



CAPITOL CITY SPEAKERS BUREAU

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Johnny Bench

Travels from: Florida/California

Fee Range: \$20,000 - \$40,000

Growing up in the small town of Binger, Oklahoma, Johnny Bench's childhood dream was to become a Major League baseball player. Taking his father's advice, Johnny became a catcher and was selected in the 1965 amateur draft by the Cincinnati Reds. After playing two seasons in the minor leagues, Bench made Cincinnati's Major League roster for the 1968 season and began his career with a bang, earning Rookie-of-the-Year honors. This marked the beginning of one of the most successful careers in baseball history.

A 14-time All-Star, Bench was a solid power hitter, belting out 389 career home runs for the Big Red Machine during his 17-year career. His remarkable defensive skills won him 10 Gold Gloves and the honor of being called "the greatest catcher

in baseball history" by many. He was named the National League MVP in 1970 and in 1972 and helped the Reds earn National League Championship Series titles in both of those years. Johnny appeared in 22 National League Championship Series games and 23 World Series games, earning the honor of World Series MVP in 1976 when the Reds swept the New York Yankees.

Johnny twice led the league in home runs (1970 and 1972) and three times in RBI (1970, 1972, and 1974). In 1980, he set an endurance record by catching 100 or more games for 13 consecutive seasons. He has been the recipient of many notable honors including the 1975 Lou Gehrig Memorial Award, the 1976 Babe Ruth Award and the 1981 Hutch Award, which is given to a player who best exemplifies the fighting spirit and competitive desire to win. The Reds retired Bench's uniform number (5) in 1984 and admitted him into the Reds Hall of Fame in 1986. Earning 431 votes on 447 ballots, Johnny was inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1989. He was also selected to the All-Century Team in 1999.

Bench pioneered the one-handed style of catching, keeping his right hand behind his back to protect it from foul tips and using a hinged mitt to snare the ball. This technique is now used by virtually all Major League catchers. Johnny was also the first backstop to wear a protective helmet during the game. In 2000, the **Johnny Bench Award** was established in his honor and is presented annually during the College World Series to the best college catcher, as determined by a panel of selected sportscasters, sportswriters, Division I Head Coaches and professional scouts.

Over the years, Johnny has maintained a sense of balance by using his celebrity status to aid such worthy causes as the Heart Association, the American Cancer Society, the Kidney Foundation, Franciscan Sisters of Poor Health System, the American Lung Association and the "Catch the Cure" program of the Children's Hospital of Cincinnati. He also supports the Cincinnati Symphony and the Museum of Science and Industry in addition to the Johnny Bench Scholarship Fund, which provides funds for students to attend college in the Cincinnati area.



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Johnny Bench continued

Johnny has logged thousands of hours making personal appearances on ESPN and Fox Sports in addition to participating in events such as touring with Bob Hope's Christmas Shows and visiting troops in the Far East during Desert Storm. He has sung with the Cincinnati Pops and hosted the Emmy-Award-winning instructional show, "The Baseball Bunch." A skilled author, Bench has written several books about baseball, including *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Baseball*.

Johnny's national broadcasting background includes nine years with CBS Radio, broadcasting the National Game of the Week, the All-Star Game, the League Championship Series and the World Series as well as play-by-play on Reds' television. His corporate involvement is evident in long-term spokesman relationships, both present and past, with the Cincinnati-based Fifth Third Bank and national retailer, S&K Menswear.

Most Requested Programs...

- The Vowels of Success