



Jim Abbott has battled the odds his entire life. Despite being born with only one hand he was the 15th player to ever make a professional debut in the Major Leagues. Many considered the move a publicity stunt by manager Doug Rader, but after struggling early, Abbott proved his doubters wrong by winning 12 games with a 3.92 ERA in his rookie season.

On the mound, Abbott wore a right-hander's fielder's glove at the end of his right arm. While completing his follow-through after delivering a pitch, he rapidly switched the glove to his left hand so he could handle any balls hit back to him. In that first 1989 season as a professional he won more games as a rookie than any other previous player without Major League experience.

What prepared Jim Abbott for this type of success?

Abbott spent hours as a youngster bouncing a ball off a wall to practice fielding as well as throwing. He was the starting quarterback on his high school football team, which went to the finals of the Michigan state championship, and he showed enough promise as a pitcher to be drafted by the Toronto Blue Jays shortly after graduation.

However, Abbott went to the University of Michigan on a baseball scholarship. Abbott led the Wolverines to Big Ten titles in his freshmen and junior years and won the prestigious Golden Spikes Award, presented annually to the outstanding college baseball player in the United States. He had a career record of 26 wins and 8 losses at the school.

As a member of Team USA in 1987, he became the first American pitcher in 25 years to beat a Cuban team on Cuban soil. The team won a silver medal at the Pan-American Games and Abbott won the U. S. Baseball Federation's Golden Spikes award as the best amateur player in the country.

Abbott participated in the 1988 Summer Olympic Games, pitching a complete game seven hitter, leading the United States to the Gold Medal in a 5-3 victory over Japan. The United States first ever, gold medal in Olympic Baseball competition.

He then joined the California Angels following the Olympics. Jim made his pro debut in spring training and made it to the Major Leagues without playing in the minor leagues, which was the beginning of a tremendous Major League career. His most famous highpoint is perhaps throwing a no-hitter for the New York Yankees at Yankee Stadium in 1993.

His baseball achievements include the Sullivan Award (best amateur athlete in the United States), male athlete of the year for the 1988 Olympic Games, and many awards at Michigan including the Jesse Owens Athlete of the year.

But the awards that best define Jim Abbott would be those that exemplify courage and overcoming adversity.

- March of Dimes Athlete of the Year (twice)
- Academy Awards of Sports, Courage Award
- 1991 Victory Award recipient at the Kennedy Center Washington D.C.
- Freedom Forum's Free Spirit Award

Today Jim Abbott is a professional motivational speaker. He has been featured in USA Today, Newsweek, Time, Sports Illustrated, Parade Magazine, People, and Baseball America. He has been featured during Olympic coverage, and has appeared on ESPN, Good Morning America, CNN, Larry King, Phil Donahue, George Michael Sports Machine, NBC Nightly News, ABC News Person of the Week, Late Night with David Letterman, and the ABC television series Boy Meets World.

Jim Abbott was invited to throw out the first pitch at game 7 of the 2002 World Series and recently participated in his first Yankees Old Timers Day.

As a philanthropist, Jim Abbott donated 100,000 dollars to Amigos de los Ninos, an organization that aids groups that care for children in California.

He is an inspiration to all that meet him or have followed his career. More than his no-hitter, his 13 strike out game, a seven game winning streak, overcoming an eleven game losing streak, Jim Abbott became a great baseball player and a great person. He learned to overcome adversity and be an inspiration to those around him.

Jim lives in California with his wife, two children and their dog Billie. His parents still live in Michigan. Jim and his family take the Summer off each year to stay at the lake, and visit with family and friends. Jim has a younger brother.