



Bigger Than the Game: Restitching a Major League Life

Dirk Hayhurst

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"The best writer in a baseball uniform." --Tyler Kepner, *The New York Times*

After nearly a decade in the minors, Dirk Hayhurst defied the odds to climb onto the pitcher's mound for the Toronto Blue Jays. Newly married, with a big league paycheck and a brand new house, Hayhurst was ready for a great season in the Bigs.

Then fate delivered a crushing hit. Hayhurst blew out his pitching shoulder in an insane off-season workout program. After surgery, rehab, and more rehab, his major-league dreams seemed more distant than ever.

From there things got worse, weirder, and funnier. In a crazy world of injured athletes, autograph-seeking nuns, angry wrestlers, and trainers with a taste for torture, Hayhurst learned lessons about the game--and himself--that were not in any rulebook. Honest, soul-searching, insightful, hilarious, and moving, Dirk Hayhurst's latest memoir is an indisputable baseball classic.

Praise for The Bullpen Gospels and Out of My League

"Dirk Hayhurst writes about baseball in a unique way. Observant, insightful, human, and hilarious." --Bob Costas

"A fun read. . . This book shows why baseball is so often used as a metaphor for life." --Keith Olbermann

"Entertaining and engaging. . . reminiscent of Jim Bouton's *Ball Four*." --*Booklist*

"A rare gem of a baseball book." --Tom Verducci, *Sports Illustrated*

"A humorous, candid, and insightful memoir of Hayhurst's rookie season in the majors. . . Grade: Home Run." --*Cleveland Plain Dealer*

Bigger Than the Game: Restitching a Major League Life Details

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Author : Dirk Hayhurst

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From Reader Review Bigger Than the Game: Restitching a Major League Life for online ebook

Brent Soderstrum says

I have read both of Dirk's prior books in which he gave us an inside look of what it is like to be a minor league baseball player and a look at what its like to be a first year fringe major league player. This book is quite different but still very enjoyable.

In this book Dirk shows us what a player goes through when he is injured and has to rehabilitate the injury away from the team. Dirk is injured in the offseason and misses the entire 2010 season. He is thankful the Toronto Blue Jays kept him and didn't release him. He then goes through the loneliness and isolation of rehabilitation. He questions whether he will be able to come back and what he will do if he can't. You get a glimpse of the physical grind plus the mental and emotional toll that a player goes through. Throw in the flack Dirk takes from certain players about his first book which is released in 2010 and you see a down time in his career. Most of us think that being a baseball player would be so great but Dirk shows us that oftentimes it doesn't live up to what everyone thinks it should be.

The best part about this book is that it gives life lessons that are applicable no matter what your profession. We all face downtimes in our careers. Depression is often creeping around the corner. We all have the employee who just gets under our skin and who we secretly wish bad things for. For Dirk this is Brice. Dirk shows us that we are more than our profession. We need to be happy with ourselves. If we are and are true to ourselves it really doesn't matter what others think. It was a good time in my life to read this book.

Jay says

It's spring, and I thought a good time to dig into a new baseball book. However, this ended up being much more a medical book. It starts with Hayhurst injuring himself offseason, and follows him through his attempted rehab with the team during spring training. When that doesn't do so well, he rehabs at a couple of sports medicine clinics. We are treated to some banter in the locker room with the team, but that is mostly about Hayhurst being a writer and the issues some players have with him. Frankly, it could have taken place in any other sport or in many other jobs -- there isn't much distinctly baseball content in this one. So this really doesn't meet my definition of a baseball book. As a book about medical and mental health issues, it tends to be overwrought, with quotes of conversations that appear very one-sided sprinkled throughout. There are lots of monologue moments for Hayhurst that appear as quotes, though no one talks this way in real life. He comes across as very self-centered, but that is to be expected when one of the topics is his mental health. The best aspect of the book, by far, is his interaction with the clinicians in Birmingham, which occurs in the last quarter of the book. These are very funny anecdotes for the most part, and although I haven't read Hayhurst's earlier baseball books, I imagine that this kind of practical joker-type anecdotes were the best of them. I suspect this isn't his best book, but it didn't scare me away from being interested in reading his earlier ones.

I won a copy of this book in Goodread's First Reads program.

Scott Breslove says

I don't even know what to say...what a life this guy has led, pros and cons...and still a hell of a writer...

Kristine says

Bigger Than the Game by Dirk Hayhurst is a free Goodreads Firstreads advance reader copy of a paperback book I read right around the time of the lunar eclipse in April. Not sure what drew me to this book, but my guess that it would have something to do with it being a kind of off-beat sports memoir.

Dirk Hayhurst pretty much writes like a man named Dirk Hayhurst would write - with not a lot of poise and a heck of a lot of swagger. Following the events/success of his earlier book, *The Bullpen Gospels* (even taking the time to reference it being published and its eventual acclaim), Dirk lift weights, gets signed to a team, goes through an injury, then physical therapy, all while having silly yet masculine conversations with what seems to be perfect spontaneous recall. It's a quick, sporty read, but not enough story to metaphorically bind together that unraveled ball on the front cover.

Gregory says

From <http://weeksnotice.blogspot.com/2014/...>

I bought Dirk Hayhurst's new book, *Bigger Than the Game*, as soon as it came out because I knew I'd like it. This is the third book in a baseball trilogy and the previous two were fascinating and funny.

This one is no different, but it's actually much less about playing baseball than about dealing with baseball. It starts with the self-inflicted shoulder injury (lifting too much weight) he got in the offseason after 2009 and how he dealt with injury during the entire 2010 season. That included depression, using pills to make himself sleep and get numbed, having people know about his first book, a run-in with an arrogant teammate who did not like him writing and talking to the media, and rehab (with a cameo by wrestler Triple H).

Baseball is a conservative game in many ways--players have their codes, things are done this particular way, and you must not rock the boat. The mere idea of letting people see inside scares baseball players, and seeing inside is what Hayhurst does. He goes off about the player who kept confronting him (different reviews speculate differently, but he may just be an amalgam) as well as a few others, in large because he's not respecting the game and instead is trying to be bigger than baseball, which is a sin.

In some way all of his books are about his efforts to figure himself out. You get the impression that he was finally getting there at the end of this one. He thought hard about what baseball means and how he should fit into it. He learned how not to care about others' perception of his role in it. Like many other entertainers--such professional wrestlers--the fans see you as a commodity and not as a person. Players buy into the image, which feeds their self-image and self-worth.

Everyday dumbasses get on the internet and debate your worth like you're a fucking commodity. But instead of trying to say we're not a commodity, we just want to be the most valuable commodity possible. Everyone wants to be the hyped, processed, nostalgia-injected product instead of being an actual fucking person (p.

125).

The player who didn't like him hated the fact that Hayhurst might puncture the bubble they live in and value so highly--just chatting too often with the team's own media person (who in many ways helps nurture the image!) was crossing the line. As he points out, though, this is already slowly changing. Glacially yes, but social media is here now and not going away. Way too few baseball players write real books but reality is spilling out in bits and pieces.

And like the rest of the books, it's funny and self deprecating. As he said to his book agent:

"My style is being honest about failing in a game that everyone thinks you're a winner in simply by playing" (p. 232).

I'm guilty of that feeling, and like how Hayhurst has made me think more broadly. If you're a baseball fan, you should check out all three.

David Drysdale says

Really 3.5 stars. I'm a fan of Dirk Hayhurst's. I don't think he's a phenomenal writer or anything but I think he has good insight into a side of baseball that is rarely seen, whether it is the struggles of minor league players, the pleasure and the pain of just barely cracking a big league roster as a peripheral player, or, in this case, the mental struggles that come along with being a highly tuned athlete whose career can end with one workout. This is where the book is the strongest: when it describes the fear and frustration that comes along with the author's injury in the off-season and the downward spiral he takes as a result.

But after that, this one loses steam pretty quickly. Structurally, it felt weak. The primary crisis is resolved about half-way in and then the rest feels like a lot of hurrying up to wait. There's just no climax. The second half of the book is pretty funny--though sometimes I think Hayhurst has a bit of an inflated sense of his own comedic skills--but it's not as good a story. I feel a bit guilty saying this because the first half is so raw--I don't want it to sound like I'm disappointed that Hayhurst got better (eventually). But I could have tolerated less of the book being about goofing around in rehab and hearing more about the effects of mental illness and addiction. I think that's the more important part of the story, too. But this is set aside in the second half of the story. People disappear, notably Hayhurst's wife, whose deep concern for her husband in the first few chapters is quite moving. But once he returns to Ohio from Florida, she's a non-entity.

I think I'm being a bit tougher on this one than I have been on his other books because I think the issue of mental illness is so important and I am glad when athletes do address the effects it can have on even people who seem, by all appearances, to have it all. I wish Hayhurst had done a bit more with it.

Leah Polcar says

A disappointment when compared to *The Bullpen Gospels* or if you are looking for another sort of insider look at major league baseball. However, this book is exactly what it purports to be -- an account of Dirk Hayhurst's time on the DL, his subsequent depression, and moving on. However, there is nothing really new

here: Turns out athletes don't like weakness -- really? -- or that depression makes you less interested in things -- really? -- or that MLB players pocket their per diem -- wait, actually that was new. So, two stars for teaching us all how to be frugal when we make the Show.

Scott Foshee says

Broken Athletes and What it Means to be Human

I have read all four of Dirk Hayhurst's books now and have enjoyed each one of them. Where the first three predominately focused on the lighter side of baseball (with terrific background into his troubled family, his supportive romance and subsequent marriage), "Bigger Than the Game" takes a slightly different tack. Dirk gets injured and his experiences move to the trials and tribulations of dealing with rehab, teammates resentful of his writing, and the realization that what makes one good on the field of competition is not necessarily what gives one an acceptable quality of life.

Dirk Hayhurst's writing is vulnerable and real. We are privy to the rarely seen shadow world of pro sports rehabbing and psychologists. A particularly funny section of the book takes place at the world famous Andrews Clinic in Birmingham, where Hayhurst encounters sadistic trainers, a baseball crazy nun, a living ghost of the old south, and wrestler Triple H.

The world of the injured player can be a difficult one. "I don't think being lonely has anything to do with the number of people you're around," writes Hayhurst. Largely separated from the team during their physical rehab regimen, players are suddenly removed from the game they have devoted their lives to from an early age. With time suddenly on their hands basic insecurities often rise and introspection follows. Some cannot handle it. Some become depressed and turn to pain meds, some turn to alcohol, and some face difficult home lives. "Spring training for the injured is like detention. While everyone else is out having fun, sharing experiences in the game they love, you're stuck inside doing tedious busywork." While teams now often provide a sports psychologist to help players work through these problems, actually going to see one is seen as a sign of weakness by many in the game.

Hayhurst finally does go to the psychologist, albeit reluctantly, and works to come to terms with his difficulties. Professional sports is a business, and as a business it is performance based. "It's like this," he writes. "This whole industry is morally bankrupt. It's full of fakes and bastards and arrogant SOBs who can get away with murder as long as they play great. And then, on the flip side, there's a pocket of decent guys who deserve respect, but don't get it if they don't play well...but instead of trying to say we're not a commodity, we just want to be the most valuable commodity possible...both sides say they hate it and yet both sides wouldn't have it any other way." Later, when he talks to wrestler Triple H at the Andrews Clinic, Hayhurst realizes that playing a sport professionally is "a job where people look at the role you play on television and feel they have the right to make up what your life should be like."

If, as Yogi Berra said, 90 percent of baseball is half mental, the mental side of the game is much underrepresented in print. Players have to learn not only how to play the game, but how to play a role when they reach the elite levels of their sport. Many struggle off the field with this distinction, with disastrous results plucked right from today's headlines. Hayhurst encounters all of these issues and more. Instead of succumbing to his problems, he uses the time to step away from the intense competition of sport and get some much-needed perspective. "...at the end of the day, we were just grown men putting on costumes and playing children's games. To take any of it more seriously than that was a mistake." The money,

competition, intensity and constant press coverage seems to warp perspectives and values in sports in a way that makes people glorify the game and forget that there are other things that are more important. Players coddled from a young age because of their athletic abilities often forget that there is much more out there that is bigger than the game.

Dirk Hayhurst gives us a rare and fascinating behind the scenes glimpse of broken athletes working out of the spotlight not just to return to form, but to discover and face what it really is to be human. "You know," he writes, "I think I learned more about baseball this year than any season before it, and I didn't throw a single pitch."

Rinku says

As a Blue Jays fan, when I found out Dirk Hayhurst was going to write about his time with the Jays in his next book, I was ecstatic. Looking forward to hearing about his time in Toronto. Unfortunately, for him his time in Toronto was miserable and injury plagued. Unfortunately for me, this book was poorly written (compared to his previous two books). "The Bullpen Gospels" and "Out of my League" seemed more polished, more tight than this book. He states in the book how he had signed a book deal in which he had to write two more books. I am assuming he had to rush this book to make it meet deadline.

"Bigger than the Game" talks about the mental aspect of the game and how the culture in the locker room can impact one's self worth, esteem and identity. These themes are extremely important, and Hayhurst develops these themes quite well. However, the conclusion seemed a bit rushed.

The book does not depict the baseball locker room culture or the Jays organization well. I was quite frustrated with how the Jays handled things - specifically injuries, rehab and mental illness (maybe it has to relate to my personal ideals and how I wish "my team" were to act).

I knew the laughs would be few and far between compared to his first two books, but I did expect more humour than was given. Kevin's sarcasm and the time in Birmingham were the only parts of the book I truly enjoyed. I hope Kevin actually exists and he is berating Luke as we speak.

All in all, it was a okay book. Expected better, but glad I read it.

Lastly, "I'm going to make you famous just to make you infamous" might just be one of the most badass things I've read in a while.

Gord Jones says

After reading Dirk Hayhurst's the Bullpen Gospels, I was looking forward to reading more of his work as it came out. Bigger Than the Game is his newest book and the second I have read of his. I was excited to read it.

I'm glad that it was a quick read, as I found myself really not enjoying many of the stories he told. Some chapters just went on and on about nothing. In fact where in his first book, I saw a likeable person with drive,

and humour but in this book, I did not like him at all. I realize that there is a lot of mental as well as physical healing needed when a pro athlete injures themselves, but found him quite whiny. There was also an air of arrogance that came through, that he never showed in his first book.

There were some interesting things about life in baseball that he wrote about but not much. Near the end of the book, he said that after the success of his first book that he got a two book deal from the publisher. This book seems thrown together just to satisfy the terms of the agreement.

I highly recommend the Bullpen Gospels but recommend that you should avoid Bigger than the Game!

Teena in Toronto says

My husband had read "The Bullpen Gospels", which the author wrote a couple years ago, and enjoyed it. We are fans of the Toronto Blue Jays ... the author had played for the Jays so I thought I'd find this book interesting since it covers his time with the Jays.

Hayhurst spent most of his career playing in the minor league. In 2009, he was signed to Toronto's farm team and spent part of the season "in the bigs" playing for the Jays. He hurt his shoulder in the spring of 2010 and spent the season on the disabled list. This book covers the time he was on the disabled list getting rehab for his shoulder.

Some parts of this book were interesting ... like the stuff that happens behind the scenes with the players, the allowances and per diems, locker room hierarchies, etc. There are not so flattering stories about some of the players on the Jays' team and minor league teams (their names have been changed).

I thought, though, that the writing could have been tighter. There were many many conversations that were really really long. For example, rather than the author saying he had a conversation with his trainer about something, we read about it word-for-word-for-word for pages. It seemed to be like this with everyone he talked with. As a heads up, the language is for a mature reader ... the "F" word is used quite often.

I didn't find him overly likeable. Yes, I know he had problems dealing with his being in rehab and out of the game when he really wanted to play, but I found him arrogant, self-centered and whiny. At any opportunity he was sucking up to the media to promote his previous book (which was just coming out when this book takes place) or going on and on about what a hard time he was having adjusting and being shut out by the other team members.

If you are a fan of baseball, you may like this book. I like baseball and had a hard time getting through it.

Blog review post: <http://www.teenaintoronto.com/2014/02...>

Laura says

I've enjoyed Dirk Hayhurst's previous books, "The Bullpen Gospels" and "Out of My League." Both were interesting and insightful glimpses into the goings-on behind the scenes of both minor and major league baseball clubs - the day-to-day minutiae of long bus rides, accommodations, per diems, and adjusting to a

constantly changing roster of co-workers. I love baseball, and I especially love the stories behind the game.

This book fell short for me, however. The first few chapters where Hayhurst writes about his injury and his subsequent depression and anxiety were heart-wrenching. Working on finding his way back to baseball while trying desperately to hide his real emotions from his teammates and trainers - these chapters were well-written, and I'm sure they were difficult for him to write about. Towards the end, the long chapters with a nun, a wrestler, and his new trainers (I'm not sure what happened there, I skimmed those chapters) seemed to be more of a "you had to be there" situation and they didn't move the story forward.

I understand that Hayhurst was a baseball player/writer. He wrote about what went on in the locker rooms, the hotels, etc. His teammates were understandably skittish about this, not knowing if or how they might be portrayed in these books. Much of the book went in a circle of "I promise I'm not going to write about you," yet if these exchanges went into the book, weren't those promises broken? Even if names were changed, the people he promised not to write about surely knew they were being portrayed - the details were too fine and specific. In the end, I had a weird feeling that I was looking into the lives of Hayhurst's teammates in a "TMZ" kind of way - they didn't want to be in the book, but there they were.

This book felt a bit rushed and thrown together, like maybe there was a deadline to meet. I recommend his first two books, not so much this one.

Jon Moeller says

A very good book about the struggles of a professional baseball career and the struggles after suffering an injury. A good read, but not nearly as good as his earlier books.

Reid McCormick says

I don't watch reality shows. I find them brainless and totally uninteresting. Why should I care about the daily life of a random person? However, I do spend several hours a week thinking about and studying baseball. In my opinion, baseball is fascinating and utterly philosophical.

What is the difference between baseball and reality television? Truthfully, absolutely nothing. Sure you can argue some differences, but in the end you are watching the meaningless interactions of egotistical people partaking in fabricated drama.

There is nothing that can replace the excitement of a walk off home run or the beauty of a no-hitter, but in the grand scheme of life, baseball is meaningless.

This is why I like Dirk Hayhurst. He understands that constant internal struggle all baseball lovers feel. You love the game so much yet you also loathe its insignificance.

Bigger Than the Game is the third book I have read from Hayhurst. His first book let us see the unglamorous life of the minor leagues. His second book showed us the complicated transition from the minors to the majors. Hayhurst then came out with an e-book that was a continuation of his second book which I have not read.

In *Bigger Than the Game*, Hayhurst uncovers the life you definitely have not heard: the life and times of the disabled list. In the civilian world, all the reports the fans receive pertain to a ball player's estimated recovering time. Here Hayhurst shows us the physical and emotional struggle recovering athletes go through day in and day out.

Like I have said in other reviews, Hayhurst is a great communicator. He is able to give us a peek behind the curtain without writing a shocking exposé and throwing someone under a bus. Hayhurst simply recounts his experiences, how he handled success, how he dealt with defeat and how he suffered with pain.

This book offers the least amount of actual baseball than his other books, but if you love his earlier stuff you will love this book too.

Here is a quote near the end of the book that I think sums things up perfectly:

“At the end of the day, we are just grown men putting on costumes and playing children's game. To take any of it more seriously than that was a mistake.”

Scott Sykes says

Dirk Hayhurst's first book, *"The Bullpen Gospels"*, is one of my favourite books of all time, and while *"Bigger Than the Game"* keeps the same fluid writing style that makes it a fun and easy read, the subject matter is much darker. Dealing with depression, potential addiction, injury and rehab, you follow Hayhurst through some pretty dark, depressing times. It isn't until the final act of the book where you really get a sense of what Hayhurst was trying to accomplish with this book, which is self acceptance and personal growth. I'm not an athlete by any means, but hearing some of the stuff he went through, I could relate which made it a very personal read. And as I stated before, it doesn't really pack the punch of *"Bullpen Gospels"*, Hayhurst is still a writer whose work I will always seek out to read.
