

game as if it is an elimination game and make a strong effort to stay in the winner's bracket, where the path to the championship requires fewer games.

Find out as much as you can about the opposing team's starting pitcher. If he is a low-run guy, you may have to change your game plan. You're going to have to try and throw a guy who is going to shut them down, because you are not going to get a lot of runs. Offensively, your kids can't be up there free-swinging. The team is going to have to be more patient at the plate. They may have to take a strike or two. In this situation, there is a need to simply put the ball in play. They're going to have to work to get one run.

Whatever you do, you've got to stay in the ball game. This may require putting the bunting game into effect, playing some "small ball," and just trying to get base runners. When the opposing pitcher is tough, do what you have to do to scratch a run across. The key is to always try to stay in the game. Stay close enough to give yourself a chance to win.

If you have no prior knowledge of the opponents your team will face, then apply the general philosophy to win the game you are in. You never know; it may rain for a week.

Home Versus Road Games

The home team should theoretically have an advantage, especially if the grounds or ballfield have irregular features that make them different from a typical baseball field. When on the road, take the players out early and let them roam the grounds.

There is definitely a mental factor involved when playing on the road. You are out of your element, and you are a guest at somebody else's place. To combat this, we played a lot of road games. We learned how to play on the road by developing the same mental toughness and discipline we have at home. That's about the only way you can really do it. You can't worry about the crowd, the umpires, etc. You've got to go out and play *your* game no matter where you are. You're always trying to beat the *game*. If you beat the game, you'll beat the opponent.

As mentioned earlier, there is a different mental state playing at home versus the road. Your players have to understand a lot of teams are tougher at home. They will play better, just as your team will, when they are more comfortable with the environment. So, when you go on the road and play one of those teams you have to take it up a notch. You have to play well. As the coach, you must establish that kind of mentality with your players about road games.

When we went on the road, my equipment manager carried a little plastic bucket with a mixture of dirt and clay. He also had a small scoop and a tamp. A lot of times, mounds are not well-groomed or maintained and there are large holes in front of the rubber or where the pitcher's striding foot lands.

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The ability to cope with different game situations requires both excellent physical conditioning and mental toughness.

The pitcher will have a difficult time reaching a good balance or striding position because the footing is so uneven in front of the mound. So, our equipment manager would go out and repair the holes before the game began.

Ballpark Factors

The biggest thing you can do to combat ballpark factors is to go out early. Get to the field as early as possible so your players can walk around and size up the situation. The sooner they can see what they are up against, the sooner they can begin their physical and mental preparations. What type of ballpark is it? Is it a bandbox that requires the pitchers to adjust down in the strike zone with their pitches to keep routine fly balls from going out of the park? Is it a graveyard that may require the outfielders to play deeper than normal to minimize the chance for an extra-base hit? Determine what type of grass is on the field. Is it a slow track? What are the characteristics of the infield surface? Is there a warning track? How big is it? How much foul territory is there? What about the sun and the field layout? If it's a night game, where are the lights oriented?

If you have the luxury of having four or five outfielders and you're at a big park, you might have to sacrifice some offense by playing the three fastest outfielders on your roster. You might have an outfielder that hits a little better but doesn't have the foot speed of a backup outfielder. In a big-park you're better with the three fastest outfielders in the lineup.

Years ago I coached a college all-star team that was a guest team at the Argentine National Championship. Our games were played in Buenos Aires in the largest stadium I've ever seen used for baseball. It was 425 feet down the lines! In talking with some of the Argentine federation officials, I learned that they had a hard time developing pitchers but they could develop outfielders who could really run and go get the ball. So, they built this ballpark extra large with the idea that no matter where their opponents hit the ball, the Argentine outfielders would be able to track it down. Good thinking.

However, this presented us with a challenge because it was hard to gauge where to play the outfielders. The park was so big we had to imagine the field was smaller and adjust our outfielders accordingly. It seemed our outfielders were playing in way too far, but in reality they weren't. It was just that the fence was so far behind them.

Conversely, in some ballparks routine fly balls are home runs. In these ballparks, it is a given that your pitchers have to keep the ball down in the strike zone. They must really work hard to keep the opponent from hitting the ball in the air. We played a best two-out-of-three series for the district title one year against a team whose home field resembled more of a phone booth than a baseball diamond. They beat us at our place in the first game of the series and we had to go to their place for the next two games. We proceeded to hit seven home runs in the double header compared to their two—at *their* place. We came out victorious simply because our pitchers kept the ball down and their pitchers did not.

Odd-shaped contours and extraordinarily high fences can be a deciding factor during a ballgame. Again, the best weapon you have to combat these ballpark factors is to arrive early at the field and allow your players to practice going after balls in these areas. The more they can learn about the nuances of the ballpark, the better equipped they will be come game time.

Infield surface conditions can also be a factor during a game. Depending on whether the infield is fast or slow, you must prepare your players for that and adjust to it. If it is really slow, you are going to have to play up, closer to the hitter. Your players are going to have to concede a couple of steps, particularly the second baseman and shortstop.

If it is a slow track (high sand content), then you are not going to be able to utilize your running game quite as well. Your players will not be able to take the extra base or steal bases, and the bunting game will suffer somewhat. A fast track would be advantageous to your running game and your infielders would be able to play a little deeper than normal.

Sunfield and Twilight

Make sure *all* of your players understand that they need to be prepared with eye black and sunglasses. You never know who will be affected by the orientation of the sun at the field where you're playing.

Twilight time in some parks is a lot tougher than in others. This can be a real problem. Your pitchers must keep the ball down during twilight hours. They can't let the other team hit the ball up in the air because it is difficult to locate the ball against the twilight sky. A high sky (no clouds) is another time that requires pitchers to throw the ball down. Anything hit up will be more difficult to judge.

Practice with your players during these conditions to help them get better. Orient yourself so you are hitting fly balls or pop-ups to your fielders that are in the sun. Schedule a later practice every once in a while so your players can practice tracking the ball during twilight.

Weather Conditions

If it is raining or wet, the outfielders may need to be more secure in their throws and may want to use a three-finger grip on the ball. They won't get as much velocity on the throw, but with two fingers it is going to slip and slide more and players will make erratic throws from time to time. Also, the footing is going to be less sure so they may not be able to be as aggressive when charging ground balls.

Is it windy, requiring the infielders and outfielders to communicate more effectively on pop-ups and high fly balls? I've taken teams to play on the Caribbean Island of Aruba. The wind never stops blowing in Aruba. There is a constant breeze, day and night. Our players have always struggled even after they were warned about the wind.

Is it cold? Believe it or not, some people are allergic to cold. If you have players like this they will have a hard time functioning during games played in colder weather. Is it hot? During hot weather, players (especially pitchers) may want to bring an extra undershirt and towel to keep dry.

Injuries

The best way to adjust the game plan for injuries is to catch them early and get them treated. The two key defensive positions where injuries will be devastating to team success will be at center field and shortstop. What you have to do ahead of time is prepare another outfielder to play either center field or another outfield spot that would be vacated by a starting outfielder who takes the place of the injured center fielder. If the second best outfielder on your team is the left fielder and your center fielder runs into the wall, gets hurt, and has to be removed from the game, your left fielder has

to move to center. You have to have someone come off the bench and do a great job in left field. You have to train them for this ahead of time. Prepare now for losing the key guy later.

The same thing is true at the shortstop position. If you never work anybody else at shortstop and your shortstop gets hurt before a game, you're in trouble. Once, during batting practice before a game, the infielders were taking fungos. Somehow the timing of the infield fungos and live-hit balls got messed up and when the shortstop came in to field a ground ball off the fungo, he was hit in the face by a live-hit ball. It broke his nose, and he obviously didn't play that night. A bad mistake and horrible accident. However, the third baseman was ready and took the shortstop's place.

In practice, and in some games, you need to move the second best infielder (usually the second baseman) to shortstop so he can play there and get comfortable at the position so if the unforeseeable happens, he can step in and contribute.

Even though my teams always had two catchers, I made the third baseman learn to catch. That way there was always a backup if both catchers went down.

A team must have pitching depth in order to protect the team against injuries to the pitching staff. The development of utility players is also a must for a successful game plan. Players who can play many positions are very valuable to a team.

The development of a successful game plan based on sound, fundamental philosophies grounded in team discipline and player development can help a team overcome any adversity or handle any situation it may encounter throughout the season. You will never be able to prepare for every possible setback you may encounter during a season. But what you can do is give your players the mental resolve to attack the problem with a positive attitude. If you have prepared them to adapt the game plan when the most common setbacks occur, they will have the skills to adjust when the unforeseen ones arise. It all begins with your preparations. You should always be stressing the five Ps: Prior preparation prevents poor performance. Prepare for the worst, just in case it happens. Doing so is time well spent and will pay off tenfold throughout the season.

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Playing the Game the Right Way

Bobo Brayton

When you as a coach open the gates to your ballpark, you are assuming a great responsibility. We owe the game; it doesn't owe us. We owe the game identity; we owe the game integrity; we owe the game tradition; we owe the game perpetuity. We are committed to the game. To quote a 51-year-old player who plays baseball continuously on an amateur level, "The most important aspect in baseball is the love of the game. If you are playing for money or your ego, the game will eat you up."

Baseball is a great game, and how we approach the game is of utmost importance. The approach is so important that presentation becomes a big issue. It begins with how you treat the visiting coach and his team. Do you or your representative greet them at the motel or in the locker room or at the gate, whatever the case may be? Do you give them workout time on the field or nearby? Should there be some delay, such as inclement weather or a late bus, you should give up some of your field time to the visitor. Above all, don't hog the infield or hitting time; offer the visitor equal or more preparation time than you reserve for yourself.

Regardless of what happens, start your game on time. Fans and umpires will quickly come to know this about your program and will appreciate it. Make sure the visitors have training facilities and even a trainer. Make sure water and towels or whatever you think necessary is available in their dug-out. If you are playing a double header, provide fruit, candy, or similar items between games as a courtesy. In other words, before the game even begins, show your class by being a good host. You have the responsibility of being Mr. Baseball in your area or at your school.

The park you play in, the field you play on, programs, lineup information, PA system, announcer, music, concessions, seating, the attitude of park personnel, groundskeepers, ball and bat shaggers, hostesses, umpires, scorers, and yes, your individual players, are all extensions of you and your program. As a coach you want the fans to enjoy your presentation. You want teams to look forward to competing in your park and against your team. You should strive to be the standard bearer of facilities in your area. Perhaps you cannot afford a new stadium or park, but your field can be well groomed and clean. Fans will want to come to your games because they know they will be comfortable and see a high level of competition. Coaches will want to play your team at your place because they know it will be a good game. They know the field itself will give them a chance to win. They know the officiating will be good. They know the bullpens, dugouts, and the field will all be first class. They know your attitude as a coach will be to play hard, play fair, and play to win. They know your players will emulate you and will play clean, doing and saying only positive things that make the game better.

An item that ranks near the top in your approach to the game is how your players look to others. Their personal appearance as reflected in jewelry, facial hair, and hairstyles is important. Their appearance in a baseball uniform is also important to fans, other teams, and other coaches. A great comment to hear about your team is that they always look and play the part, meaning that they look like traditional baseball players and play like traditional players. These issues may be controversial at times, but tradition always wins out.

The attitude of you and your players toward umpires is important to your total approach. Designate someone to meet the officials, direct them to their locker room, and issue them towels and baseballs. This is a good time to mention starting times, ground rules, and the ball resupply process. You can offer between-game or postgame snacks and attend to any other concerns. When addressing officials, use "Mr. Umpire" or "Sir." Those terms beat the heck out of "Blue" or "Hey, Ump." Umpires will appreciate that example of respect and work hard to keep the feeling going. A major-league coach recently mentioned that more players want to know the first name of the home-plate umpire. He thinks that players are attempting not only to know the umpire but also to improve working relations.

A cheerful or normal salutation between opponents is a good omen. When an opponent makes a great play or really scalds one, a positive comment cements good competition. A remark that I've remembered for almost 60 years occurred in a game I was playing as a 16-year-old kid against a high-quality team. The opposing first baseman was Art McLarney, a well-respected coach from the University of Washington. I ripped one back over the second baseman's head and as I rounded first base and came back to the bag, I said, "I thought he'd catch that one." Coach McLarney said, "Hey, kid, they don't catch those kind." Just a brief but correct comment brings



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When it comes to appearance, attitude, and style of play, tradition always wins out.

out the respect the game deserves and, in this case, a lifetime memory. After all, that is what this game is all about—lifetime memories.

Hustle

A hustling approach is always a positive. Hustling is mental as well as physical. Being mentally alert whether you are on or off the field is important. As the coaches say, “Stay in the game, play nine!” Physically, hustling builds

on your positive approach to the game, and everyone appreciates it. Some of the tried-and-true hustle plays are

- running out ground balls and fly balls;
- bouncing off and on the field between innings;
- returning to defensive position with a little pop after every play;
- backing up plays even when not directly responsible (a great example is the play by Yankees shortstop Derek Jeter in the 2001 World Series when he relayed a throw to the catcher from the right fielder from outside the first-base line and cut off an important run);
- throwing the ball around the infield from chest to chest with the accuracy required on a close play;
- accurate, forceful return throws from the outfield to the infield as opposed to some kind of flip throw that requires an infielder to retrieve the ball from someplace in the infield;
- accurate return throws from the catcher to the pitcher;
- bouncing out to the mound by the catcher for visits and brisk movement by the coaches to the coaching boxes; and
- giving maximum effort (the old college try) on every play.

Webster's definition of a hustler as one who gives energetic drive and effort at all times just about covers the preceding list. A team that hustles, both offensively and defensively, generates more problems for the opposition. An example of great hustle was displayed by a Lewiston (Idaho) High School player who ran to first base in four seconds flat—on a base on balls. When a player gets to first base that fast on a walk, what will he do when turned loose on the bases? That thought makes the pitcher hurry his pitch, the catcher becomes anxious about a potential steal attempt, the infielders all shorten up or move, and batted balls get through.

Two things that hurt the concept of hustle today are television and promotions between innings. In the College World Series and in professional baseball we are always waiting for the television advertising break. Thus the player doesn't have his glove ready at the right moment, the last-minute drink takes a little longer than anticipated, his appearance from the dugout is delayed, and the game is held up.

To encourage attendance in minor-league and college baseball, ballclubs run promotions between innings. When a player accustomed to hustling out on the field after the third out finds himself on the field all alone while two fake sumo wrestlers push each other around on the mound or some kids race a mascot somewhere, he can't help but be embarrassed. He is not likely to hustle out again.

Little Leaguers see this so they emulate the slowness of taking the field, and that action carries over to their play. Now this concept has moved into

the parental ranks. Mom brings a sandwich or drink to her ballplayer just as the inning ends. Instead of hustling out, he eats the sandwich or takes a drink. Now he drags out onto the field. If the coach observes this lack of action, he may send a replacement out, which means that the mother is upset with the coach's insensitivity to his ballplayers' needs. This nonhustling concept seems to be creeping in throughout the sport.

Coaches must discourage the deterioration of the hustling attitude and image. The point here is that you are seldom right if you don't hustle and you are always right if you do. Fans, umpires, and other players appreciate a hustler. A major-league ballplayer who stands out in my mind as a real



Photo courtesy of Washington State University

A good player hustles on every play.

hustler was Mark Fydrich, pitcher for the Detroit Tigers. An injury early in his career was unfortunate because he might have changed baseball just by his hustle. Eddie Eraut, catcher for the Seattle Rainiers in the Pacific Coast League, and Pete Rose of the Cincinnati Reds, known as Charlie Hustle, were both famous for their hustle. Bobby Winkles, coach of Arizona State and manager of the Oakland Athletics, demanded hustle. Mark Marquess, an all-American player for Stanford and now coach at that university, is another great example of a hustler. The performance of David Eckstein and Darin Erstad in the 2002 World Series is an outstanding example of what hustle can do. Though these two players are not power hitters, their tremendous hustle set the tone for the Anaheim Angels team which resulted in the world championship. For those of us who love baseball hustle, these men are in a league of their own.

Practice Aggressive Base Running

Good base running is a powerful asset, and the defense must reckon with it. Base running is an area that coaches can teach, and because it is an integral tool of scoring, I feel they must teach it! First, you must determine the individual's attitude. Is he aggressive? Does he love to run? Does he love to slide? How badly does he want the next base? If these are all positive and he has reasonable speed and reaction time, he can be a good base runner. If he is very fast and has great reaction time, he can be a great base runner.

We start with the fundamentals of getting out of the batter's box and running through first base or rounding it. Next are the fundamental leads, the starts, and circling the bases. Reading the ball off the bat correctly, especially when the runner is on third base, is crucial.

The philosophy of where the runner should be at what time will reflect the attitude of the coach. To be a good base-running team, the players must practice all the fundamentals—both physical and mental. Coaches who take the time to concentrate on this phase of the game will find that it pays off big time. The Washington State Cougars had a prime example of a player being able to learn base running. A few years ago we had a big, overgrown catcher walk on to the program. His work ethic was so good that he soon became the number one catcher. His running speed was far below average, however, so every time he got on base in a situation when we needed a run, we sent in a pinch runner. As time went on, he became somewhat faster, and he learned to run bases exceptionally well. In his junior and senior years he did not need a pinch runner when he got on base. Everybody was comfortable with Hooper running instead of a faster pinch runner. The facts were that Hooper dedicated himself to base running just as he had with hitting and catching. He made up for a lack of speed by good fundamental base running.

A great example of aggressive base running occurred in a regional game we played against Stanford. John Olerud Sr., a catcher with medium running speed, was on first base when the batter hit a short grounder to center field. Ole challenged the outfielder's arm. With a great slide, he beat the throw to third base. As he got up and dusted himself off, he turned to me with a grin and said, "I burned 'em with my speed."

A third example occurred in an extra-inning playoff game with Oregon and a slow runner on third base. The Oregon infield was playing in when the hitter hammered a ground ball right to the first baseman, who juggled it just slightly and threw home. The base runner slid in safe at home to win the game. The opposing coach exclaimed, "He shouldn't even be trying to score in that situation." The point is that we had practiced the break from third base every day with every player, and it paid off.

Perfect the Fundamentals

New methods are sometimes frowned upon, but if they are sound and can be repeated to successful effect, the new techniques will eventually reach fundamental status. The evolution of equipment itself has led to many of these changes. One relatively new method that has been debated but has now almost gained fundamental status is the one-handed method of catching for catchers. This method—blended in with the old philosophy of keeping the ball in front, blocking pitches in the dirt, catching the ball in a near throwing position, and working the feet—has opened a whole new dimension to catching. With more pitchers developing the knuckleball, the knuckle curve, the split-finger pitch, the turnover, and so on, the catcher must keep the ball in front of him. In the 2001 World Series, games were won or lost by catchers either blocking or not blocking the pitch. First-base play with one hand has extended the ability of the first baseman to make plays. I taught a present major-league Gold Glove first baseman to use one hand instead of two. The one-handed catch of fly balls, thrown balls, and grounders is now accepted and taught as an extension of basic two-hand play.

Coaches, scouts, and baseball people in general always appreciate good fundamental performance in catching, fielding, and throwing. Players can expertly exhibit these fundamentals in infield practice. Outfielders can work fly balls and ground balls in the proper way and finish with a low, strong overhand throw to the baseman or cutoff man. Infielders can work their feet, develop rhythm in their fielding, and make sound throws from chest to chest.

During an alumni game I was hitting infield to the alums. On the first ball I hit to the third baseman, the catcher, who had graduated 20 years earlier, played professionally for 9 years, and was presently a doctor in Seattle, yelled out, "Work your feet, work your feet, get on top of the throw."

That stuff must have been ingrained pretty deeply in those long-ago collegiate years. Catchers can also work their feet and get on top of their throws to the bases. A key to a sharp-looking infield is for the players to know where the ball is going before the fungo man ever hits it. They will get a good jump on the ball and maintain rhythm during the drills. A good fungo man is essential to good infield drills. Everything goes as planned—no bad hits, no surprises.

Develop Discipline

According to all the great teachers in the world of sport, such as Frank Leahy, Knute Rockne, John Wooden, and Frank Frisch, discipline is the difference between a gang and a team. On the field, discipline can be approached from the mental and physical aspects combined. Mentally, I tell myself that every ball is going to be hit to me, and I am going to get it. I must know that I need to be positioned correctly before the ball is pitched. I must approach the ball in the proper way to make the play. I must know what I can do with this ball. I must know what I need to do physically to field the ball and make an out.

There is a fine line between making a great play and trying to do something unachievable that will become a major mistake and in turn affect the outcome of the game. Players can locate this line only through experience and confidence developed by practice, practice, and more practice. We can avoid frustration by practicing good fundamentals and thereby gaining confidence to make the routine play all day, every day and to make the tough play whenever it is needed.

In the dugout and bullpen, the coach can keep discipline at a high level by keeping everyone involved in the game with tasks such as charting pitchers and hitters and timing base runners, pitchers' deliveries, double plays, and catchers' releases.

Know the Other Team

You've got to know who you are playing. Does the opposing team have an identity? Can they beat you with defense? Are they bulldogs who can beat you in the late innings? Can they beat you with the long ball or with base running? Do they sit back, play by the book, and count on superior talent to beat you, or are they aggressive and try to beat you with hustle and great execution? Will pressure affect them? Can you play better longer than they can?

Jim Wassem at Eastern Washington University was aggressive and coached with the phrase, "Don't let 'em throw a fastball by you." He won

games with that philosophy, but we made a living using it against him. He also had some great running schemes that we had to shut down to beat him. We played a successful Big 12 team who wouldn't swing at a curveball unless they had two strikes on them. Our philosophy was to work at getting two curves over for strikes and then go from there. The tough part was getting that third strike past those hitters.

What can your opponent do against you defensively? How is each position manned? Are the players average, outstanding, or poor? Is there one player who you can beat by making him run, throw, or hit?

You must especially know the pitchers and catchers. Can they shut down your bats? Can they shut down your running game? You have to know what makes their pitcher tick. What is his personality? What is his game plan? What pitches does he throw and when? What is his out pitch? Where does he go when he is behind in the count or behind in the game? How does he field? How well does he hold runners on? What is his release time to the plate? Do we have to get to him early? Does he get better as the innings go by? Do we try to go deep into the count to get to him in the late innings? What is the release time for the catcher to first and second base?



Photo courtesy of Washington State University

The better you know your opponent, the easier it will be to shut down their strategy.

What is the opponent's offensive approach? When do they run? When do they hit-and-run? When do they steal? Do they squeeze? When? What other offensive maneuvers do they use as specialties—double steals, double squeezes, delayed steals, fake bunt and steal, fake bunt and hit, squeeze from second base, scoring from second on a ground ball? Do they have one or two guys who can beat you with their bats? If so, you must deal with them using a special philosophy. Do they have one or two guys who can hurt you with their speed? If so, you must keep them off base. What is their approach to the two-strike count? Do they swing for downtown, or are they contact hitters?

Be Ready to Play

To coach an intelligent game, you must have a sound approach and plan to deal with the opposing team. Have your team mentally and physically ready to play the game. Everyone should be on the same page, knowing your approach and how you plan to win the game. We know that if two baseball teams play each other enough times, each team will win some games. But you should not coach to “win some and lose some,” but to win every game. Know what you must do defensively to shut down the other team. Know what you can do offensively against them. If you plan to use special maneuvers, practice them.

Your defense has a better chance of being consistent than your offense. If you can play defense, you can compete with anyone. Besides basic outfield and infield play, you must be able to execute a number of maneuvers, including

- bunt defense,
- double-steal defense,
- squeeze defense,
- cutoff and relay defense,
- double-play infield defense, and
- rundowns.

Your team will be judged by how well they execute these defenses.

One of my approaches to baseball has been that the game starts in the seventh inning. This thinking is similar to the philosophy of a famous basketball coach from Oregon State, Paul Valenti, who said at a regional basketball clinic, “In the last 30 seconds of a basketball game, get the ball in the hands of the basketball player.” So in the seventh, eighth, or ninth inning

we pinch run the best runner, pinch hit the better hitter, and make sure the strongest pitcher is on the mound. He may be the starter, or a right- or left-handed reliever, or a pitcher who is tough to bunt against, or a hard thrower who might get pop-ups or strikeouts, or any pitcher who may give the hitters a different look.

If it is a team unknown to us, we take the information that we have gathered during batting practice, infield, and the first six innings and apply it where we can. In the seventh inning we reexamine our approach. What has transpired for both teams and how? What is the score? We look for the defensive ability of the player that we can work against. If we are three or four runs ahead, we will probably continue an umbrella defense in which we cut off the four and six holes and the alleys. If the game is close, we may protect the lines with the infield to cut down the extra-base-hit area. If extra-base hits can really hurt us, we may play extra deep in the outfield. If the bases are loaded and a double play means more to us than one run, we will shorten up the infield and snuggle up a little closer to second base. If one run will win or tie or if we feel that we can't give away another run, we will bring the infield in. With runners on second and third we may bring our infield halfway in. This means the corners are up and the middle is back, which gives us a better chance at pop flies. With runners on second and third how we play will probably depend on what the runner on second means to us. We don't give them a bunch of runs; we want to stay close. Depending on the total situation, at any time we may show the infield in and then drop back on the pitch or vice versa. When the opponent has a runner on third with less than two outs and one run beats us, we bring the outfield in and adjust the infield to match up with the batter and the runner. We are always reluctant to bring the infield all the way in because of the broken-bat or pop-fly single.

Remember what happened in the 2001 World Series? The Yankees were forced to bring the infield in with the winning run on third. Gonzo Gonzales, a left-handed power hitter, hit a bloop pop fly into short left-center field. The ball fell in, and the Diamondbacks scored the winning run. Had the Yankees shortstop been in normal position for a left-handed power hitter, he may have made the catch, prolonging the game. This is baseball at its best. Even with the application of knowledge and extensive preparation, fate and luck have a place in this great game. John Zaephel, the great high school and American Legion coach from Yakima, Washington, once told me, "Bobo, sometimes before you even go out on the field, the big umpire in the sky has it all figured out who is going to win and how."

With runners on first and third we will defend the double steal in several ways. With the game-tying or game-winning run on third, our basic philosophy is to make them beat us with the bat. In other words, we won't throw a run in because that is what the opposition is counting on. They double steal because they don't have confidence in driving in the run.

Make Adjustments

Factors other than team personnel that may affect your approach are

- the park itself, small or large;
- contour of fences;
- warning track and distance from field to grandstand;
- park surface, whether dirt, grass, gravel, or artificial turf; if grass, note its condition—short or long, wet or dry; and
- weather—rain or wind and its effect on running and fielding conditions on the playing surface.

If these conditions change during the game, we must be ready to make adjustments. One example of an adjustment we made was in a game with the University of Idaho. In the 11th it had been raining for several innings, and the score was tied. Idaho had a catcher playing third base because of his strong bat. With a runner on third and slow-running Larry Schreck at bat with two strikes on him, I called for a bunt. Larry bunted the ball toward third, and it became a question of who would outslough who. Larry won the contest, was safe at first, and we won the game.

Making adjustments can change the outcome of a game or even a season. Washington State University played an unusual Lewis & Clark team that booted a lot of ground balls. Coach Ed Cheff made an adjustment for the bad hands of his infielders, coaching them to be aggressive and charge the heck out of everything, picking up the grounders on the infield grass and throwing out the runners. Using this adjustment, they won the NAIA championship. We challenged them by having everyone run out ground balls as if they would be booted. The games we played against Lewis & Clark weren't pretty, but they were wars. The University of Oregon slapped the ball around, bunted, and ran. They were tough to beat. We adjusted by playing our infield in to about what coaches call halfway in. We began cutting down on four to six of these slap hits, drag bunts, and squeezes, resulting in our winning those games. The comments earlier had been, "How did they beat us when they never hit the ball out of the infield?" They beat us by being aggressive and scrappy.

In a series with Arizona State University, we were having trouble with left-hander Clay Westlake, a big, powerful hitter who had been killing everybody in left-center field. I placed my center fielder in left center and my right fielder in dead center. As predicted, Westlake hit a ball about 500 feet to straightaway center field. I had a man standing under it—my right fielder. Boy, what a great coaching adjustment—we had gotten Westlake out! Moments later everything fell apart when my man dropped the ball! Even when you make what you think is a great adjustment, the kids have to perform.

Rod Dedeaux, the great coach from the University of Southern California, won many games by adjusting his outfield play. In one College World Series game against Florida State, he jammed left-center field, took away about five doubles, and won the game. In a game against the Washington State University Cougars, Coach Dedeaux had every outfielder play toward left field in defense of Ron Cey. In a double header, Cey hit five doubles to right field. Dedeaux still wouldn't fault his strategy. He merely stated, "That Cey is the best unsigned hitter in America." Probably the greatest adjustment in modern baseball was made by the manager of the Anaheim Angels when he elected to walk Barry Bonds of the San Francisco Giants 14 times in crucial situations in the 2002 World Series and as a result won the series.

Do's and Don'ts

There are some real don'ts in the game that you see on occasion. As is usually the case, they are more easily copied than some of the do's are. Discourage an attitude of contempt toward your competition and encourage respect for their ability. Badgering the opposing team from the dugout is bad sportsmanship. Individual badgering on the field is an attitude thing. Threatening comments such as "We'll see how you can hit from your backside," or "You're going down next time up," or "You come hard into second again you had better be on the ground" are all better left unsaid. Some examples of physical actions you should discourage are

- spiking a first baseman,
- elbowing a baseman who happens to be near the bag,
- running over a pitcher covering the bag,
- sliding into the baseman with the spikes high,
- running over a baseman when there is no play and he may be looking elsewhere,
- interfering with the defense when running the bases,
- running over the catcher or baseman,
- swinging late to interfere with the catcher,
- intentionally getting hit by a pitch,
- throwing the bat, and
- throwing a helmet.

Other actions to discourage are mental strategies the offense might employ such as yelling "Look out" on a routine grounder or yelling "Cut it off" or "Let it go" when those plays would be the opposite what the defense should do. Discourage the defense from using a fake tag, telling the runner to slide

when it is not necessary, standing in the base path to force a runner to take the longer route, and shielding the view of a base runner who is watching a fly ball on a tag-up play. Offensive players should assist defensive players who are attempting to make a play on or near the dugout, the bleachers, and the bullpens. The defense should signal or tell the runner to stand up if there is no play.

The home team is obliged to furnish a rosin bag and cleat cleaner for the pitcher. In case of rain, both teams should be prepared to help with the tarps and regroom the field so that play can resume.

To me, an important act concerns the exchange of the lineups. As a sign of respect, especially when the teams rarely play each other, the head coaches should do the exchange.

Important off-field etiquette includes arriving at and leaving the field fully dressed. A current movement in youth baseball has players wearing the least they can when they enter the field and stripping off the uniform as soon as the last out is made. A couple other poor behaviors are wearing spikes where it is prohibited and leaving the dugout or locker room in a disorderly condition. Coaches could also make an effort to clean up the language both on and off the field. A good example is a good teacher.

Improve the Game

As a personal challenge, you may want to take one or several elements of the game and make an effort to improve and encourage them or discourage and eliminate them from the game.

- Throwing and catching. What a challenge! This is the communication of baseball, and it must be improved.
- Double play. This is one of the most interesting elements of the defense. Keep it simple!
 1. Get there early.
 2. Make it simple.
 3. Get one out at a time.
- Pitchers. Keep them pitching. Eliminate the extracurricular activities on the mound.
- Catchers. Encourage pride in the position. You can win games with poor pitching, but you can't even play the game with poor catching.
- Infielders. Work for rhythm; it is almost extinct.
- Outfielders. A good outfielder must be able to hit, run, and throw, so he shouldn't jeopardize two-thirds of his game by not running and throwing properly. In the '40s and '50s, Al Lyons, the right fielder of

the Seattle Rainiers, took pride in making every throw split third base and home plate.

- Base running. Base runners should always be a threat to get to the next base. They should keep pressure on the defense.
 - Between-inning delays. Do what you can to keep the game moving.
 - Mound visits. Hustle.
 - Poor PA system. Get a guy with a megaphone.
 - Poor scoreboard. Improve on it.
 - Poor music. Make it enjoyable to all involved.
 - Ballpark. Make your park fan friendly.
-

A hustling team is a tough competitor and always has a chance to win. The statement, “They will hustle you right off the field,” is a good thing to be said of your team.

- A courteous team, wearing uniforms properly, is acceptable on any field.
- A team strong on fundamentals will be a winner and appreciated by all who see them.
- A good base-running team can win.
- A sound batting philosophy will score runs.
- If you can play defense, you can compete with any team.

Two good cliches are particularly relevant here:

It isn't where we are; it is where we are going.

It isn't what we have; it is what we do with it.

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About the ABCA

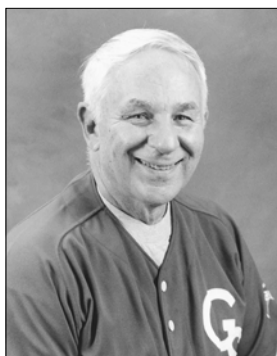
The **American Baseball Coaches Association (ABCA)** is the largest baseball coaching organization in the world, including coaches from every state in the country and hundreds of international members. The association's mission is to improve the level of baseball coaching worldwide. The ABCA assists in the promotion of baseball and acts as a sounding board and advocate on issues concerning the game. In addition, the ABCA promotes camaraderie and communication among all baseball coaches from the amateur to professional levels. The ABCA also gives recognition to deserving players and coaches through several special sponsorship programs. It is an organization that has grown steadily in membership, prestige, and impact in recent years. The ABCA's headquarters is located in Mount Pleasant, Michigan.

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About the Editors



Bob Bennett retired from coaching in 2002 with a career record of 1,302-759-4, ranking him seventh all-time on the Division I win list. In his 34 years as head coach at Fresno State University his teams had 32 winning seasons, won 17 conference championships, made 21 NCAA Regional Championship appearances, and played in two College World Series. Bennett was awarded 14 conference Coach of the Year Awards and an NCAA Coach of the Year Award in 1988. He coached 32 All-Americans, eight of whom were first-round draft picks. Bennett also served as head coach of the United States national team in 1983 and 1986. He lives in Fresno, California, with his wife, Jane. They have three children and eight grandchildren.

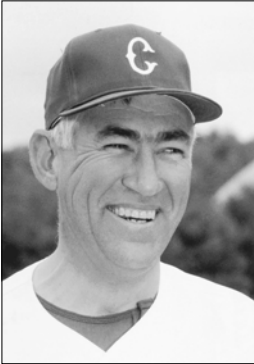


Jack Stallings finished his coaching career as the winningest active college coach with 1,258 victories. Stallings headed up baseball programs at Wake Forest University (1958-1968), Florida State University (1969-1975), and Georgia Southern University (1976-1999). He also coached the USA national baseball team in the 1979 Pan American Games, the 1970 and 1973 IBA World Tournament, the 1979 IBA International Cup, and the 1984 Olympic Games. Stallings is an associate professor in the department of health and kinesiology at Georgia Southern University. He and his wife, Norma, live near Statesboro, Georgia.

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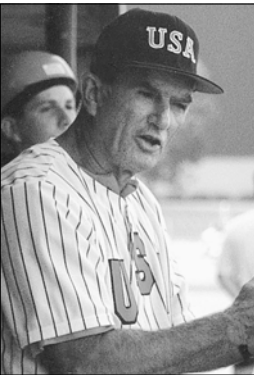
About the Contributors

Photo courtesy of University of Connecticut



Andy Baylock has coached the University of Connecticut Huskies for 39 consecutive years and has served as head coach for 23 years. With an overall record of 532-469-8, Baylock has led his teams to two Big East Conference Tournament Championships and three NCAA Regional appearances. He was named the New England Conference Division I Coach of the Year in 1990, the Big East Conference Coach of the Year in 1992, and the Northwest Region Coach of the Year in 1994. He has been inducted into five halls of fame, including the ABCA Hall of Fame.

Photo courtesy of Dick Birmingham



Dick Birmingham served as head coach at Hillcrest High School in Springfield, Missouri, Hillcrest American Legion Baseball, and the USA Junior Olympic team. Birmingham's teams have won more than 1,000 games, including a high school state championship, three legion state championships, and three medals—a gold and two silvers—at the Pan American Junior Baseball Championship. Birmingham is a member of several halls of fame, including the ABCA, the Missouri Baseball Coaches, the Iowa Baseball Coaches Hall of Fame, and the Missouri Sports Hall of Fame.

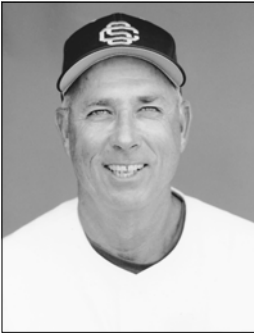
Photo courtesy of Washington State University



Bobo Brayton, a former All-American player and coach for Washington State University, compiled a record of 1162-523-8 and a .689 winning percentage before retiring in 1994 after serving as head coach for 33 years. He coached his team to 21 Pacific-10 Conference Championships and led them to the College World Series in 1965 and 1976. He is a member of several halls of fame, including the ABCA, Inland Empire, Washington State University, and Washington State Coaches Hall of Fame.

About the Contributors

Photo courtesy of
University of Southern California



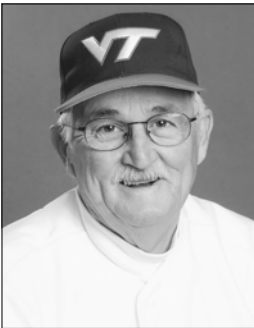
Mike Gillespie has been at the University of Southern California for 17 years and has coached his teams to five Pacific-10 Southern Division Conference titles and the 1998 National Championship. He also coached the 2000 USA Baseball national team to a championship, posting a record of 27-3-1. Gillespie was named 1998 National Coach of the Year by both Collegiate Baseball and the ABCA.

Photo courtesy of Georgia Tech



Danny Hall, head coach at the Georgia Institute of Technology since 1994, has posted a record of 396-172. His teams captured two Atlantic Coast Conference Championships in 1997 and 2000 and appeared in the College World Series in 1994 and 2000. Hall was named ACC Coach of the Year in 1997 and 2000 and National Coach of the Year in 1997.

Photo courtesy of Virginia Tech



Chuck Hartman has coached baseball for 44 years and has spent 24 of those years at Virginia Tech. He ranks fourth in Division I baseball's top 20 winningest all-time coaches with 1,339 career wins. He posts an 856-481-7 record with the Hokies and has led his teams to three Atlantic-10 Tournament Championships. Hartman is also a member of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics Hall of Fame.

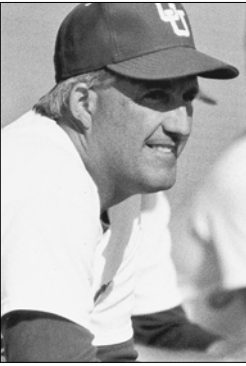
Photo courtesy of
Cal State L.A. by Stan Carstensen



John Herbold, ABCA Hall-of-Fame member, began coaching at California State University at Los Angeles in 1984, after 28 years at Long Beach Poly and Lakewood high schools. Both schools ranked in the top four U.S. high schools for drafted players. Over 120 of his players have signed professional contracts. Herbold claimed two California Collegiate Athletic Association Conference Championships in 1997 and 1998 and earned a spot at the 1998 NCAA Division II Tournament.

About the Contributors

Photo courtesy of Gonzaga University Baseball



Steve Hertz has served as head coach at Gonzaga University for 23 years after pitching for the Bulldogs for three years. He is the winningest coach in school history with more than 600 victories. Hertz has coached his teams to two NCAA Tournament appearances, and he has been named Conference Coach of the Year five times in four different conferences.

Photo courtesy of Cal-State Fullerton



George Horton has amassed a 259-116-1 record since taking over as head coach at California State University at Fullerton in the 1997 season. Horton's teams have won six Big West Conference titles by way of tournament or regular season play and have made two trips to the College World Series in 1999 and 2001. Horton has been honored as Big West Conference Coach of the Year twice, and National Junior College Coach of the Year three times.

Photo courtesy of Texas A&M Sports Information



Mark Johnson holds a 759-365-2 overall career record in his 17 years as head coach for Texas A&M and takes a place among Division I baseball's top 10 best winning percentage of active coaches. Johnson coached his teams to two Big 12 Conference Championships in 1998 and 1999; three Southwest Conference Championships in 1986, 1989, and 1993; and two trips to the College World Series in 1993 and 1999. Johnson was honored with Big 12 Conference Coach of the Year in 1998 and 1999. He served as ABCA president in 1994.

Photo courtesy of University of Illinois



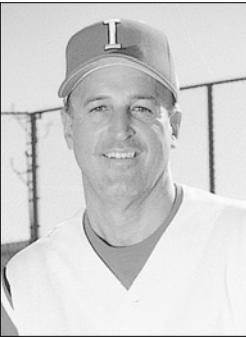
Richard "Itch" Jones, one of Division I baseball's top 20 all-time winningest coaches and the 10th winningest active coach, boasts a 1,158-670-5 career record. Jones came to the University of Illinois from Southern Illinois University in 1991, where he made 10 NCAA Tournament appearances and three trips to the College World Series in 21 years. Jones' Illinois teams have captured a Big Ten Conference Championship and two NCAA Tournament bids.

Photo courtesy of
University of Kentucky Baseball



Keith Madison began his head coaching career at the University of Kentucky, where he has coached for 24 years. He has compiled a record of 713-602-5 and has taken his teams to NCAA tournaments in 1988 and 1993. He is second in wins among active Southeastern Conference coaches. Madison has coached 10 All-Americans, and 83 of his players have been drafted or have signed professional baseball contracts. Madison served as president of the ABCA in 2000.

Photo courtesy of Indiana University

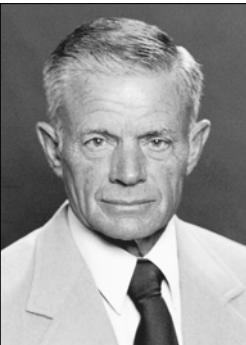


Bob Morgan, head coach at Indiana University, is ranked among Division I baseball's top 20 winningest active coaches and Division I baseball's top 20 best winning percentage of active coaches with a record of 990-504-6 in 27 years. As Indiana's all-time winningest coach, Morgan led his teams to the Big Ten Tournament championship and an appearance in the NCAA Tournament in 1996. In 1993, he was honored as Big Ten Coach of the Year.

Photo courtesy of University of Miami



Jim Morris, head coach at the University of Miami, posts a career record of 1,069-469-2 and claims the fifth spot in the Division I baseball's top 20 best winning percentage of active coaches. In his nine seasons with the Hurricanes, Morris led them to eight College World Series appearances including two National Championship titles in 1999 and 2001. In both 1999 and 2001, he was named Collegiate Baseball National Coach of the Year and the ABCA Coach of the Year.



John Winkin coached for 48 years in Maine, first at Colby College (1954-1974) and then at the University of Maine (1974-1996). Since 1996, he has been the pitching coach at Husson College. He amassed a 943-670 career record and appeared in 12 NCAA regional tournaments and 6 College World Series. Winkin received the College Division Coach of the Year award in 1965 and the prestigious Lefty Gomez award in 1986. He is a member of the ABCA Coaching Hall of Fame, Maine High School Baseball Coaches Hall of Fame, and the Maine Sports Hall of Fame.

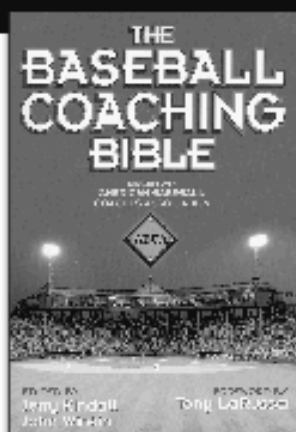
About the Contributors

Photo courtesy of
Bob Kalmbach—University of Michigan



Geoff Zahn served as head coach at the University of Michigan from 1995 until 2001 after earning his varsity letters there in 1966 and 1967. Zahn earned Big Ten Coach of the Year honors in 1997 after leading his team to a Big Ten title. The Wolverines also captured a Big Ten Conference Tournament Championship in 1999. Zahn spent 12 years pitching in the Major Leagues and was named Rookie of the Year for the Dodgers in 1974.

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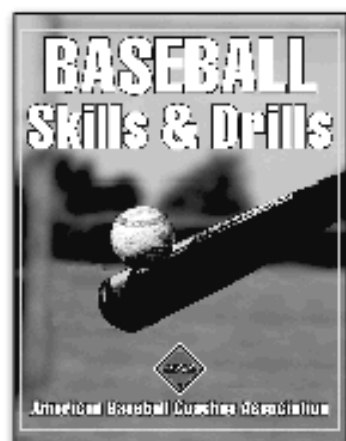
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