

Inspiration From the Archives

Since the program began in 1992, Face to Face has aired interviews with hundreds of Christian athletes from all walks of life. Whether in the limelight, retired or recognized as an “up-and-comer” in the world of sports, we think you’ll enjoy past highlights of these sports figures’ careers. Here’s a look back at a “Face to Face” encounter with MLB umpire Ted Barrett.



Ted Barrett: Calling Balls and Strikes for Christ

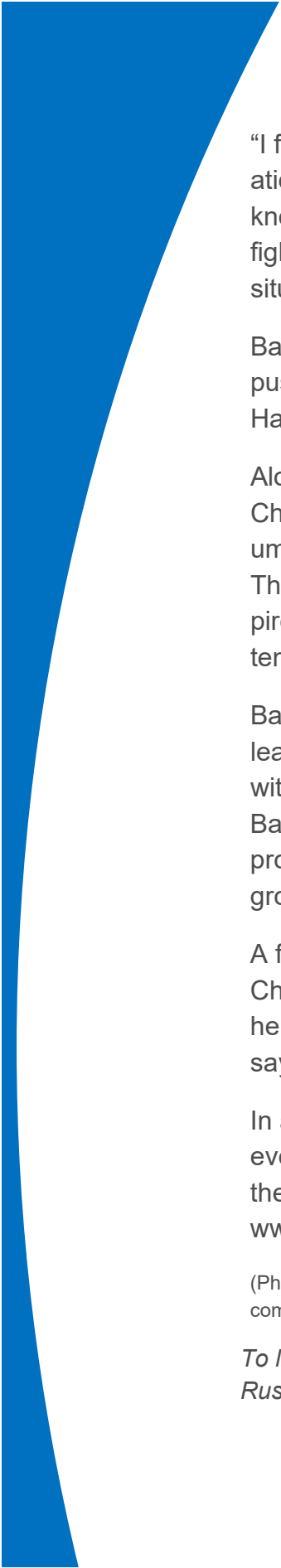
To say the job of a Major League Baseball (MLB) umpire is difficult, is an understatement. On the road by themselves for more than six months each year, umpires are constantly questioned and second guessed by players, managers and fans. As veteran MLB umpire and crew chief Ted Barrett jokingly says, “It’s said that umpiring is a job where you have to start out perfect to get better.”

Barrett offers this perspective on his work, “It’s just an impossible job to do perfectly, yet I love the challenge. I want to do really well. We feel, as umpires, we’re the integrity of the sport. It’s America’s game and we’re in charge of keeping order in what can be chaos at times.”

Barrett spent six years umpiring in the minor leagues, before getting his first big league start in a May 1994 Texas game when Roger Clemens was pitching for the Boston Red Sox. He spent the next five years as a “fill-in” MLB umpire before landing a full-time gig in 1999. He holds the record as the only MLB umpire to have worked home plate for two perfect games (David Cone in 1999 and Matt Cain in 2012). He also worked the plate for the longest World Series Game in modern history (Game 3, Oct. 26-27, 2018).

Barrett has had several other historical highlights as an umpire, but says he derives the most satisfaction by working each game for a crowd of one. “We work for God,” explains Barrett. “When we walk off the field, if He’s glorified, we’re satisfied.”

Barrett, a former amateur boxer, is an imposing figure at six-foot-four. But among MLB colleagues he is mostly known for his calm demeanor. He said it was not always that way. When he was umpiring in the minors, Barrett said he used to handle situations as a “hot head” and admits that it usually did not work out well.



“I feel like the Holy Spirit has given me the ability to bring peace into a situation and it wasn’t always that way,” explained Barrett. “The people who knew me in the minor leagues knew that I had a temper and I wanted to fight. That’s the way I dealt with conflict. Now I just try to bring calm into a situation and luckily God has given me favor.”

Barrett became a Christian at age 8 and credits his involvement with Campus Crusade for Christ (Cru), during his time playing football at Cal State-Hayward (now Cal State East Bay), for helping rekindle his love for Christ.

Along with fellow umpire Rob Drake, Barrett is the co-founder of Calling for Christ (CFC), a ministry trying to reach, teach, and disciple professional umpires for Jesus. Beginning in 2003, CFC has hosted an annual retreat. This past year marked CFC’s 15th retreat with about 15 active MLB umpires, one retired MLB umpire, and over 40 minor league umpires in attendance.

Barrett says during the season CFC holds weekly prayers calls for major league umpires on Fridays and minor league umpires on Saturdays, along with Bible studies and discipleship programs. CFC is a “brotherhood” that Barrett says is really important for encouragement. “Umpiring is a lonely profession. We’re on the road constantly,” explains Barrett. “Having a group of believers that you can have community with is essential.”

A favorite Bible verse for Barrett is Colossians 3:15, “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts... (NIV).” Barrett, an ordained minister, said when he went to seminary he learned the meaning of the verse in the Greek. He says this peace is to “act as umpire” in the Christian's heart.

In a job fraught with clashes, Barrett says his calling is to bring peace into every situation. And Barrett is quick to point out that peace is not always the absence of conflict. To learn more about Calling for Christ, visit www.callingforchrist.com.

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To listen to the full interview of Ted Barrett, conducted by Face to Face host Tom Rust, visit <http://face-2-face.org/listen-now/shows-archive/>

www.FaceToFaceRadio.com