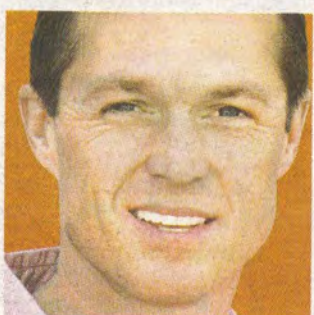




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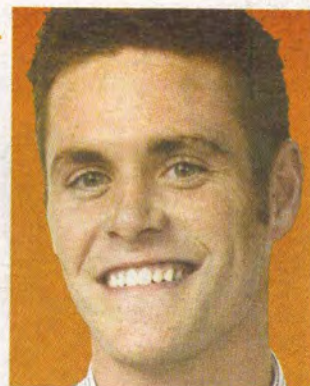
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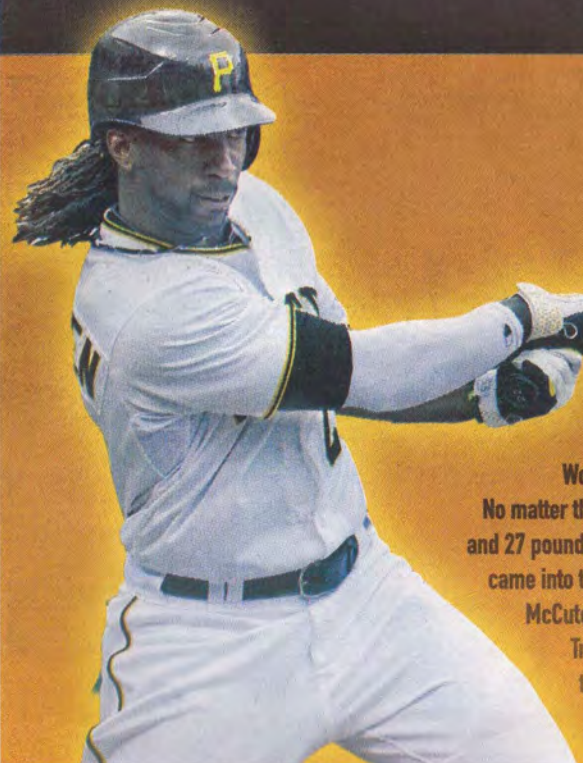
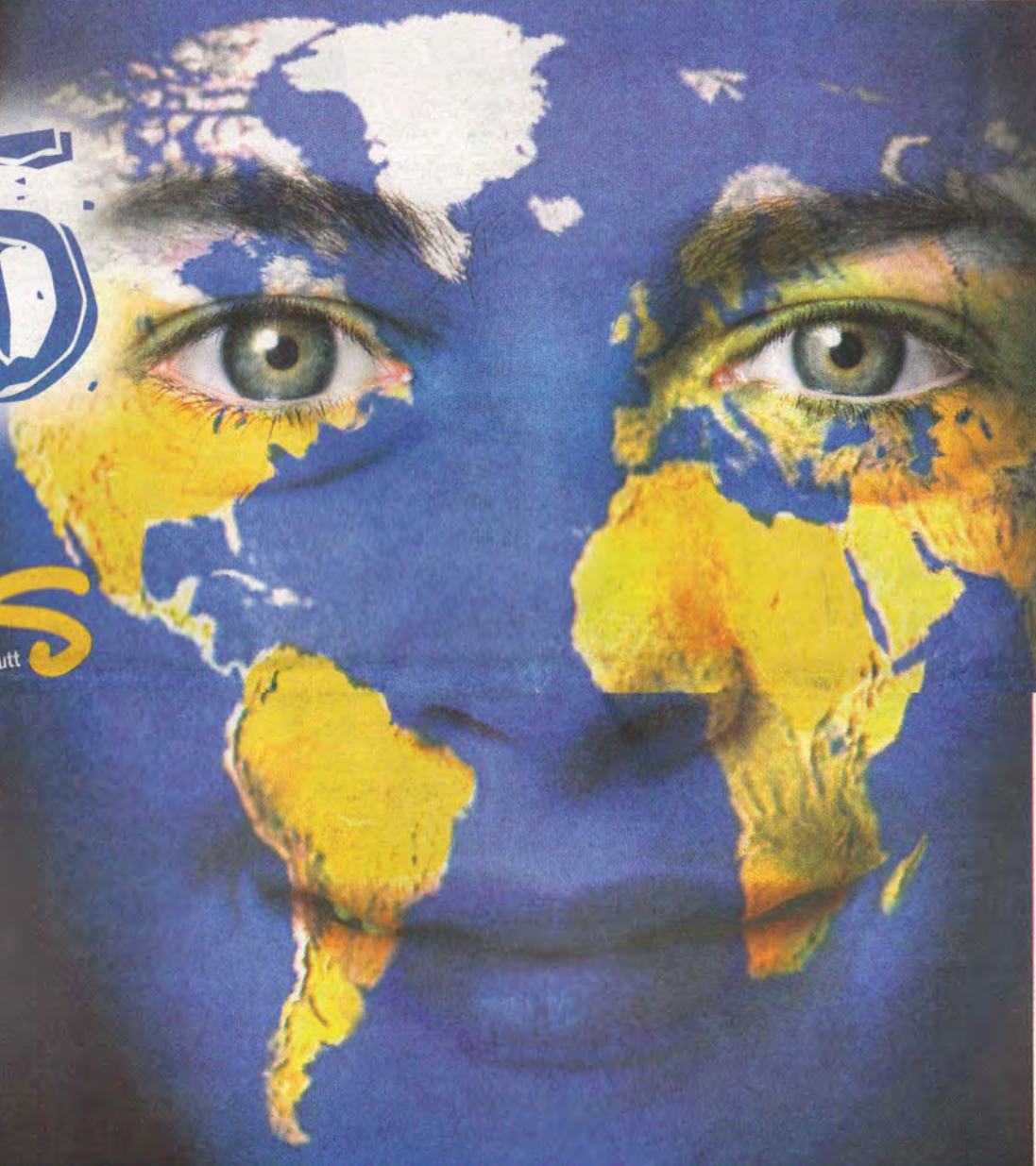
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A WORLD of Possibilities

by Sarah Chestnutt

As a child, Benny Prasad's future seemed terribly bleak. "I was the firstborn in my family in Bangalore, India," he recalls. "I was expected to become like my father, who is an aerospace scientist."

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PIRATE FINDS HIS POWER IN PRAYER

 BY CRYSTAL KUPPER

When MLB centre fielder Andrew McCutchen got slammed with a 101-mph fastball on Aug. 3, he didn't wince, cry out, or even rub his throbbing arm. The Pittsburgh Pirate simply tore off his shin guard, trotted to first base and shot a frown toward Aroldis Chapman, the Cincinnati Reds pitcher who beamed him.

World, take note: you can't knock Andrew McCutchen down. No matter that his 5-10, 185-pound frame is three inches shorter and 27 pounds lighter than his average teammate. Or that he came into this world to unmarried 17-year-old students. Or that McCutchen's team hasn't made the playoffs in 20 years.

Try telling those facts to the two-time All-Star and heavy favourite for this year's National League MVP. With headlines announcing, "Why

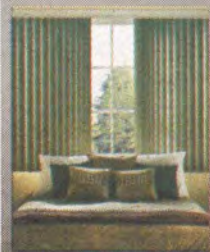
Andrew McCutchen is the Best Player in Baseball" and "McCutchen enjoying Barry Bonds-like season, and Pirates are the beneficiaries," no one is listening. "I've seen guys have great years, but what [McCutchen has] done thus far, I've never seen anything like it," teammate Casey McGehee told the *NY Times*. "He's getting infield hits, he's driving the ball out of the ballpark, he's getting clutch hits, he's walking when he's supposed to walk. It seems like he's got a new trick every night, and it's been incredible to watch."



Thankfully, the Pirates will be watching for a while; in March, "Cutch" signed a six-year, \$51.5 million contract with a 2018 club option worth \$14.75 million.

"I came up with the Pirates organization. They signed me to my first contract out of high school," the 25-year-old told *Living Light News*. "It's a good place to play. I have the opportunity to play in a great ballpark and a nice city, so I never really thought about going anywhere else." And win-starved Pirates rejoice.

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Raised in Fort Meade, Fla., McCutchen crushed his way to the top of Polk County hitters as an eighth-grader playing on a high school team. When he batted an astonishing .709 his senior year, Pittsburgh scouts took notice, drafting the youngster 11th overall in 2005 after graduation.

McCutchen made his major league debut in June 2009, going 2-4 with a steal and three runs while leading his team to an 11-6 win over the New York Mets. It would be a typical showing for the so-called five-tool talent (batting average, power, base running skills and speed, throwing abilities, and fielding aptitudes).

That surefire propensity to slug, run, or steal his way home snagged him the 2009 Pirates' MVP and Baseball America's "Rookie of the Year" awards. Since then, McCutchen has never dipped below a .364 on-base percentage, twice winning both the National League's "Player of the Week" and "Player of the Month" awards while playing in the 2011 and 2012 All-Star games.

Yet offense isn't the righty's only specialty; Topps named him their 2009 Rookie All Star Outfielder. Such all-around genius has many baseball insiders, including broadcaster Bob Walk, tossing McCutchen's name around with former Pirate Barry Bonds'.

"McCutchen is a way better hitter in his first couple of years than Barry was," Walk told the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. As a former Bonds teammate, he should know.

So has that lofty comparison expanded McCutchen's dreadlocked head? Hardly. Instead, he calls the associations

"nice" and "a little humbling."

"I can't be anyone else but myself. I just have to focus on my game and do what I do," he says. "I can't let all that talk about being like other players affect the way I go about playing my game. When my career is over I'll let my numbers speak for themselves, and maybe then I can be compared to some of the great players."

Such a self-effacing attitude stems from Lorenzo and Petrina McCutchen's constant refrain: your skills come from God, not you. As he told reporters shortly after signing his first contract, "The Lord God blessed me with all of these talents and all of these abilities. He can also easily take them away."

Lorenzo and Petrina married when Andrew was 5. As youth pastors, they faithfully took Andrew and his younger sister Lauren to church and encouraged them to read the Bible for themselves. Because of that, McCutchen asked Jesus Christ into his life at age 12.

It's a relationship that still affects McCutchen's life today — even his baseball career.

"It's all about being positive. Having a positive approach and outlook is important, especially during the course of a long baseball season where there are going to be many ups and downs," he says. "Being positive in your beliefs of Christ and positive in the workplace go hand in hand. If I can

be in a positive place, then it's all good."

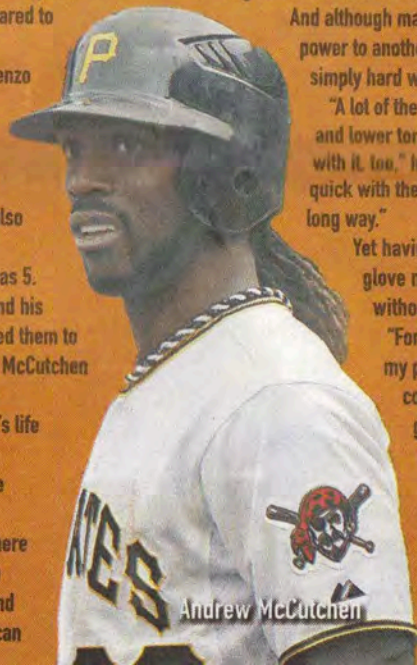
Or great — McCutchen currently leads the majors with a .356 batting average and tops the National League with 85 runs. He's also fourth for hits behind Derek Jeter, Melky Cabrera, and Miguel Cabrera and makes the top 30 for stolen bases.

And although many Pirates fans attribute his power to another world, McCutchen says it's simply hard work.

"A lot of the power comes from my legs and lower torso. Conditioning has a lot to do with it, too," he says. "Strong legs and being quick with the bat enable me to hit the ball a long way."

Yet having the quickest hands and glove mean nothing to McCutchen without Jesus.

"For me, without His power through my parents and the church, my life could have crumbled. But by God's grace, I'm now standing strong in His power," he told *Sharing the Victory*. "And hopefully, with His blessing, I will leave a legacy as more than just a professional baseball player. I'll leave a legacy as a man of God."



Andrew McCutchen