

You have to have an enthusiasm for life. You have to have a dream, a goal. And you have to be willing to work for it.

- Jimmy Valvano

Coaches are always stressing the importance of preparation. "Practice how you play, success is built through preparation, champions are born at practice." These are all quotes used by coaches to stress the importance of hard work needed off the field of play. Therefore, nothing is more important than the off-season and how you spend your time. Today, there are many distractions between video games, cell phones and television and it is very easy to forget homework or study or skip a workout. However, those who are determined and persistent know that in order to achieve their goal they have to ignore the distractions and create priorities especially during the off-season. The work they put in and the reps they take during that time every day is what moves them closer to achieving their goal. For the month of December, we chose an athlete who has spent a great deal of time at the club simply trying to get better. The Athlete of the Month, December 2015, is Alex Aborn.

In 2014, Alex and I started doing lessons. It was June and Alex knew he was raw and a little behind but he was eager to get better. My first reaction to Alex was that it was June, why start now? June is usually the time that lessons slow down and the games increase. I soon realized with Alex that he was already preparing for next year. This young man was determined to push through frustration and failure knowing full well that to improve it was going to take a lot of work. This was not easy and I applauded him for his attitude because this is something even the most talented cover away from. Alex deserves a lot of respect and admiration for his persistence. The lessons continued, they actually never stopped, and Alex improved immensely as his confidence grew. Jeff Sprague, Alex's coach in Spring 2015, stated, "Alex had a great year. He played all over, a lot of catching, centerfield, and shortstop. He was a pleasure to coach doing whatever was asked of him and was a good mentor to the younger kids. Alex hit 5th all year and batted over .400 and maybe close to .500. He had at least two game winning hits and had a positive attitude at all times."

This off-season Alex found himself in the same situation he was in a year and a half ago. He was curious about an Advanced Strength and Hitting class with Jay Schnabel and Matt Duffy. However, Alex was a little apprehensive, fearing he was not good enough for the class. I assured Alex and his mom that I thought he would do alright. Over the past two months I have seen Alex at the class and he has become one of "the boys." More than anything, I have seen the improvement in his athleticism that I know will help him going into next season. In fact, Alex received an award from Coach Jay and Matt Duffy for most improved in the class. Once again, Alex faced his fears and challenged himself. Coach Jay said about Alex, "he's a little guy who has some great tools. He came in with a great attitude and wanted to learn. I have been very impressed with his persistence and how quickly he has improved his footwork. Although he has played a lot of innings behind the plate, Alex will most definitely find himself in the infield and maybe even the outfield as he gets older." The past two months may have been difficult and of course it will only get tougher, but Alex knows through his experiences that he will be a better athlete and person for it. I hope many learn from Alex's story and understand the phrase, "you can't hit a homerun without stepping in to the box."

We are very proud of you Alex here at the Braintree Baseball Club and we know your hard work, persistence and determination will help you achieve your goal. Those who pick themselves up from falls or setbacks and keep pushing forward are those who succeed in life. I have seen Alex do that time and time again and I know he will continue with that mentality as he grows into a respectable and hardworking young man.

Thank you Alex for teaching others to face their fears and to never give up.

James Joyce