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Skepticism meets eye tests

Visual mechanics least understood in baseball circles

BY SCOTT BROWN
FLORIDA TODAY

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VIERA - Ryan Harrison has seen the looks enough to know that many of the players he and his father work with on enhancing baseball vision are initially skeptical.

That, he said, is understandable since eye exercises traditionally haven't been embraced as ways to improve a player's performance at the plate.

"A lot of people don't understand it," said Harrison, who runs Slow The Game Down with his father, Dr. Bill Harrison. "We've done questionnaires and (players) have said seeing the ball is most important. But the next question is 'What do you work on the most?' And the answer is 'Hitting mechanics.' And what do they work on the least? Visual mechanics."

Washington Nationals interim manager Jim Bowden is a big proponent of what the Harrisons teach and that's why he had them in Viera for three days recently.

Bowden saw the benefits of improving depth perception when he worked in player personnel for Pittsburgh in the 1980s and Dr. Harrison tested and worked with many of the Pirates, including Barry Bonds.

"Once (players) learn what we're talking about they kind of go 'Oh, these guys know something. I don't know what they know so I think I am going to listen.'" Ryan Harrison said.

As for how many players embrace what the Harrisons espouse, Ryan said, "Some guys will take it to the bank and some guys will go 'These



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guys were kind of right, but I still want to work on my hitting mechanics more.' "

Nationals outfielder Brad Wilkerson is one who plans to at least give the eye exercises prescribed by the Harrisons a try.

"There's always things you can learn in this game," Wilkerson said, "and I really think it's something I could work on and maybe help me relax my muscles in my eyes.

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