



## Long Shot

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**Mike Piazza's autobiography—the candid story of the greatest hitting catcher in the history of baseball, from his inauspicious draft selection to his Hall of Fame-worthy achievements and the unusual controversies that marked his career.**

Mike Piazza was selected by the Los Angeles Dodgers in the 62nd round of the 1988 baseball draft as a "courtesy pick." The Dodgers never expected him to play for them – or anyone else. Mike had other ideas. Overcoming his detractors, he became the National League rookie of the year in 1993, broke the record for season batting average by a catcher, holds the record for career home runs at his position, and was selected as an All Star twelve times.

Mike was groomed for baseball success by his ambitious, self-made father in Pennsylvania, a classic father-son American-dream story. With the Dodgers, Piazza established himself as baseball's premier offensive catcher; but the team never seemed willing to recognize him as the franchise player he was. He joined the Mets and led them to the memorable 2000 World Series with their cross-town rivals, the Yankees. Mike tells the story behind his dramatic confrontation with Roger Clemens in that series. He addresses the steroid controversy that hovered around him and Major League Baseball during his time and provides valuable perspective on the subject. Mike also addresses the rumors of being gay and describes the thrill of his game-winning home run on September 21, 2001, the first baseball game played in New York after the 9/11 tragedy. Along the way, he tells terrific stories about teammates and rivals that baseball fans will devour.

*Long Shot* is written with insight, candor, humor, and charm. It's surprising and inspiring, one of the great sports autobiographies.

## Long Shot Details

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## From Reader Review Long Shot for online ebook

### Ethan Belanger says

I read Long Shot Mike Piazza by Lonnie Wheeler during the summer. This book was published in 2013. This book is a nonfiction biography about Mike Piazza's baseball career, his childhood, and his path to being the best offensive catcher in Major League Baseball history. The main character in the book is Mike Piazza. The setting was mainly in Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and New York during 1980-2010. This is because he talks about his childhood and then his career of playing baseball. The conflict was that everyone said that Mike could never make the big leagues. A theme for this book is keep trying and never give up. Another theme for this book is if you try your hardest, you can do anything you want to. I liked reading about Mike Piazza's baseball career and his childhood. There is nothing in this book that I did not like. People who like baseball would like this book. I had no expectations for that. My connection with the book is that I love playing baseball.

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### Ann Marie says

I loved the book. I think it answered many questions regarding how he carried himself. Being in his company away from the field he was very open and was respectful of everyone. I think the people who are saying he is whiny are dodger fans who are disappointed that LA meant less to him than most believed. It's great to read a book that wasn't kissing everyone's butt.

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### Frank Fusco says

Awful. While I will never lose respect for Piazza as a ball player, given the work ethic, talent and penchant for clutch power in late-inning, meaningful ball games, I must report that it was a struggle to get through this whining, defensive and downright juvenile account of a life on the top of the heap in the Bigs. Wow. Awful.

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### Pasquale says

Mike Piazza is my favorite baseball player of all-time. This was an interesting and revealing look at the life of a ballplayer from his beginnings through post-retirement. Piazza is simultaneously arrogant and humble at the same time, which is pretty difficult to do. Not the best autobiography I've read, but a decent read. Absolute crime that he was denied admission to the Hall of Fame by the idiot baseball writers.

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### Steve says

Full disclosure. When he was playing Major League Baseball for Los Angeles, Miami, New York, San Diego and Oakland, I was pretty much unaware of Mike Piazza. In fact, when I picked up this

autobiography, I was totally unaware Piazza had played for any other team than the Dodgers. In fact, it was kind of a shock to learn how many teams he had played for since Los Angeles.

That said, I came away from *Long Shot* with the overall impression, none of us would've ever heard of Piazza had it not been for his father and the legendary Dodger manager, Tommy Lasorda. Especially in the early chapters of Piazza's journey through the major leagues, Vince Piazza appears to have been the ultimate Stage Mother, er, Father. Early in Piazza's baseball career, Vince was his son's Puppet Master, pulling the strings and knocking down the doors.

The epilogue to Lonnie Wheeler's assisted tell-all is more revealing, in my view, than the previous twenty-six chapters. In this wrap-up, Piazza explains why he did what he did in the first 336 pages. Here, the former catcher and sometime first baseman makes an argument for why he belongs in Cooperstown. He confirms why he'd prefer to be inducted into the Hall of Fame as a New York Met. He also attempts to lay to rest the rumors he faced while in uniform that he used PED's or performance enhancing drugs at and behind the plate. What's remarkable here is despite his major, perhaps Italian-fueled ego, Piazza is remarkably candid about his own weaknesses and shortcomings, both as an athlete and as a human being. He admits to being less than stellar as a defensive catcher, preferring we focus solely on his prowess with the bat. In Piazza's own words, he "was too moody, too brooding, too consumed, too unlikeable." After nineteen seasons in the Big Show, "the principal regret" he has about his career is he "never really did" enjoy the game. Pretty sad.

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### **Jason Shatkin says**

In who is my favorite ball player of all time, I found this book very insightful but not necessarily in a good way. While Piazza was coming through the Dodger organization he was frequently whiny and self gratifying. His father frequently intervened in his professional life and I'd have been better off not knowing some of that.

Still....who can forget him standing on the first base line, with tears welling in his eyes, for fallen heroes when baseball returned to NY after 9/11. Then he brought us his own heroism by lifting up a fractured city on his shoulders and hitting the game winning home run. I cant help but to think of those moments and cry, and I will always love him for that.

Reading his version of the events of his baseball life was very gratifying, and the story seemed to mature as he went along. One could say the book was a metaphor for his baseball life. while the story was told in Piazza's point of view, it was a frank portrayal of a deeply emotional and fierce competitor. That it wasn't always flattering enhances its validity.

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### **Mark Mitchell says**

Piazza's engaging -- and at times hilarious -- autobiography is a study in contradiction. Piazza's life is in some ways a rags-to-riches story; he's a 62nd-round draft pick who ends up (after the time the book was written) in the Hall of Fame. On the other hand, his father is fabulously wealthy and is friends with the legendary Tommy Lasorda, who is instrumental in Piazza's original signing and ascent to the major leagues. Catchers are traditionally great defenders, but Piazza is famous for being an offensive superstar with a poor

throwing arm. Piazza is uncomfortable with being in the public eye, but says things that cause one media controversy after another.

Through it all, Piazza's voice comes through strongly; it's as-if you sat down with him for lunch and he told you his story. And, while Piazza is clearly proud of his accomplishments -- and defensive about some of the criticism he received -- he comes across as honest and genuine; he takes responsibility for many of his mistakes, on and off the field. The middle of the book (after Piazza has made it to the Big Leagues, and before he is contemplating retirement) drags a bit; there's quite a bit of play-by-play description of long baseball seasons. But there are poignant emotional descriptions of childhood, his first serious romantic relationship, the first game at Shea Stadium after the 9/11 attacks, and his decision to retire from baseball.

There are two themes that echo throughout the book. The first is Piazza's relationship with his father; his father is critical to his success, building a batting cage in the basement, introducing him to Tommy, and using his network to help get Mike to the Majors. But, his father is at times overbearing, and Mike resents the fact that some people believe he had an easy path. The second theme is his Catholic faith; he grows up going to church with his mother, finds conflicts between his faith and his behavior, and eventually (after meeting the Pope himself) finds himself happily married with two daughters.

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### **Kate says**

I'm sort of sorry I read this book. A lifelong Met fan, I was skeptical when he came to play for my team, but his unflappability, work ethic, and humility won me over, and I was outraged when he was denied a place in the Hall of Fame in his first year of eligibility. However, in "his" memoir (the syntax is laughably not Piazza's own), he comes off as a complainer and grudge-bearer -- ironically, a great deal less likeable than he was portrayed in the media he gripes so much about here.

(Full disclosure: I read R.A. Dickey's incredibly thoughtful and articulate memoir recently, and I'm afraid it set the bar pretty high.)

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### **Andrew says**

One of my all time favorite players had an interesting career & some great stories to tell, but could have had some help writing them down better. Neat to learn about how he overcame some obstacles in the beginning, but the end just felt like a list of all his home runs. The editor could have also helped Piazza rewrite parts so that he would sound less whiney & egotistical. Overall about as disappointing as Mike not punching Roger Clemens in the face.

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### **Kevin McAllister says**

Mike Piazza's bio is for the most part an enjoyable read . He spends a surprising amount of time discussing his childhood and his difficult journey to the major leagues. When he finally does hit the big time each year of his career is given its own chapter and baseball fans are treated to richly detailed accounts of on the field and off the field events. While definitely not a tell all exposé; a lot of juicy bits of gossip are revealed. Also enjoyable are all the non baseball people Piazza spent time with, which varied from Fabio to Pamela

Anderson to Axel Rose and even to Pope John Paul. The one flaw in this book is that Piazza is a bit whiney about defending himself against his detractors. This is especially the case late in the book when Mike's skills and career are fading. Frankly, I'd forgotten about some of the negative things said and written about him and by bringing them up again Mike probably is doing himself a bit of a disservice. Don't worry so much about it Mike, next year you'll get into the Hall of Fame and as the years go by, the bad things will be forgotten and you will be remembered as one of greatest catchers the game has ever seen.

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### **Joe Healy says**

I'm generally not the type of pre-order books before they are released or even buy them when they first hit the shelves. I'm usually reading something else at the time, so I always figure I can pick up the newly-released book some other time.

Because Mike Piazza was one of my favorite baseball players growing up, I made the exception for his book *Long Shot*.

I'm given it three stars, but I have to admit that if I weren't a huge fan of his growing up, I would have given it fewer.

The best autobiographies either show us a vulnerable side to the subject or give us some insight to information we didn't know before reading.

This book did neither.

One of the first things I noticed was that it had a very defiant tone to it. At times, it seemed that the book was nothing more than a vehicle for Piazza to call out everyone that ever doubted him or had something negative to say. In the afterword, even Piazza admits that the book may come off as sour grapes, but if he was so aware of that, I wish he would have done something to change it.

For me, the other big negative was that there were chapters upon chapters that just read like series by series (or home run by home run) rundowns of individual seasons. It's impressive that he remembers so many small details from each season, but it's very dull to read them being regurgitated.

If nothing else, it was nice to take a trip down memory lane with this book. During my formative years as a baseball fan, Piazza was as good a hitter as there was.

I will also give credit to Piazza for addressing the steroid and homosexuality rumors head on. Sure, he didn't have anything new to say, but it would have been easy for him to not mention them at all and say something like "the book is about my career and not about those off-field issues."

I'm glad I read the book because it took me back in time, but ultimately, I was left wanting much, much more.

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### **Mark Sinnott says**

Well, I certainly don't remember Piazza being as much of a whiny, narcissistic brat as he came off as in this book. I knew he was moody and quiet, but I didn't know it was because he was actually fuming most of the time about not being recognized by everyone for how good he was. Yikes, Mike!

I know he probably didn't actually write most of what was in this book word for word, but even so, I'm surprised he let some of his accounts of situations during his career be published in the way that they were. There were times that I actually cringed reading the book. *I can't believe he said THAT!*

Anyhow, I read the book mostly to re-live some of the Mets stories from the turn of the last century. Some of the most positive things he says in the book are about New York fans and his years with the Mets, so I guess that's a plus. But, I'm still pretty blown away by how different his attitude was than I perceived while he was playing.

Mike was never my favorite player on any of the Mets teams he played on, but it is hard to deny his impact on the ball club. His presence brought a legitimacy to the team that they had lacked for years and his stats speak for themselves. Despite his attitude, he is the best hitting catcher of all time.

And he is a first ballot Hall of Famer...if those types of things still existed.

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### **Kerry Kushetsky says**

Mike was my favorite player from the Mets. I still fondly remember when he hit a 3 run homerun to help the Mets comeback against the braves and of course his now legendary homerun during the first game back after 9/11. I did enjoy this book for the baseball stories he shares. It's clear he used the negative things said about him as motivation while he played. He wanted to prove everyone wrong. Towards the ending he does come off a bit whiny. He also gives some insight in regards to how front offices treat aging players (Oakland A's). If you are a Met fan or Dodgers fan you will enjoy this book.

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### **Rob says**

Rob To say I'm disappointed is an understatement...

I idolized this man. He put numbers in the books that are certainly Hall of Fame caliber... However, in reading his memoir (and listening TO HIS OWN WORDS) Mike is clearly not a nice man. The most self-centered, egotistical, aloof, arrogant, moody, selfish bastard on the planet. He had utter contempt for the fans (in LA AND NY), the media, his team mates..you name it. And he makes no bones about explaining it! Like a true sociopath, he discusses all he had (and still has) coming to him...from his rich father's connections in MLB to being placed in the Hall of Fame.

Yes...it's true..this man put up better numbers than any living catcher in baseball...But at what price? Mike, yesterday, I would have salivated for an autographed baseball of yours...Today, I know that not only do I not want it, but more importantly, I could never be your friend.

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## James says

Let's call this a 2.5, dead in the center of the scale. It's got its interesting points, specifically Piazza's signing and climb through the minors. In the end it goes on a bit long, sort of like a catcher trying to hang on beyond his prime.

The dust jacket, in typical fashion, promises thrills and spills: "With resolute honesty Piazza addresses the issues that swirled about him during his career: the rumor that he was gay, the infamous bat-throwing incident with Roger Clemens during the 2000 World Series, and the accusations of steroid use that plagued nearly every power hitter of his era."

Anyone who expected Piazza to come out of the closet or confess to taking steroids will be sorely disappointed, though he does cop to using androstenedione, the same product that ensconced Mark McGwire in so much controversy. Piazza spares no opportunity to work in the hot models and actresses he palled around with, though he's quick to point out he was never serious about most of them because he didn't want to distract himself during the baseball season. So gay, no. Overly proud of dating and marrying eye candy, guilty as charged.

"The week of the wedding, the Daily News conducted a poll on baseball's hottest wife. In a close vote over Anna Benson—the former stripper whose husband, Kris, was a starting pitcher who had just signed with us as a free agent—Alicia won."

That's Alicia Rickter, of Baywatch and Playboy fame for those who didn't know. And I'll count myself in that group, as I'd never heard of her before now. The rumors of Piazza's sexual persuasion were stoked in part on the speculation that all the hot women he hung around with were simply a cover. They were, but not for homosexuality. They were there to paper over the insecurities that ran through every square inch of his body.

What comes through loud and clear in *Long Shot* is that Piazza cared about what everyone thought, despite his claims to not give a damn. He internalized every slight, large or small, and used it as motivation.

"I played with a chip on my shoulder, and admittedly-unapologetically—I'm writing with one, too," he says in the book's epilogue. "More than five years since my final single started a ninth-inning, game-winning rally, more than seven since my twelfth All-Star Game, more than eight since I broke the home run record for catchers, I still feel the need for validation."

That is why a man who posted numbers unrivaled by any catcher in the history of the game feels the need to toot his own horn repeatedly throughout a book that came out coincidentally within months of his first appearance on the Hall of Fame ballot.

"I'd be less than truthful if I didn't admit that my legacy is something I ponder quite a bit," he writes. "Mostly, it bewilders me. I honestly don't know why it is, exactly, that, from start to finish, I've been the object of so much controversy, resentment, skepticism, scrutiny, criticism, rumor, and doubt. ... Whatever the reason, I suppose I might be a little oversensitive about it all, except that I feel I'm defending more than just my reputation. I'm standing up for what I consider to be—deeply wish to be—a fundamentally and triumphantly American story."

There's no doubt he's oversensitive and has been so most of his life. Though he spent half a dozen summers

hanging out near the beach in Southern California, any sign of a relaxed surfer dude within was a complete facade. He was wired in such a way that he strove for excellence with little regard for how he was perceived. It wasn't enough to get three hits in a game, and he expressed his frustration at making an out so openly that he was classified as selfish by teammates who interpreted his helmet throwing and wall punching as signs he cared more about his batting average than the team's won-loss record.

He makes no effort to hide his disappointment at being passed over by MVP voters, particularly in 1996 when a roided up Ken Caminiti won what Piazza refers to as a "popularity contest." Four top four finishes, including back-to-back runner-up slots in 1996-97, were little consolation.

Piazza came off to me as a fairly unlikable fellow. He was a hothead who once walked out on his team in the minors and multiple times stormed into opposing clubhouses looking to fight pitchers who had drilled him on the field. I was neutral on him when I began and emerged with a somewhat negative impression. That's probably not what he was looking for. Your mileage will likely vary depending on how closely you followed his career.

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