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## “This New Book Addresses the Growing Problem Within Youth Sports – with Special Guest, Jerry Jenkins”

**David Loy:** Hello and welcome once again to *In the Loop* with Andy Andrews, I’m your host David Loy. And Andy we have once again with us today, our good friend, Jerry Jenkins.

**Andy Andrews:** Man I am so excited about this. Jerry, are you there?

**Jerry Jenkins:** I’m here, good to be with you again.

**Andy:** Awesome, great, great, great.

**David:** Well Andy we did a very unique and what I thought was very interesting episode, just a few minutes ago actually, talking about the art of writing and the journey that both you and Jerry have been on. But there are some other more specific similarities that the two of you share. I know that you’re both avid sports fans. Jerry you are, the most sought after sports biographer of all time. You’ve done some of the biggest names ever. But you’re also just aside from being a great writer you just love sports and specifically baseball. Is that right?

**Jerry:** Yeah, baseball is my favorite sport, probably because I wanted to be a baseball player. And one of my earliest breaks in writing, I’d written I think three books, when I was in my early twenties, and my boss came into my office, I was

working for a Sunday School publisher actually. And he said, would you want to help write a biography of Hank Aaron. And I was...

**Andy:** No way.

**Jerry:** And I was speechless. And I said, Hank Aaron, are you serious? He said, yeah. He said, I've been asked to write an inspirational book on Hank Aaron and he said, I thought, knowing that you came from the sports world, that you might help me, because he said, I don't really know that much about football.

**Andy:** Help you help you? Move aside my man.

**Jerry:** That's exactly. And I said, you sure don't, if you think Hank Aaron is a football player. But I over reacted so much that he didn't want to get out of the way, he said, well, I'll handle the inspirational side, he happen to be a pastor. And he said, you can handle the sport side. And I was 23 years old and I was such a fan of Hank Aaron and he was still playing at the time. In fact he was at the point where he was 713 home runs, his next home run would, would tie the record, one after that would break it.

**Andy:** No way.

**Jerry:** So my boss and I go down and interview Hank Aaron. And I'm interviewing him about baseball and my boss is interviewing him about the inspirational side. And the fact was that Hank and his wife, had had a trauma, she had given birth to twins in a Catholic hospital and they had lost one of the twins. And he was, they were counseled by one of the priests there. And during that time, they were converted to Catholicism. And they had become fairly devoted Catholics. So that was his sort of faith story. And it was an interesting thing but

Hank was fairly private about it. And not too articulate about it. But he really came to life when we talked sports. And here I was, almost speechless in his presence and yet I would ask him, I'd say, remember that time, I was sort of like Chris Fairly talking to The Beatles. It was like, remember that time that when you hit that home run? And he'd say, yeah, that was great. And so, my boss, not being that familiar with football,

**Andy:** Yeah, yeah.

**Jerry:** He wants to get into that action. So he sees that Hank is all, come to life when he talks about sports so he says, Hank, have you ever gone through a whole game without hitting a home run?

**Andy:** Oh my gosh, really.

**Jerry:** And Hank looks at him and looks at me and goes, man, I've been all for August. And so I had to say to my boss, yeah, why don't you just let me handle the sport stuff. But it was great, it was called *Bad Henry*, because that's what his teammates call him because he was the baddest hitter in the league. But what great fun it was just to meet him and at that stage of my career. And that just opened the doors for these later ones. Because to be able to write to other athletes and see them coming along and see that they're going to be stars and say, you know, I've got this experience, I've been a sports writer, I've done some other books including Hank Aaron's. And that just gave them confidence to say, hey if you can get a deal, I'll be happy to do it with you. So it's been a wonderful fun career.

**Andy:** You know, you must have a similar feeling, because I grew up with Hank Aaron. You're a little older than me, not much, but little older than me, but man,

I was like at night, in Dothan, Alabama, after bedtime, under the covers with my clock radio, with Phil Niekro on the mount. And Orlando Cepeda at first, and Felix Millan The Cat, at second, with the Atlanta Braves, Sunny Jackson, and Rico Carty in the left field, and Ralph Garr, the road runner, in center field, and Hank Aaron in right. Man I followed those guys like crazy. So now, now when my boys are growing up and they're like, yeah, Barry Bonds is fixing to break the record. I'm like, no, no, no. No, he's not. How do you feel about all that?

**Jerry:** Well I feel the same way anybody else does, that watched Hank Aaron and his drug of choice was nicotine, you know. And you look at the film clips and you think, you know, he was a child compared to these guys that did steroids, you know. I've got an editorial cartoon hanging in my office that shows the guys that run steroids pointing to Hank and saying, how come the more homeruns we hit, the bigger he looks? And I kind of get a kick out of a fact that it's going to be really, really hard for these guys to make the hall of fame, because everybody knows, in my mind, they cheated. That's all there is to it. For a guy that weighs a 165 pounds one year and two years later weights 235, hmm, it doesn't cover for me.

**Andy:** And Hank man, he was not big. And those slender quick wrists, and every golfer knows, it's club head speed. Well with Hank it was that bat speed, it was that moment, that flick of those wrists, just unbelievable.

**Jerry:** Yeah, I think it was, I know he hits 17 home runs of, of a Clod Austin, but I think it was Don Drysdale that said, trying to sneak a fastball past Hank Aaron, is trying to slip the sun, like trying to slip the sun pass the rooster.

**Andy:** You know, to me, there is such, people wonder why baseball is not in the hearts and minds of the youth of today. And a part of the reason to me and nobody ever says this, but when I was growing up, I was not the biggest kid, none of us

were, none of my friends. We were not big kids, but we looked at Hank Aaron and Felix Millan, these guys, they weren't big either, they were little guys too. But now you're a normal size guy and you look at some of the baseball players, these guys are massive.

**Jerry:** You even look at second baseman, they look like football players, they got the big thighs, and big biceps, I mean, there's something happening there.

**Andy:** So it's hard to relate, it's hard to relate.

**Jerry:** Yeah, really is. And especially, if you watch ESPN classic, just watch a game from 15 years go, these kids look like junior highers, you know, it's amazing.

**Andy:** Hey if you're listening to this podcast and you're thinking, Jerry Jenkins, Jerry Jenkins, I want you to remember, this guy, if you're just popping in, this maybe the first one you're listening to. Jerry is one of the most prolific fiction writers in history. Most prolific writer in history, over 70 million books sold, 20 New York Times best sellers. And if you're going, where do I know the name? Listen he has done the best sports biographies that have ever been done. I mean, I would put Jerry Jenkins, John Feinstein, you guys are probably the top, you guys are probably in the top two of all time people who have done that kind of stuff. And then Jerry is also doing *The Left Behind* series. Remember *The Left Behind* series? And so this is just awesome talking to you. Who was your favorite athlete to work with Jerry?

**Jerry:** Well believe it or not, I've just finished this one with Mike Matheny, the manager of the St. Louis Cardinals. And people hear that I've done Nolan Ryan and Walter Payton, and Joe Gibbs, and all those guys, and they're all incredible athletes. And I've got some great stories about each one of them. And maybe it's

because it's the most recent but Matheny is a classier guy I've ever work with. I didn't even expect it to be that way especially at this time of my career. I just thought, well this is one that's sort of in my wheelhouse, I love the game, love his old school approach. But in fact, he's young enough to be my son, he was born few months before my wife and I got married. And you know, so he's just a cool young guy. But as I interviewed him, he came to me out of the blue. He had written a letter to a little league parents who wanted him to be the coach to their team a few years ago. And his son was going to be on the team. And he said, he wrote them a letter as he was on his way back from some appearance, I think on an ESPN show or something like that. He said, I'll do this but maybe after you hear how I want to do it and what my caveats would be, you might want to withdraw your offer. And that's ok, I'll just be a parent and watch the games. But he said, if I'm going to do it, I'm going to do it right. And he said, I always said, if I was going to coach a baseball team, I want to coach a team of orphans. He said, why, because I think parents are the worst thing about youth league sports. Well that's no way to start a letter to people that are asking you to be the coach to their kids. And so he said, you know, just let me spell it out, I need to talk about all the thing parents do wrong, the way it should be done. And so, he read this letter to the parents and they were all kind of sitting there with their mouths hanging open. But they gave him a chance, they said, ok, we'll do, it, we'll stay out of it, let you run it. And he did that and the team became very disciplined and they were involved in teamwork and working together and all this stuff. And within a few years, that team went on to become several teams that are all the same, have the old school work ethic and all that stuff. He becomes, unlikely manager of the St. Louis Cardinals, one of the youngest in history, and had never had any big league managing experience but in the first three years, he's taken them to the pro season every year. He's got five teenagers, he and his wife do. Four of them are Division One athletes themselves and the fifth one probably will be too. He's humble, he's

soft spoken, he's not a screamer, he's just a really quality classy guy. And I just loved working with him. It was a great experience and that's been one of the highlights of all the guys I worked with, is working with Mike Matheny.

**Andy:** Wow.

**Jerry:** And the letter, somebody leaked it to the internet, and they started calling it The Matheny Manifesto. He's so humble, he said, I would never call it a manifesto, he says, I don't feel like I know it all, he said, I wonder if there's a book here because people are posting it and dug out some locker room and stuff. And I looked at it and showed it to my agent and he said, yeah, there is definitely a book here. And so that's the name of the book, *The Matheny Manifesto*.

**Andy:** Now when does that come out?

**Jerry:** It actually came out February 3rd, first day of Spring training. And so it's gonna be big this year during the baseball season, I think.

**Andy:** Ok, I'll get that.

**Jerry:** We can have it in your home for just pennies a day.

**David:** Andy make sure you get one. I think it is interesting to know, because neither one of you guys are going to pat yourself on the back, but this is not just a pitch for a book. I mean, every one that is seeing this, is just raving about it. Jerry, Bob Costa wrote the afterward, is that right?

**Jerry:** Well we asked him for endorsement and his endorsement was so nice that the publisher said, can we use this as an afterward. He talked about this thing

where Mike took the Cardinals up to the semifinals for the World Series. They lost to the Giants. And the camera happen to catch him after the game and you know how the losing team often will just kind of sit in the dugout and watch the celebration, because they're disappointed and they want to kind of drink that in and say, this should have been us and we want to be there next year. And so Mike was in the dugout and just kind of watching the Giants celebrate. And of course he's disappointed but when the camera hit him, he was tipping his cap to the other manager. It was really moving. And Costa saw that and so he wrote about that and said, some guys have characters, some guys have class, and Matheny has both. And so that's what he wrote about. And we thought, that'll make a nice afterword. That's the afterword to this book. So it's pretty cool. We got endorsement from Joe Torry and Tony La Russa.

**David:** Well even outside of the baseball circles, just yesterday coach Jim Harbaugh tweeted about how he was reading it and how fantastic it is, I think he said, it's a must read for parents, coaches, teachers and all who work with young people. And that's coming from now, one of the top college coaches as of a few weeks ago, he was one of the top pro coaches in the league, but for football. But it's just great to see that everyone in the sports community is reeling around an encouraging message. And Andy I think that this brings light to what you were talking about earlier, you as a kid were idolizing Hank Aaron, but you were wondering who your boys could look up to. And I think Mike Matheny is certainly on that list of candidates for them to check out. And for all young people, this is a great man of character, man of faith, and a great example for everybody.

**Andy:** Let me just tell everybody too, I want you to save me one but just in case you don't, I have just ordered it on Amazon. And get this, the book is number one in sports on Amazon. It's the number one sports book on Amazon right now, it's the number one. Did you know this?

**Jerry:** I did, yeah. I just heard that yesterday. It's great news.

**Andy:** Well, yeah, knowing how Amazon is, yeah, you just heard it yesterday, well it's still number one today Jerry.

**David:** It hasn't changed.

**Jerry:** A great story too. And I think you would appreciate it Andy. In doing my research on Mike, I kept roaming across this thing because you know, he's not a household name because he wasn't a great hitter, he was a great catcher. But I kept running coming across this line that he was the toughest guy in baseball. And I kept thinking, why did they say that? Catchers are always tough. He played 13 years and that's longer than an average career, especially for a catcher. And I came across this thing back in '96 when he was with the Brewers. And they said, watch this video. And the show his face in a relief pitcher, I think it was in 8th or 9th and he takes a 95 mile an hour fastball to the cheek. And he tells the story that his wife happened to be visiting that day and she was in the third row. And you can hear this thing, hitting him in the cheek, from the camera, you can hear the sound. He doesn't even fall down and the umpire is waiting frantically for the trainer, I mean, people are coming out, the manager comes out the catcher's waving, get somebody out there. And you can see on Mike's face that he's irritated, that he's taking this pitch, he can't believe the guy threw that so close to his head and everything. And he's trying not to spit, in front of his wife. And probably has to so he won't choke. And when he first spits, and it looks like he's spitting in a cup of blood in tissue and everything. He lost eight teeth. He did not fall down. And so they rush him to the hospital, he get stitches, he loses all his teeth. And he tells the story in the book that he decides, when he comes back, he looks terrible. His face is swollen and purple, and the manager says, man, that was horrible. And Mike say, if you've ever done me a favor, he says, I want to play tomorrow night.

And he says, are you serious? He says, can you get the mask on, he says, I'll make it work. And he says, that was the dumbest thing he ever did. He could hardly walk, let alone squat and catch and throw. He said, I didn't get a hit but I played ten and I would never do it again. Nowadays, when his players want out of the game because they've got a pulled muscle or torn or whatever, they say, you going to tell him you can't play because you got au-y? They show that video in the locker room and nobody wants to get out of the game, you know.

**Andy:** Oh my gosh, that's not the toughest guy in baseball, that's the toughest guy in the world. Good grief.

**Jerry:** There's another great story in there too, where the one drawback they had when they were interviewing him for the job, he's known as a man of faith. And he doesn't swear. And so they said, you know, you got to get kicked out of the game once in awhile to show your team that you're behind them, you got to argue with umpire and all that. He said, I can do that, I've done it as a catcher. And they said, are you sure, and he said, yeah, you know, I'll backup my team. And so he's been sharing his faith with one of his assistant coaches and the guy's wondering the same thing. So he's about maybe ten games into his new career as a manager of the Cardinals. And they're in Chicago, and a call goes against him so he charges out there and he's arguing with the umpire. And the umpire knows him because he was a catcher for 13 years. And so the umpire is calling him by name and he says, now Mike, we saw it this way and I know you disagree but you know, we got it right. And he's arguing and everything. And the guy won't kick him out. So after he's out there for five minutes, he comes back to the bench and the team is kind of looking at him funny, like, thanks a lot coach, you didn't stand up for us. So about an ending later, there's another call that's going to cost them the game. So he decides, I'm going out there and I'm not coming back, they're gonna have to throw me out, I'm not coming back, I don't care what. So he goes out and do the

same thing, now Mike, you know. And he says, don't now Mike, you blew that call, it's gonna cost us the game. And he keeps arguing. And umpire says, don't make me run you. And he says, you're going to have to because I'm not leaving. He says, I've had enough. And Mike says, well I haven't had enough. And the guy says, alright, you're out of here. So they throw him out. He stamps of the field and goes in the clubhouse. And after the game, this coach comes in and peeks in the office and says, Mike, you ok? And he says, yeah, I'm alright. He says, what you say to that umpire? He said, I just told him I had enough. And he says, he told me he had enough, and I told him I hadn't had enough. And he says, did you swear at him? He says, you know me better than that, I didn't swear at him. He says, let me get this straight. Are you the first manager in the history of big league baseball that get thrown out of the game for loitering?

That was great.

**Andy:** That is great.

**David:** That's fantastic.

**Andy:** Oh my gosh.

**David:** And the book is full of other unique characteristics and stories about Mike and his journey. And it's definitely worth everyone picking up. Andy you just ordered it on Amazon. Anyone else can order it from Amazon, or I'm sure at your local bookstore, it'll be there as well. And

**Andy:** And I really need to get on Jerry's website, what is that David?

**David:** Go to...

**Andy:** Because you can register on that, just to be aware of everything what's going on.

**David:** Absolutely, jerryjenkins.com, that is the place to start the journey. Sign up on his email list. And also stay active, stay up to date on social media, Facebook and twitter @jerryjenkins and that will get you plugged in to everything that's going on with him. There's a lot of exciting things coming up. We talked a little bit about it last, on our last episode with Jerry, but just make sure you're plugged in to what he's doing. And stay tuned for some exciting things. And Jerry thank you again for taking the time to join us. This is great, we could sit here and tell stories all day. We might have to have you back on future episodes if that's alright?

**Jerry:** I'd love to. My pleasure, thanks so much for having me.

**Andy:** Awesome buddy, thank you. Thank you so much.

**David:** Thanks Andy, we'll talk to you next week.

**Andy:** Take care.

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