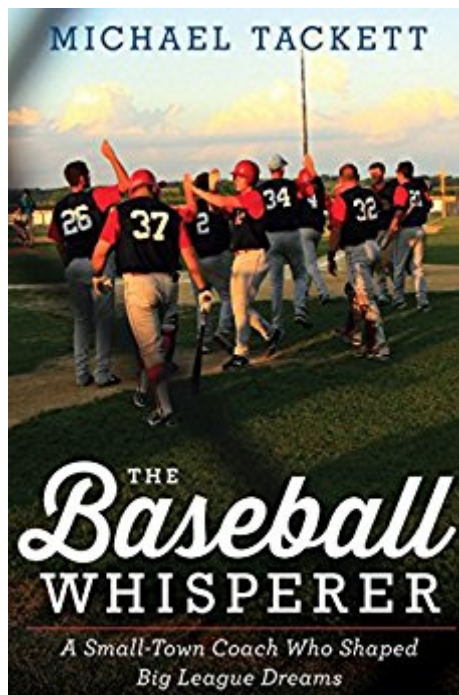




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# The Baseball Whisperer: A Small-Town Coach Who Shaped Big League Dreams



## Synopsis

From an award-winning journalist, a real *Field of Dreams* story about a legendary coach and the professional-caliber baseball program he built in America's heartland, where boys come a summer after summer to be molded into ballplayers and men. Clarinda, Iowa, population 5,000, sits two hours from anything. There, between the corn fields and hog yards, is a ball field with a bronze bust of a man named Merl Eberly, a baseball whisperer who specialized in second chances and lost causes. The statue was a gift from one of Merl's original long-shot projects, a skinny kid from the ghetto in Los Angeles who would one day become a beloved Hall-of-Fame shortstop: Ozzie Smith. *The Baseball Whisperer* traces the remarkable story of Merl Eberly and his Clarinda baseball team, which he tended over the course of five decades, transforming them from a town team to a collegiate summer league powerhouse. Along with Ozzie Smith, future manager Bud Black, and star player Von Hayes, Merl developed scores of major league players (six of which are currently playing). In the process, Merl taught them to be men, insisting on hard work, integrity, and responsibility. More than a book about ballplayers who landed in the nation's agricultural heartland, *The Baseball Whisperer* is the story of a coach who puts character and dedication first, and reminds us of the best, purest form of baseball excellence.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

There is something special about collegiate summer baseball. In it's simplest form, it's a bunch of kids grinding out 50 or 60 games in places like Lima, Ohio, Chatham, Massachusetts and Anchorage, Alaska as their fellow students relax, hit the beach and catch up on Netflix. But as Mike Tackett demonstrates so beautifully in "The Baseball Whisperer," it's so much more. With the right coach, the right support system, hell, the right town, it's a genuinely life-shaping -- or even changing -- experience. Make no mistake, it all comes back to the game -- a group of ballplayers, no rest from their 70-plus game spring season, strapping on the cleats for another few months, all in the hopes of getting noticed by that one scout who will give them a shot at the next level. And Tackett, who despite his misguided allegiance to the Chicago Cubs, can chronicle the heck out of this legendary summer program's successes on the field. But in the town of Clarinda, Iowa, under Coach Merl Eberly, it's bigger than baseball. It's about the nervous 19 year old, plucked out of South Central Los Angeles, popped into a host family's home in a 5,000 person town and learning to not only acclimate, but thrive (that kid's name? Ozzie Smith.) It's about a tough-as-nails coach who seemed to always know exactly what his players needed to get better, both on and off the field. It's about a town that went above and beyond -- even in the toughest of times -- to make sure there was always a place to play. What makes this book wonderful is that while it's a fantastic baseball book (think elements of "The Last Best Game"), it's one that goes beyond the game. It's about the people. Deeply reported, richly written, packed with life lessons, reasons to smile and no shortage of "holy cow, how is it possible that many Major League stars played for this team?!" it is an effort well worth your time.

"The Baseball Whisperer" is a lovely read, mostly about a time and place of the past that echoes today. The "whisperer" is Merl Eberly, a baseball student from the time he picked up a bat, who takes baseball "boys" and turns them into baseball men. College kids, looking for wooden bat experience come to Clarinda, Iowa, population 5,000. They get baseball coaching, but life lessons as well, and it's the non-baseball stuff that stays with them forever. Ozzie Smith, the Hall-of-Fame shortstop is Eberly's star pupil, but the stories of the non-stars and the lessons they learned are just as compelling. Tackett gets to know these characters and his descriptions will let you get to know them too.

Anyone who loves baseball, in it's purest form, will love this book. And for those who believe in good old American values, mentoring and development of young men, this will strike a chord. It is a true story about a man, his family and a community that pulled together every summer over a number of years to support a team of young men from all parts of the country with dreams to become major leaguers. Merl Eberly was dedicated to enhancing career opportunities in the great game of baseball and to help teach young men the values of dedication, hard work and doing what is right. I knew Merl Eberly and can assure readers that Michael Tackett has done a wonderful job of capturing the essence of this man, his family, his community and the many young men whose lives were touched in the great game of baseball.

I loved the story. I didn't like the writing style but it was just a preference thing. Very well studied. I would recommend the book. Not too long. Kindle version said I was at 80% when the book finished. Just so you know if you are trying to get a quick read, it's pretty quick and easy.

I usually don't write reviews about books I have read but I just finished this incredible book and had to say something. It is a must read for any diehard baseball fan such as I. A real gem of a book well written fast read could not put it down. If you don't shed a tear at the end of this book you are not human. I loved every minute of reading about this Incredible town, incredible people, especially incredible man who was loved by all he touched. Thanks Michael Tackett for writing such a superb book.

good, solid book. For anyone who played town-team summer baseball in Iowa or the Midwest a generation or two ago, it is evocative and warms old memories, setting out the history of Clarinda, an exceptionally successful small-town program based on community support and the leadership of one man, player-coach Merl Eberly and his wife Pat. Several major leaguers--including Ozzie Smith, Von Hayes and Bud Black--played in Clarinda on their way up.

After playing in Clarinda for two summers, reading the book allowed those memories to come back and learn more about the program. Merl and Mrs. E made my time there special. The book is a great read about hometown values, determination and hard work. Great read and would recommend it anyone

I was so happy to see this book in print in time for me to purchase it as a Christmas gift for my sports-fanatic nephew! It emphasizes the kinds of values that are lost in today's money-driven world of sports. And I know it will be one of the few books that could hold my teenage nephew's interest in the midst of his long days of school and ball practice. Thanks, Mike, for bringing this story back to life!

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