

After Dark Past, MLB Star Pitcher Knuckles Down With God, Life

The knuckleball—Cy Young Award-winner R.A. Dickey's "money" pitch—serves as a metaphor for the Toronto Blue Jays right-hander's life story. It's all about surrender.

And it wasn't until Dickey finally decided to give up control of his life to God that everything—including his knuckleball pitch—began to work for him.

"When you throw a knuckleball well, the only thing you care about is releasing the ball toward its target without spin," says Dickey, who won the Cy Young Award as the National League's top pitcher in 2012. "To release a ball that doesn't spin, you have to surrender to the outcome in a way that you don't with other pitches.

"For me personally, God's in my mechanics too. The surrender for me doesn't happen when I release the pitch; it happens when I wake up in the morning—having to surrender to every moment from then until I close my eyes at night."

The only knuckleballer ever to win a Cy Young Award, Dickey has joined several of his fellow Major Leaguers—including Josh Hamilton, Albert Pujols, Clayton Kershaw and David Murphy, along with several other celebrities and athletes—who have shared their stories in a short film production by I Am Second, a movement meant to inspire through stories of hope and transformation.

In the film, Dickey shares about his childhood abuse, feelings of inadequacy and a near-death experience, along with his challenging journey to the top in his professional baseball career.

A childhood marked by molestation and rape scarred Dickey, who tried to hide the abuse from the world while coping with feelings of unworthiness. Baseball became a saving grace for him, but only for a short while.

“Within sports, I found I could control my destiny,” Dickey says in the film. “If you followed the formula as an athlete, you would be rewarded for that. So that was not only how I escaped, but found a lot of validation and identity as I grew up.”

The Texas Rangers gave Dickey hope when they offered him a \$700,000-plus contract out of high school. But that hope was soon crushed when the Rangers rescinded the offer because team doctors discovered Dickey lacked an ulnar collateral ligament in his elbow, which could affect his pitching. He threw 95-mph fastballs without pain, which puzzled doctors.

The devastating news hit Dickey hard, and he eventually contemplated suicide. A moment of clarity and faith prevented him from killing himself, but a near-death experience with the current of the Missouri River in a stunt to impress friends proved to be the defining moment in Dickey’s path to the Lord. He told CBS News that his “faith lifted him to the surface.”

“God brought me to the bottom, literally and figuratively. And He picked me back up and said, ‘You’re gonna do it different,’” he says.

Dickey eventually shared his story of abuse with his wife, and the healing process slowly unfolded. His career prospects improved as well when he consulted former Major Leaguers Phil Niekro and Tim Wakefield, both of whom enjoyed major success with throwing the knuckleball.

The Rangers eventually re-signed Dickey, and he pitched for them from 2003 through 2006 with minimal success.

After one-year stints with Seattle in 2008 and Minnesota in

2009, Dickey signed with the New York Mets in 2010, going 11-9 that season and 8-13 the following year. In 2012, at the age of 38, he enjoyed his breakout season with a 20-6 record for the Mets and garnered his first All-Star game appearance.

Dickey became a free agent after the season and signed a five-year \$ contract with Toronto.

Learn more of Dickey's story at .