



Chuckers

"Coaching Philosophy and Approach"

Introduction

As a RCBA coach, you want to maximize whatever time you have on the field to help your players and teams develop to the very best of their abilities.

In order to do that coaches need to be both organized and creative when it comes to putting together their practice schedules.

Coaches who put some genuine thought into how they want to approach and organize the time on the diamond not only maximize their productivity, but also provide their players with a positive and enriching experience. With a specific focus on coaching philosophy and practice atmosphere, this hopefully will provide you with the tools to create a fun and active practice environment that will keep your players engaged and attentive.



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"Coaching Guidelines"

There are many layers to coaching, especially when you are coaching a team sport such as baseball. With every player having different capabilities, be mindful of the following general guidelines:

Teach one thing at a time.

- Don't overload your players.
- Work from the ground up.

Stay positive.

- Encourage process driven action over end results.
- Criticize effort and approach.
- Encourage players to become students of the game.



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"Coaching Guidelines"

Teach one thing at a time. As coaches "we" don't want to overload players. So if we think a hitter has three or four things that mechanically need to be fixed, we're going to focus on one. "We" are going to focus on one thing, and before we go to anything else we're going to fix it.

"We" are not going to try to fix two or three things at a time, and we're going to **work from the ground up**. A lot of times you fix something with the lower half of the body, and it cures an issues in the upper half of the body.

As coaches "we" are going to try to encourage any action that gets us closer to the desired result. **Still criticize effort. Still criticize approach.** But as they get closer to the desired result, we're going to **continue to encourage** that.

And then we're going to **encourage players to become students of the game**. We want to get them to understand why and how we do things.

STAY POSITIVE



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"Be an Encourager"

We should say seven, eight, nine encouraging words for one negative word, one critique word. We have to encourage the simplest little things so that foundation gets built.

The word "now" is really important when you're training, rather than "but." So you encourage somebody, for example saying, "You got that throw over to first base on the pickoff attempt. Now, let's get that throw waist high"—rather than, "But, that throw was up and over to the left side of the first baseman."

Encouraging words make it interesting. It makes it fun for the players. It makes it a learning environment.



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"Coaching Philosophy"

Philosophy and personnel — Coaches have to ask ourselves when we start to plan our practices, "What type of team do we want to be?" And maybe the better question is, "What type of team can we be?"

Do we see our team as a station-to-station team, or an aggressive team that's going to force the issue and put a lot of guys in motion? Do we see ourselves as a pitching and defense team first, or maybe an offensive-minded team first? We'd like to be all four; we very seldom have that opportunity. And we keep in we get who we get.

We have 100's of players come out for baseball every year; we keep around 12 for each team. That's who we get, that's who we work with, that's who we're going to coach. We can't complain about it. We can't wish we were somewhere else. That's who we coach.



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“Practice What is Important to You”

Always remember one thing “If you preach it, teach it.” So if you think something’s important, it needs to become an integral part of your practice. If you think it’s important, you need to teach it until you get it right.

How you practice and what you practice is going to tie into your personnel and philosophy.

If you think you’re going to have to bunt a lot, if you see yourself bunting five, six, seven times a game, then that better become an integral part of your practice. If you see yourself as a team that has five or six guys that can steal a base and you’re going to run a lot and put pressure on people, then you need to spend a lot of time on that in practice.

Player capabilities — As coaches we need to be aware of our players, what they’re capable of and what their limitations are. At the same time, we need to have a constant conversation with our players so that they know their limitations so that they’re not trying to do more than they can do. I think every player needs to understand what their limitations are and what they’re capable of.



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"Practice Atmosphere"

Practice atmosphere — **you** are going to dictate your practice atmosphere. As a coach **you** are going to set the tone. They will rise to meet the expectations that you set for them.

Two different thoughts — 1st thought is that your practice atmosphere is going to be a business-like or game-like approach. 2nd is, it's going to be a little more relaxed or a little more loose.

You need to set the practice atmosphere and then you need to stick with it. If the practice demeanor changes, It may confuse players. If it's business-like one day, loosey-goosey the next day, players may struggle with that. So we want to be consistent with our practice demeanor.



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"Coach Approach"

Coach approach — again, there are two different approaches. One is a **cookie-cutter** approach, the cookie-cutter approach is we're going to have everybody do everything the same way. So all our players are going to hit the same way—they're going to have the same stance; their approach is going to be the same. All our pitchers are going to have the same windup; they're going to throw the same from the stretch; they're going to hold a curveball the same way; they're going to hold a changeup the same way.

Second approach would be what is would be called the **absolutes approach**. John Wooden, probably the greatest basketball coach of all time, was also a big baseball fan. He felt baseball was an over-coached sport. He wrote a poem:

"There once was a .400 hitter named Krantz, who had an unusual stance. But with a coach's correction, his stance was perfection; but he couldn't hit the seat of his pants."



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“Coach Approach continued”

Sometimes we need to add a little flexibility for players that do things a little different, but still meet the absolutes that you have.

So when you talk about hitting, you may have five or six absolutes—you may have five or six things, five or six fundamentals that you think every hitter has to do mechanically to be successful. You may feel there's six or seven things every pitcher may have to do mechanically to be successful.

So if you have a hitter with a little quirky stance, or he does things a little different, but he still meets your absolutes, you allow for that flexibility.



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“Purposeful Preparation”

The most important start to making practice fun—making practice impactful—is to **prepare and organize**.

John Wooden said that “*Failure to prepare means preparing to fail.*” Simple phrase; very important phrase.

You have to be purposeful, to plan for your practice each day. You have to take that time to plan.

Coaches own individual personalities, own strengths and weaknesses. If you are more adept at teaching defense, or pitching, or hitting, or something, you can concentrate to make sure you oversee those things, and then have other people—be it staff, be it even coaches, be it the players themselves—take care of other things.

But if you prepare — if you diligently prepare beforehand—you can have an organized practice that works efficiently, that works on time, that gets learning done, that gets development done, that gets training done.



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“Coaching Techniques”

Some of the techniques — **consistency** is important. Consistency is very important. The ability for the player to learn and have fun when they know what is expected of them; when they know where they're supposed to be; when they know what's coming next; when they know what's going to end—we all like that, and the player really likes it.

There's a **routine**.

Players know the rotation. Players know when their session is ending, be it a defensive session, be it a defensive fundamental; there was a routine that they grasp, that they get comfortable with.

Players can develop then. So be **consistent**; stay in your routine. Pregame practice, stay in a routine. The day that you adjust off of it is the day that you can tell, as a coach, that they're in a rut. It's in a grind, it's not fun—okay, now we'll adjust.



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“Coaching Techniques continued”

Let there be **No Gray Areas** — be specific, be clear. None of us want a gray area. Now, if there is a gray area — because a lot of the game is a gray area — it's reactionary.

Well, then it's reactionary; you can be specific that it's reactionary. You're going to react. There's no specific that “Joe” was going to score on that play; he just did. But in your practice, **be specific**.

There will be things that go on in your practice that you don't know how to address immediately because it will be a reaction by the player; it will be a reaction off of something you can't plan. You might have to take the time. That's the note you make; take the schedule out of the window, make a note that, you know, you are going to look that over again and then address it. **No gray areas**.



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“Baseball Should Be FUN”

This is a “profession” where they don’t say, ‘Work ball,’ to start the game. They say, ‘**Play ball.**”

So we’re playing a game.

It should be fun; it needs to be fun.

We can make it fun, and that’s what continue to try to stress; if we do things right, we can continue to develop this game far into the future and have a lot of impact on a lot of players that will enjoy the game and will pass it on to enjoy the game further.

This is property as developed of Richmond City Baseball (1963)