

“Mind your Pitching Mind”

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If you have been round the game of baseball long enough, you know pitching and defense wins. Don't get me wrong, I love the three run homer as much as the next guy. However, pitching and defense wins!

I know we as coaches always work on mechanics and PFP's. But do we spend enough time on the mental side of pitching? There is common mental pitching flaws that a hurler can suffer from, they are: Prayer Pitching, Primitive Pitching and Perfect Pitching.

Lets take the first one Prayer Pitching and explain its problem. The pitcher who is exhibiting prayer pitching is the guy who is thinking, “I hope it's a strike,” I hope the hitter doesn't hit it, or “ I hope the ball goes where it needs to go. These thoughts are mentally defeating the pitcher. A pitcher's mind set should be, “ you can't beat me, “ The ball is going where I want it”, or “ I am in control.

The key here is for your pitchers to pitch with conviction. We must instill into our pitchers mind that they are in control at all times. The mind has a lot of power.

The mind is like fire. If you can control it you can be productive, and use it to your advantage. If you let your thoughts get out of control, like a fire, it can destroy you.

The second mental flaw for hurlers is Primitive Pitching. This is where a pitcher forgets the concept of pitching and simply just throws the ball. In this form of a thinking, a pitcher is thinking throwing harder and harder is the best thing to get out of a jam. Ironically, Primitive Pitching produces an opposite result of what is intended. The effort to throw the ball harder produces tension, which actually slows the ball down out of your hand. To able to perform in any athletic

endeavor one must be tension free to produce.

The last mental pitching dilemma is Perfect Pitching. Some pitchers respond to pressure by attempting to make the perfect pitch. Perfect pitching results into nibbling at the corners. Every now and then it is ok to challenge a hitter. In this form of thinking the pitcher seems to be afraid to get hit and starts to aim the ball instead of pitching. When you try to aim the ball or try to steer the ball to the target your mechanics will suffer. “ Mechanics fail because of faulty thinking”

Marcel Lachemann

Primitive Pitching and Prefect Pitching are result of false assumption that pitchers must strike out every hitter. I believe the pitchers' job is to get a hitter to swing at a pitcher's pitch. The key to Pitching is to upset the hitter's timing not striking every one out. Pitchers cannot be afraid of contact. Bottom line all these mental pitching breakdowns are the result of lack of TRUST. As coaches, we have probably stated and repeated, “ Trust your stuff” to our pitchers.

One of the ways to overcome these forms of thinking is by having a pre-pitch routine. Our mental routine is going to be an ongoing process through the course of the game. There are three parts to the pre-pitch routine: Self Control, Plan, and Trust.

It starts with Self Control. A pitcher must control himself before he control his performance. Secondly, a pitcher must have a Plan before each pitch. Throwing the pitch you want to the spot you want and know why you're doing it is essential. Finishing the pre-pitch routine is Trust. A pitcher must believe in his ability and his stuff. I heard a saying sometime back that drives the mental game home, it is ,” What the mind conceives the body can achieve.” So true, the mind is the most under practice muscle in athletics.

Pre-Pitch Routine example:

1.

Self Control- Step onto the rubber, and get sign.

Plan - Visualize the pitch hitting the desired target.

Trust- Throw the pitch

2.

Self Control- Get ball back from Catcher and rub the ball till you are ready mentally for next pitch.

Plan- Select Pitch (Change Up)

Select Location (Down and In)

Select Target (Catcher's Outside Knee)

Trust- Take a deep breath and make the pitch.

"The key for me is to forget about results and concentrate on execution."

Orel Hershiser

Points to ponder

1. Hitters will make contact
2. Pitchers must always be on the offensive
3. 50 % of all hitters take the first pitch of an AB
4. 65% of all balls hit in fair territory go for outs
5. It is harder to hit than it is to pitch.

Some final thoughts on how to succeed with your pitching staff. Your team will

only be as good as it's pitching staff. A pitcher must make establishing his

fastball a priority. Pitchers who dominate the outside half win ball games.

Pitchers must dominate their mind's to produce in clutch situations. Lastly, I think

if you organize your time wisely and work hard with your pitchers on the physical

and mental aspects of pitching you will be successful.