

Choosing a baseball bat

by [Brian Doyle](#) in the [August 24, 2010](#) issue

The second son, having made the school baseball team,
Informs his startled father that they are underequipped
In the matter of bats—sticks, hammers, the implements
Of destruction, the tools of the trade, the thunder lumber,
As the salesman says cheerfully. There is a dense forest
Of bats against the wall, gleaming graphite and brilliant
Maple, aluminum in every conceivable shade and sheen,
And the father gets absorbed in the names, the Torpedos
And Thunderclubs, Phantoms and Cyclones, the Patriots
And Nitros, Magnums and Maxxums, Rayzrs and Ultras,
And, rivetingly, the Freak, which comes in thirteen sizes,
Which makes you wonder. The father, a terrible baseball
Player as a boy, admires but does not say anything about
The extraordinary lean loveliness of the ash bats hanging
Lonely at the far end. The boy chooses a bright red metal
Hammer, takes a few swings, waggles it a bit, hoists it up
On his shoulder, says *this'll do*, and the sacramental hour
Passes, as all holy moments must. But they do happen, as
Fast and terrifying as a baseball fired right at your noggin.
The batter's job, the second son says, is to identify a pitch
As soon as it leaves a pitcher's hand. Seeing is everything,
He says, and for once we are in complete and utter accord