

BO MCLAVEY – 2008 GRADUATE – EATON REDS

THIS IS EATON BASEBALL

Everyone that's any good at something puts additional emphasis on the task at hand. The greats though, they exaggerate the importance of success as if their life depended on it. No one did this as well as 2008 graduate Bo McLavey, whose hard-nosed approach once had a coach describe him as playing "as if his family had been taken hostage by the opponents and would only be released if McLavey won." And that description came during a non-league game that meant very little in the grand scheme of things, but to McLavey, he was upset the moment the opposing team arrived at the field, daring to show up to try to beat him; to McLavey, that simply wasn't going to happen.

He wouldn't allow it, as he played every game as if the fate of the town of Eaton was dependent upon victory.

As just one example of this attitude he carried, after breaking his finger on his throwing hand in the first weekend of the State Tournament, McLavey hid the blackened hand from everyone, borrowing a lefthander's fielding glove to wear over the top of it in the postgame chat and off the field. Knowing that something was up, one of the Reds' coaches confronted him, and after a standard tall tale or two about why he was hiding his right hand, McLavey finally showed him the broken pinky finger and blackened hand.

Knowing that the State Championship would be played the following weekend, McLavey promised his finger would be OK by Friday. When told that if it wasn't he probably couldn't hit in his cleanup position and the Reds would just try to find a way for him to pitch, he said, "nope, it won't be a problem, and if it is, I've got a bandsaw to fix it, I never use that finger for pitching anyway." Those few fortunate people that have ever gotten to know McLavey, knew that he was dead serious, he would lose a finger before he would fail to compete in a State Championship that he was simply going to go win.

And he did go on to win that State Championship, 10 fingers in all, the following weekend by throwing a complete-game win and then being ready for the "If" Game had it been necessary to decide the State Champion.

McLavey and his family came to the Reds' coaching staff knowing the importance of winning State for Bo, and stated that if 12 innings is the maximum he can throw in a weekend, then throw him 12 innings, if the maximum is 20 innings, then throw him 20 innings. If the last pitch he ever throws in this lifetime is to win the State Championship, then have him throw that pitch here at this field. While the Reds' coaching staff wouldn't risk a player's future in that way, the sentiment of course is appreciated by any coach.

McLavey is a true warrior, fighting to do anything it takes to find success. He never played dirty in his life, but he never played soft either. The following summarizes McLavey's career in pinstripes, written immediately after his graduation. He then went on to lead Trinidad State to the Region IX league championship as only a freshman, simply outwilling his opponents in college, and outworking his teammates to earn the #2 starting job as a freshman and the #1 job as a sophomore.

Every college and semi-pro coach that's ever had the opportunity to coach McLavey has immediately seen his competitiveness lead their teams to victory and has considered him one of their favorite players of all-time. Eaton Baseball couldn't have been more fortunate than to have had this truly great warrior that is cut from the same cloth as baseball legend Ty Cobb.

Bo McLavey

“Baseball is a red-blooded sport for red-blooded men. It's no pink tea, and mollycoddles had better stay out. It's a struggle for supremacy, a survival of the fittest.”

“Baseball is not unlike war.”

“I never could stand losing. Second place didn't interest me. I had a fire in my belly.”

*“I had to fight all my life to survive. They were all against me, but I beat the ***** and left them in the ditch.”*

“Baseball was one-hundred percent of my life.”

“When he's at bat, you can hear him gritting his teeth.”

“This great athlete seems to have understood from early in his professional career that in the competition of baseball, just as in war, defensive strategy never has produced ultimate victory.”

“Let him sleep if he will, if you get him riled up, he will annihilate us.”

“Every time I hear of this guy again, I wonder how he was possible.”

“He lived off the field as though he wished to live forever. He lived on the field as though it was his last day.”

The quotes above are from, and about, the toughest player to ever play the game of baseball. The reason we know they're referring to Ty Cobb and not Bo McLavey, is because Bo would never use a word like “mollycoddles”. Other than having operated from a slightly different vocabulary, one cannot find other differences between the way that these two men approached the game of baseball.

Bo McLavey just completed the most hard-fought, tenacious baseball career in the history of Eaton Baseball. The Reds are known for having a bunch of disciplined, tough guys in their lineup that aren't squeamish about taking a hit by pitch, or chesting a bad hop in the infield, so to be considered the toughest baseball player out of this group, is much like being considered the toughest soldier in the U.S. Armed Forces.

Bo is a throwback to the way the game was played a century ago, when everyone was battling simply for the sake of battling; solely to win, to beat the other guy. Players back then didn't play for the headlines, the money, the supermodels, the fame – they simply played the game as if it were the only thing that mattered in life. No one did this better than Ty Cobb, and frankly no one else today does it quite like Bo McLavey.



McLavey threw every pitch for the Reds as if it were the last one he would ever throw. He was smart enough to know how to set up a batter for the next pitch, but he was more interested in just sending an opponent back to the dugout right away. As a hitter, he took each at-bat as a confrontation, in which the opposing pitcher dared to try to beat him. When it mattered most, such as in the State Tournament, Bo wouldn't be beaten on the mound or at the plate. He led the Reds in

on-base percentage in 2007, and then moved to bat cleanup in 2008 and made a huge difference in allowing the Reds' #3 hitter to lead the Reds this year in on-base percentage and a number of other categories, as opposing players and coaches simply preferred to go after the Reds' #3 hitter, Tyler Wallace, and throw him strikes, rather than risk walking him to bring up McLavey with runners in scoring position. Over the final 13 months of his career, McLavey was intentionally walked in more pressure situations than maybe anyone in Eaton history. He was even intentionally walked in the final inning to become the potential tying run in the American Legion State Tournament, a move that is simply considered insane by most, as the worst that could happen is that he could hit a home run to tie up the game anyway. This was done though simply because one could see in McLavey's eyes that he wanted to be at the plate when it mattered most. Some players in those situations don't come out into the on-deck circle right away, they don't have the fire inside them to want to go be the one that's about to become either the hero or the goat (Bo has a term for people like that, and it's not mollycoddles). Bo was never afraid of this situation though, he relished such opportunities, and would be standing as close as possible to the batter's box whether he was on-deck or in the hole. He couldn't wait for this turn at-bat.

As a pitcher for the Reds, McLavey went after the toughest opponents in the State Tournament and did not allow a single run to score until the Reds had taken a commanding 6-0 lead in the State Semifinals, at which point the Reds' coaching staff called pitches to be thrown for contact rather than for strikeouts, so as to save McLavey's arm for the following day. Had the Reds not won the first game played on Championship Saturday, McLavey would have thrown the legal limit of another 5 innings in the 2nd game. It's impossible to envision anything other than an Eaton win in a game battled between two tired teams playing their 13th and 14th innings of championship baseball on the day; it was under conditions such as that—where simply the guy who wants it more is the one who wins—in which McLavey always shined the brightest. He and his entire family told the coaching staff before the weekend that he was available for 12 innings and wanted to throw all of them – the message was loud and clear, regardless of what might happen that weekend, find a way to win. With McLavey on your side, winning becomes pretty easy, even at the State Championship level. When it mattered most, McLavey was nearly flawless in the State Tournament, as he set the postseason record for the lowest earned run average in Eaton history, besting legends of the past that have won titles for the Reds like Martin, Shelton, Ochoa, Ayers, Griffith, Dominguez, and Noblitt, even beating pitchers with pro-level stuff, like Dyer and Ottoson.

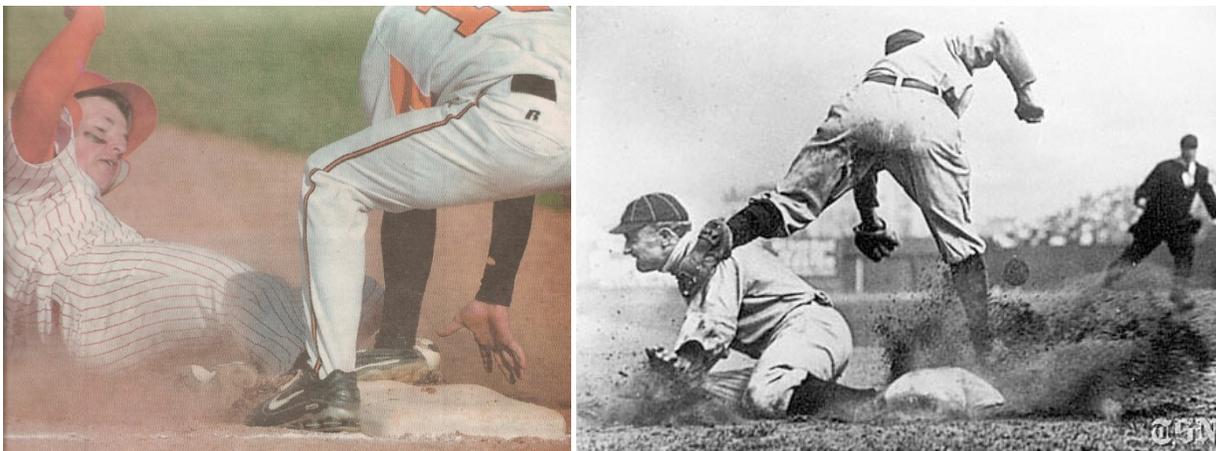


McLavey throwing no-hitter at Yuma

He also finished the Fall season with a no-hitter to win the Reds the Fall Championship, and then came out this spring and threw a no-hitter, and nearly a perfect game, to start the season. Following that no-hitter, Bo's arm became slightly sore, though Bo confided this information to no one until after the State Championship, as he knew the coaches would have rested his arm had they known. This wasn't the first time McLavey had done this either, as he hid arm soreness as a sophomore when he ate up a number of critical innings in the double-elimination American Legion State Tournament. If Bo had had to choose between a State Championship and keeping his right arm attached to his body, you would have to shake Bo left-handed today, and hope that his gigantic State Championship ring wouldn't crush your left hand.

Like Cobb, McLavey's swing was not simply handed to him naturally through superior athleticism. Instead, he swung less like a guy trying to impress anyone and more like a guy who simply was going to will his bat into the path of the baseball regardless of everything else. McLavey knocked in the go-ahead run in three of the final—and most important—four games of his career. In those situations, McLavey was going to get an RBI regardless of what instrument he was required to hit with; you could have handed him a baseball bat, a section of a telephone pole, a 2-liter bottle of Coke, or a folding lawn chair and McLavey would have still come through with an RBI to put the Reds ahead. The Reds never trailed in the postseason, and were rarely even challenged after early offensive explosions in each game.

On the bases, McLavey wasn't the fastest runner, but he was the one with the best baseball instincts that always knew when an extra base could be taken. And anytime McLavey saw a path to advance to the next base and bring his team that much closer to victory, he took it, successfully. He slid hard into every bag he ever went for, and in the State Tournament dislodged a ball from the third baseman's glove in a critical situation.

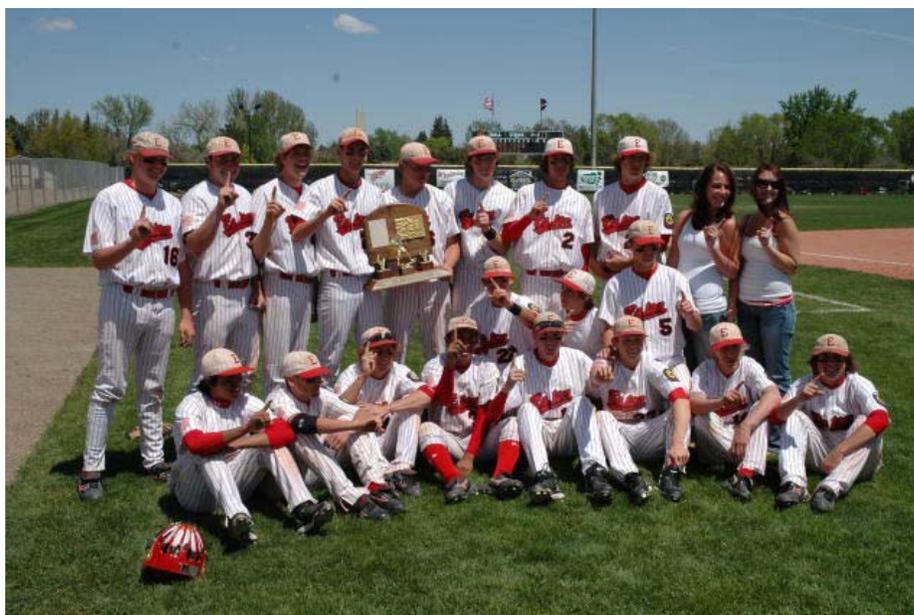


In the field, McLavey was a standout shortstop, winning All-State honors in 2008, and going the entire 2007 season without a single fielding error, which is something that had never been done before at Eaton. Every ball hit anywhere near him was a challenge between Bo and the batter to see who would win the race to first. McLavey won nearly every such battle, even if he had to call off other infielders and even outfielders to get the ball; McLavey wanted the ball. McLavey also had all the right baseball instincts and was smart enough to deek runners into poor baserunning decisions; never was this more important than when he deeked the would-be tying run at 2nd base to try to advance to third base in the State Championship Game, as McLavey then got the Lamar runner in a rundown and dove to tag him out and get the Reds out of a tough situation. McLavey was one of only two players throughout all of Colorado's more than 5,000 high school varsity players that earned All-State honors as both a shortstop and as a pitcher in 2008. But media-awarded honors mean little to McLavey, as all that matters really is victory, leaving the other team walking off the field with their heads down, and then seeing who is left in the tournament that still needs to be beaten.



Very few considered themselves to be a true friend of Ty Cobb, as he was going to beat anyone and everyone, and his competitiveness in everything he did distanced many from him. However, when former teammates and even opponents were in financial or other distress, Cobb used portions of the vast fortune he built for himself off the field to help those that he respected. Had they not been born a century apart, and had Cobb ever had the chance to compete against Bo McLavey, it is quite likely that the two of them would have hated each other with all that they had, but respected one another so much as to one day upon Cobb's death find that McLavey had been willed a huge stake in the Coca-Cola Company, which Cobb had promoted and built great wealth through his investment in the company. A single-minded "I'll do everything myself if that's what it takes to win" type of man, McLavey doesn't need Cobb, Coke, or any other sponsor to pay for him to play baseball at the next level, as he earned a full-ride scholarship to Trinidad State Junior College this spring. Trinidad State finished in the Top 20 junior college teams in the nation this year, and McLavey will be pushing the Trojans to reach the Junior College World Series next year. Though we all know that just getting to the World Series would never satisfy McLavey, as this Irishman needs to beat everyone on the field until no one is left. That is exactly what he did for the Eaton Reds. State Champs.

McLavey's Team:



McLavey's Next Team:



Note: as Bo rests his arm this summer prior to the Fall Season at Trinidad State, he is coaching the Reds' Junior Legion team. Has his will to win been picked up on by his players? They've only won 24 games at the time of this article, but then again, they've only played 24 games thus far. As a player and now coach, Bo has won his last 36 consecutive games.