

## **We'll Do It Without You!**

He was their number 3 hole hitter. After 113 games, he was batting .346 and primed to win the National League batting title. He also had 11 home runs, 60 RBI's, and he singlehandedly nailed down home field advantage for the National League after winning the MVP in the All Star Game last July.

But, how was Melky Cabrera's team doing? They were doing great, tied for first place with the LA Dodgers heading toward the home stretch of the season. Then, the unthinkable happened when Melky was suspended for 50 games in August after a positive test for testosterone.

The Giants would have to go the rest of the way without the league's best hitter. Unless of course, they could get into the postseason, at which time he would be eligible to return.

Conversely, the Dodgers would not subtract from their team. They would add.

How much? About \$275 million dollars worth of players!

With the additions of Adrian Gonzalez, Josh Beckett, and Carl Crawford from the Boston Red Sox the Dodgers were sure to get better. With the loss of Melky, the Giants were sure to get worse.

The Dodgers were not the first team to employ this strategy. The Miami Marlins had already bought the best players that money could buy to go along with the acquisition of a big-name manager heading into 2012, but now it was the Dodgers who had a decided advantage over the Giants.

With this much talent they couldn't lose right?

Wrong!

The Giants finished 8 games ahead of the Dodgers en route to winning the National League West Division. How could this be? It just didn't make any sense or did it?

In my book [Our Time- A High School Baseball Coach's Journey](#), I devoted an entire chapter to this very concept. Legendary LSU coach Skip Bertman said, "I play my best 9, not my 9 best." This is not a play on words.

Sometimes, a player has a certain effect on a team that goes way beyond statistics. Sometimes a player has a way of making others around him better and creating new dynamics within a team concept.

Synergy means that when people are working together and pulling together, the sum of the whole is much greater than the sum of the parts.

How often does a team's success have more to do with a belief in each another, self sacrifice, and the power of the human spirit than it has to do with just plain talent?

How magical is the power of teamwork? So much so, that when Melky Cabrera was eligible to return to the Giants and help them win in the postseason, the Giants told him not to come back. Yes, sensing that their team had gotten better without him, they asked the league's best hitter not to return.

How magical is the power of teamwork? The Giants trailed the Cincinnati Reds 2-0 in a best of 5 series and won. After trailing the St. Louis Cardinals 3-1 in a best of 7 series, they inexplicably did not lose again. When it was all said and done they had made Major League Baseball history winning an unprecedented 6 elimination games.

The Dodgers essentially bought a rotisserie team, had the best 9, and lost. The Giants got rid of an All Star game MVP, played their 9 best, and became the league's best team after winning the 2012 World Series.

By then, the Marlins had fired their manager for their failed season. By all accounts the Marlins and Dodgers were the best teams. Where were they? They were home watching the Giants, the team that played best.

So was Melky. The last he saw of his teammates they were tied with the Dodgers. Then he left, allegedly without explaining himself to his teammates.

Without him, there were a number of examples of players doing whatever they needed to do in order to help their team win. Brian Wilson became the team cheerleader in spite of not being able to play due to injury. Hunter Pence made locker room speeches reminiscent of Baltimore Ravens linebacker Ray Lewis in spite of underperforming. Tim Lincecum accepted a demotion into the bullpen after not living up to his past performances as a starter and became a 7th and 8th inning bridge to closer Sergio Romo. Why?

Because it made the team better.

