



# Taylor Hargrove & Athletes in Action Sharing the Journey



January 2008

## Interview with Zach Leighton

by Taylor Hargrove

I'd like to introduce you to Zach Leighton, a 6'3" 195lb junior from Vanguard University, an NAIA school in southern California. Zach is a shortstop with a cannon of an arm. Not only is Zach a phenomenal athlete, but his heart and relationship with God are solid as he seeks to be a servant leader on campus. Zach played for an Athletes in Action baseball team last summer in the very competitive Texas Collegiate League. I wanted to give you supporters a deeper look at the type of athletes your financial and prayerful investment supports and how an Athletes in Action summer tour has helped them in their relationship with Jesus Christ. To that end, the following is a portion of a conversation I recently had with Zach.

**TAYLOR:** How has a summer tour with Athletes in Action helped you in your walk with God?

**ZACH:** I use baseball as a way to worship, playing hard for Jesus' glory. To have confidence in Him whether I succeed or fail. I don't need to put my identity in success or failure; my identity is in Christ.



Missions Trip to Philippines over Christmas Break  
Zach, pictured left, along with his baseball teammates

**TAYLOR:** What were two major things that God taught you?

**ZACH:** Patience, specifically with people. Also, patience while I was hurt. (Zach pulled his hamstring four games into a 40+ game season)

**TAYLOR:** How did you overcome your injury and still worship God on the field even though you were out for most of the summer?

**ZACH:** I tried to be encouraging. I showed my teammates that you can still have fun on the field. Baseball is not everything. I built cool relationships that I wouldn't have been able to if I hadn't been hurt. I learned how to use baseball as worship. I never really thought about that before. I can take this gift that God has given me and use that as worship instead of something I just do.

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**TAYLOR:** How do you use it as worship?

**ZACH:** Playing hard and doing it for excellence and for the Glory of God. Rehab for the glory of God. First Corinthians 10:31 says, "Whether you eat or drink whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God". I worship on the field by making prayer a continual thing throughout the day not just in the morning. When I fail, I don't let it affect who I am; how I see myself. My emotions stay strong through that. I have confidence in Him. I've learned that God is not a timid God or of fear. And we shouldn't play with fear. I can play hard...all the time and that is glorifying to him. Not backing down.

**TAYLOR:** How has God been using you since this summer on your campus at Vanguard University?

**ZACH:** Through BAM (Beyond Athletics Ministries) we get together on Monday nights have Bible studies. I spoke at the first one, which was cool to feel the power of the Holy Spirit flow through me. In my daily walk on campus, I try to be intentional, asking God "help me to see people how You see them, love like You love"; speak things into them.

**TAYLOR:** What has God been doing at Vanguard to and through your athletes?

**ZACH:** In the past two years, I've definitely seen...growth of the (baseball) program not in wins and losses but the majority of guys who are honestly living out a relationship with Christ. The students have noticed a change in the guys who always had a bad reputation. As a whole our athletic department has steadily grown. There is still a huge number of kids who have no idea of the joy they could have if they followed Christ. Also, 10 baseball players from Vanguard went on missions trip to Philippians over Christmas Break.

**TAYLOR:** Why should a college athlete want to play with AIA instead of any other team? What sets them apart?

**ZACH:** The focus AIA has is on the growth of the college athlete in their relationship with Christ. That is more important than anything else. AIA does a good job especially with the devotions, giving testimonies and getting into the community. It also makes your summer go by a lot faster with all the activities, which is a huge plus.

**TAYLOR:** So that my readers know how their support affects others, what is something you learned (from me) this summer?

**ZACH:** I learned to have a passion for Christ, to live life for Him. Living life not in timidity or fear but being a man of God. I learned that you can be a true man who doesn't back down or have a passive spirit; rather a confidence in Jesus, standing up for what you believe.

**TAYLOR:** If you were recruiting supporters what would you tell them that their financial and prayer investment do for athletes?

**ZACH:** For guys who are already walking with Christ, it shows them that you can be a passionate man of God. For guys who don't have a walk for Christ, it encourages them. The Christianity stuff is not this lame thing; it is real and important and eternal. You speak to both types of guys.

**TAYLOR:** Do you have hopes to play pro-ball?

**ZACH:** Yes, I am draft-eligible this year, and I need a consistent year on the field. If I put together a clean year, I got a chance.

If you are interested to learn more about what AIA is doing or follow Zach Leighton this season playing in the Golden State Athletic Conference, check out [www.vanguard.edu/athletics/baseball](http://www.vanguard.edu/athletics/baseball).

- These pictures from Zach's
- awesome ministry experience
- in Philippines reveal God doing
- amazing things. As AIA pours into
- the athletes, they, in turn, give to
- others.



## **Hitting Homeruns in the Heavens**

**Translation: What God has done through your prayers**

- We had an awesome camp with Rockies assistant to the hitting coach and former AIA staff member, Mike Bard. We got to have fun with the kids and teach them the basics of the game. I also met a lot of the Rockies as they were also working at the camp: Matt Holiday, Clint Barmes and Ryan Speilburg.
- I've had great preaching opportunities. Please check out [www.auroraalliance.com](http://www.auroraalliance.com), click Sermons then "True Beauty at the Bus Stop" and "False Advertising" to hear or for you iPod users there are podcasts at Aurora Alliance.
- God is continuing to use me to minister in the school system as I substitute teach.
- An update on Tommy Gilman: Tommy is cancer free and his family thanks everyone for all their prayer and support. Please pray for it not to return.
- I am at **53%** of my monthly support! 

## **Dialing Up the King**

**Translation: Our prayer needs**

- Obedience to God's word and to the Holy Spirit
- People committed to praying daily for me and this ministry
- The Christian athletes in the Super Bowl to be protected and to minister to the world
- The AIA Super Bowl breakfast to proclaim God's glory (check out [www.superbowlbreakfast.com](http://www.superbowlbreakfast.com))
- Jesus to be the lover of our soul
- World-wide prayer movements

*My greatest fear about raising support is ruining relationships because people are so precious to me. I remember when one of my friends starting calling me only to get in his business, and it really put a bad taste in my mouth. I feel that I have been good with being regular and not treating people like a business transaction. If you ever feel that way with me call me out and talk to me about it. I find that way of dealing with people to be ugly and ungodly. Please pray for it to never enter into my support raising.*

## **Hooking Me Up**

**Translation: If you would like to donate or contact me**

If you would like to donate and/or contact me you can reach me using the information below. Please send me address, email, phone number, pictures, or web sites you want to share. Please write check to Campus Crusade for Christ and put 0604207 on the memo line.

Online: [www.give.ccci.org/give](http://www.give.ccci.org/give) - be sure to enter my name or account number #0604207

Snail-mail: 3346 S. Chester Court, Denver, CO 80231

Email: [tay.jc@excite.com](mailto:tay.jc@excite.com)

Web: [www.aia.com](http://www.aia.com) & [www.TaylorHargrove.com](http://www.TaylorHargrove.com)

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