

# ***The Man With One Hand!***

BY: Michael A. Aun, CSP, CPAE Speaker Hall of Fame

Web: <http://www.aunline.com>

Toll Free: 1-(800)-356-0567

**I was giving a speech to an insurance association several years ago and was on the program with a guy named Jim Abbott, a former major league baseball pitcher with only one hand.**

**How would you like to play baseball with only one hand? Imagine competing in NASCAR with only one hand. Imagine playing basketball with only one hand. Imagine playing any competitive athletic event with one hand. Jim Abbott did it-- *and did it well!***

**Jim Abbott has battled the odds his entire life. Despite being born with only one hand he was the 15th player to ever make a professional debut in the Major Leagues. Many considered the move a publicity stunt by manager Doug Rader, but after struggling early, Abbott proved his doubters wrong by winning 12 games with a 3.92 ERA in his rookie season.**

**On the mound, Abbott wore a right-hander's fielder's glove at the end of his right arm. While completing his follow-through after delivering a pitch, he rapidly switched the glove to his left hand so he could handle any balls hit back to him. In that first 1989 season as a professional he won more games as a rookie than any other previous player without Major League experience.**

**What prepared Jim Abbott for this type of success? I believe that it was Jim Abbott's so-called "weakness" that caused him to excel. Like Wilma Rudolph who was born pre-mature and later acquired polio, those "weaknesses" became the thing that motivated her to win three Olympic Gold Medals in the 1960 Olympics in Rome. Our strengths, overused, can become our weaknesses. Conversely, the things that hamper us in life can become the very things that motivate us to higher performance.**

**Jim Abbott spent hours as a youngster bouncing a ball off a wall to practice fielding as well as throwing. He was the starting quarterback on his high school football team, which went to the finals of the Michigan state championship, and he showed enough promise as a pitcher to be drafted by the Toronto Blue Jays shortly after graduation.**

**However, Abbott went to the University of Michigan on a baseball scholarship. Abbott led the Wolverines to Big Ten titles in his freshmen and junior years and won the prestigious Golden Spikes Award, presented annually to the outstanding college baseball player in the United States. He had a career record of 26 wins and 8 losses at the school.**

**As a member of Team USA in 1987, he became the first American pitcher in 25 years to beat a Cuban team on Cuban soil. The team won a silver medal at the Pan-American Games and Abbott won the U. S. Baseball Federation's Golden Spikes award as the best amateur player in the country.**

**Abbott participated in the 1988 Summer Olympic Games, pitching a complete game seven hitter, leading the United States to the Gold Medal in a 5-3 victory over Japan. The United States first ever, gold medal in Olympic Baseball competition.**

**He then joined the California Angels following the Olympics, beginning a tremendous Major League career, which included throwing a no-hitter for the New York Yankees at Yankee Stadium in 1993.**

**His baseball achievements include the Sullivan Award (best amateur athlete in the United States), male athlete of the year for the 1988 Olympic Games, and many awards at Michigan including the Jesse Owens Athlete of the year.**

**Jim played for 10 seasons on 4 different teams and ended his big league playing career in 1999.**

**Today, in addition to being a pitching instructor for the Los Angeles Angels, Jim Abbott is a motivational speaker.**

---

**622 words**