

## 2002 ABCA Clinic Review - Missing the Point

I attended the recent ABCA convention in Orlando. I thoroughly enjoy the national conferences because serious people with purpose attend. You don't get on a plane and fly to a convention to drink beer with your buds and tell war stories (Well, it's not your *primary* motivation!)

The annual gathering of committed professionals is truly inspiring to me. It energizes my spirit and begins the year with excitement and optimism. **You should go!**

There was, however, one incident that left me puzzled, angry, and wanting an explanation.

Friday afternoon Bill Hamilton from Pensacola JC gave an excellent presentation on the change up to a relatively full audience. The following speaker was Dr. Barry Sieller, a vision expert.

Approximately 60% of the audience left after Coach Hamilton spoke. Dr. Sieller proceeded to present some amazing research from his work with MLB and several universities. That data is available on his website at [www.visualedge.com/coaches](http://www.visualedge.com/coaches)

Vision training is not a hot topic in some areas of baseball. It is technical. It is not difficult. It is not medical. It can be a routine practice station. It is affordable. It is desperately needed as Dr. Sieller's research shows. It is apparently widely misunderstood.

The next speaker after Dr. Sieller was Joe Barth – the subject was “hitting the curve ball”. The room filled back up with the prodigal audience taking their seats, eager to learn the “secrets” of hitting the pitch that kept Michael Jordan out of the major leagues.

The first words out of Joe's mouth were, “In order to hit a curve ball you have to see it. You must have pitch recognition.” Barth went on to validate everything Dr. Sieller had just identified.

I don't think it was coincidental that clinic planners staged the vision presentation just prior to a presentation on the practical use of vision.

Earlier in this article I used the word “professional”. You don't have to be paid a major league salary to be a professional in baseball. You do, however, have to act like one.

As professionals, it is necessary for us to embrace new concepts – whether they are technical, botanical, strategic, physical, or emotional. It is vital for us to recognize innovation and change.

Tradition is our personal history. It builds character and is the fabric of who we currently appear to be. However, it can be used to merely moniker who we **WERE**. We can slip stagnantly into repeating who we used to be over and over again. (see the movie Ground Hog Day for details)

If you are on the table with searing chest pains and you look up at the doctor standing over you, do you really want to hear, “hey boys, let’s crack him open like we did in the in the 80’s !” Doubtful.

My group is on the vision bandwagon. Why? Because in baseball we historically believed that we competed against the opponent, right? Not true.

Boxers compete against each other. **WE COMPETE AGAINST THE BALL** – both offense and defense. If you can’t see it, interpret its distance from you, follow it to interception, coordinate vision to motor skill, you will not be as proficient as you could be in using the fundamental skills you religiously practice. Why pitchers need to participate in vision training will be the subject of a future article.

I believe that the ABCA attracts the best and brightest in our profession. All the more reason to stay vigilant and critical in our personal training experience.