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Imperfect: An Improbable Life

By Jim Abbott, Tim Brown



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“Honest, touching, and beautifully rendered . . . Far more than a book about baseball, it is a deeply felt story of triumph and failure, dreams and disappointments. Jim Abbott has hurled another gem.”—Jonathan Eig, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Luckiest Man*

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

Born without a right hand, Jim Abbott dreamed of someday being a great athlete. Raised in Flint, Michigan, by parents who encouraged him to compete, Jim would become an ace pitcher for the University of Michigan. But his journey was only beginning: By twenty-one, he'd won the gold medal game at the 1988 Olympics and—without spending a day in the minor leagues—cracked the starting rotation of the California Angels. In 1991, he would finish third in the voting for the Cy Young Award. Two years later, he would don Yankee pinstripes and pitch one of the most dramatic no-hitters in major-league history.

In this honest and insightful book, Jim Abbott reveals the challenges he faced in becoming an elite pitcher, the insecurities he dealt with in a life spent as the different one, and the intense emotion generated by his encounters with disabled children from around the country. With a riveting pitch-by-pitch account of his no-hitter providing the ideal frame for his story, this unique athlete offers readers an extraordinary and unforgettable memoir.

“Compelling . . . [a] big-hearted memoir.”—*Los Angeles Times*

“Inspirational.”—*The Philadelphia Inquirer*

Includes an exclusive conversation between Jim Abbott and Tim Brown in the back of the book.



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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Amazon Exclusive: Essay by Jim Abbott

He wouldn't say it exactly, because precision with words wasn't his specialty, but my father was the first to ask me, "So, what are you going to do about it?"

The question itself --framed as a challenge--came years later from a sports psychologist, long after I'd become an adult and as I was nearing fatherhood. My father had warned me to the answer.

I was born when my dad was 18, barely out of adolescence himself, not yet married to my mother, and coping with his own response to a savagely simple call to obligation. I was born without a right hand, which, in 1967, qualified me as "crippled," predecessor to "handicapped," then "disabled," then "challenged."

So, what was *he* going to do about it? What were *we* going to do about it?

Well, we fished. We rode a bike. We flew a kite. And, eventually, we played ball. In Flint, Michigan, that's what boys did, what fathers and sons did. They played ball.

When I went out into the world and felt like I'd been spit out the other side, my father would turn me around, open the front door and send me back out.

He'd lost his own father at a young age, and his childhood with him. He replaced both with a desire to see more, and experience more. When everyone went right, Dad, often enough, went left. It wasn't willfulness, but instinct. He raised me in the same manner, from a soul that told him I'd need to fall down in order to stand. If he caught me today, I'd need someone to catch me and help me up tomorrow, and that wouldn't work at all.

He let me fail, with the faith it would teach me to succeed. I learned that it was as hard on him as it was on me, but not until my own children had fallen and risen themselves. Now one of my daughters will come to me, her eyes moist and swollen, and I'll think of my dad and what he said. In a quiet moment, I'll look at my little girl and I'll ask her:

"Well, honey, what are we going to do about it?"

Review

"Powerful."—*Library Journal*

"Funny, heartbreaking, and triumphant . . . Still, to label this fine book 'an inspiration' almost misses the point. *Imperfect* isn't about learning to cope with a disability. It's about becoming a man in America."—Mark Kriegel, author of *Pistol: The Life of Pete Maravich* and *Namath: A Biography*

"Terrific . . . *Imperfect* can teach all of us valuable lessons."—Cal Ripken, Jr.

“A story of how to fight, overcome and, ultimately, thrive.”—*Newsday*

About the Author

Jim Abbott was a major league pitcher with the Los Angeles Angels and the New York Yankees, among other teams. Born in 1967, he was an All-American at Michigan; won a gold medal with the 1988 Olympic baseball team; and threw a no-hitter at Yankee Stadium in 1993. He retired in 1999. Abbott has worked with the Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy, has been a guest pitching instructor for the Los Angeles Angels, and has appeared as a motivational speaker. He lives with his wife and two children in Anaheim.

Tim Brown is an award-winning writer with twenty years of experience covering Major League Baseball at the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Star-Ledger*, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, and *Los Angeles Daily News*. He studied journalism at the University of Southern California and Cal State Northridge, and currently works for Yahoo! Sports.

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Amy Arwood:

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