

## **BASEBALL PLAYERS SEEK VORNBROCK FOR HELP**

**By Russ Christ**  
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Stacey Vornbrock, a self-described Sports Performance Pioneer based in Scottsdale, Ariz., may be the best-kept secret in baseball.

But soon that may change. A number of top baseball players in Arizona are raving about how Vornbrock helps them improve performance and speed up the process of healing injuries. She takes away stress, relieves anxiety and fear and lets these athletes perform like they should.

Vornbrock uses Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), or “tapping” to improve performance, increase range of motion, overcome mental and physical blocks and other issues that prevent athletes from excelling. She focuses her work on elite athletes, including top amateur and professional baseball players.

Currently, she’s helping several top baseball players, including **Mitch Arnold**, 25, of Phoenix and Wadell resident **Coby Cress**, a senior catcher and outfielder for Millennium High School, a 4A school in Goodyear. Former Major League Baseball player **Mike Bell**, now a coach in the Arizona Diamondbacks organization, is also a client.

## **OVERCOMING THE FEAR OF INJURY**

Originally from Wyoming, Mitch Arnold is a 6’8” right-handed relief pitcher in the Los Angeles Angels organization. He has “tapped” with Vornbrock for eight sessions.

In August, 2005 Arnold had Tommy John surgery. A torn elbow ligament once signaled the end of a pitcher's career. The doctors call it a UCL — ulnar collateral ligament reconstruction.

Baseball players and fans call it Tommy John surgery, after the pitcher who was the first to have the surgery 29 years ago. By any designation, it is one of the major advancements in sports medicine in the last quarter century.

More than 90 pitchers who have appeared in the major leagues the last two seasons have the scar that goes with the injury and surgery—about one out of every nine.

Only about 20 percent of the UCL surgery patients of James Andrews, the renowned Birmingham, Ala., orthopedic surgeon, are big leaguers. Another 20-25 percent are minor league professionals like Mitch Arnold, but the majority are college or high school athletes.

These players typically perform as well, if not better, after the operation and have stronger arms, with radar gun readings to match.

The surgery requires a full year of rehabilitation and typically another year pitching before returning to pre-injury form.

Essentially, the body must convert a tendon into a ligament, get it carrying blood again and train it to start working as a ligament. (A ligament connects bones, stabilizing a joint. A tendon attaches muscle to the bone.) It is very weak immediately after the surgery, and the rebuilding process must be gradual.

Arnold hasn't pitched in a game since the operation, but is working with Vornbrock to expedite his return to the mound.

After surgery Arnold said he couldn't get his elbow out to the point where it needed it to be because his body was still trying to protect it from the injury. "Stacey helps me get rid of that. We've been working on getting rid of the fear of my elbow hurting," he said, "And letting my body know I'm healthy again and not to hold back."

Thought somewhat obscure, "tapping" is catching on among elite athletes. "I read some articles on (EFT) and talked to a friend who recommended it," Arnold said.

So far, so good, according to the pitcher, who says he doesn't worry about his elbow hurting anymore. "Before, the injury was always in my mind. Now I don't try to protect the injury at all."

If Arnold has learned anything about EFT it's that you don't have to believe in it. "It works whether you believe it or not," he said. "Stacey brings up the little things you wouldn't normally think about. And that's usually what's bothering you."

Arnold said he would recommend other baseball players seek out Vornbrock for help. "Especially those players who have had injuries or other problems. It's something they should try," he said. "She's very positive and relaxed."

## **CATHCHING PRODIGY USES EFT TO GET RID OF THROWING YIPS**

Coby Cress, a starting senior catcher for the West Valley Champion Millennium Tigers, batted a team high .408 as a sophomore and was named the team's offensive player of the year.

His junior year he was named the team's defensive player of the year.

Ranked in the top one percent of his high school class with a weighted 5.25 Grade Point Average, Cress is a member of the National Honor Society. Articulate and personable, he plans to play college baseball for Arizona State University in 2008 on a full Presidential academic scholarship.

From the outside all the stars would seem to be aligned for Cress. But, for some reason, once in a while, Cress couldn't throw the baseball back to his pitcher.

Playing catch, perhaps the game's easiest task, became problematic for the young catcher.

Once or twice a game, usually in a pressure situation, he would overthrow the ball to the second base side just out of reach of his pitcher. Cress called it having the throwing yips.

"The pressure was getting to me," he said. "I was probably over thinking, there was too much on my mind, stress, trying to do too much, just trying to play my best in front of everybody."

Three or four sessions of tapping with Vornbrock made his yips go away.

"She's helped me get almost completely over it," he said. "Stacey helped clear my mind, relieve anxiety from focusing on negatives and just all the things I was worried about. I was thinking too much when I was throwing."

Now Cress is throwing the ball back to the mound just like any other catcher. With the yips out of the way, Vornbrock and Cress are working on helping him focus when he's up to bat, clearing his mind and seeing the ball better, and even injury prevention and other types of stress.

## **BELL USES TAPPING TO MAKE TRANSITION TO COACHING**

Mike Bell, a Chandler resident who coaches the short season Class A Yakima Diamondbacks in Washington state, met Vornbrock in January 2006.

Bell, a first round draft pick in 1993, had just ended his professional playing career in 1995. He played for seven different organizations, including the Diamondbacks, before retiring.

"When I went to see Stacey I had just finished playing and wasn't sure what I was going to do," Bell said. "It was a difficult time. But after the first time I talked to her I felt 100 times better."

Bell had trouble sleeping.

He was anxious about the transition from professional baseball to his next step in life. "After the first tapping session with her I felt like I could relax again," he said. "I actually felt like myself."

Bell and Vornbrock then met for another eight or nine EFT sessions. "I just kept feeling better and better," he said. "I believe other players can get a lot out of this," he said. "There are always issues that come up during the season that distract you from what you're doing on

the field. Stacey, with her techniques and tapping, can really help players focus on what they are doing that day.”

Bell’s family is one of baseball’s best stories--a group of high-achieving baseball men. Mike’s brother, David Bell, who has also tapped with Vornbrock, played in the big leagues from 1995 to 2006 for the Cardinals, Mariners and Phillies. David turned Mike onto Vornbrock after tapping with her for a couple of seasons. “David speaks very highly of Stacey,” Mike said. “I’m grateful that David introduced us.”

Their father, Buddy Bell, who manages the Kansas City Royals, played 18 seasons in the big leagues from 1972 to 1985. Mike and David’s grandfather, Gus Bell, played in 1,741 Major League games from 1950 to 1964.

Bell said Vornbrock helps athletes overcome their fears, anxieties and deal with their everyday problems so they can focus on the task at hand. “She helps you put all that stuff in perspective,” he said. “And get in control of your fears.”

Bell ultimately decided he wanted to return to baseball in 2007. He felt he had something to offer other players, so he called Josh Byrnes, general manager of the Arizona Diamondbacks, about a job.

Byrnes made the offer and Bell accepted it.

“All the things I went through in my career,” he said. “I feel this is an opportunity to pass on my knowledge and help them get through some tough times.”

“I’m looking forward to coaching and passing some of the things I’ve learned with Stacey along to these kids,” Bell said. “Some of them will be homesick, a little culture shock in some cases. I love baseball and am looking forward to having a chance to help someone else.”

### **About Stacey Vornbrock**

Vornbrock offer a one-of-a-kind, Performance Enhancement Program for amateur and professional baseball players that releases all mental, emotional, physical, and mechanical blocks. This program teaches players how to truly get out of their own way and attain the level of performance they have always desired.

Though somewhat obscure, EFT is growing in popularity. Anyone can do it. Using two fingers (index and middle), EFT allows a person to discharge negative blocks by physically tapping the body’s pressure points on the hands, wrists and face. It is designed to address the physiology of the body and it releases mental, emotional, mechanical and physical blocks, including range of motion blocks. It works very quickly whether the person believes in it or not.