

## A Coach's Mentality

You prepare your team with practices and pep talks to be the best that they can be and to win. But how much do you really prepare yourself. Everyone has goals for themselves and their teams but how many achieve 100%? That is pretty hard to do if the goals are lofty. But to be consistently successful and close those goals is possible. So, what sets some coaches apart from others. What are those coaches who win a lot saying to their players or doing that might be different to what you are saying?

### **Winners Don't Make Excuses**

Nothing is perfect during the game: weather, grass is long/lumps/hard with very little grass in the outfield, dirt not good or smooth on the infield, maybe missing a key player, home fans unruly when you are the visitors, lack of time for proper warm up, unexpected delays and team just sitting around, hometown umpires? Lots more can come up on game day. But it is how you react to the situations that really counts.

It is easy to blame a loss on things like those in the previous paragraph. But winning coaches take these in stride before the game even starts. They control the things that they can control more than worry about those they cannot. Their job is to not let any negativity or dismay about the situation be shown to the team. They find ways to coach their players how to play in those situations before they even occur. Practice in adverse situations, field a bad field to hit infield and outfield, practice fly balls and pop up in the wind, a misty day or a full sun day. We always went to Arizona from Missouri in March to play the best teams we could play out there. First thing we did practice wise was to hit high fly balls and pop ups to the players. The sky is NOT like a St. Louis sky. It is a very high sky with rarely clouds and very sunny. So, we practice even seeing the ball in that sky. Our field was not the best, so we didn't have to go far to hit grounders to everyone that had extra little bounces in it. We also practiced a lot with the 1B and RF. Our field had a definite downward slope from home to the RF fence. So 1B got a lot of bad balls thrown to them to get use to stopping everything or the ball hit the fence and went straight down to deep RF.

## **Keep Your Opinions of the other team, opposing manager or the umpires to the coaching staff.**

Leave the players out of any drama. Discuss with your coaches if things are happening that should not be happening and they are being done purposely by the other team, calmly discuss it with the umpires out of ear shot of the players and parents. If the umpires are part of it and won't do anything about it, figure out a way to beat the team anyway instead of just getting mad about it and giving up. Those things will happen. Keep your players out of it as much as possible and see where the other team is the weakest and exploit that to try to win the game. I will admit that some teams have thrown at my players batting or running to first. There is no room in sports with coaches who try to hurt the other team's players. That is a different situation and we have had discussions with the umpires and other team's coaches that were not as cordial as others. Still keep the players/parents out as much as possible.

A different type of opinions given during a game is when the team you are playing is not as good as your team. Respect all teams and fear none. Keep your comments and those of your coaching staff to yourselves. There is no reason to belittle any team. If you are a lot better, congratulations. A winning coach respects that other team but getting the lead and replacing starters at different time without any fanfare. No letting them go to the field and then taking them out to cheers. Just have someone new go out to their position at the beginning of inning or insert a new batter casually not one after the other. That belittles the other team. Take the bunt and steal sign off. Practice other things you need to learn better during the game without the other team realizing it. Tell your players to stay as intense as ever with no game face waver. Same with the bench, same intensity as a close game. That is respecting the other team. My opinion is that most teams have not gone undefeated during their season so there is always something to learn from every game played. It is also a good chance for your substitutes to get some game time. You need those subs to be ready to take over any time they are needed when a starter gets injured or is sick. That too will happen. So be prepared and prepare all of your players. All players should learn 2-3 positions especially the substitutes.

## **Winning coaches stay in control and are confident always.**

Winning coaches do not need to be arrogant or cocky. They know their teams are prepared through hours and hours of hard work preparing for every aspect of the game and situations that could arise during a game. A winning coach thinks of every one of those situations that could arise during a game, with every player on the team and through analysis of every team that they play. They are prepared. Do situations occur that were not covered? Of course, but the winning coach stays calm, thinks through it and has their team respond to that challenge. A winning coach is confident and has a positive attitude which is the key to having a winning team. They do not think that they know everything, they are always learning. They are not afraid to seek the advice of other coaches especially retired coaches who have been successful and in more situations. Their minds are open to advice and they want to learn new things and think in different ways. They look and listen to everything; they take what they like or incorporate into their programs.

**Being a winning coach does not happen by chance, it takes a lot of hard work, soul searching, listening, watching, diagnosing, strategizing and doing.**