is precious to me. Although I never won that elusive state championship as an Eaton Red, I was selected the 3A player of the year. As an All-State player, I received many All-Conference awards and, more importantly, my high school baseball career gave me the opportunity to continue my education.

My college career began at the junior college level and I was always chasing my dream of playing professional ball. My sophomore year I was recruited to a 4- year program and made the step into the NCAA. An opportunity arose to transfer to the University of Nebraska, but without guaranteed playing time I chose to stay where I was. I got positive signs from scouts from Atlanta, Tampa Bay, and Oakland, but despite my dream to play pro it was not God's plan for me. This was difficult to accept, and the end of my playing career was hard for me to handle; one of the hardest things I have ever gone through if I am being honest. I felt such a void when the game I loved so much no longer wanted me, and the "beer softball league" did little to fill that ache. As one door shut, another one opened.

I had never considered a career as a coach or in the education realm. I always, foolishly maybe, planned on a professional baseball career. But with a loving push from my wife, I applied for an assistant high school coaching job while I was finishing my college degree. I was hired by Eaglecrest High School the summer before our first child was born. The opportunity allowed me to continue to be a part of the game of baseball and I still felt like a kid playing the game; but it was new and exciting. Sharing baseball, but in a role of teaching and molding young players was unexpectedly perfect! I love being a part of the team, and although it was a different role than I had ever envisioned, I quickly

realized it came very naturally. With maturity and the disappointment of things not going the way I had planned, God showed me quickly that his plan was greater. It allowed me to be home with my growing family and form relationships with young men who needed not only baseball direction, but more importantly, a male role model. I felt like I could still help with the outcome of the game and I got to share my love and passion. And more importantly I got to share my faith and my story. I soon found myself on the phone with Coach Danley, asking for his advice and reminiscing about old times. As an adult, it was easy to look back and see the influence he had on me. As I began coaching, I realized how important it was for me to make a difference in a kid's life, just as baseball had made such a difference in mine. My coaching philosophy is that of a college mentality, working hard to play the game at a high level. Playing baseball became second nature due to the strong program that I was exposed to in my youth and high school. As I started my coaching career, I realized how different baseball was for other kids; I could not rely on "the program." I had to teach fundamentals at the high school level. I believe in keeping it simple, as Coach Danley says, "it's not a hard game, you have to field the ball, throw the ball, and hit the ball."

I became a varsity head baseball coach in 2001. I coach with an easy-going personality; some would say like Coach Danley, I am not a yeller and I do not micromanage my players. I like to let my players figure out how to solve their own problems. I guide them but I do not harass them. I believe strongly in letting a player seek their solutions. I give large amounts of responsibility to my players and in turn they take ownership in their play and their team. If you let them own it, they take more control of it. The team is not mine; I am just one piece of the puzzle as we try to complete the final project. Having been a head varsity coach, my time was largely dedicated to that endeavor.

My son Brody, born in 2000, didn't miss many games and one of our favorite family photos is him sitting next to me during a game on a bucket of balls, dressed in a uniform made by his grandma to match the team. Brody never knew a stranger. My high school guys were like brothers to him and at times he was too comfortable on the field. I have a unique philosophy about coach's kids – everyone thinks they get

special treatment and that is why they get playing time. The reality is they spend so much time immersed in the game from an early age that a coach's kid is just more apt to be a prodigy. As Brody grew, I focused on the prep level and he went from t-ball, to coach pitch, to competitive majors. I was never his head youth coach but was blessed with great coaches that surrounded him. Many of them are still a big part of his life to this day. I was lucky to be allowed a supporting role with a lot of those teams, but it wasn't until his freshman year in high school that we began our first year together as head coach and player. This transition was smooth for us but looking back I can tell you I was extremely tough on him, tougher than I was on my other players. I saw the potential and I knew he could handle it. We would hear the rumblings from the stands from time to time about his playing time and how it only came because I was the coach, but I can tell you he always earned everything that he received. The thing people do not see, and maybe it is an unfair advantage, but when team practice is over the coaching does not stop when you go home. We spent a lot of hours outside of traditional practice, hitting and working. I had been given the advice that once you left the field, your son was your son and at home you were dad, but that did not work for either of us. Brody craved the structure and support, but more importantly he needed the push. His sophomore year he was an All-State player at our small school.

He was becoming very driven and unsettled in his current environment so at the end of that sophomore year he transferred to a larger high school to complete his prep career. I wasn't disappointed! I was proud of his decision even though it meant I would no longer coach him. I committed this to prayer and reflected on how it would be in a different league and classification and not having me as his coach. Would I see him play? Would I miss too much? God quickly answered, and not unlike Coach Danley I was forced out of my position soon after Brody transferred. I again looked to Danley for the grace and maturity with which he had handled the situation. He and I had remained close and I had been so disgruntled at what had happened to him. But he

had no ill-will or hard feelings about how his coaching career ended, so I resolved myself in knowing that God had simply given me a lot of time for spring baseball to enjoy watching my son. Ironically, but not by coincidence, a greater plan was already in place and when Brody's high school coach left his position, I was sought out to apply. I was not given the head varsity coaching position and I was ok with that, but I did accept the assistant varsity job and it was the best situation for all of us. I was still able to be a part of his career and I was still doing what I loved the most, coaching the greatest game ever without all the headaches of being in charge. Brody had an amazing high school career; I still cannot believe how fast those 4 years went by. He ended up playing in 3 state tournaments, All-State honors all three of those years, and was even named an All-American as a senior. One of his last high school games in the State Championships happened to be against the old Eaton Reds, under a new coach by then. As the game sat tied 1-1 at the top of the 7<sup>th</sup> Brody cracked a solo home run to end my alma mater's run at a state championship. That bomb in a way, was for me and for Coach Danley. What an amazing game, an amazing senior year, and an amazing high school career. And what an amazing ride for his greatest fan; his Dad and coach. It was a ride that only our Lord and Savior could have put together for the both of us.

Brody is now in college and playing the game he loves. We are grateful for the games we get to see and even more grateful for every opportunity this game has afforded him. I continue to coach. It won't be the same without him on the field, but it's still the game I love and actually will bring me closer to him even though he is now in another state, well on his way to becoming a grown man. Coaching is a way of life for myself and my family. I have been blessed by the experience and although my life did not turn out the way I planned; I know it has gone exactly the way God intended.

The name on the front of  
jersey represents who you  
play for, the name on the  
back of the jersey represents  
who raised you. Do them  
both justice.

—quote from Baseballism



## Chapter 26

### Famous Homerun Calls and More (PredictEm.com)

**Jack Brickhouse:** “Hey hey!”

**Ernie Harwell:** “Long gone!”

**Vin Scully:** “Forget it.”

**Harry Caray:** “It could be, it might be, It is! A home run!”

**Chris Berman of ESPN:** “Back, back, back, back... Gone!”

**Ken “Hawk” Harrelson:** “You can put it on the board.. Yessssssss!”

**Dave Niehaus (Grand Slam call in which he emphatically screams:)**  
“Get out the rye bread and mustard grandma, cause it’s GRAND SALAMI TIME!”

**Harry Caray:** “Hello again, everybody. It’s a bee-yooo-tiful day for baseball.”

“Holy Cow!”

**Casey Stengel:** “Ability is the art of getting credit for all the home runs somebody else hits.”

“All right everyone, line up alphabetically according to your height.”

“Good pitching will always stop good hitting and vice-versa.”

“I don’t know if he throws a spitball but he sure spits on the ball.”

“Most ball games are lost, not won.”

“The team has come along slow but fast.”



**Rickey Henderson:** "If my uniform doesn't get dirty, I haven't done anything in the baseball game."

**Babe Ruth:** "If I'd just tried for them dinky singles I could've batted around .600."

"If it wasn't for baseball, I'd be in either the penitentiary or the cemetery."

"All I can tell them is pick a good one and sock it. I get back to the dugout and they ask me what it was I hit, and I tell them I don't know except it looked good."

**Nolan Ryan:** "One of the beautiful things about baseball is that every once in a while you come into a situation where you want to, and where you have to, reach down and prove something."  
"I can honestly say it took two full years for me to get over the fact that I was no longer a baseball player."

## Chapter 27

### Chris Berman's Famous Baseball Nick Names

Brady Bunch Anderson	Rick See Ya Later Aguilera	George Taco Bell
Jason Raspberry Bere	Bruce Eggs Benedict	Jesse Belly Up to the Barfield
Bobby Bad to the Bonilla	Britt Third Degree Burns	Matt Son of a Beech
Bo Diddley Jackson	Pat South of the Borders	Matt Forever Young
Kent Buy a Vowel Hrbek	Rollie Chicken Fingers	Tom Dirty Henke
Dave Supreme Court Justice	Chris Hammond Cheese	Sam Little Big Horn
Chuck New Kids on Knoblauch	Joe Magrane Headache	Ty Corn on the Cobb
Juan Going Going Gonzales	My Cousin Vinny Castilla	Jeff Pin the Tail on the Bronkey
Jim Gott the Win	Barry Savings Bonds	
Tony Gwynn and Bear It	Andres the Giant Gallaraga	Jeff Brown Paper Bagwell
Bernard Innocent Until Proven Gilkey	Red-Hot Chili Davis	Cecil Espy N
Bruce Bochy Ball	Johnny Quaker Oates	Leon Bull Durham



## Chapter 28

### Baseball Movies

Isn't it great to sit down and watch a movie about baseball? What was your favorite, and do you find yourself quoting a line or two? Here are my top 10 with my favorite quotes.

1. *Bull Durham* (1988)- Crash Davis: Your shower shoes have fungus on them. You'll never make it to the bigs with fungus on your shower shoes. Think classy, you'll be classy. If you win 20 in the show, you can let the fungus grow back and the press'll think you're colorful.
2. *The Natural* (1984)- Roy Hobbs: Fred, it took me 16 years to get here. You play me, and you'll get the best I've got.
3. *The Sandlot* (1993)- "You're killing me, Smalls!"
4. *The Bad News Bears* (1976)- Coach Buttermaker: Listen Lupus, you didn't come into this life to sit around on a dugout bench, did ya? Now get you're a\$@ out there and do the best you can!
5. *42* (2013)- Reporter Four: Whatcha gonna do if one of these pitchers throws for your head? Jackie Robinson: I'll Duck!
6. *A League of Their Own* (1992)- Jimmy Dugan: "Are you crying? Are you crying? There's no crying. There's no crying in baseball!"
7. *Field of Dreams* (1989)- Besides the obvious, build it and they will come. Archie Graham: We just don't recognize life's most significant moments while they're happening. Back then I thought, "Well, there'll be other days". I didn't realize that that was the only day.
8. *Eight Men Out* (1988)- Buck Weaver: You get out there, and the stands are full and everybody's cheerin'. It's like everybody in the world come to see you. And inside of that there's the

players, they're yakkin' it up. The pitcher throws and you look for that pill... suddenly there's nothing else in the ballpark but you and it. Sometimes, when you feel right, there's a groove there, and the bat just eases into it and meets that ball. When the bat meets that ball and you feel that ball just give, you know it's going to go a long way. Damn, if you don't feel like you're going to live forever.

9. *Moneyball* (2011)- Billy Beane: I'm not paying you for the player you used to be, I'm paying you for the player you are right now.
10. *Major League* (1989)- Lou Brown- 'Forget about the curveball, Ricky. Give him the heater!'

## **Chapter 29**

### **Field of Dreams and Bull Durham**

#### **Quote from the movie, Field of Dreams**

Ray. People will come, Ray. They'll come to Iowa for reasons they can't even fathom. They'll turn up your driveway not knowing for sure why they're doing it. They'll arrive at your door as innocent as children, longing for the past. "Of course, we won't mind if you look around", you'll say, "It's only \$20 per person". They'll pass over the money without even thinking about it: for it is money they have and peace they lack. And they'll walk out to the bleachers; sit in shirtsleeves on a perfect afternoon. They'll find they have reserved seats somewhere along one of the baselines, where they sat when they were children and cheered their heroes. And they'll watch the game and it'll be as if they dipped themselves in magic waters. The memories will be so thick they'll have to brush them away from their faces. People will come Ray. The one constant through all the years, Ray, has been baseball. America has rolled by like an army of steamrollers. It has been erased like a blackboard, rebuilt and erased again. But baseball has marked the time. This field, this game: it's a part of our past, Ray. It reminds us of all that once was good and that could be again. Oh...people will come Ray. People will most definitely come.

#### **Bull Durham quotes:**

"A good friend of mine used to say, 'This is a very simple game. You throw the ball, you catch the ball, you hit the ball. Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose, sometimes it rains.' Think about that for a while."

"Man, the sucker teed-off on that like he knew I was gonna throw a fast ball. He did know. How? I told him."

"I'm your new catcher and you just got lesson number one: don't think, it can only hurt the ballclub."

"Man, that ball got outta here in a hurry, you know anything that travels that far ought to have a damn stewardess on it, don't you think?"

"Quit trying to strike everybody out. Strikeouts are boring and besides that, they're fascist. Throw some ground balls. They're more democratic." - Crash Davis to Nuke

"There are 108 beads in a Catholic rosary. And there are 108 stitches in a baseball. When I learned that, I gave Jesus a chance."

"Think classy, you'll be classy. You win twenty in the show, you can let the fungus grow back on your shower shoes and the press will think you're colorful."

"You guys...you lollygag the ball around the infield. You lollygag your way down to first. You lollygag in and out of the dugout. You know what that makes you? Lollygaggers!"

## **Chapter 30**

### **My Favorite Yogi Berra's Famous Quotes**

1. When you come to a fork in the road, take it.
2. You can observe a lot by just watching.
3. It ain't over till it's over.
4. It's like déjà vu all over again.
5. Baseball is 90% mental and the other half is physical.
6. A nickel ain't worth a dime anymore.
7. Congratulations. I knew the record would stand until it was broken.
8. You better cut the pizza in four pieces because I'm not hungry enough to eat six.
9. You wouldn't have won if we'd beaten you.
10. I usually take a two-hour nap from one to four.
11. Slump? I ain't in no slump... I just ain't hitting.
12. The future ain't what it used to be.
13. We have deep depth.
14. Pair up in threes.
15. You've got to be very careful if you don't know where you are going, because you might not get there.
16. All pitchers are liars or crybabies.
17. He hits from both sides of the plate. He's amphibious.
18. I'm a lucky guy and I'm happy to be with the Yankees. And I want to thank everyone for making this night necessary.
19. I'm not going to buy my kids an encyclopedia. Let them walk to school like I did.
20. In baseball, you don't know nothing.





## **Chapter 31**

### **Quotes about the Game of Baseball**

"The minute you're satisfied with where you are, you aren't there anymore." – Tony Gwynn

"People ask me what I do in winter when there's no baseball. I'll tell you what I do. I stare out the window and wait for spring." – Rogers Hornsby

"There are three types of baseball players: 1. Those who wonder what happens. 2. Those who watch it happen. 3. Those who make it happen." – Tommy Lasorda, Dodger Manager

"Never let the fear of striking out keep you from playing the game." – Babe Ruth

"Whoever wants to know the heart and mind of America had better learn baseball, the rules and realities of the game." – Jacques Barzun, American Historian

"A ball player has to be kept hungry to become a big leaguer. That's why no boy from a rich family has ever made the big leagues." – Joe DiMaggio, NY Times April 30, 1961

"I'd rather try hitting a hummingbird than a knuckleball" – Pete Rose

"A full mind is an empty bat." – Branch Rickey

"The pitcher has got only a ball. I've got a bat. So, the percentage in weapons is in my favor and I let the fellow with the ball do the fretting." – Hank Aaron

"Hit 'em where they ain't." – Wee Willie Keeler

"Close doesn't count in baseball. Close only counts in horseshoes and grenades." – Frank Robinson

"I'd rather be lucky than good" Pitcher Red Barrett

"Yet today, I consider myself the luckiest man on the face of the earth." Lou Gehrig July 4,1939

"If you don't play to win, why keep score?" – Vernon Law Pirates Pitcher

"We need three kinds of pitching: left-handed, right-handed and relief." St. Louis Manager Whitey Herzog

"I knew I was in trouble when they started clocking my fastball with a sundial." Pitcher Joe Magrane

"There are only two things a manager needs to know: When to change pitchers and how to get along with your players." – Senators Manager Bucky Harris

\*Famous Baseball Quotes- "We love baseball and hope to be a resource of famous baseball quotes for you!"

## Chapter 32

### Youth Sports Charities

If you feel lead to support a baseball charity, here are 6 wonderful organizations.

1. **The Fresh Air Fund** – This charity assists children only in New York City. It provides children from families with financial hardships the opportunity to be involved in summer camps and sports activities. Volunteer hours, host families and donations are needed to provide kids with a great outdoor experience. [www.freshair.org](http://www.freshair.org)
2. **Global Sports Foundation** – This charity focuses only on baseball, but their reach is global. The Global Sports Foundation provides gently used and new baseball gear to kids and adults in the U.S. and across the globe. They also organize fundraisers and special events to assist families with medical bills and living expenses due to severe medical ailments or diagnoses. [www.globalsportsfoundation.org](http://www.globalsportsfoundation.org)
3. **Project Fit America** – If you're donating to youth sports and you'd like your donation to impact U.S. schools, Project Fit America is the charity for you. By providing schools with new equipment, training and materials to develop a successful fitness program, this charity believes in healthy kids from the very beginning. [www.projectfitamerica.org](http://www.projectfitamerica.org)
4. **Right to Play** – If you're looking for youth sports charities that have a more global impact, Right to Play might be the perfect option for you. This charity donates time, equipment and money to develop play programs, youth sports programs and

health education in several countries around the world.  
[www.righttoplayusa.org](http://www.righttoplayusa.org)

5. **Kids in the Game** – Kids in the Game is a charity that provides financial assistance to get low income families access to youth sports programs. They accept monetary donations as well as volunteer hours, and they provide assistance nationwide.  
[www.everykidssports.org](http://www.everykidssports.org)
6. **Pitch In For Baseball** is a registered 501(c)(3) not for profit organization that provides new and gently used baseball and softball equipment to boys and girls in the United States and around the world who want to play ball but lack the equipment to do so. [www.pifb.org](http://www.pifb.org)

\*Vital Check blog February 17, 2017

<https://blog.vitalchek.com/birth-certificates/youth-sports/top-5-youth-sports-charities-can-support>

## Chapter 33



Caden's early years

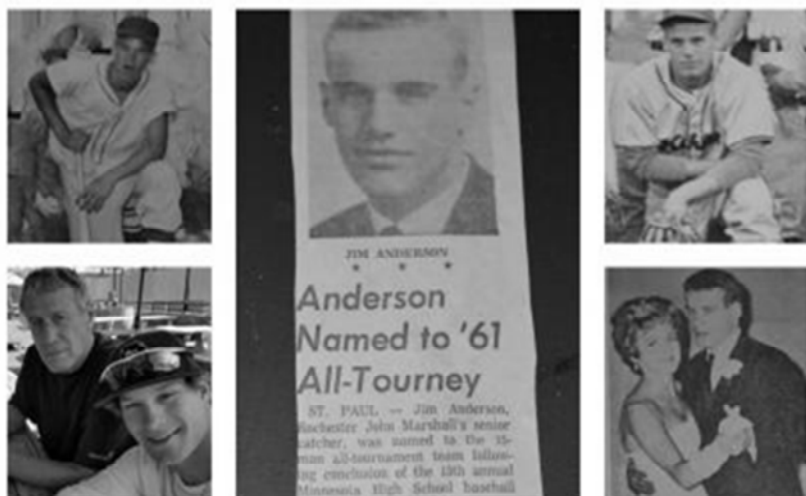


My Younger Years



Growing Up!

## *Outside the Fence*



Jim Anderson (Dad, Grandpa, Coach and Best Friend)



Family Matters





Onward!

## **Chapter 34**

### **Acknowledgements**

Thank you, LORD, for blessing my life. Your gift of salvation, mercy, and grace are overwhelming.

Dad: thank you for coaching me in the game of baseball and in life! As I did when I was growing up, I continue to look to you for wisdom and guidance. You have and always will be there for me; thank you and I love you.

Mom: you are the unsung hero in my life and the glue that held our family together. I love you so much and thank you for being my biggest fan.

Bethany: you have been the rock of our family and you wear so many hats that it is impossible to count. Thank you a million times over for the blessings that you have poured into our lives. I love you so very much. “Blessed is the woman who trusts in the Lord. Whose hope and joy is found in Him. For she will receive strength to face each day with courage and peace.” – Leah DiPascal

Elayna (Elle): my precious daughter who I cherish so much. I love you and remember fondly looking for you from the dugout or from the field. I watched your playfulness and the way that you had fun wherever you were. You are a gift from the LORD!

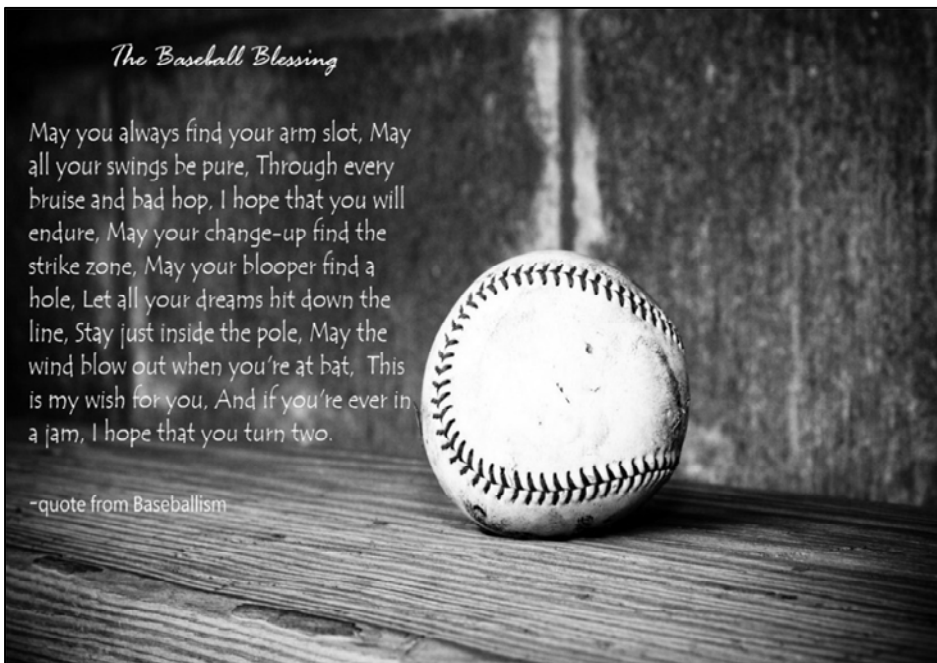
Tristen: thank you for your strength, your love, and for being my sister. You’ve raised Abby, Emily, and Ana to be children who love the LORD and He will do mighty things in their lives.

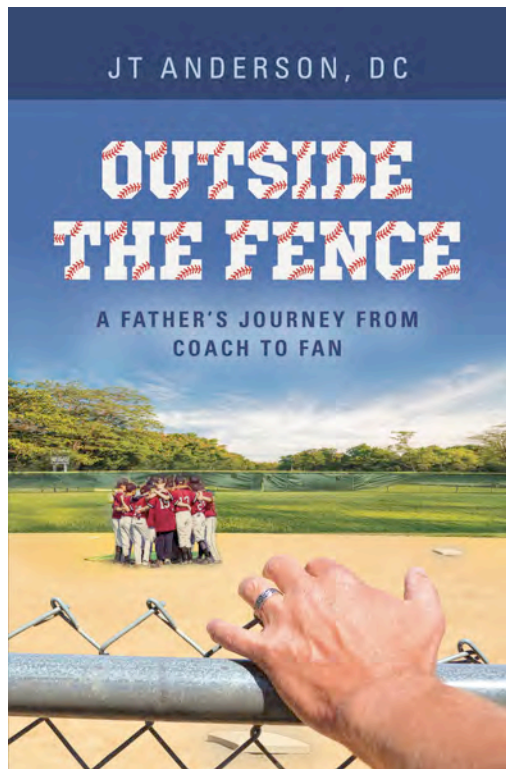
Grandpa and Grandpa Anderson and Grandma Gronvold: someday we will meet again in Heaven. Thank you so much for encouraging me in life and on the ballfield. I played better when you were there! I love you both.

Steve Yohn: thank you very much for your help in polishing my story and bringing it to life! Not only are you an incredible pastor, but your gift as a writer is unmatched.

Baseballism.com; your quotes are inspiring and hit home! Your company's legacy brings all of us closer together. Thank you.

To the men who have written their stories: you poured your hearts and souls into this and for that I am so thankful. May this bless your family for years to come. Thank you, Dennis Carter, Jimmy Tyler, Ben Snyder, Josh Schneider, Mark and Blake Goldsberry, Gavin Custodio, Brian James, Randy Manning, Bill Surina and Brad G. I also want to thank the other dads that tried but just couldn't finish their stories due to the raw and tender emotions. This book is also for you.





*When you are coaching your son or daughter, there are memories that become lost over time. For many, coaching is just for a season or two, while for others it lasts a lifetime. Outside the Fence was written for those who enjoy baseball and blends the emotional side of coaching with the tenderness of a father's love for their kids.*

## ***Outside the Fence***

By JT Anderson

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