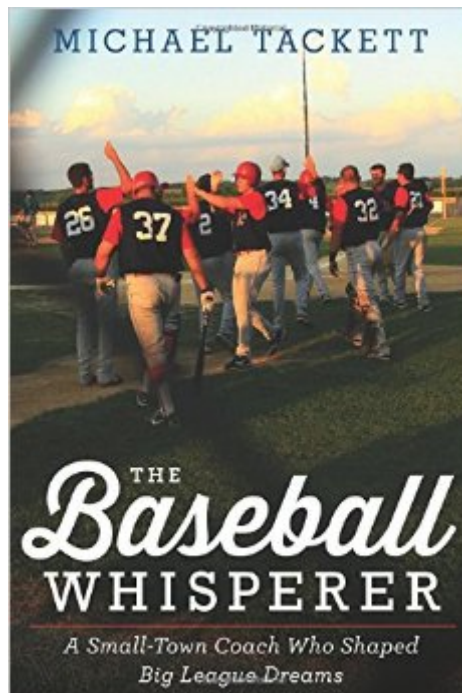


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# The Baseball Whisperer: A Small-Town Coach Who Shaped Big League Dreams



## Synopsis

From an award-winning journalist, a real *Field of Dreams* story about a legendary coach and the professional-caliber baseball program he built in America's heartland, where boys come summer after summer to be molded into ballplayers and men. Clarinda, Iowa, population 5,000, sits two hours from anything. There, between the corn fields and hog yards, is a ball field with a bronze bust of a man named Merl Eberly, a baseball whisperer who specialized in second chances and lost causes. The statue was a gift from one of Merl's original long-shot projects, a skinny kid from the ghetto in Los Angeles who would one day become a beloved Hall-of-Fame shortstop: Ozzie Smith. *The Baseball Whisperer* traces the remarkable story of Merl Eberly and his Clarinda's baseball team, which he tended over the course of five decades, transforming them from a town team to a collegiate summer league powerhouse. Along with Ozzie Smith, future manager Bud Black, and star player Von Hayes, Merl developed scores of major league players (six of which are currently playing). In the process, Merl taught them to be men, insisting on hard work, integrity, and responsibility. More than a book about ballplayers who landed in the nation's agricultural heartland, *The Baseball Whisperer* is the story of a coach who puts character and dedication first, and reminds us of the best, purest form of baseball excellence.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This biography of a legendary coach for a collegiate summer-league team is a complete work of hagiography, saved by the fact that it is exhaustively reported and well written. Merl Eberly

managed the Clarinda As baseball team in Iowa for 50 years and entered author Michael Tackett's radar screen when his son became part of the program one summer. Scores of college players went on to play in the majors and minors after their time with Coach Eberly and his wife, Pat; the most famous being Hall of Fame shortstop Ozzie Smith. Even though my own son has played baseball almost since he could stand, I didn't have any idea these programs for college ball players existed, so I was interested in the book for that reason alone. Not having been a fan of the game in the 1970s and '80s, I didn't recognize many names of the ball players who went on to successful careers (though I did know a few, like Chuck Knoblauch). But I appreciate the fact that Mr. Tackett took the time to interview these players, as well as coaches, sports writers, and other people involved in the game and in the Clarinda As. Hearing this chorus of voices brings the biography to life. Mr. Tackett draws on newspaper articles to introduce Coach Eberly's voice to the story (he died in 2011). Quoting him from an article in the Omaha World-Herald, he relays Eberly's motivation for running the program without ever drawing a salary: "This is my hometown. I think it's good for the community and this is a contribution toward that. When I used to call players they would say, 'Clarinda, Iowa? Where is Clarinda, Iowa? Where is that?' Now I think a lot of people know where Clarinda is.

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