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Baseball and Religion

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In life, we are taught that there are some things that do not mix such as oil and water, cats and dogs, etc. In baseball, just as in life, there are things we are told don't mix like weights and baseball and baseball and religion. Of course these two myths are based on nothing more than the ignorance of a misinformed culture.

As far as weights are concerned, I was one who believed that weights were bad for my profession. It was my understanding (again out of ignorance) that lifting weights would only be harmful to my career. I was afraid of losing flexibility and range of motion which would eventually cause me to lose the skills, speed and throwing that I depended on to excel in my sport. Of course, I was wrong.

On the other hand religion, which I believe in, was looked upon in a different light. It was not thought of as causing or promoting any physical restriction. Baseball people, who frowned on religion as being part of a player's life, believed that religion served no useful or rational purpose. The impression was that it had a damaging effect on players in regard to the way they approached and played the game. Players, managers, coaches and fans seem to be attracted to players that displayed aggressive, confrontational behavior. The thoughts were that religion caused players to be less aggressive and too passive. Managers, coaches and fellow players felt that these players, who express their religious beliefs, did not display the aggression and anger that should have accompanied feelings of disappointment or failure. The term "Jesus freak" was used as a negative description of a person's calm demeanor when they were known to be active Christians. For these reasons, players were once reluctant to confirm their religious beliefs.

In the past, although I think this is no longer the case, some viewed religion as crutch for its believers to avoid accountability; a place to shift the responsibility of his career and actions. Out of ignorance, religion and its practitioners have endured the stigma of being passive, emotionless and even weak athletes.

However; in recent years, more sports figures are willing and even elated to publicly confirm and display their religious beliefs. I am a Christian; in fact, I am studying to become a minister. It was my faith that helped me survive the hardships of the minor leagues. It is my faith that enables me to endure the disappointments associated with the baseball profession. It is my faith that helped me to overcome the temptations attached to fame and success as a major league baseball player. It is my faith, my religious beliefs that give me the strength to remain focused on my life and career. Christianity, just as other religions, is a way of life, accepting who you are while respecting others and allowing oneself to be strong and confident. I may be mistaken but isn't that what every team would like to see from its players?

-Mookie Wilson