

# HITTING I.Q.

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*A SMART HITTER'S PATH  
TO A BETTER APPROACH AT  
THE PLATE*



**By BOB McCREARY**

*Forward by Mike Neill*

*Major League Player & Olympic Gold Medalist*

## *HERE IS WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT THE BOOK!*

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*“This book tackles something that is not easy and makes it relatable for all players - from Little League to professional - as well as coaches and instructors.”*

**Gene Schall**

**Former Major League infielder and Professional scout (Phillies)**

*“This book is tremendous. It explains the game of baseball in a precise and helpful way. I recommend this book for baseball players and coaches of all ages.”*

**Dennis McCaffery**

**Former D1 and professional outfielder (Angels).  
Current High School head coach (Cranford, New Jersey)**

*“Hitting IQ does a great job of addressing a key component of player development that is often left untaught by many at various levels of the game. I have found myself coming back to this book prior to each practice to make sure we are incorporating various aspects of this mindset and approach.”*

**Rich Coletta**

**Former D1 infielder, college coach (D1, D3) and amateur scout (Mariners, Red Sox). Current high school coach (Plymouth Whitemarsh, PA)**

TO SEE COACH MCCREARY'S BIO, CLICK [HERE](#).

*“After having played Division 1 baseball myself, and thinking I knew a lot about the game, in 9 years alongside Coach Bob McCreary, I realized I still had much to learn, and through working with him I learned a ton. I am lucky to have enjoyed considerable success with the teams I am now coaching as well, including one American Legion State title and two High School State titles - teams comprised of many players who have gone on to enjoy great success at the next level. As I have continued as a head coach, I still continuously use Coach McCreary as my own #1 resource for all baseball questions, drills, and situations that arise, and he is the first call I make whenever I need an instructor for a camp. Coach McCreary respects the game, and he truly understands how to communicate it to coaches and players.”*



*Coach Kevin Manero  
Head Coach - North Penn High School  
Lansdale, PA  
4A State Champs - 2013, 2015*



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# Forward

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## USA vs Japan, 13th inning, 2000 Sydney Olympics

Reading Coach McCreary's book *Hitting IQ: A smart hitter's path to a better approach at the plate* brought back such great memories. Back in 2000, baseball fans across the country saw the home run I hit against Japan to win Team USA's first round game in the Sydney Olympics. The highlight was on every channel, from ESPN to everyone's local news station. The act of hitting a home run is easy to see even if the person has no baseball background. What people don't see is what happens behind the scenes. Things that are said in the dugout between teammates. Things that are said between a player's own ears. The mental edge that is required if a hitter wants to be successful at the upper levels.

Playoff baseball games, whether it be at your local Little League or on the world stage in the Olympics are pure and some of the best games a player will ever be a part of. Individual stats don't matter at all, just a win or loss. In September, 2000, Hall of Fame manager Tommy Lasorda penciled my name into the third spot in the batting order against Japan. Our fifth hole hitter that day was John Cotton. John was a left handed hitter like me and a true professional hitter. I always paid very close attention to how pitchers threw to John during games because I knew they would likely pitch to me the same way. On this day against Japan, John faced a young Japanese relief pitcher who had been brought into the game around the 11th inning. After his at-bat, I walked by him in the dugout and asked what he saw from the pitcher. John, the ultimate teammate, said "*firm but straight and you can see it.*" As I was walking away, John added, "*he bounced his curve. I don't think he can throw it for a strike.*"

Two innings later in the bottom of the 13th inning, Brad Wilkerson worked a walk and I came up to the plate. The game was tied 2-2. I worked the count to 2 balls and 2 strikes. The Japanese pitcher bounced a curve ball which moved the count to 3-2. It also allowed Wilkerson to move up to second base with no one out. A 3-2 count with first base open and the third hitter up. The game winning run at second base. Even in a 3-2 count, it's a situation where another tough breaking pitch being thrown next is not out of the question. But Cotton's message rang in my ear. "*I don't think he can throw it for a strike.*" In this situation, I am trying to do everything in my power to pull the ball to

get Wilkerson to third with nobody out. My go-to self talk started in my head. *“Just see it.... just see the baseball. See a strike and pull it.”*

I ended up doing both. I saw a strike and I pulled it. A fastball that I knew was coming. Jimmy Jack Corn. Home run into the right field seats. Team USA wins.

As a kid growing up in Delaware and watching the Philadelphia Phillies, Manny Trillo was a player I loved to watch. I remember him saying *“Baseball has been very good to me.”* The game has been good to me as well. Reading my good friend's book *Hitting IQ* brought back many great memories. The book exemplifies the importance of developing a good mental approach at the plate. An approach that includes an awareness of you, the pitcher, and the situation. Such an approach enabled me to come up big in that one key at-bat and enabled my team to stand on the Olympic podium several days later and have a gold medal placed around our necks.

I am fortunate to know Bob McCreary since my freshman year at Villanova University. We ended up being part of a great team that went 42-13 that year and were one win away from going to the College World Series.

I often get asked by parents that I know where to take my son or daughter for lessons. My answer is *“Bob McCreary and Baseball By the Yard.”* When a coach asks about learning more about the finer points of the game to improve their teams, it's *“Bob McCreary and Baseball By the Yard”* once again.

I have been involved in baseball since I was 8 years old. I have told Bob repeatedly that if I was ever asked to coach, I would only do it if he were to come along with me. I have played with him as a teammate, faced him as a competitor in the minor leagues, and have respected him as a person for 35 years. His passion and knowledge of the game is one of the best I have been around.

When you finish this book, I think you will agree. Enjoy.

**Mike Neill**  
**Former Major League outfielder - Oakland A's**  
**Olympic Gold Medalist - 2000**

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***“Nobody ever wins when they have a bat in their hands. That’s why hitting is a lot like playing pinball. You really never win. The object of both sadistic endeavors is to play as long as you can by adjusting to whatever the games give you.” - Unknown***

***Dedicated to my family.  
The best team I ever played on.***

# Introduction

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## ***“The game has changed, LA.”***

If you live in the Philadelphia area and are a frequent listener to Phillies games on the radio, you have undoubtedly had the pleasure of listening to announcers Scott Franzke (pronounced *fran-ski*) and former Major League pitcher Larry Anderson. Together, in my opinion, they are a tandem that can rival any duo in baseball radio broadcasting today. Add an occasional visit in the booth by former player and class clown, John Kruk, and it makes for a very entertaining few hours of baseball.

Listen for just a week or two and you will probably hear the quote above at least once. It usually is said by Scott Franzke to Larry Anderson (aka LA). I guarantee it has been said in every other radio booth in Major League baseball as well.

Both men are in their middle age years and are, like many other people, quite aware that the game of baseball has changed in many ways since their youthful watching and playing days. They certainly would argue (and have!) that some of those changes are not for the better.

The two of them have ranted so much about this in the past that they often simply say the above quote and just move on, choosing to no longer elaborate. Like the saying goes, *“no sense in beating a dead horse.”*

Below are some scenarios after which you will tend to hear a version of that quote from announcers and coaches alike. We have always seen these scenarios at the younger levels but unfortunately, they are showing up more and more at the highest levels of the game as well. The scenarios, and many others like them, tend to produce groans, head shakes, and quotes like ... *“The game has changed, LA.”*

- *The pitcher walks a batter on four straight pitches, all of which are up and out of the strike zone. The next hitter swings at the first pitch, also up and out of the strike zone.*

- *With runners on second and third and no outs, the batter swings and misses at two curveballs in the dirt and then takes a fastball down the middle for a called third strike.*
- *Late in the game and the 9th hitter is up with no outs. The go-ahead run is on second base. The first pitch he sees is a fastball on the inner half of the plate. He weakly pulls a ground ball to the third baseman who looks the runner back to second and throws to first for out number one.*
- *Bases loaded late in the game with two outs. Batter's team is down by two runs. After seeing two bad curveballs, the count is 2-0. The hitter takes the next pitch, a fastball, right down the middle for strike one.*
- *Down 4 runs in the 7th inning, the leadoff hitter of the inning (also the 9th hitter) who is batting .185 swings and fouls off a first pitch curveball down and away.*
- *The offensive team's pitcher hits a ball into the gap and is thrown out trying to stretch it into a triple for the 2nd out of the inning. The next batter steps into the batter's box, swings at the first pitch, and pops it up to end the inning.*
- *The 8th hitter is batting with runners on 2nd and 3rd with two outs late in a close game. He sees mostly curveballs and works the count to 3-2. On the next pitch, he gets fooled by a curveball and takes a called third strike to end the inning.*

*As they say, the struggle is real.*

Let me be honest and say that my blood pressure rose simply by typing those scenarios. Yours may be also. If that is the case then you are probably also aware that, in the past, those hitters would get quite an earful from coaches and/or veteran teammates when they returned to the dugout. Unfortunately, on far too many fields these days, that is no longer the case. I fully understand that the game changes and that these changes can be tough for some people. Even me. The saying, "*You can't have progress without change*" is certainly true. Change can be necessary. However, I would add a second part to the quote by saying, "*Not all change is progress.*"

If you read the above scenarios and are not sure what the fuss is all about then this book is for you. All of the scenarios listed above involve (I would argue) an awful hitting approach. By the end of this book, you will know why as well. Hopefully, you can use the information you learn to better approach your own at-bats or help others improve theirs.

Every facet of the game demands a good approach. Pitchers need to develop a good approach while on the mound. Base runners need one too. So do infielders, outfielders, and catchers. This book only focuses on the hitting approach.

I hope you find it useful. Let's get after it!

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