



JESSEY ASSOCIATES  
was very tough for me because I didn't know how to recognize those pitches. But now I'm getting a good feel for it, and as I continue to see them more, I'll get an even better feel.

**SPORT:** At what point in the pitch delivery do you recognize what the pitch is? Fifty feet? Thirty feet? Ten?

**JORDAN:** Early in the delivery. Once it's released from the pitcher's hand, I pick up the spin of the ball. All pitches have a different spin. That's what I've been learning. It's not easy. But it takes repetition to be able to recognize it and adjust to it. Constant repetition.

**SPORT:** What's been your most memorable moment?

**JORDAN:** The first home run. It was the most inspirational thing that's happened to me here. No one thought it would happen. No one thought it could happen. But I believed in myself. Everybody thought I was playing baseball as a publicity stunt, and the last thing in the world I wanted was publicity. I was running from it, in fact. But it was the steps of progression that enabled me to get to that point to succeed, to hit a home run. I progressed enough as a hitter to be able to believe in myself and to be able to hit a home run. From a confidence standpoint, that was the starting point, something to build on.

**SPORT:** What's been the most embarrassing moment?

**JORDAN:** Well, this game is very humbling. I didn't come in with any ego. I didn't come in thinking that I couldn't make mistakes and laugh at myself. I really haven't been embarrassed be-

cause of that kind of attitude.

**SPORT:** Do you miss basketball?

**JORDAN:** No, not at all. Anyway, I still play...but it's with the guys here. It's not in stadiums with 18,000 people. It's on the playground, usually once a week or so.

**SPORT:** But does that satisfy your desire of competing in a sport you dominated?

**JORDAN:** I conquered everything on that level. So whenever I play, I just play for the fun of it, the love of it. I'm having more fun playing baseball.

**SPORT:** Does it concern you that there is an emptiness in basketball, that the NBA and the fans miss you?

**JORDAN:** I'm sorry, but it doesn't. Unfortunately, people are going to be thinking that way for years because I'm through. I'm not coming back. At least, that's my feeling right now. I know there are people who wish I was still playing basketball, but at some point in time, either now or 20 years from now, those people will get over it. I apologize if some people think that's selfish of me, but that's the way it is.

**SPORT:** What was the No. 1 reason why you left basketball?

**JORDAN:** I was bored. Bored with the regular season. Bored with the preseason. You can't win anything in the regular season. If you go 82-0, you don't win anything. The only thing that matters is the playoffs, and there was no way I could skip the regular season and play in the playoffs. That just wasn't feasible. The individual things, like a scoring title, didn't matter to me anymore. I was only interested in team accomplishments. I would have liked to win four, five, six championships in a row, but to get to that point

**MJ's confidence in his skills was down because of his long layoff from the game, but now he's into the swing of things and hopes one day to play for the Sox.**

[by playing the regular season] was what I was worried about.

**SPORT:** Did you feel you had to be great every game, and did that begin to wear on you emotionally?

**JORDAN:** Definitely. If I didn't maintain the expectations, people perceived something was wrong. To open myself to that kind of scrutiny where people would say, "Hey, he's losing a step because he's not putting up the kinds of numbers he was before," I just didn't want to go through it anymore. There was so much expectation, it was terrible.

**SPORT:** Did you feel you were losing a step, that your skills were eroding, that even though you were the best in the game, you felt something was slipping?

**JORDAN:** No, not at all. I could go in right now and average 33 points, 34 points, whatever.

**SPORT:** If someone asked you to join a team of retired players such as, say, Magic Johnson, Larry Bird, Kevin McHale and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, to play against a current NBA All-Star team, would you play?

**JORDAN:** Yeah, just for the fun and love of it, not for business or making money. The game has become too commercialized. The love of the game isn't as evident as before. Everybody worries too much about what other guys are making. I'd rather play the game for the sheer love of it. ★