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My favorite and most inspirational book is named The Rookie. This novel is about the game of baseball, but at the same time so much more. Imagine being one of the most talented and naturally gifted persons to ever play the game. Now imagine being that same person and having the motivation and determination to fully maximize your potential. This is Elgin Woodell. He is the main character of this story and someone that not only kids, but adults can look up to.

I was a kid when I first read this book. My Dad, Mom, and I would take turns passing the book around and reading a chapter or two. At this age, the story was all about baseball.

It started out with Elgin in little league developing his love for the game. Everyone quickly saw how truly gifted that Elgin was and he was placed on a team playing with older kids. On this team he was not a stand-out player like before and it seemed to bother him. One day while searching for something in his basement, Elgin uncovered an old pitching machine of his father's. This was his chance to get an edge on the rest of the players in the league. He runs upstairs to his mother, so excited he can barely talk, and tells her of his discovery. All he needed was some new baseballs and a bat. Unfortunately for Elgin, times were hard and his mother simply could not afford those things. This part of the story was very important to me growing up. I was a soccer player and, like Elgin, quickly moved from recreational, to travel, to club soccer. On my club team I was the only one that hadn't been playing at this level for at least three years. I was used to being the best player on both my other teams and this was discouraging to me. Most of the team was from a higher class of family than I was so there were often times when I was embarrassed by not having shoes or clothes as nice as everyone else. There was a time when I wanted to quit the team and give up on all the hard work I had put in over the years. Then one day my father reminded me of Elgin. When his mother told him that she could not

afford baseballs or a bat for him to practice with he could have easily given up. After being upset for a little while he remembered seeing a bucket of golf balls in the basement. This is where Elgin first shows the amount of determination he possesses. Without a bat, Elgin has no other choice but to try and use a metal pole about the size of a broomstick. In his basement, the pitching machine was set up shorter than the distance of a pitcher's mound with a trap behind it to catch the golf balls. All week long he was in the basement swinging away at a golf ball, rarely ever getting a piece of it. With nothing but hard work and his natural talent Elgin began to crush the golf balls. He even had to increase the speed as he was getting so good. When the next season came around Elgin couldn't wait to show off his new talents. In his first game he lined one straight back at the pitcher hitting him square in the face. Elgin could not believe what had happened. He blamed himself for becoming too good. If he had not practiced so hard then this would never had happened. The parents even didn't want him playing with their children in fear that it could happen to them. Again, he could have easily given up. He had to move up a couple more age groups to get on a team where his talents were equal to everyone else. This was the first time that I read this book. I saw a kid who practiced as hard as he could and never gave up. This stuck with me all the way through high school in playing soccer. I eventually became one of the top players on my club team and led my high school team to three conference championships while I was there. Had I not read this book I may have given up when I first thought of quitting and would not have achieved so many things in the sport.

The second time I read this book I was a lot older and much more mature. The story told me different things about Elgin that previously I did not understand.

One of the hardest parts of Elgin's life, which I did not mention before, was growing up with a father that wasn't around. As a child

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I couldn't grasp how hard this would have been for him. I came from a loving family where both of my parents were always involved in my life. If my father was not around I can't imagine myself doing so good in sports growing up. Even though his dad was never there, Elgin never stopped loving him. His mother would tell him stories about his father being a great baseball player and it filled him with inspiration. This shows so much character to be able to love someone who never showed a sign a truly loving you back.

This is a great novel that shows you what hard work and perseverance can get you. Everything is about so much more than just baseball. When Elgin first started up the pitching machine and was swinging at air, it wasn't just about him hitting the ball. It was about overcoming the most difficult challenges of your life. Elgin Woodell taught me qualities that can be used forever. To never give up is one of the greatest things that you can instill in your life. Motivation, determination, and understanding are traits I hope to carry the rest of my days after reading The Rookie.