

# 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