

Coaching Tips to Win

Strategy and Team Management (Do's and Don'ts, and Never's)

1. Do make and publish a game and practice schedule for the entire season. Changes can be made to this schedule, but understand players and families need to make plans further than a week in advance.
2. Do know the strike count and outs at all times in a game.
3. Do break the game down into "half runs". A half run is scored when you get a player to second base. From second a base hit should score the runner.
4. NEVER make the first OR third out at 3rd base. Stealing third base is rarely worth the risk.
5. Do know when you need more base runners than steals. If down by more than 2 runs later in the game, you need more base runners than stolen bases. More base runners = more runs. Don't waist them using over aggressive base running.
6. Do use the bunt to advance runners and generate runs early or late in the game. This is a good way to counter a good pitcher or catcher. One run per inning is still 7 runs. It is better to have a runner at second with two outs, then a runner at first with one or two outs.
7. Never intentionally walk the go-ahead or tying run.
8. Do know when to concede a run versus bringing in the infield to make the play at home. (ie: Early in the game bases loaded and 1 out..... go for the out or the double play)
9. Do chart your opponents player's batting tendencies. (Pull hitter? Can't hit outside corner, etc.)
10. Don't risk a Hit and Run with a natural right handed pull hitter at bat. Hitters should be trying to hit behind the advancing runner to right field.

Mental Tips and Sportsmanship

1. Remember, your team's sportsmanship and attitude will follow the coach. **Stay positive.**
2. Make sure your team is prepared for the start of each game, both physically and mentally. Pre-game warm up should be a slow build up, with the peak happening as the players first take the field. They should be pumped up and charging onto the field.
3. Don't complain or argue about umpire judgement calls during an inning. You will never get a call overturned, and you just look like a whiner.
4. NEVER object to calls about balls and strikes from the coaching box or dugout. If you must, discuss the strike zone with the umpire, do it between innings. Ask him for his help, in understanding the pitches. Are they too low or inside, etc. This way you are seeking his help, so you can make the needed on the field adjustments to players.
5. Keep the dugout players under control and mentally ready to play. They should **not** be sitting down when their team is batting. Positive chatter is encouraged. Sarcasm or negative chatter is bush league.

Coaching Your Players in the Middle of a Game

1. Always coach proactively before the play occurs. Never reactively after a play.
2. Help defensive players make needed adjustments. Don't expect them to just know.
3. Remind base runners what to do. (ie: "Be sure to tag up on an outfield fly.")
4. Help increase or decrease your base runners lead offs with hand signals, not your voice. When the wind is high, or nearby traffic is loud, you may not be heard.
5. If a player needs technique instruction, wait until between innings and approach the player in a one-on-one manner. Don't shout technique improvements to a player after an error.
6. Control the defensive game too. Call all pickoff plays and defenses. Letting players decide on their own will lead to poorly coordinated efforts, or over aggressive mistakes.
7. Control the pitching game. Letting a catcher or pitcher call pitches, will lead to too many meat fastballs or too many hanging curves
8. Runners should return to the 3rd base coach a confirmation sign (tap on chest) on every pitch. If any confusion is present with a runner, call off the play quickly.

Player Base Running 101

You're a Runner on First Base and A Fly Ball is Hit to the Outfield

Fly ball to right, go 1/3 of the way between 1st and 2nd. You will have to turn yourself so you can see if the right fielder catches the ball.

Fly ball to center, go about 1/2 way between 1st and 2nd.

Fly ball to left, you can go almost 2/3 of the way between 1st and 2nd. Your weight is on the balls of your feet. Your arms are hanging loosely in front of you. If the ball falls in, you're on your way to second base. If the ball is caught, you're scampering back to first base.

Basic Hit and Run. Base runner must NOT get picked off. The hitter will be swinging (even at a bad pitch) and trying to put the ball on the ground. The hitter's job is to hit the ball down. No popups. You can sacrifice a good jump since you are protected by the hitter. Runner should take a quick peek as the ball is hit.

You're a Runner on Second Base and a Ball is Hit (no runner on first)

"Apply the Rule": On ground ball to right side (second base, first base), advance to third. On ground ball back to pitcher, hold and make sure he throws the ball to first (you can be a couple of steps off the bag, just don't be so far off that the pitcher can pick you off), then if you've gotten a good jump, go over to third. On ground ball to left side, make the third baseman or shortstop throw the ball to first before attempting to go to third. (You can be a couple of steps off the bag, just don't be so far off that they can pick you off.) Make a line drive go through. don't get doubled off! On fly balls, if it's obviously going to be caught - go back to second to tag up. If the fly ball is kinda iffy (may be caught and may not be caught), you need to be far enough off the bag so that you can score if the ball falls in for a hit, but not so far off the bag that they can double you off if the ball is caught. Obviously, the coach doesn't have time to go over all of possible scenarios in a game. So, I'll just say: Apply the Rule.

You're a Runner on Third Base

No prize for a big lead. Take a big enough lead that the 3rd baseman must stray from their position to hold you, then quickly shorten it again.

Scoring on a passed ball or wild pitch As the ball travels in the air, the runner can be moving toward home on their second lead. If there is a passed ball or a wild pitch, the runner is in good position to score. If the catcher catches the ball, the runner must stop and sprint back to the bag in fair territory (so if the catcher throws to third the ball has a good chance of hitting the runner in the back, caroming into left field and we score the run). Never play the cat and mouse game, attempting to challenge a catcher to throw down. At the 90 foot divisions, you will be out.

Tagging up on fly balls. Make the line drive go through. Don't get doubled off! On any fly ball to the outfield that isn't obviously a base hit (and less than two out. With two outs, of course, you're off on contact), you go back to third base and tag up. Timing is very important. If you leave the base too soon, they can appeal the play and you can be called out. If you leave the base too late, they may throw you out at the plate. If it's going to be a close play, the runner must leave the base at the exact time the ball touches the glove of the outfielder. The runner must be able to observe the catch himself, rather than relying on the third base coach to tell him to tag up. The only way the runner can clearly see the ball while tagging up at a base is to have the foot on the base that will allow him full sight of the baseball as it is touched by the outfielder. Just as the ball touches the outfielders glove, the runner pushes off hard with his foot that is in full contact with the base, achieve maximum acceleration as quickly as possible, and slide at home plate. If you run into the catcher and don't slide, they will call you out. You must slide at home.