

Going Batty

Pitcher John Odom has gone down in baseball history. Way, way down.

Odom is a twenty-six year old big league prospect who has seen action in the San Francisco Giants' single-A farm system. His fastball can arc into the low nineties on a good day but injuries have hampered his career. He signed with the Calvary Vipers of the Golden Baseball League and headed to Canada only to be stopped at the border for an unreported scrape with the law from back in his wild teen years. He asked his new club to trade him to an American outfit. They honored his request – sort of.

The Vipers obligingly swapped the six-foot-two right-winger to the Laredo Broncos in exchange for ten baseball bats. And not even Louisville Sluggers! These were off-brand models turned out by a company called Prairie Sticks. Estimated value: six hundred and fifty bucks. Odom may never make Cooperstown but his wax effigy, along with the bats, will grace a Ripley's Believe It Or Not museum. Ripley's bought the lumber for ten grand; the Vipers have earmarked the proceeds for charity.

We don't so much mind being bought and sold, but no one likes to go cheap. But both short-relievers and saviors, it seems, often do.

When Judas haggled for the life of Jesus his bargaining skills forsook him. The man who could estimate to a nicety the market value of perfume, and who managed to cook the Messiah's books for the best part of three years, apparently accepted the first low-ball offer to sell out his Lord. The thirty pieces of silver entered on the ledger in Matthew 26.15 represents, according to Zechariah 11.12-13, wages low enough to insult a non-union shepherd. Like the owners of the Canadian ball club, the indignant herdsman saw the whole thing as an insulting joke and donated the proceeds to charity.

But the flip-side of this transaction amazes us. What Judas saw as a quick buck turned off a disappointing prospect, what the religious leaders viewed as a bargain, God regarded as personal bankruptcy entered to purchase people proven to be worthless. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." – 2 Cor 5.21.

The Father traded the Son for some inconsequential lumber – two crossed boards of it – and donated the proceeds to the charity of buying back our sin-forfeited souls. And the Son, like John Odom, endured the shame of that public humiliation. And as a result, Hebrews 12 tells us, he has taken the seat of honor in the eternal Hall of Fame.

So the next time you feel you've been sold short, remember the price that purchased you. And the next time you want to argue that you are worth more than you're getting, think in terms of giving more than others seem to be worth.

Batter Up!
Doug