



CAPITOL CITY SPEAKERS BUREAU

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Jim Abbott

Travels from: California

Fee Range: \$10,001 - \$15,000

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, but Abbott proved his doubters wrong by winning 12 games for the California Angels 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.

Although he was born without a right hand, Abbott was taught by his father to focus on his gifts and to find alternative ways to win. A baseball fan, Abbott spent hours as a youngster bouncing a ball off a wall to practice fielding as well as throwing. In high school, he was the starting quarterback for his football team, which went to the finals of the Michigan state championship. Jim showed enough promise as a pitcher to be drafted by the Toronto Blue Jays shortly after graduation. However, he chose to attend the University of Michigan on a baseball scholarship instead. Abbott led the Wolverines to Big Ten titles in his freshmen and junior years, and graduated with career record of 26 wins and 8 losses.

As a member of Team USA in 1987, Jim became the first American pitcher in 25 years to beat a Cuban team on Cuban soil. He carried the United States flag during the opening ceremonies at the 1987 Pan American Games in Indianapolis, at which the team won a silver medal. That year, Abbott was presented with the US Baseball Federation's Golden Spikes Award, presented annually to the best amateur player in the country. Abbott participated in the 1988 Summer Olympic Games in Seoul, pitching a complete game. Jim led the US to a Gold Medal, 5-3 victory over Japan...the first ever gold medal in Olympic Baseball competition for the US.

Following the Olympics, Abbott joined the California Angels beginning a tremendous Major League career. Jim had his best season in 1991 winning 18 games for the Angels while posting an ERA of 2.89 and finishing third in the American League Cy Young Award voting. In 1993, he threw a no-hitter while pitching for the New York Yankees at Yankee Stadium.



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Jim Abbott (continued)

Jim's many honors include the 1987 Sullivan Award recognizing him as the best amateur athlete in the United States. Jim is the only baseball player to have received this award. Abbott was also honored as the Male Athlete of the Year for the 1988 Olympic Games. Jim won many awards while at Michigan including the 1988 Big Ten Jesse Owens Athlete of the Year Award. Abbott was invited to throw out the first pitch at game 7 of the 2002 World Series and recently participated in his first Yankees Old Timers Day.

But the awards that best define Jim Abbott would be those that exemplify courage and overcoming adversity. Jim has been distinguished as the March of Dimes Athlete of the Year twice and has received the Academy Awards of Sports Courage Award, the Freedom Forum's Free Spirit Award, the 1991 Victory Award, the 1992 Tony Conigliaro Award and the 2005 Roy Campanella Memorial Award. Jim has been honored as a 2004 inductee into the Michigan Sports Hall of Fame, a 2007 inductee into the College Baseball Hall of Fame and a 2008 recipient of an Honorary Degree Doctor of Laws from the University of Michigan. As a philanthropist, Abbott has donated \$100,000 to Amigos de los Ninos, an organization that aids groups that care for children in California.

Today, Jim is a professional motivational speaker. Unique as a sports speaker, Jim's story, and the way he delivers it, appeals to many types of audiences - even those who are not sports fans. In his keynotes, Jim Abbott uses motivational sports stories of how he overcame adversity and anecdotes from his career as a professional baseball pitcher. In September 2008, The U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), in cooperation with Major League Baseball, announced that Jim will serve as campaign spokesman for the new Proving Individuals with Talent Can Help (PITCH) campaign that encourages businesses to hire individuals with disabilities.

Most Requested Programs...

- ADAPT: A System for Overcoming Adversity