



KRISTAN LIEB/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Former Cubs outfielder Adam Greenberg was hit in the head with a pitch on his first at bat in the majors, which ended his career.

## CUBS

# PULLING OUT THE POSITIVES

Greenberg hopes his new book inspires people to persevere

By ED SHERMAN

Chicago Tribune

Adam Greenberg insists he doesn't dwell on that one pitch that became the arc of his story.

He admits, however, that the Cubs winning the World Series in 2016 filled him with "bittersweet" emotions.

What if on July 9, 2005, in Miami, the 5-foot-8 outfielder, fresh from being called up from the minors, raps a single against Marlins pitcher Valerio de los Santos, steals second and scores a run in his Cubs debut?

"Then maybe I get 10-12 years in the big leagues," Greenberg said.

Maybe, if he plays out the fantasy even further, he is a part of the Cubs World Series team.

"It's fun talking like that," Greenberg said, "but it didn't work out that way."

Instead, Greenberg got hit squarely in the head by a de los Santos fastball on the first pitch he saw in the big leagues. The errant delivery, which caused concussion and vertigo symptoms lasting a couple years, effectively ended Greenberg's major-league career — with the exception of an official at-bat with the Marlins in 2012.

Prior to a recent speaking appearance in Chicago, Greenberg said the Cubs' success only served to stir up his thoughts of what might have been.

"It was bittersweet to be honest with you," said Greenberg, who was hitting over .300 for Double-A West Tennessee when he was promoted in

2005. "I was beyond ecstatic for the fans, players and the organization. They deserved it.

"But on the personal side, I wanted to be part of that. When I got called up by the Cubs, I wanted to help them win the World Series. I did not get that chance."

Instead, Greenberg's life has taken a different path. Still boasting an athlete's physique at 36, he now wants to use that one fastball as a way to help others.

Greenberg soon will release a new book, "Get Up: The Art of Perseverance," based on dealing with his experiences. He lives in Connecticut, has a health and fitness company, Lurong Living, and is active with public and motivational speaking.

Appearing at a Jewish United Fund event at the Sachs Recreation Center in Deerfield, Greenberg opened with his stock line.

"You know when people say life throws you a curveball?" he said. "Well, life threw me a fastball to the head."

Greenberg then detailed how he was the victim of perhaps the cruelest tale in baseball history. After working so hard to wear a Cubs uniform, his career basically lasted one pitch.

Greenberg's message, though, is upbeat as it talks about turning a negative into a positive. He said the reaction he received after appearing on "The Today Show" in 2012 to discuss his upcoming at-bat with the Marlins spurred him to write the book.

"People were stopping me in the street, telling me how good my story made them feel," Greenberg said. "It made (me) realize how this whole experience was bigger than me. People saw this as perseverance and anything being possible. "If my story mirrors

someone else's personal story, whether it is injury, illness or financial stress, you have two options: You can lie there and feel sorry for yourself or you can get up."

Greenberg continued to pursue his baseball career after the beaming. He even got a single off of de los Santos in a minor-league game in 2011.

However, a string of injuries created more obstacles in Greenberg's pursuit of a return to the big leagues. He did get one opportunity when the Marlins signed him to a one-day contract to play the final game of the 2012 season, but again luck wasn't on his side. He fanned on three pitches against the Mets' R.A. Dickey, the knuckleballer who was in the midst of a Cy Young Award season.

"That was the icing on the cake to face a guy throwing a knuckleball," Greenberg said. "The most important thing is how great my teammates treated me. They all appreciated what I was trying to do. That is something I will cherish forever."

Greenberg knows he will be known forever as the guy who got hit in the head with the first pitch he saw in the big leagues. He says he is fine with that if his story can serve as motivation to someone else.

However, Greenberg insists people miss the point about what happened to him.

"It's not just about accomplishing your goal," he said. "It's about what you do to accomplish your goal. I worked hard to get there.

"People say, 'I'm so sorry you got hit in the head.' I always (reply), 'Yes, but I made it to the big leagues.' "

*Ed Sherman is a freelance writer.*