

ABF Lead Off Dinner History



Tommy Lasorda, baseball ambassador, ex manager Los Angeles Dodgers for 22 years in which his teams won four National League pennants and two World Series titles was the featured speaker at the inaugural ABF Lead Off Dinner. Tommy was named National League Manager of the Year in 1983 and 1988. Tommy also lead the USA National Team to a gold medal at the 2000 Summer Olympiad in Sydney, Australia. Known for his generosity toward others, Tommy donated his time to the ABF in its inaugural event on February 9th,

2002. Tommy's words to live by: "God delays but does not deny".

Holder of twelve Major League records including most games, most at bats, total bases and runs batted in, Hank Aaron spoke at the second ABF Lead Off Dinner on February 13, 2003. A Mobile, Alabama native whose life is part of the ABF BASIC curriculum, Hank overcame obstacles during his career to become one of the greatest players ever to wear an MLB uniform. Hank's message directed to Central Alabama youth was to focus on the task at hand, both on the athletic field and in the classroom. This is similar to the ABF's message in BASIC.

Hank shares a memory with
ABF board member
Jeffery R. Dugas, M.D.



The only player to win the Rookie of the Year, Most Valuable Player and the Cy Young Award in the history of professional baseball, Don "Newk" Newcombe was one of the first African American players to cross the color line in 1949. As a pitcher, Newk won 149 games over a 10-season career with a .623 winning percentage. Don also places ninth on the all-time pitchers' batting list boasting a lifetime .271 batting average. Newk entertained the local fans with his stories of his first years in the "biggs" and his post-baseball life of spreading positive values as a Los Angeles Dodger featured speaker. Don's life is also part of the ABF BASIC program.

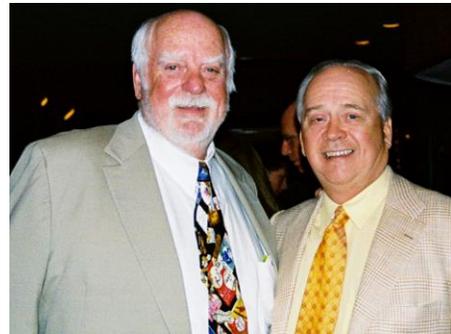




On February 3rd, 2005 the ABF featured two dynamic pitchers as speakers for its 4th annual event. Chicago Cubs ace Mark Prior shared the podium with Tom House, ex Atlanta Braves, Boston Red Sox and Seattle Mariners pitcher. House led off with his mother's oft-repeated axiom, "No "A", no play". Prior stressed his education that includes a degree in economics from University of Southern California where he was the second pick in the 2001 baseball draft. He noted that his degree exists as his building block for a future beyond baseball.

Mark and Heather Prior

Hall of Fame great Gaylord Perry entertained the audience at the ABF's 5th Lead Off Dinner held on January 26, 2006. Perry a veteran of 22 MLB seasons in which he won two Cy Young Awards pitched 5350 big league innings. Perry and his brother Jim hold the second highest number of MLB wins for a brother combination at 529. A native of North Carolina, Gaylord thrilled the audience with his stories of a small-town boy made good on a national stage.



Gaylord pictured with ABF board chairman, James R. Andrews, M.D.

San Francisco great, Will Clark spoke at the 6th event on January 25th, 2007. Will a graduate of Mississippi State University and a native of Louisiana, began his talk with a story about Birmingham great Bo Jackson, who barreled into Will on his first at bat against the Giants. Bo who attended the event to recognize Dr. Andrews with the ABF Leadership Award, noted that he hadn't tried to hurt the rookie. Will "The Thrill" recounted many stories of his fifteen year career in which he batted a lifetime .303 and was named to the all-star team six times.



Clark flanked by ABF supporters John and Jack Odle



Atlanta Braves great John Smoltz graced Birmingham with his strong message to area youth at the 7th Lead Off Dinner held on January 10th, 2008. John a future Hall of Fame inductee based on his remarkable competitive career at a starting and then a closing MLB pitcher dating back to 1988. A 1996 Cy Young Award winner and known for his great post-season winning percentage, John exhorted Birmingham enthusiasts to “follow your dream, even though others are skeptical”. He summarized his life philosophy saying, “I would love to leave a legacy with my children to know that God had a hand in my life, to know that HE changed me from a decent person to a God-fearing, loving person, and that servant mind-set, humility, thinks of others before himself.”

Author of two books designed to educate the professional and amateur sporting public, Atlanta Braves great Dale Murphy entertained an adoring public on January 29, 2009 with a combination of stories from his playing days in which he was the most exciting Braves player for fifteen seasons during which he collected awards for his hitting and fielding prowess. During his peak career years, 1982-1987, Murphy was widely considered the best all-around player in MLB. Dale, husband of Nancy and father of seven boys and one girl, heads the “I Won’t Cheat Foundation” that promulgates vital values for America’s youth. The Foundation values are the same one that are taught in the ABF BASIC program.



Dale poses with Yankee great Oscar Gamble



Tim Hudson’s friendly manner brought many smiles to more than 380 fans who gathered on January 14th, 2010 for the 9th annual Lead Off Dinner. Children especially seemed to be drawn to his open smile and were intrigued to find out how an undersized boy through very hard work and much persistence made it to the heights of his profession.



Tim noted that as a boy his mother had to take in his baseball pants so that he could “suit up” for the local games in Opelika, Not finding any pro offers after high school, Tim studied at a junior college until Auburn University gave him his opportunity to compete at a high level. All present could identify with his determination and courage in pursuing his dream.

Many of the youngsters attending peppered Tim with questions ranging from his most feared rival to how he spent his time off the field with his family.

On January 15th, 2011 Atlanta Braves Hall of Fame pitcher, Phil Niekro addressed Central Alabama fans in the 10th annual ABF Lead Off Dinner. Phil stressed the value of family, as being more important than on-field heroics. He related the story of how he attempted to nurse his father through a serious illness and also win his 300th game, giving him a new contract and a berth in the Hall of Fame.



He also emphasized his belief in never giving up. Phil nurtured the thought that if on a given day an opponent beat him with the bat, that there would come another day in which each, he and that batter, would pick up the implements of the sport to face each other, and that Phil would know that he would win that that day.



On February 3rd, 2012 Hall of Famer Andre Dawson headlined the 11th annual ABF event held in Birmingham, Alabama. Dawson is one of three MLB players to have stolen more than 300 bases and hit more than 400 home runs during his career. Andre noted that statistics to him were of secondary importance, as he took pride in the longevity of his career that included 12 operations to his knees. He suggested to the Central Alabama fans that overcoming obstacles was a key ingredient to success on and off the playing field.

Introduced at the ABF 12th annual event on January 25, 2013 by former MLB pitcher and Hartselle AL native, Steve Woodard, Craig Kimbrel, who hails from Huntsville, AL offered the 350 fans on hand for the January 25th, 2013 ABF event his recipe for success-never listen to the negative advice given to you.



Craig Kimbrel related his 3rd grade teacher's admonishment to rewrite his essay on Craig's dream of becoming a Major League pitcher, as the goal seemed too difficult to be achieved. Much the same as another Alabama product and Braves pitching great, Tim Hudson (2009 ABF Lead Off Dinner) who was told repeatedly that size was a disqualifying factor in the quest for a berth in pro ball, Kimbrel had to ignore the negative vibes as he won starting berths at Lee High School, Hanceville Community College, and now the star closer for the Atlanta Braves.

Signing with the Braves and ascending rapidly in the minor leagues gave Craig the opportunity to test his mettle against all rival hitters. When asked whom he feared most among Major League hitters, Craig noted that he feared no one, as he was going to defeat the opposition in

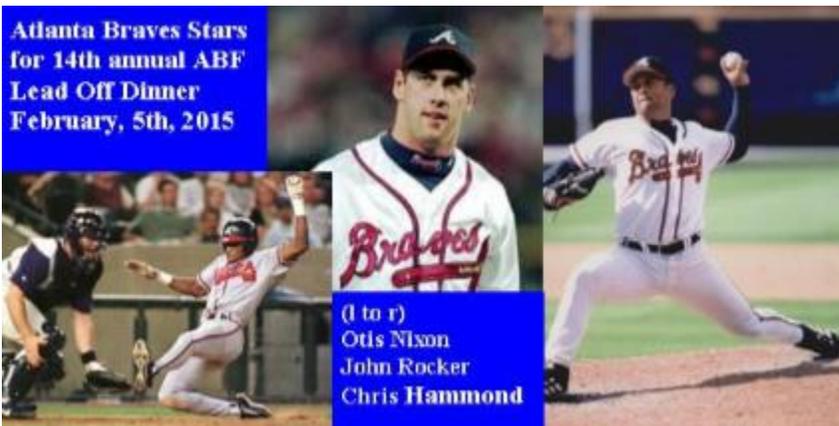
every instance. Kimbrel's rise to instant stardom in the Major Leagues belies his philosophy and his great God-given talent.



Roger Clemens headlined the 13th annual event on January 6, 2014. Roger noted that he developed a strong physical workout routine early in his sports development that served him well as he competed at higher levels of the sport.

He noted that once in the Major Leagues he sought and obtained advice from ABF board president, James R. Andrews, M.D. that assisted his competitiveness during his twenty-two-year career.

His message to the Birmingham public was to pursue life's goals vigorously and to remain focused on the steps needed to attain the goals.



On Thursday February 5th, 2015, the ABF celebrated a night featuring the Atlanta Braves as three ex-Braves spoke—Chris Hammond, Otis Nixon and John Rocker.

Hammond described his spiritual beliefs that served him during his fourteen-year career and helped him to have a career year as he returned to MLB play after two years of inactivity. Nixon recounted his great plays of his 17-year career but had a specific message for youngsters regarding the dangers of drugs and alcohol that tempt MLB players. Rocker suggested that youngsters and parents should never be dissuaded from their dreams, as he noted his several years of mediocrity in the minor leagues, before he made a decision to excel and worked toward it all through his remaining minor and major-league career.



The 15th annual ABF Lead Off Dinner featured New York Yankee pitching great Andy Pettitte.

On Thursday, January 21, 2016 some 400 fans enjoyed a walk through Andy's great career as ABC 33/40 sports anchor Mike Raita interviewed him at the 15th annual event.



Jim Rice poses with ABF Board Member E. Lyle Cain Jr. M.D.



On February 2nd 2017, Hall of Famer Jim Rice visited Birmingham to headline the 16th annual ABF Lead Off Dinner. More than 300 persons joined Mr. Rice and also were thrilled by the speech of BASIC student Brian Serna who had just entered the Alabama School of Fine Arts in Birmingham.



On February 2nd, 2018 Los Angeles Dodger and New York Yankee pitching great, Tommy John addressed 300 Central Alabama enthusiasts at the ABF's 17th annual dinner event. John noted for his successful pitching after having ground-breaking surgery on his left elbow, said that many Major League players in 2018 ask him if he is a doctor.



On January 18, 2019 Atlanta Braves star David Justice flew across the United States to entertain over 300 Central Alabama fans with his vivid stories of his development as a player and his many post-season exploits. He described growing up poor with great support from his mother and several coaching mentors who carried him to baseball practice on many occasions. He said that he gave up basketball, his first love, for the short sprints in baseball and was drafted out of college after several “monster shots” against Division 1 pitching. He now mentors younger athletes and offers this advice: “Even if you become a Major Leaguer, you will have many years to contribute back to society after the cleats are in the locker permanently. Get an education!”

Presenting Sponsor

Name/logo in event title

Two tables proximate to dias (\$2400 value)

Television Sponsor ABC/3340. Runs PSA annually on three stations

WJOX.fm radio on-air promotions

One billboard mention/logo on presentation made for the dinner.

Prominent mention/logo on all event advertising.

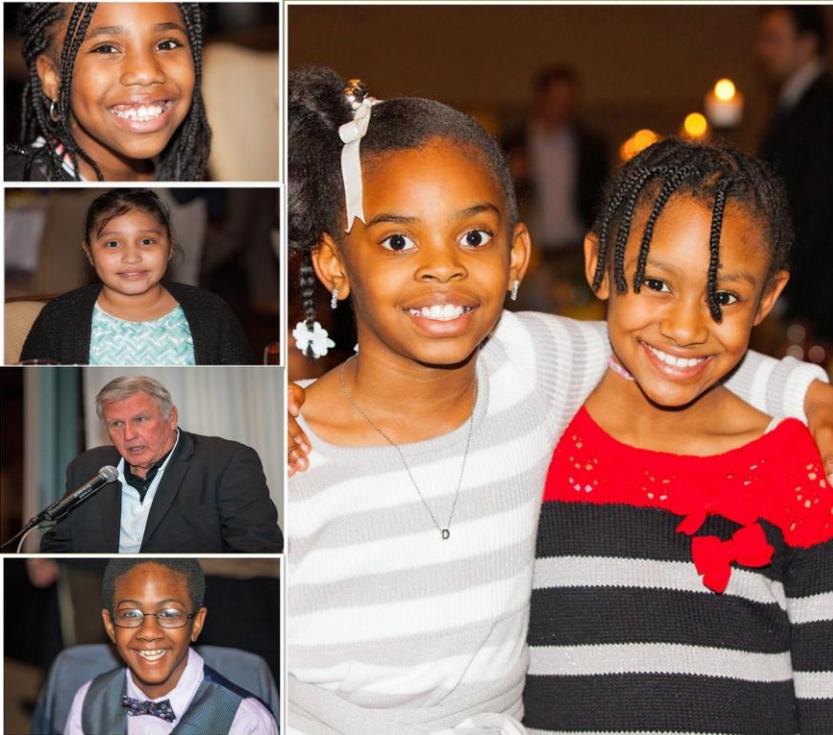
Prominent mention/logo on: save the date card, dinner brochure, dinner program, and dinner ticket

Banner placed behind podium for exposure on TV during dinner

Six Invitations to VIP function

Logo linked to ABF website

Investment: 2020: \$7,000



Annually Central Alabama corporations donate their tickets back to the ABF. These tickets are used to have BASIC students attend the event.

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