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Coaching

Formulating Your Coaching Philosophy

The statement ***“Success is getting a group of kids to play together as a team, play hard, and reach their ultimate potential while having fun”*** is a great foundation for your coaching philosophy. While all your players should enjoy their experience as part of the team, everyone on the team is expected to put the best interest of the team first, before any thought is given to individual accomplishments. No individual, coach or player, is more important than the team.

Enthusiasm, encouragement and personal attention from you, the coach, is a key to every player having a positive experience. Much of this comes from players developing a sense of contribution to the team. Find a role for all your players and let them know they are doing a good job. You may have to be creative, but it's important to find that spot for each player. Finally, stress improvement and development. Cheer the areas where you see improvement in individuals and the team as a group. Point out with a positive approach where additional improvement is possible. Effort, enthusiasm, improvement and fun lead to a successful team. Never miss a chance to encourage, challenge and have fun.

Team pride should be another cornerstone of your baseball program. Success builds pride, but so does hard work and commitment to individual and team goals. You should instill in every player the belief that hard work pays off, and the harder players work, the more they will achieve. While being successful is a goal for everyone, at the same time each player should focus on effort - not outcome. A team can always control their effort but seldom the outcome of a game.

Teaching and repetition are two tools you can use to prepare players to be the best they can be. Start with fundamentals, work on techniques and individual skills and teach team defense in depth. Take every opportunity to teach and demonstrate teamwork, sportsmanship and respect for everyone, starting with the coaches. Believing that *“Perfect practice makes perfect”*, players should properly practice the skills being taught on a repetitive basis, so that these skills become as natural as walking and talking.

Ask your players to set goals for themselves and the team. Their goals should be challenging enough to require them to extend beyond their present skill level. Every player should have the opportunity to achieve success and/or failure in game situations. When they succeed, give them positive feedback in terms of recognition and approval. When they do not succeed, give them feedback in terms of advice or instruction.

Success and individual growth have much in common. Successful coaches are often remembered by former players more for their lessons of life than for winning or losing. Good

coaches know that the key to success is motivating their players to do their best and improve beyond apparent limitations, motivated by team goals. The best coaches know that spirit, the will to win and to excel are important things that are more important than the game itself. A good saying to remember..... *You never exceed your own expectations.*

Each player's primary competition should be on their team, not the opposing team. Strive for constant competition among pitchers, catchers, infielders and outfielders. By practicing often with excellent players, players will have the opportunity to become the best they can be. The underlying philosophy is ... players compete **with** other players or teams rather than **against** other players or teams.

Mental preparation is as much a part of a coaching philosophy as physical preparation. Try to accomplish the following through mental preparation:

- I**ntensity Exhibit an exceptional focus and concentration.
- C**omposure Keep cool under pressure.
- E**nthusiasm Have fun, enjoy the game of baseball.

Finally, your coaching philosophy should include the fact that playing baseball is intended to be **FUN**. Make your practices and games enjoyable experiences that will both develop skills and provide positive life long memories for every player.

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