

Bill Bethea - My Baseball Story

My name is Bill Bethea, and I am the founder and owner of Power Pitching & Hitting, Inc. I have dedicated the last 20 years to developing baseball players of all ages and abilities. Below is a summary of my baseball career, which I hope will provide insight to the knowledge that I have acquired throughout the years, and help communicate my love for the game of baseball. My goal is to share this knowledge with players and parents who are as passionate about the game as I am.

LITTLE LEAGUE YEARS

As a young player, I was a below-average little leaguer. I was only allowed to pitch one time when I was 9, and I walked 11 batters! I was not allowed to pitch again after that. At age 12, I had a coach (Mr. Jones) who was a mainstay in the Midtown Edison Little League (God rest his soul), was the first coach that believed that I had potential. I was a big kid that had power, but could never utilize the size to my advantage. As a hitter, I could make good contact, primarily hitting singles and doubles. But as a pitcher, I could not throw a strike to save my life. Needless to say, I never made an all-star or travel team. After Little League I played senior league baseball for two years before moving on to high school. At this point, I didn't even want to try out for high school, as I didn't think I would make the team, and I considered playing Lacrosse. Although I had never played lacrosse in my life, the team was terrible, and I knew I could make the team. My mother, however, (God rest her soul too) convinced me to try out for the baseball team instead. Her reasoning: She liked the way I looked in my uniform! Out of respect, I obliged, and promised I would try out.

HIGH SCHOOL YEARS

Freshman Year

After trying out, I made the team. The coach told me I had some potential, but I had to learn an effective delivery for pitching. "PITCHING!?" I replied. He said, "Yes, pitching! You are 6 feet tall and have a good arm." He assured me that he would teach me everything from a delivery to a changeup to a curveball. I didn't know anything about any of this stuff, and I was on a team that had a ton of talent. In fact, during my freshman year, we had two junior pitchers that were both All-State. During the year, I ended up pitching in 17 of 19 games. Twelve of those 17 games, I was actually the starting pitcher! What a great opportunity for me. To put it in perspective, there were five All State pitchers ahead of me, one who was All-American. I was pitching with guys that had pitched their whole lives.

Needless to say, I made a lot of mistakes, and was labeled "The guy with potential." That's a tough gig because once you get labeled as 'having potential', everyone starts wondering when you are going to reach it...including myself! My problem was that people all around me would tell me that I should be throwing harder, but no one could communicate to me how; so I decided to seek out the answers for myself. I started researching pitching 'gurus' and picking their brains. The problem I found was that everyone had different ideas which made it all the more confusing.

Junior and Senior Year

Our team finished 27-2, and won the state championship my junior year. We ended up 4th in the nation as ranked in USA TODAY. We had a high school All-American pitcher who went 15-0 that year, and the remaining innings were spread around to four of us. After completing my senior year with a 5-1 record, four of us went on to play in college - one stopped playing altogether. I was still labeled as the guy 'having potential', and was trying hard to figure out how to achieve it.

College Years

I spent my first three years on a college team that proved to be very average development years. I would spend countless hours trying to learn new techniques to be an effective pitcher, and I truly believe that this hindered my success. My ability to change my delivery and try new things, although commendable, did not prove successful, as I was trying all of these different things without any guidance from a good pitching coach (the team did not have one). So in essence, I had been pitching for seven years now with all of this information, but not truly knowing what

was right and/or wrong with my mechanics. After my junior year, I contacted a pitching coach in Arizona, and sent him a video of me pitching. He sent back a reply stating that I had 3 major flaws that restricted my potential, and provided drills to correct them. Finally some answers! Not just comments on what I was doing wrong, but instructions on how to correct them too! It's true that the older a pitcher gets, the harder it is to change his mechanics, but I had the confidence that I could do it because of my ability to change my delivery in the past. Consistency in pitching is critical, and I didn't have it, as I was always trying new things without any real guidance.

With this information, I worked every day for three months. When I returned for fall-ball, they put me on the radar gun. I had gained seven miles per hour in consistent velocity! That's unheard of at age 22. In my mind, my dream of playing professionally was now a reality. I had the velocity, the size...now I just had to execute. I had six different workouts that I performed weekly during the offseason in order to prepare myself to go beyond college baseball. I had a very good senior year, and racked up 33 strikeouts during my last three games. My last game in college was a 4-0 shutout. After that game, my coach hugged me and thanked me for all my hard work for 4 years and then he broke the news to me that the Elmira Pioneers called and invited me to spring training.

Professional Baseball

The Elmira Pioneers were an independent minor-league team at the time (Red Sox double AA). Now I was going to get to play on the same field that Don Zimmer got married on; the field where Wade Boggs and Roger Clemens played on. WOW! I spent some time playing with the team, but soon after the Mets released their AAA pitcher, Ivan Arteaga, and the Elmira Pioneers quickly picked him up.....and sent me packing. Who wouldn't release a rookie for a triple guy throwing 94 mph!?

Soon after, I had invites to seven other tryouts including the Kansas City Royals. The Royals said at age 23, I was too old to make it even though I was good enough. If I was hitting 94 mph instead of 88 mph, I truly believe that age wouldn't have been a factor. So instead of the Kansas City Royals, I was picked up by the Springfield Ozark Ducks of the Texas-Louisiana league, and I spent the remaining season and part of the next season, but then asked for my release to try and play closer to home.

After the Ducks

When I got home I realized the following: I did something that many kids only dream of... I played professional baseball! Granted, it wasn't the major leagues, but it was something to be proud of. I then thought to myself, "if I only knew how to train like I did the past two years when I was in high school or younger, then maybe I would have had a shot to go further." **The light bulb went off!**

I decided not to pursue the dream of playing professionally, but to focus on helping young players learn at an earlier age what I had learned so late. In the beginning, I didn't charge anything for the lessons until the demand grew larger. I incorporated a name (PPH), and then started contacting various leagues, with the goal of offering the best baseball instruction available.

After starting PPH, I started to receive offers to play in Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, Australia, France and Italy, but developed such a passion for teaching that I couldn't leave my students. Instead, in 2008, I was asked to do some scouting for a league called the Continental Baseball League. I was allowed to sign players, three of which have signed with major league organizations.

Present Day

And that brings me to now. Now that I have over 40,000 hours of instructional experience with over 350 guys who have moved on to play college ball, my primary focus is to offer the best experience for young players looking to improve. Regardless if their goal is to play in the majors, or simply develop into a competitive player in a sport that they love, I will provide them with the proper tools they need to achieve their goals and become more than just a player that simply "has potential", but a player who has maximized their potential.

-BILL BETHEA, Owner PPH Baseball