



Trading Manny: How a Father and Son Learned to Love Baseball Again

Jim Gullo

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The moving story of how a father and his young son recaptured their love of baseball—a winning testament to why the game matters and how it can still bring us together in spite of itself

In recent years something hasn't been quite right with baseball. Ask Jim Gullo: he'll tell you even a seven-year-old kid knows it. In December 2007, just as Jim's young son Joe was beginning to develop a true passion for the game, the bombshell news of players' steroid use made it clear that America's pastime wasn't what it claimed to be. Suddenly, Jim found himself struggling to answer questions from Joe that had nothing to do with batting averages or World Series champions: "What are steroids? Who was using them? Wasn't it cheating? Why weren't the players who got caught suspended or punished by baseball?"

While Jim searched for the right words and Major League Baseball dithered, Joe took matters into his own hands: he removed the players who had been named as likely drug users from his prized baseball card collection and created a cheaters pile. Then he created a different category of suspected "juicers" to keep an eye on. He took these players' posters—even the poster of his favorite slugger, Manny Ramirez—down from his bedroom walls. The steroid scandal had clearly hit home.

Rather than wait for an official explanation and apology from Major League Baseball that would never materialize, Jim and Joe set out to find their own answers. They traveled the country from coast to coast, from Spring Training contests to major and minor league games—speaking with players, prospects, and managers while tracking down the legends and ghosts of baseball's golden age. And one day they discovered an aging but dedicated prospect who would become not only a true role model for Joe, but also the unlikely inspiration to lure both father and son back to the game they loved.

By turns humorous, heartbreaking, and inspiring, *Trading Manny* tells the story of their journey back to baseball—how along the way Joe traded his idol Manny for a more worthy hero, and Jim discovered something invaluable about being a father.

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