

# The Patriot-News

## Doctor offers new insight into game

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Spring training for some will begin today.

In Harrisburg. With snow still scattered and temperatures in the high 20s. No problem since there will be no need for baseballs. Nor bats for that matter.

This practice will begin with the mind.

The pitches will come from Dr. William Harrison, who for 30 years literally has been the man with the vision for some of baseball's best players.

"This will be a little different from standard baseball instruction," Harrison, a sports performance specialist, said this week from his home in southern California.

More than 50 participants, players as young as 11 and coaches as old as 60, were expected at Harrison's 3 1/2-hour seminar today at the Central Pennsylvania Fitness Center.

Harrison was expecting a rapt audience. Understandable, given that his 30-year resume includes work with thousands of pro players -- including Hall of Famers George Brett and Rod Carew, as well as future Hall of Famers Rickey Henderson, Barry Bonds, Sammy Sosa and Greg Maddux.

Harrison's approach to baseball is through the mind. For him, focus is more important than form.

His tools are his words. His ideas center on slowing down the game with your mind while speeding up reactions. His concepts may be applied to hitting, pitching or fielding.

"Many players are over-focused on their physical skills at times," Harrison said, "so they get away from the visual side of the game."

Harrison, 60, helps them get re-focused. His Web site ([www.eyeadvantage.com](http://www.eyeadvantage.com)) is devoted to improving visual reaction time, mental flexibility and hand-eye coordination.

"That's what this is all about -- the ability to slow the game down," said Carmen Fusco, the New York Mets' assistant general manager from Camp Hill who invited Harrison to the midstate.

"Anytime you can do that -- slow the game down -- you will become a better performer," Fusco said. "This is about dynamic vision. With an optometrist, you can sit in a chair and be told you have 20-10 vision. But that's static vision. This is different. This is vision in motion."

Harrison has the blessing of teams such as the Atlanta Braves, who have used his services for the last dozen seasons of their unparalleled success in the National League.

At times, the approaches have been made by players before they turn pro, let alone into all-stars.

New York Yankees first baseman Jason Giambi was an 18-year-old high school player when he first was introduced to Harrison.

Los Angeles Dodgers right fielder Shawn Green was even younger -- all of 13 -- when his father took him to meet Harrison.

"He's the godfather of this stuff," Fusco said of Harrison. "It's like he was talking about going to the moon when the rest of us were thinking about going around the world."

Among Harrison's first students in December 1971 was a skinny first-year, Class A infielder considered by some to be a marginal prospect.

The prospect's name? George Brett.

Not a bad way to start the resume, which for Harrison includes working in the late 1980s with former Harrisburg Senators outfielder and future all-star Moises Alou.

"One of the big issues with players is, 'What does this guy know?' He didn't play; he's not in the Hall of Fame," Harrison said. "When they find out I worked with a lot of Hall of Famers, then they start to understand that I know what the game is about."

Fusco, forever looking for a mental edge to a game predicated as much on smarts as skills, first learned of Harrison through articles written more than 25 years ago. Fusco still has the stories in files. Today, he has Harrison's expertise in person.

"This guy is a Hall of Famer in his field," Fusco said. "He's lights out. He's that good. He understands the eyes and the head better than anybody I've known."

Much of what Harrison teaches is built on Henry Aaron's oft-quoted philosophy of "see the ball, hit the ball."

On the major-league level, Harrison simply provides a nudge to those already blessed with God-given talent.

"That's pretty descriptive of what we're doing," Harrison said. "Most players are not allowing their natural talent to come out. When they're thinking of their body or just thinking, their body is not reacting naturally. It's all about reaction. What Aaron [said] is what we're teaching."