



AUG 30, 2010

## *ALL THE RIGHT MOVES*

PROFESSIONAL, POLITE, EAGER TO PLEASE—COULD JOEY VOTTO BE MORE PERFECT? AN MVP AND AN END TO THE REDS' PLAYOFF DROUGHT WOULDN'T HURT

**L. JON WERTHEIM**

It was a big ask. As player requests go, this one unquestionably pushed the limits. But in mid-June, Reds first baseman Joey Votto approached his bosses, asking to miss a team flight so he could attend Game 7 of the NBA Finals. Votto has been a die-hard Lakers fan for most of his 26 years, and a friend had scored tickets. The seats weren't great—"Tickets in the lower bowl were going for, like, 10 grand!" Votto says—but they were good enough. In a sort of postmodern version of Cannonball Run, Votto had mapped out a cross-country itinerary whereby he could get from Cincinnati to Los Angeles and then meet his team in Seattle without missing an at bat.

The Reds' executives, including manager Dusty Baker, considered the request and then consented. Yes, it was a reward of sorts for Votto's typically excellent performance this season. But they were also thrilled to see him doing something impulsive and fun.

So it was that on June 17 Votto closed out a home stand by going 2 for 4 with a home run in an afternoon win over the Dodgers. No sooner had he delivered a few postgame fist bumps to teammates in the infield, than he tore out of Great American Ball Park, bound for the Cincinnati airport. Taking advantage of the time difference, Votto landed at LAX as the NBA game started and jumped into a cab. With the locals glued to their televisions, traffic was uncommonly light. Votto arrived at Staples Center at the start of the second quarter and watched his team beat the Celtics and win the title. He then slept a few hours, woke up early and returned to the airport to catch an 8 a.m. flight to Seattle. In a blow to coaches everywhere who preach the virtues of a good night's rest, Votto went 2 for 4 that night against the Mariners. "It was just one of those experiences I'll always remember," he says.

Maybe the oddest part of the story: Votto says that between the time he left Cincinnati and the time he landed in Seattle, he went totally unrecognized. Or at least unaccosted. No "Hey, Joey, what's up?" No autographs. No iPhone paparazzi. As he sat—stood, mostly—in the Staples Center stands, he was just a nice-looking, thickly built guy in his 20s, cheering for the purple and gold. "Trust me," he says, "it's fine with me that way."

Votto's bat is threatening to sabotage that preference for privacy. In his third full season he is quietly establishing himself as a Pujolsian figure, a National League MVP candidate who through Sunday was leading the league in hitting (.323), on-base percentage (.422) and slugging (.592) and, with 29 home runs and 86 RBIs, was among the top three in each of the Triple Crown categories. Votto is a disciplined hitter, complementing brute power with patience at the plate. And he's a major reason that the Reds, who had a 3½-game lead in the NL Central at week's end, are about to snap a string of nine straight losing seasons and are challenging for a postseason spot. Votto would rather the focus be on the resurgence of the proud franchise he plays for, but his MVP-caliber performance also makes for a heartening comeback story. Last season he missed nearly a month while struggling with depression after the sudden death of his father, Joseph. To judge by his hitting—and, perhaps, that seat-of-the-pants plan to see the Lakers—Votto has put those emotional issues behind him.

"I'd be lying if I said I thought he'd be what he is now," says Nationals slugger Adam Dunn, who played with Votto in Cincinnati in 2008. "But the dude works so hard, he's so smart and professional, it's almost like, why wouldn't he be this good?"

Otherwise, though, Votto can be hard to notice. If you're tired of the sportscape's many cases of arrested development, indifference and look-at-me-itis, Votto is your elixir. As he often says, "Baseball is just my job." And he treats it as such, preparing meticulously, taking pride in his work, harboring ambition while avoiding office politics. "He's a good teammate, but he keeps to himself," says Reds second baseman Brandon Phillips. "He tells you only what he thinks you need to know. There's nothing wrong with that."

It's not that Votto is aloof. Far from it. Sitting in front of his conspicuously tidy locker in the Reds' clubhouse a few hours before a game, he holds forth on a range of subjects, the dinner-party guest you feel fortunate to be seated alongside. And for all his professional drive, he's not ruthless. "He's as polite as anyone I've ever met," says Baker.

But until Votto can figure out how popularity will benefit his job performance, he'll keep a low profile. "Attention goes both ways, it creates expectations and it also creates limits," he says. "When you buy into that, it's almost like you're not being fair to yourself ... and, to me anyway, it distracts from the job."

When this is recounted to Baker, he nods. "I'm telling you, if everyone were as dedicated as Joey, we'd have a much better game. He's intense but mellow. He's serious but has a great personality. He's Canadian, you know."

Growing up in the Toronto suburbs, Votto was 10 in the fall of 1993, when Joe Carter's walk-off home run gave the Blue Jays their second straight World Series title. Votto tells the story that his parents, Joseph and Wendy, left him home alone and ventured downtown that night to join the celebration. By then, baseball already enthralled him, its pacing and combination of team and individual a good match for his personality. If you needed proof Votto was a unique species, here was the rare (perhaps only?) natural athlete in Canada who didn't take to hockey. Votto never even got the hang of skating. Another story he tells: He went to a rink as a teenager for a first date with a new girlfriend. "When she saw what a disaster I was on the ice," he says, "she dumped me."

Joseph and Wendy owned a restaurant, and when it went bust, the family struggled. Eventually Joseph got a job as a chef at a Toronto yacht club. Wendy became a sommelier. "Seeing them dig themselves out and get back on their feet and overcome, that's a pretty good example," says Joey. "That's a lot like baseball, a lot like life."

Votto was a second-round pick by the Reds in the 2002 draft, part of an early-century Canadian baseball boomlet that also produced sluggers Justin Morneau and Jason Bay. An intense, sweet-hitting lefty, Votto gypsied around the minors, disappointed he wasn't being promoted faster—but unwilling to express that view publicly. "I just made it a point to get ready for the big leagues because I knew that's where I belonged," he says. "You run the bases properly, you have a good two-strike approach, you compose yourself. So many situations can turn complicated if you can't slow things down."

Finally called up by the Reds in late 2007, six days shy of his 24th birthday, Votto arrived not with a sense of awe, but a sense of, "I'm not going back down." In 2008, his first full season, he hit 24 home runs—most by a Reds rookie since Frank Robinson in 1956—and finished second to Cubs catcher Geovany Soto in the NL Rookie of the Year voting. Beyond that, he impressed teammates with his comportment, everything from his early arrival at the ballpark to his diet heavy on brown rice. Says Reds third baseman Scott Rolen, "You know how they say, Do things the right way? It's like he does the right things naturally."

Then, tragedy. In August 2008 Votto's father died suddenly of undisclosed causes at age 52. Votto and his three younger brothers, Tyler, now a college student in Toronto, and twins Ryan and Paul, now 11, grieved together, but differently. Votto says that the deep sadness, coupled with the responsibility that came with being thrust into the role of father figure to his brothers, was "totally overwhelming." He made it through spring training and the 2009 World Baseball Classic (he batted .556), but as the season got rolling he began suffering full-on panic attacks. "The very first night I was alone was when I went to the hospital," said Votto, who sought treatment during a series in San Diego and also while home in Cincinnati. "I couldn't take it. It got to the point where I thought I was going to die." He went on the disabled list in late May—stated reason: stress-related issues—and spent time "working through some things."

When he returned to the lineup on June 23 he resumed his torrid hitting, batting .322 for the season. But his perspective was altered. "My attitude changed. I needed to do a better job of reflecting and balancing, making my free time really mine," he says. "Not to disrespect the game or disrespect the fans, but baseball doesn't own my life. I'm not going to allow it to. . . . I hope I said it right. Grieving is a tough process, and I'm still working through it."

When he played, no longer was every at bat a personal referendum. He was more interested in relishing the competition. "Santana's pitching? That makes my day. Halladay? Carpenter? Wainwright? Lincecum? I can't wait. When Strasburg got called up, I wanted to face him," he says. "I'm not embarrassed to say it, I want to beat the best in the world, that's what I prepare for."

Votto's indifference to image can bite him sometimes. Despite leading the National League in home runs, slugging and on-base percentage in the first half this year, he was nearly left off the All-Star team. Votto was passed over in the selection of starters and reserves in favor of three higher-profile first basemen, Albert Pujols, Ryan Howard and Adrian Gonzalez.irate, the Reds launched a campaign for him in the fan vote for the last roster spot, outfitting every team employee with a VOTE VOTTO T-shirt. Votto appreciated the support but—giving new zest to the phrase Cincinnati red—was embarrassed by the attention. "It kind of became a popularity contest," he told reporters. "It's not really the route I'd like to go to get to the All-Star Game."

Thanks in small part to ballot stuffing by Baker's 11-year-old son, Darren, Votto was a late addition. He went 0 for 2; he also caused a minor stir when he declined to congratulate Chicago outfielder Marlon Byrd for a nice defensive play because Byrd plays for a division rival. "I don't like the Cubs," Votto told a reporter. Votto says that he was ribbing the reporter, who he knew was from Chicago. Still, that Votto had to explain the joke says plenty about his reputation for intensity.

Votto's earnestness and clean living play well in measured and reserved southern Ohio. Men relate to him. (Hell, even his bristly crewcut conforms with the local hairstyle of choice.) Women walk around with FUTURE MRS. VOTTO T-shirts. And Votto is happy playing in a small city/big town, where hassles are few and he can stroll to the ballpark from his apartment and walk his dog along the Ohio River. "You can get your city fix on the road," he says.

Whether Votto is locked up for a long-term stay in Cincinnati will be a drama for the off-season. He's eligible for arbitration and is looking to improve (dramatically) on his current \$525,000 salary. The situation will be familiar to Reds G.M. Walt Jocketty, who held that position with the Cardinals in 2003 when another young, ascendant first baseman was in a similar position. St. Louis lavished \$100 million upon Albert Pujols over seven years. Pujols's agent? Dan Lozano ... who also represents Votto. Parallels aside, both Votto and the Reds are content to wait until the off-season to talk business—though Baker allows that his first baseman has reason to ask for the moon. "Joey's the man of the household," Baker says. "He has a mom and three younger brothers. Especially in these times, you can set up everyone for life."

For now, though, there's competition to address. A winning season. A possible post-season appearance. A possible Triple Crown. A possible MVP award. Not that Votto wants to discuss his highlights. He's fine yakking about the Lakers or his dog or Canadian culture. But baseball? He'll let his body of work speak for itself.

MAR 27, 2017

## 13 THE REDS' BIG MACHINE

HISTORY IS HAPPENING IN CINCY: JOEY VOTTO IS A HALL-LEVEL HITTER—AND GETTING BETTER. DON'T MISS IT

### SI STAFF

A RUDIMENTARY but effective way to assess the quality of a hitter is through evaluation of his slash line. One of the slashiest: Reds first baseman Joey Votto has a career batting average of .313, a career on-base percentage of .425 and a career slugging percentage of .536. Only five players in baseball history have done as well or better in all three categories. Their names are Ruth, Williams, Gehrig, Foxx and Hornsby.

There are measures even more rudimentary. A hitter's most basic goal is to not make outs, and only 11 men in baseball history have been better than the 33-year-old Votto at not making outs, i.e. getting on base. One is Barry Bonds; one played in the 1890s; the other nine are in the Hall of Fame.

Votto reaches the plate knowing exactly what he wants to hit, and he waits for it. Since 2014, according to Fangraphs, no hitter has swung at a lower share of pitches out of the strike zone. He hits the ball all over the field, too, and his career batting average on balls he puts in play (.359) is fifth in modern baseball history, one tick behind Mike Trout's (the others ahead of him are Ty Cobb, Shoeless Joe Jackson and Hornsby). Last year he did not hit a single infield fly ball; only two other qualified regulars could say the same.

Following a slow start in 2016—Votto says "confusion, frustration, and determination" filled his head—he hit .408 after the All-Star break, becoming only the fourth player in the last 30 years to hit above .400 in any half of any season. (What exactly went wrong early on? "There was some stuff," is all Votto will say.) Over the last two seasons, slow start and all, Votto has posted the best OPS in baseball. Though he has not since matched the power of his 2010 MVP season, every other part of his offensive game has gotten better.

There are few hitters whose at bats are so captivating—and few teams whose games are less competitive. The Reds have had the game's worst record over those two years, finishing a combined 71½ games out of first place in the NL Central.

Says Reds manager Bryan Price, "He's someone, for me, that any baseball fan would pay to see hit, would pay to see play. I hate to think he's a well-kept secret. I just don't think that we've earned the right to get the attention that would shine a brighter light on Joey."

Baseball's most evolved hitter toils in relative anonymity, underappreciated by his own fans and the broader baseball world. And he doesn't mind it. "I think if I let the team's performance dictate how I behave," says Votto, "or how I perceive my performance, or whether or not there's value, or whether or not anyone even cares, it's a dangerous and slippery slope."

But surely some part of Votto must find it harder to do what he does on a team like this, a team whose radio broadcaster said in January that the owner should trade Votto and tell him, "Hell, I can lose 94 games without you just as easily as I could lose 94 games with you?"

"No, not at all," Votto says. "No matter what, I'm being paid to perform. I, personally, have standards that I have set for myself. I'd like to achieve those and look back without regret."

Though the Reds made three playoff appearances from 2010 through '13, the team has entered each of the last two off-seasons as definite sellers. It would have made some sense to deal Votto, who is signed to a long but, by today's standards, not obscene contract. (He is owed \$22 million this year, and \$25 million for each of the six years after that.) Since July the team has traded veterans Jay Bruce and Brandon Phillips, committing belatedly but in earnest to a full-scale rebuild.

But Votto, who has a no-trade clause, doesn't want to go anywhere. "As I get older I'm connected more to the city, and to people in the city," he says. "I own a home there. I'm out and about in the community all the time." So that's that.

Votto will be the Reds' oldest starting position player, and its longest-tenured. And a young lineup like this one (average age excluding Votto: 26) could learn from him. Centerfielder Billy Hamilton already has.

Hamilton says, "I like him way more now than I used to—not in a bad way." He says he was once afraid to talk to the notoriously intense Votto or even look his way; since then Votto has helped him get out of his own head when he hits. In the process the first baseman has become Hamilton's best friend on the team.

"It's hard, though," says Hamilton, "for him to tell somebody how to hit, when he's that good. He knows what he wants to hit and exactly where he wants to hit the ball.... He's so good at knowing what he wants and sticking to it."

In an era when superstars routinely abandon their first teams for contenders or bigger markets, Votto could indeed be said to be sticking to what he knows he wants. The Reds' big machine keeps quietly humming away.

JUN 10, 2013

# THE CASE FOR ... BATTING YOUR STUD SECOND

**JOE SHEEHAN**

Babe Ruth wore his iconic number 3 because when the Yankees first assigned uniform numbers, in 1929, they did so based on a player's lineup spot. Ruth batted third, because the fashionable thinking of the time was that the best player bats third. Other fashionable thinking from the late Jazz Age held that it was a good idea to smoke like a chimney while traveling by train no farther than St. Louis to play all-white baseball games.

We know better now. Mostly. Because while a diverse Reds squad jets coast-to-coast on nonsmoking flights, they're still batting their best hitter third—and it's costing them runs. Joey Votto is the game's greatest offensive force, with an absurd .469 OBP since the start of 2012. He's at .460 this year, including .492 in May. Cincinnati's two hole (usually occupied by shortstop Zack Cozart) has a .246/.271/.382 line in '13, but every day Dusty Baker sets a lineup that places a weak hitter ahead of his best player.

It doesn't have to be this way. The best modern analysis of lineup order—as published in *The Book*, by Tom Tango, Mitchel Lichtman and Andy Dolphin—points to one conclusion: a team's best hitter should bat second. Doing so clusters the best hitters more efficiently, putting more runners on base for the big sticks in the middle of the lineup. But most significant, it gets the best hitter more at bats. Each lineup spot gets about 18 extra plate appearances a season more than the spot below it, so moving up a Votto is like squeezing four extra games a year out of him, while taking those games away from a player with a .271 OBP.

This idea is starting to get some traction within the game. The Phillies' Chase Utley, a fixture in the three hole, and Robinson Cano, the Yankees' cleanup hitter much of last season, have spent time in the second spot this year. John Gibbons moved Jose Bautista to the two hole two weeks ago and has seen his Blue Jays average 5.56 runs a game since. In Minnesota, Joe Mauer—roughly the AL's version of Votto, a high-average, high-OBP lefty—has batted second in 46 of his 51 starts this season.

Getting that best player up three extra times a month sounds trivial, but now and again it could be the difference between winning and losing. On May 17 the Reds, down 5--3 to the Phillies in the ninth, had a runner on second with two outs. Instead of having Votto up as the tying run, they had him in the on-deck circle, watching Cozart pop up to end the game. That wasn't a new phenomenon; four times last year Cincinnati had a ninth-inning rally in a close game end with Votto watching a vastly inferior hitter make the final out.

In addition to getting more plate appearances, Votto would also get more chances to actually swing the bat hitting second. He leads the NL in intentional walks, with nine, after topping the league last year with 18. Three this year have come after a sacrifice bunt opened up first base for the opposing manager. Batting Votto directly behind leadoff man Shin-Soo Choo will eliminate those bunts (a good idea in itself, but that's an argument for another day) and put Votto at the plate with first base occupied more often. You protect great hitters not by worrying about who bats behind them but by having the bases occupied when they come to the plate.

The tactical giveaway of batting two lefties consecutively is a concern, but it's not as if having Cozart or Cesar Izturis or even Brandon Phillips batting between Choo and Votto is going to dissuade managers from bringing a southpaw into the game late. Moreover, the practice of automatically using the closer in the ninth inning means that the opposing manager will usually elect to face Choo and Votto with a righthander in the final frame, anyway, rather than get away from his assigned bullpen roles.

This is one of those ideas that seems a lot more radical than it is. "Give your best hitter more at bats at the expense of a lesser one" shouldn't be that hard a sell, but the most powerful force in baseball isn't Miguel Cabrera—it's inertia. The argument that we've always done it this way is not enough anymore. Joey Votto should be batting second for the Reds.

Follow @joe\_sheehan

Moving Joey Votto up in the lineup is like squeezing four extra games a year out of him.

PHOTO

TOM DIPACE



# Joey Votto: Here's what the deal is with my practice swing



By C. Trent Rosecrans (/author/c-trent-rosecrans/) Jul 3, 2019

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CINCINNATI – Sometimes a single question can turn into several – especially when the person being asked the question is Joey Votto.

Before Wednesday's 3-0 Reds victory over the Brewers, I asked Votto some questions for another story, but then, because there was some time and Votto didn't seem to be in any hurry to end our conversation, I asked one more and told him I was asking one more. That, well, wasn't accurate.

I wanted to work this into a story, but sometimes the straight Q&A format works best, so, here it is.

**The question I get asked the most often, it's about your warmup swing. ... So ... there is a thought process, there's ...**

Why do I do it?

**Yeah.**

I do it because I want to feel things that are connected to my best swing. As I mentioned early in the season, if I beat left-handers and I don't strike out, those are my very best years. When I take that swing, that cues parts of my move that is required in those two instances. Right-handers I haven't done very well against this year, but I'm very confident that will come. If I'm competitive in two-strike situations against everybody and I'm competitive against left-handers every day and in every opportunity I face them, I feel like, in the long run, good things happen. That swing physically and mentally cues things in my body that are required. I'm not often on Twitter, but on the rare occasions I am, I've seen it before, where I catch a little bit of ... people make comments about it. I don't react to people's comments, I understand that sometimes people do awkward things and people have the right to say things they want to say, but for me if I take a standard swing, it wouldn't tap into things that I need to be my best.

Joey Votto wacky warm up swing complation 2019



**It's not your standard swing – when did this come about, is it another evolution?**

I think I've done it for years, I've done it on rare, rare occasions before. Starting as poorly as I did this year, you have to go back to the essentials, you have to go back to the things you know are near-guaranteed effective. I do it behind the scenes, but I started taking it in the middle of at-bats, treating it almost like practice, kind of re-training my swing. So now when I do it, it's just in the middle of an at-bat to prompt things I want to feel.

**Is it to keep your swing short?**

It's a lot of things. There's a ton of things to it. It just feels right when I do it. It reminds me of the things I need to feel during my swing. I've found there's a strong correlation between working that and my swing coming back.

**Have you ever taken a swing at a real pitch with that swing?**

No. I don't think so. Maybe a foul ball or something. Everybody wants to see the ball as long as possible. Everybody wants to hit the ball as far as possible and as hard as possible and everyone wants as short of a swing as possible. That (practice) swing, for me, prompts all of those. It reminds me of those three things. It's hard to explain. It's something I've developed over the years. Those are the only three things that matter for every hitter: How long can I see it? How far and hard can I hit it? And, pairing with how long can I see it, is how short my swing can be. You know what I mean?

**No, that makes sense. I'm sure there are tiny little things inside that, subsections of those things, of course. I've seen you do it in the field, I've seen you do that motion before, some other places. Usually, in the field, I think it's been in spring.**

That's not the same swing.

**Really?**

Yeah, really. The swing on deck, with a bat, I'm trying to feel something in my body. The one on the field is just a reminder, that's all. I try not to swing on the field, I don't think it's a good look.

**Is the on-deck swing different than the between-pitches swing?**

Sometimes. Yeah, I think so. The on-deck swing is still trying to tap into that, but like, sometimes the at-bats get really hard, really fast, The pitchers are really sharp, their stuff is elusive, you need maximum time to see the ball. Sometimes they've got the stuff that pushes you to your extreme and sometimes you're just fatigued or you're sore or you're playing through an injury or whatever it is. Whatever it may be. For me, I just want to get back to the extreme of my fundamentals. So doing that in the middle of an at-bat, I think usually gives me a chance to get back.

### **It seems like an exaggerated short swing ...**

Listen, the shorter the swing, the longer I can see the ball, that's all I care about. I care almost exclusively about hitting the best pitches and never swinging at anything that's questionable and then putting on the best swing, that's it.

### **When I was in Little League and even now, you hear “too close to take.” That doesn't exist for you?**

No. No. I think that – listen, I think I looked it up the other day, I have around 7,000 plate appearances and I average four-point-something pitches per plate appearance, let's call it, 28,000, 29,000 pitches. Ultimately, if I swing at even a few more pitches that are deemed questionable, everything about my batting profile changes.

### **That's not something you're willing to do?**

I've gotten too much bang for the buck with the walks. So, it's like, there's too much to gain out of putting another baserunner in play for the team. I think if you look at the best offensive teams each year, they're the ones that end up in the World Series, they're the ones that make the playoffs. You look at those teams and they have a strong on-base percentage. They're not just slugging teams that hit homers, they're guys that hand the bat off to the next guy. That's where my mind is at with that, that's why I don't swing at edgy pitches. The other thing too is it stretches out your swing. It makes your swing less consistent.

### **That makes sense to me, it's something you're not used to doing, so it can screw it up.**

You are how you practice, so if I only practice swinging at perfect pitches to take swings at, then I get better at it. If I don't practice lots of different parts of the zone – I think that's what I did early in the season, by the way. I'm 99 percent sure that's what I did wrong early in the

season. All my poor starts are a byproduct of being too aggressive, too many swings.

## You feel like you're better now?

I think you can tell I am.

*(Photo: Aaron Doster / Associated Press)*

### What did you think of this story?



MEH



SOLID



AWESOME

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63 COMMENTS

Add a comment...

**Nathan E.** Jul 4, 4:57am

Best article yet ive read about votto. Really good because i get to hear his reasoning, and that can be more fascinating than stats





87



**Brent J.** Jul 4, 5:15am

Thanks for this Trent, because it's exactly what I was dying to know. I still don't fully understand it, but Joey's brain is fascinating to me. Whatever he's doing is clearly working now!

 53 

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**De R.** Jul 4, 12:35pm

Absolutely love this guy talking about hitting

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**Martin C.** Jul 4, 12:45pm


Congrats on getting JV to give details on how his brain works. You may be the only writer that could ever do that. He has to do what he thinks he has to do to stay effective.

2017 was the last season we will likely see JV be the guy they pay \$25 mill a year for him to be. Age is catching up, but he's not giving up. What I feel is really good this season is his D. It used to be glaringly bad, he would not get in front of a hot grounder for anything. Now he stands his ground and does. His footwork around the bag is also better. His DWAR is -.4, which is normal for the peer group, but the eye test tells me he really has put in the work to take it up a notch.

 4 

**Christopher B.** Jul 5, 3:32am

The D was really good in 2017-18 as well. Over those 2 years he was first among first baseman in both DRS and UZR and third in DWAR. A big improvement over the previous few years

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**Jeffrey T.** Jul 4, 12:55pm

Really interesting about why he doesn't swing at close pitches!!!

Wonder if others in the majors feel the same way. Hard to get mad about a k3yerout looking just off the edge, then.

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**Ronald A.** Jul 4, 1:08pm

Nice job of going deep Trent. We don't get this perspective on the daily sports page which is great. So that leads me to ask since you cover the reds so we'll is it possible to interview the opposing players every once in a while to get their perspective on things. Like playing the reds and their take on the game against our pitcher and hitters. Thanks again for the great coverage which is why I renewed my subscription. Best to you

 8 



**Trent R.** STAFF Jul 4, 1:40pm

@Ronald A. thing is, that's tricky. As Paul Dehner Jr. noted in a discussion we had last night, a credential doesn't equal access. It's having a relationship with the players, developed over more than a decade in Votto's case, that allows the conversations to flow. I like to go over to the other side some, but those guys don't know me. They're more guarded around strangers, especially when asking them about the opposition. Joey, who I've covered since the 2006 Futures Game in Pittsburgh (13 years ago Tuesday), still won't say anything about other players as to not tip his process. I like to try to get more from the other side sometimes, but it's hard to have that relationship, even in clubhouses where there's someone who will vouch for me. One of the beauties of this here place is we have those people with relationships in every clubhouse.

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**Ronald A.** Jul 4, 6:43pm

Ahh. Thanks for the insights

 3 



**Charles M.** Jul 4, 1:22pm

I recall seeing that practice swing early in the regular season and thought he looked so uncomfortable and out of synch. I was wrong. Nice read.

 2 

**Stephen B.** Jul 4, 1:48pm

Thank you Trent. Just wish Marty and Thom has more respect for Votto. I was looking at the stats last night and he's 14th in all time OBP, ahead of Trout. The guys ahead of him are a who's who of the HOF.

 13 

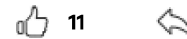
**Stephen B.** Jul 4, 1:49pm

Had, not has. Sorry.



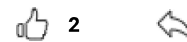
**Jerry M.** Jul 4, 2:31pm

@Stephen B. I agree. I think a lot of Marty's disdain for Joey's walking is a belief that he is a power hitter and I think he's always been more of a Pete Rose kind of hitter who sometimes hits home runs, but mostly gets on base. I guess I'm old school, but getting on base and stealing bases are an easier way to win than guessing where the pitch will be and then worrying about launch angles and swinging for the fences every time. I know Tom loves to point out how many bloop hits Joey has had to left this year and I'll bet any amount of money Pete is thinking thatta way Joey, make contact and the hits will come.



**Stephen B.** Jul 4, 7:31pm

@Jerry M. Amen brother.



**Joe K.** Jul 5, 8:58am

@Stephen B. The day Marty stops intoning about things he doesn't understand will come very soon. Amen to that.



**Amos P.** Jul 4, 1:49pm

Really neat read Trent. I just thought he did it because he was overly concerned with getting to hard inside pitches. I remember seeing him start doing it within the last 2-3 years, and I don't have numbers to support it but I suspect since then he's been pulling the ball more because I don't recall teams shifting to his pull side like they do now earlier in his career. It would be interesting to track when he started doing that practice swing and compare his spray charts from before and after.







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**Melanie H.** Jul 4, 1:55pm

Thanks Trent. I have wondered for the longest time why Votto's practice swing was so odd and short. The announcers have never commented on it. I have also noticed that Ryan Braun of the Brewers does something very similar with his swing.



2



**Wylie S.** Jul 5, 1:08am

@Melanie H. Matt Carpenter of the Cardinals does a choke-up-the bat variation of the same practice swing. Especially between pitches.



1



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**Michael D.** Jul 4, 1:55pm

Great story and fun to hear Joey's thinking. Is Father time working against Joey's HoF shot? Batting second will surely diminish the stats that tend to get highlighted. If he plays out his contract batting near .300, maybe that gets him close to 2,500 hits. Maybe had he won that second MVP a couple years ago (that he deserved)? Thoughts?



**Bill E.** Jul 4, 5:54pm

I think ownership dragging out the rebuild cost Joey some valuable years that would have made his HoF shot a sure thing. Hard to get over that as a fan. Wonder how he sees it.



2



**Scott J.** Jul 4, 6:46pm

Nope, he's a sure-fire Hall of Famer. Probably first ballot.



3



**Mike B.** Jul 5, 3:05am

Not first ballot, but absolutely will be in the HOF.



**Joe F.** Jul 4, 2:12pm

Your Q&As with Joey and Tucker are absolutely fascinating to learn of their process. I've been a huge baseball fan my entire life, watched 1000s of games, I'm constantly trying to digest and understand latest stats and analysis, but none of that compares to the insight gained from peering into their brains. Excellent work as usual Trent!



**Trent R.** STAFF Jul 5, 12:41am

@Joe F. thanks. I really enjoy my discussions with them



**Suzanne B.** Jul 4, 2:58pm

As if on cue, you ask the questions that are in our heads. And just like Joey, he goes above and beyond what we were expecting to hear. Thanks for asking what many of us are wondering.



**Frank K.** Jul 4, 3:07pm

That was a fun one, Trent. I've always wondered what's up with that swing. I knew that, it being Votto, there had to be a damn good reason.



**John N.** Jul 4, 3:41pm

Vitro needs his own book/website/tv show. Such a treasure of humor and information. Well written sir.



**Wylie S.** Jul 5, 1:13am

@John N. Votto did an interview during Spring training 2018 on the MLB Network's 30 teams in 30 days. It was the best interview regarding hitting I have ever heard. It was outstanding. I never tire of listening to JV speak. And I am a Cardinals fan!



**Chris J.** Jul 4, 3:45pm

C.Trent, you nailed the Votto article.....Great work!!!



**Daniel B.** Jul 4, 5:16pm

Man, C Trent. This is gold. Thanks so much for the work you put into the relationships with a player like Votto that allows us to glean a small bit of his mentality and approach. Great stuff- will keep coming back for more.



**Lowell T.** Jul 4, 5:29pm

Fantastic article, and yet another example of my subscription being worth every penny.

Thank you.



**Eric W.** Jul 4, 6:01pm

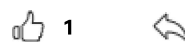
"I think you can tell I am."



**Chris S.** Jul 4, 6:26pm

Just renewed my subscription and this is what I was welcomed with. What a great interview and story!

Wonderful work!



---

**Bruce S.** Jul 4, 6:37pm

Holding the bat that way almost looks like a holding a hockey stick.



---

**Wesley M.** Jul 4, 6:49pm

Really like the q&a format in articles. This was really interesting and I didn't even know about his practice swing.



---

**Brady C.** Jul 4, 7:24pm

He's a canuck, he's taking a slapshot!



---

**Bruce L.** Jul 4, 7:36pm

Fantastic stuff. I don't know that there's another player, living or dead, who I'd rather have talk (or write!) at length on hitting. Votto's has the perfect combination of new statistical analysis and hard-earned experience, plus a hell of a lot of sass.



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**Doug S.** Jul 5, 7:27pm

@Bruce L. Ted Williams' "The Science of Hitting" is still a solid read ... though I imagine it'd be more entertaining in Ted's voice, without all the expletives removed.



---

**Ron G.** Jul 4, 7:43pm

Thanks Trent!!! That is one key question that I've wanted to ask Joey if I ever got the chance. You nailed it!



---

**Rich C.** Jul 4, 8:26pm

Great article to read. Thank you for asking and writing on the inner dynamics of a hitter.



---

**Ross D.** Jul 4, 9:54pm

Unbelievable article. Just, wow.



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**Joe B.** Jul 4, 10:05pm

Great article. People kill me when they still talk about Votto changing or hitting for more power. He's 35, he is who he is. If he didn't change at 28 he's not going to decide to hit for more power or swing at more balls outside the zone at 35. Keep him at 2, have someone behind him who can knock him and and enjoy.



---

**Mark J.** Jul 5, 12:28am

Guessing Joey is not a golfer (would screw up his swing) but most of us who play have abbreviated practice swings while killing time on the tee. It allows you to have a snapshot of your swing at various points. It's the quest for the perfect swing.



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**Evan D.** Jul 5, 1:16am

Nice interview.



**Michael R.** Jul 5, 5:13am

Joey Votto is the best!



---

**Justin P.** Jul 5, 8:31am

“You feel like you’re better now?”

“I think you can tell I am.”

I. Love. Joey. Votto.



---

**Benjamin B.** Jul 5, 10:43am

Thanks Trent. The question has finally been answered!



---

**David T.** Jul 5, 11:53am

Thank you, Trent and Joey. I really enjoyed the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the preparation that goes into playing such a difficult sport.



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**Adam S.** Jul 5, 12:25pm

Legend



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**Vince A.** Jul 5, 12:27pm

i love the catcher at the .20 second mark looking back at the ump as if to say, what the heck is that



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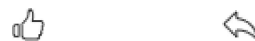
**Thomas D.** Jul 5, 12:36pm

Really love the Q&A Articles with Votto. He has been one of my favorite players in baseball, and I am glad to see that he is still a Red. Keep it up Trent. Can't wait for the next time that you only have one more question to ask him.



**Trent R.** STAFF Jul 5, 4:27pm

@Thomas D. he's rarely boring, that's for sure



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**Timothy Q.** Jul 5, 2:45pm

Too damn funny. I keep thinking, "I can't be the only person who's wondering wassup with dat?! Why doesn't someone just freakin' ask him?!" So thanks very much for asking.



---

**Christopher F.** Jul 5, 3:17pm

The important question is, what does Marty think about this?



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**Nicholas A.** Jul 5, 4:16pm

Thanks, Trent. I've been wondering about that practice swing for weeks now. It looks like he's practicing a swinging bunt.



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**Eric K.** Jul 5, 6:09pm

Great article. I never get enough of Joey Votto. It's interesting he never mentioned it but it looks, to me,

his 'swing' is a reminder to keep his hands inside the ball.



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**Richard S.** Jul 6, 3:55pm

Good article about a great player. The thing that I suspect about Joey Votto is he will adjust as he ages. He's a really smart guy and a Baseball genius. I think the beginning of this year was part of that adjustment process and now he's tearing it up. I wouldn't put it past him to do well into his 40s, I mean Stan Musial did it why shouldn't he?



---

**Jason C.** Jul 6, 5:26pm

I like Votto. He is one of the best of this era . But I sometimes wish he would hit that 3 run homer! It seems like teams are willing to let him have first base in a four pitch ab. No real harm done!



---

**Kasey R.** Jul 6, 10:10pm

Joey Votto confuses me. He is so willing to work the count for a walk and lauds the benefits of on-base percentage. However, I've read in an article about him refusing to beat the shift. He's on the record as saying that him practicing going the other way for singles is less valuable than the lesser chance of more damaging extra base hits to the pull side. For a great like Joey Votto with the best bat control, perhaps of all time, he could easily add a piece of his game to just serving the ball to the third base hole in the shift and getting singles at a ridiculous rate. Then, defenses would be forced to adjust the shift and allow Votto to pull the ball when he wants to once more.



1



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**Chris P.** Jul 7, 1:26am

Great player, so easy for me to root for him.



---

**Lee AndSamantha O.** Jul 8, 5:46pm

Great insight. I have been wondering about that swing in his ab. Creature of good habits is what he



...might have been mentioning about that swing in the last sentence of good habits is what he strides for in every ab.



---

**DAN C.** Jul 9, 4:44am

Votto is one of those "good for the game players" who no doubt, has had an admirable career.

(You knew the "but" was coming:) -- BUT... just using the last 10 WS as examples -- of the 20 teams represented they averaged a ranking of 7.5 (rounded) under OBP out of 30 over the regular season. Not sure that fits his definition of TOP OBP teams which I would at least have narrowed down to TOP 3-5.

Now just using the 10 CHAMPIONS that put the average TM OBP at 6.5 -- still not tops IMO. Runner Ups were at 8.5. My point being OBP is not nearly as impacting as it is perceived to be. I will also opine it is over-weighted in WAR formulas where yes, there are some fairly easy head scratching player examples to pull from that point to same.

Sure...it is a good thing and one thing to get 'em on but the game is won by "getting 'em in" or can we call it once they are On Base .... OHBP (On Home Base Percentage:) thereafter.

And walks (BB) what Votto "prince of process" is most known for ofc -- came in at 12.1 & 12.3 for WS Winners and runner ups. A mere 3 spots above middle ground nowhere near top.

Go ahead- pull out the usual "small sample" cries but last 10 years (covers 10 of Votto's 11 yrs in MLB to that point) and 20 WS teams so ... how about considering it is his commentary I am referencing -- recency has relevancy.

Then there is this -- for WS Winners on average: HITS @ 6th spot and even BA at 5.5 are better (w)indicators of well ...what WINS WS Championships over the last decade than OBP.

Hmmm... I didn't think to pull it up but seems as likely teams with lower LOB stats are winners more than losers (see above OHBP:)



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**Jason B.** Jul 9, 1:29pm

I can't wait to read the book you will write on Votto after he retires. Check that, let's enjoy him as long as we can before you write the book, so I'm willing to wait. Great take on a great hitter. No pressure, but I'm looking for something in the Ted Williams category as far a hitter's guide.



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# 'Laud the greats': Joey Votto weighs in on The Athletic's Baseball 100



By C. Trent Rosecrans (/author/c-trent-rosecrans/) Apr 14, 2020

20

As a minor-leaguer, Joey Votto, like his peers, had time. Lots of it.

In addition to playing baseball, Votto spent much of that time on buses, in apartments, in clubhouses, learning more about the history of his sport. Votto said Monday as a guest on a joint production of *The Athletic's* PosCast and WARP in Cincinnati podcasts, he'd play baseball and then go home and read. He'd read about everyone – Joe DiMaggio (<https://theathletic.com/1546447/2020/01/31/the-baseball-100-no-56-joe-dimaggio/>), Ted Williams (<https://theathletic.com/1714075/2020/04/01/the-baseball-100-no-6-ted-williams/>), Ty Cobb (<https://theathletic.com/1702861/2020/03/27/the-baseball-100-no-8-ty-cobb/>), Babe Ruth (<https://theathletic.com/1735732/2020/04/10/the-baseball-100-no-2-babe-ruth/>), Willie Mays ([\[https://theathletic.com/1744644/2020/04/14/laud-the-greats-joey-votto-weighs-in-on-the-athletics-baseball-100/?article\\\_source=search&search\\\_quer...\]\(https://theathletic.com/1744644/2020/04/14/laud-the-greats-joey-votto-weighs-in-on-the-athletics-baseball-100/?article\_source=search&search\_quer...\) 1/13](https://theathletic.com/1740980/2020/04/13/the-baseball-100-</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

no-1-willie-mays/), Roberto Clemente (<https://theathletic.com/1597307/2020/02/16/the-baseball-100-no-40-roberto-clemente/>). He'd also watch live, as Barry Bonds (<https://theathletic.com/1730039/2020/04/08/the-baseball-100-no-3-barry-bonds/>) and Manny Ramirez dominated the game.

“Knowing about these all-time greats, for me, was more about, ‘OK, where do I fit in? I think I’m going to be a great player,’” Votto recalled. “What level do I need to get to and what kind of bar did these all-time greats set? That was my perspective.”

WARP in Cincinnati

(<https://theathletic.com/podcast/34-warp-in-cincinnati/>)

## Debating The Baseball 10...

Clip - Episode 52

(<https://theathletic.com/podcast/34-warp-in-cincinnati/?episode=52>)

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1:34:04

That curiosity about the history of the sport hasn't died down as Votto has found himself a part of it. He, like many others, read much of Joe Posnanski's Baseball 100 on *The Athletic* (<https://theathletic.com/tag/the-baseball-100/>) this offseason. Votto, who was not on the list, reached out to *The Athletic* to, as he put it, “talk ball.”

“I view this as an opportunity to laud the greats,” Votto said to Posnanski. “And more importantly what you gave to me, kind of a separate subject, but similar, you taught me about some players that I never knew about before. I didn't know that Oscar Charleston (<https://theathletic.com/1719991/2020/04/03/the-baseball-100-no-5-oscar-charleston/>) was possibly the greatest player of all time.”

Posnanski's list concluded Monday with Willie Mays at No. 1.

(<https://theathletic.com/1740980/2020/04/13/the-baseball-100-no-1-willie-mays/>)

Votto joked he had Ruth in the top spot because of an interaction he once had with Mays. Votto said he was called into manager Dusty Baker's office in his rookie year of 2008.

“I get tapped on the shoulder, ‘Dusty wants to see you’ and I go into his office and Willie Mays is there,” Votto recalled.

“Dusty knows everybody – lord have mercy, does he know everybody. I mean, you could show up one day and Mick Jagger is sitting on the couch eating local cuisine, but ... I walk in, and he says, ‘Joey, I want you to meet Willie Mays ...’ I’m like, ‘Yeah, I know who this man is.’”

As Votto introduced himself, said how nice it was to meet Mays and reached out for a handshake, Baker said to Mays, “This guy’s going to win a batting title.”

“I had big plans. I had lofty goals in my head, in my head, I scoffed at that, ‘I’m going to do a lot better than that,’ but I didn’t say a word. I smiled and put my hand out and I shook his hand,” Votto said.

Mays had huge hands, Votto said, and even in his late 70s, still had a firm handshake.

“He goes, as I’m shaking his hands – and I’ve got large hands, I’m 6-foot-2-and-a-half, 6-3, 225-pounds, you shake my hand, I’m a larger man – but he shakes my hand and he goes, I laugh thinking about it, he goes, ‘What’s this piddly little thing?’ as he shakes my hand. I’m completely belittled, I feel small at the time. ‘What’s this piddly little thing?’ Dusty goes, ‘No, no, Willie, he’s going to be a good hitter.’ And he goes, ‘I don’t know how good of a hitter he’s going to be with them little hands.’ I remember thinking to myself, ‘I’m going to stick it to you.’ But you can’t! Sometimes you lose in life. Frankly, that was one of those moments where I had to go look up his numbers and think to myself and then look up his numbers and I’m obviously never going to come close to Willie Mays. ... That’s my Willie Mays story and exactly why Babe Ruth is the greatest player of all time.”

The interview, though, started with a simple question: Do Votto’s friends call him Joe or Joey or Joseph?

“I’m Joseph and my dad was Joe and everyone calls me Joey. I will say whenever I go out if I make a reservation or anything along those lines, it’s Joseph.”

Posnanski, a Joseph himself, said he was Joey until his dreams of becoming a ballplayer died. Joey, he felt, was his ballplayer name. When that avenue closed, he became Joe.

“When you found out you had to become an adult, you chose Joe, but I still live a child’s life is what you’re saying,” Votto joked.



PosCast co-host Michael Schur, who has had to come up with hundreds of names in his role as a TV show creator, writer, producer and director noted, “Joey Votto has a sort of poetic or literary feeling to it as a name and Joseph Votto sounds like an accountant.”

We talked “ball” for more than an hour-and-a-half. Listen for yourself, because there is so much joy and laughter in many of these stories and discussions.

Some of the other highlights and snippets include:

- Votto on Mike Trout’s (<https://theathletic.com/1638463/2020/02/29/the-baseball-100-no-27-mike-trout/>) place in history: “This start is just so special, if he decided to retire, I think we have a conversation that is he the greatest player of all time?”
- Of course, there’s also Ted Williams, a player whom Votto has studied more than any other: “I think he mattered to me most because he inspired hope. We were both not very muscular and probably middle-of-the-road in athleticism and left-handed hitters, right-handed throwers. So, we had some things in common, non-premium position types, not base stealers. Efficiency, I think, is part of my personality. If I’m going to try to do something well, I want to do it efficiently and I think he screamed that. So, I felt like he was a kindred spirit in some way. He gave me hope to be myself and be my best self but do it in a way that didn’t really follow the demands imposed upon me by others. When you’re a minor-league player, 18, 20, everyone’s telling you what to do, what to change, who to be. They’re telling you that in high school, they’re telling you that in college, they’re even telling you that nowadays – good lord, at the major-league level – but ultimately he gave me that, ‘I’m going to be myself, I’m going to be my best self.’ This is the type of player I’m going to emulate because this feeds into my style. I devoured books on him. I’m probably more, I don’t want to say introverted, per se, but I like keeping to myself, I like keeping to the task and just going home and doing that. I’m not as ... I guess the word would be bombastic or loud. I’m probably not like that personality-wise, but almost everything related to work. I felt like I could relate to him. Now, never have I come close to performing at his level, but with that being said, it’s always fun, you’re never going to catch the rabbit, but it’s a fun chase, right?”
- Votto on his first impression of Giancarlo Stanton: “We were playing Miami in Cincinnati and he gets to first base and I’m at first and I played well for a few years and I think I already had a Most Valuable Player under my belt. There’s something about the hierarchy of our sport where veterans have this, I guess, intimidation factor out of experience and achievement. So

he gets to first base on a walk and he's this big guy. Most rookies, when they get to first base and I say hello, especially as I get older, they have a tendency to curb what they're going to say or curb their personality, and I say, 'Man, you're a big dude.' He looks at me and I go, 'How?' And he goes, 'Shake Weight, bro. Shake Weight.' He's got two weeks into the major leagues and right then and there I know he's a superstar."

*(Photo of Joey Votto and Mike Trout: Alex Trautwig / MLB via Getty Images)*

### What did you think of this story?



MEH




SOLID



AWESOME


**C. Trent Rosecrans** ([/author/c-trent-rosecrans/](#)) is a senior writer for The Athletic covering the Cincinnati Reds. He previously covered the Reds for the Cincinnati Enquirer and the Cincinnati Post and has also covered Major League Baseball for CBSSports.com. Follow C. Trent on Twitter [@ctrent](#) (<https://twitter.com/ctrent>).

 20 COMMENTS

Add a comment...

**Chris S.** Apr 14, 11:20am

Votto's gonna take someone's job either on the "Reds Radio Network" or on the TV. Just has to.

 16 

**Stephen B.** Apr 14, 4:29pm

**@Chris S.** Agree. Please have him take Thom's job.



**Glenn T.** Apr 14, 7:07pm

**@Chris S.** I don't think so. The Reds seem to only hire morons to be commentators.



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**Brett S.** Apr 14, 11:20am

Fantastic. Going to listen to the podcast at the first moment possible.



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**Noodles H.** Apr 14, 11:21am

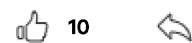
Could listen(or read...) to Joey for hours, always an interesting take. Thanks Trent, keep it flowing, we need it!



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**Tim B.** Apr 14, 11:33am

Does it get any better than Joseph Daniel Votto? I'm glad we get to enjoy him for (hopefully) his entire career in Cincinnati.



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**John N.** Apr 14, 12:06pm

Joey Votto continues to be a national treasure.



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**Mitchell M.** Apr 14, 1:26pm

An INTERNATIONAL treasure.



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**Michael C.** Apr 14, 1:45pm

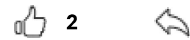
Joey is a fantastic character and Reds fans are so fortunate to have him. Thank you for another fun story.



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**Samantha G.** Apr 14, 2:31pm

I appreciate the recap!



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**William R.** Apr 14, 3:11pm

Great story. One thing that struck me as funny about the story is that Votto is somebody I associate with immaculate attention to detail, and the picture attached to the story shows Votto has missed a belt loop in his All-Star uniform.



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**Larry C.** Apr 15, 2:40pm

Maybe that's on purpose, as a superstition.



---

**Risto N.** Apr 16, 5:40am

@William R. From what I've seen of Votto's sense of humor he may of done this on purpose to see if anyone would pick up on it. Good catch William.



---

**Ken F.** Apr 15, 2:11am

Solid gold.



**Rich H.** Apr 15, 6:42am

"THEY WERE PLATOONING HIM, GUYS"

"I bet Verlander is slamming doors and punching pillows"

"I'm not kid biased, by the way"

So. GOOD.

Thanks for helping make this happen Trent, everyone was fantastic.



**Rich H.** Apr 15, 6:53am

Also, I'd be remiss to leave out "No batting title." from the inimitable Trent Rosecrans. That was perfect.



**Shirley G M.** Apr 15, 3:27pm

You help us connect with those you interview in a special way. Great read!



**Frank R.** Apr 16, 5:15am

Votto is so great to listen too and what a brilliant episode, thanks to all that made it happen!



**Risto N.** Apr 16, 5:32am

Trent, thanks for the insight on Votto. I grew up on Pinson,Robinson,Rose, Nuxall,O'Toole And those are just some of the Reds. Joey Votto has made my senior years as a fan so much more interesting. He would have been a great member as one of the "turds"



**Staci H.** Apr 21, 7:40pm

I would pay to watch a weekly "Storytime With Joseph Votto" right about now.



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