

EXAMPLE LONG NONFICTION STORY BASED ON RESEARCH

Prompt: Write a long journalistic story about a real person who is still alive and who has changed the trajectory of his/her life in some way. Show the challenges that this person faced and how those challenges were overcome. Make sure that the story contains at least eight paragraphs and all the elements of a story. Provide at least three references in a reference list. Use the MLA style.

TITLE OF THE STORY: Ankiel Comes Back!

John Brewer

Mrs. Kahn

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Ankiel Comes Back!

Rick Ankiel's career as a baseball player surprised everyone, including him. Starting out, he was a star pitcher as a high school student in Florida. As a senior in high school, he won 11 games and lost one, while striking out 162 batters ("Rick Ankiel" 1). *USA Today* declared that he was the "High School Player of the Year" in 1997. Not surprisingly, the St. Louis Cardinals selected him in the second round of the Major League Baseball Draft. His signing bonus was the fifth highest ever given to a young player: 2.5 million dollars ("Rick Ankiel" 1). With such a great start, everyone expected Ankiel to become one of the most successful pitchers in modern history.

As predicted, Ankiel's career in professional baseball started off successfully. In fact, he pitched better than all the other pitchers in the Minor League. He had 222 strikeouts in his first year ("Rick Ankiel" 1). Not surprisingly, he won several awards in the Minor League. He was the Carolina League's All-Star starting pitcher. *Baseball America* chose him as the first team Minor League All-Star starting pitcher. He also was awarded the Minor League Player of the Year Award in 1999 by *USA Today* and *Baseball America*.

When he moved to the Major League, he continued to pitch well during his first full season in 2000. His fastball traveled across home plate at 94 to 97 miles per hour, and he had several other good pitches to round out his menu of pitches (Leitch, 2014). With regard to individual awards, he was given the Rookie Pitcher of the Year Award. He finished in

second place in the Rookie of the Year Award. Moreover, his team won the National League Central Division championship that year. He was chosen to start as the pitcher for the Cardinals in the first game of the National League Division Series.

Unfortunately, things started to unravel for Rick Ankiel as the starting pitcher in that National Division Championship game. Unexpectedly, Mike Matheny, his usual catcher, was injured before the game. He had to work with an unfamiliar catcher. Although Rick did not allow any runs in the first two innings, his performance plunged in the third inning. He allowed four runs, gave up four walks, and threw five wild pitches. (A wild pitch is a pitch that is too high, too low, or too wide for the catcher to catch.) Five wild pitches in a postseason game is the worst thing that could happen to a pitcher, maybe even worse than dying. People wondered how he was able to walk off the field without help when he was taken out of the game. In a later World Series game during that same year, Rick Ankiel again posted a very poor performance. It was so bad that he was taken out of the game during the first inning after throwing five pitches that went past the catcher. At least one pitch went over the batter's head. Eventually, the Cardinals lost the World Series to the Mets without Rick contributing anything to help them.

Because of his breakdown, Rick was sent back to the Minor League team, but things got even worse for him personally and professionally. During the next year, his father was sent to prison for six years on a drug charge. That event rocked Rick's world. Meanwhile, even though Rick returned to the Major League, he still had trouble controlling his pitches. He threw five wild pitches in 24 innings ("Rick Ankiel" 1). Again, he was demoted to the Appalachian League where he won several honors including Pitcher of the Year and All-Star Designated Hitter. Unfortunately, his elbow was injured, and he eventually had surgery on

it. He moved back and forth between the Major and Minor League across the years as he rehabilitated his arm. Throughout all these problems, Rick was determined to “come back” to the Major League level in some way. In 2005, frustrated with his lack of progress as a pitcher, Rick decided that he needed to do something new. He announced that he was going to reinvent himself as a hitter and an outfielder.

After spending a year working on his batting and fielding skills, Rick Ankiel’s batting average in the Minor League impressed the Cardinals enough that they invited him to spring training as an outfielder in 2006. He knew that his chances of making the team as a reserve player were slim, but he tried to make the best of the opportunity. His fielding skills during training camp impressed the team managers. However, before the season started, he injured his knee and had to have surgery. That meant he missed the 2006 season. Nevertheless, he worked hard to rehabilitate his knee and to get back into condition as an outfielder who could run after fly balls and a hitter who could run to first base without causing an out. He practiced hard to hone his skills.

In 2007, he was again invited to spring training for the Cardinals and made their Minor League team. He became known as a home-run hitter, hitting 32 home runs (“Rick Ankiel” 1). He was promoted again to the Major League team and was given a standing ovation by the St. Louis fans during his first “at bat.” Everyone was happy to see his return to Major League baseball. Later, in the seventh inning of this first game, he hit a three-run home run. He went on in later games to hit a grand slam home run and to hit two home runs in the same game. He also made some fantastic catches as an outfielder, and he threw some spectacular assists to the third baseman. With a .285 batting average in 2007, he

became known as a star hitter (“Rick Ankiel” 1). It was hard to believe, but Rick Ankiel was back!

To conclude, no other professional baseball player has accomplished the feat of reinventing himself like Rick Ankiel did. Although everyone thought he would be a great pitcher, Ankiel failed miserably as a pitcher. Try as he might, he could not recover the skills that he once had as a starting pitcher. Because of his determination to develop skill as a batter and outfielder, he came back to the professional level successfully in another position. He showed that a player can bomb as a pitcher but return as a batter and an outfielder. He proved that despite injuries and other difficulties, he could overcome them and be successful. With talent and perseverance, he reinvented himself to return to the highest level of his sport. He is a perfect example of the saying “If what you are doing doesn’t work, try something else.” He kept trying something else until he met his goal of being a major league baseball player. Then he enjoyed several more years as a professional baseball player until 2014 when he became a professional “Life Skills Coordinator” for young players in the Minor League. Clearly, Rick’s determination is an illustration of the saying, “Where there’s a will, there’s a way!” He had a will that would not quit. He not only figured out a way to stay in baseball, but he became a star again.

Works Cited

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