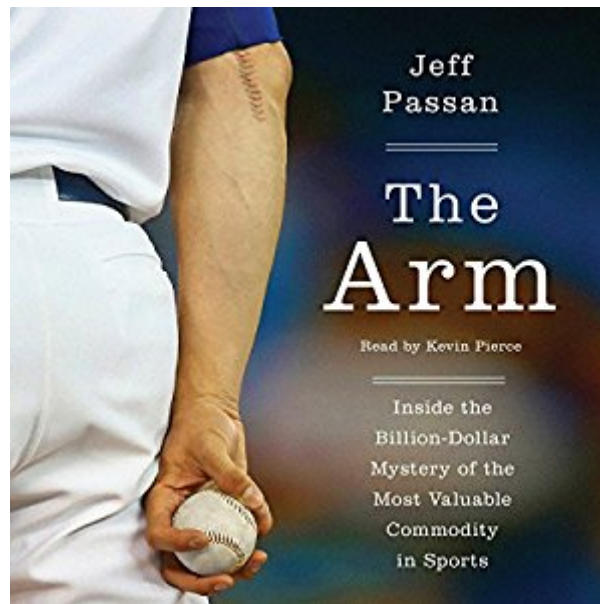


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# The Arm: Inside The Billion-Dollar Mystery Of The Most Valuable Thing In Sports



## Synopsis

Yahoo's lead baseball columnist offers an in-depth look at the most valuable commodity in sports - the pitching arm - and how its vulnerability to injury is hurting players and the game, from Little League to the majors. Every year, Major League Baseball spends more than \$1.5 billion on pitchers - five times more than the salary of every NFL quarterback combined. Pitchers are the game's lifeblood. Their import is exceeded only by their fragility. One tiny band of tissue in the elbow, the ulnar collateral ligament, is snapping at unprecedented rates, leaving current big league players vulnerable and the coming generation of baseball-playing children dreading the three scariest words in the sport: Tommy John surgery. Jeff Passan traveled the world for three years to explore in depth the past, present, and future of the arm and how its evolution left baseball struggling to wrangle its Tommy John surgery epidemic. He examined what compelled the Chicago Cubs to spend \$155 million on one arm. He snagged a rare interview with Sandy Koufax, whose career was cut short by injury at 30, and visited Japan to understand how another baseball-mad country treats its prized arms. And he followed two major league pitchers, Daniel Hudson and Todd Coffey, throughout their returns from Tommy John surgery. He exposes how the baseball establishment long ignored the rise in arm injuries and reveals how misplaced incentives across the sport stifle potential changes. Injuries to the UCL start as early as Little League. Without a drastic cultural shift, baseball will continue to lose hundreds of millions of dollars annually to damaged pitchers, and another generation of children will suffer the same problems that vex current players. Informative and hard hitting, *The Arm* is essential listening for all who love the game, want to keep their children healthy, or relish a look into how a large, complex institution can fail so spectacularly.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Author Jeff Passan tackles two questions in *The Arm*: How did baseball fail the pitching arm and what can be done to save it? Major league baseball spends \$1.5 billion annually in pitchers' salaries, making the arm the most valuable commodity in sports. Passan writes that pitchers' arms, however, are ticking time bombs. Fifty percent of pitchers go on the disabled list each year and 25 percent of them end up having Tommy John surgery. Stephen Strasburg, Matt Harvey, Jose Fernandez, Yu Darish and John Smoltz are among the many pitchers who have undergone Tommy John surgery, which Passan calls the greatest triumph in sports medicine. Pitcher Tommy John underwent the first surgery of its kind on Sept. 25, 1974, and Passan writes that there are two pitching eras "before the advent of Tommy John surgery and afterwards. In 1974, there was just a 1 percent chance of success. John was 31 and had started 318 games when he had the surgery. After the surgery, he made 382 starts without missing a turn. He pitched until he was 46 and ended with 288 career victories. Today, pitch counts dominate baseball and 200 innings are considered a workhorse season. To show how times have changed, in a 10-year period, Sandy Koufax exceeded 150 pitches 6.9 percent of the time in his starts; 140 pitches 13.8 percent; and 120 pitches almost 40 percent. In 1961, Koufax threw 205 pitches in a 13-inning game. In 2015, pitchers exceeded 120 pitches on just 40 occasions, a 90 percent reduction from 1998. Passan brings a great deal of life to the book by following two pitchers "Daniel Hudson and Todd Coffey" as they try to make comebacks from their second TJ surgery. The ordeal, pressure and uncertainty are palpable.

Passan looks "Inside the billion-dollar mystery of the most valuable commodity in sports." He bases that statement on the amount of salary paid to pitchers in recent years, which exceeds the amount paid to quarterbacks by the NFL. Of course, there are more pitchers than QBs, but the point is taken; an enormous amount is paid to pitchers, many of whom are injured and on the disabled list. Can anything be done? While pitching workloads have trended down since the beginning of baseball, the number and severity of injuries has remained the same or increased. It doesn't just seem so, but research by Bill James and others backs that up. Passan looks into some reasons why. Biggest culprit? It seems to be velocity. Pitchers these days throw harder than ever before, and velocity does correlate with injury rates. Passan looks mainly at the central point in pitcher health, the Tommy John, or ligament replacement surgery. Shoulder injuries have declined as work has been done to strengthen and condition that joint, but the elbow injuries have proportionally increased. The TJ is almost ubiquitous among hurlers of all ages. Even teenagers are getting the surgery these days. Passan examines why. The main part of the book follows two major league

pitchers dealing with the surgery and the rehab that follows: Daniel Hudson and Todd Coffey. Much of this story is their story, and they as well as their families and medical teams granted access to Passan as he built the story. The ups and downs of the surgery itself, the year-plus of work needed to build the arm back into pitching shape after surgery, the agony of the process, is all here. Passan writes not only of the effect on the players, but also on their families.

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