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An instructional video for coaches with an emphasis on attitudes and skills development of baseball players

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Middle Tennessee State University, 1992

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An Instructional Video for Coaches with an

Emphasis on Attitudes and Skills

Development of Baseball Players

Elliot Owen Johnson

A dissertation presented to the
Graduate Faculty of Middle Tennessee State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Doctor of Arts in the
Department of Physical Education
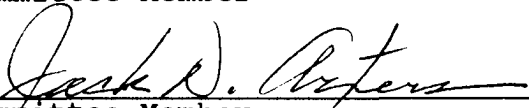
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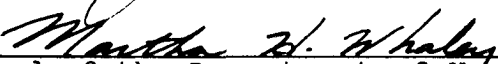Graduate Committee:
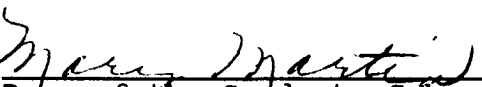
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ABSTRACT

An Instructional Video for Coaches with an
Emphasis on Attitudes and Skills
Development of Baseball Players
Elliot Owen Johnson

A 90-minute instructional videotape to aid youth league
baseball coaches in teaching skills and attitudes was
produced. The project was directed to the instruction of
youth ages 8 to 12 years. Participants included four boys
ages 8 to 12 years, four boys ages 13 to 18 years, and a
former professional pitcher. An experienced college
baseball coach taught the skills and verbalized affective
principles as they were shown on the screen.

Basic fundamentals of hitting, infield play, pitching,
outfield play, and catching, as well as the skills of
bunting, baserunning, and sliding, were discussed in six
sections of the video. Each section was organized according
to the following general format: mental aspects,
fundamentals, visualization, drills and coaching points,
team practice, and teaching keys. A special emphasis of the
video was the direct and indirect reminders concerning the
importance of the psychological impact of youth sports
competition. The entire edited of the video was included in
the manuscript. A coach's checklist of fundamentals,
drills, and affective points was included in the text.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Approximately 20 million children between the ages of 6 and 18 participate in nonschool-sponsored youth sports programs (Weiss, 1989). These sports have potential to either benefit or harm the participant. A very important facet of the physical and psychological values of youth sports depends upon the coach. Herein lie some problems. Though childhood is the time when many of our attitudes are formed and actions determined, the majority of youth baseball teams are coached by adults who have limited experience both as athletes and/or coaches. Most of the 2.5 million adults who serve as youth sports coaches lack knowledge about both child development and sport science (Weiss, 1989).

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to produce an instructional videotape on baseball which will help youth league coaches to teach proper attitudes and skills of baseball. Strategies for teaching fundamentals, as well as how to affect the development of proper attitudes towards the game of baseball were included. This video attempted to demonstrate how, when properly conducted, development of young players impacts their cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. It is hoped that improved instruction

will lead to the following: (1) an increase in the number of players who want to play the game, (2) an increase in their enjoyment levels, and (3) contribute to a lessening of the high dropout rate of preteenage youngsters in youth sports.

<div align="center">

Limitations

</div>

The project was directed to the instruction of youth ages 8 to 12 years. The video showed how the basic fundamentals of baseball in the areas of hitting, infield play, pitching, catching, outfield play, and special skills (bunting, baserunning, and sliding) are taught. Reminders, direct and indirect, concerning the importance of the psychological impact of youth sports competition were provided throughout the video. The video was confined to 90 minutes in length. Team strategy and winning were not emphasized.

<div align="center">

Assumptions

</div>

The assumption was made that success in coaching youth sports is measured by the enjoyment of the participants and their cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development. The assumption was also made that the information selected was accurate and supported by research and that the best and most recent information relating to skills and traits of 8- to 12-year-old youth was utilized.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 2 included a review of literature. Studies on the value of youth sports, characteristics of preadolescent youth, the importance of visual cues in learning. Previous videotapes teaching baseball fundamentals were also reviewed. Selected instructional theories utilized as a basis for instruction for this video were examined.

Chapter 3 included the method and procedures used in the production of the videotape. The background, pilot study, writing of the script, and selection of site and subjects were explained.

Chapter 4 provided an outline and script of the video.

Chapter 5 contained a restatement of the problem and procedure, summary and conclusions of the project, and recommendations and implications for further research.

CHAPTER 2

Selected Review of Literature

In this chapter, the researcher reviewed the pros and cons of youth sports. Included are the characteristics of preadolescent youngsters, the importance of visual cues in learning, previous videotapes teaching baseball fundamentals, and selected theories utilized as a basis for instruction.

Pros and Cons of Youth Sports

The value of youth sports has been debated almost since their inception. Depending upon which statistics are believed, from 30 to 50 organized sports involve 25 million or more of America's 40 million children between the ages of 5 and 14 years. Little League Baseball is the largest organization, with 20,000 leagues in over 30 countries and over three million children engaged annually (Eitzen & Sage, 1986). During the 1970s, sport historian J. W. Berryman (1975) saw the rise of highly organized youth sports programs for children under the age of 14 years as one of the most significant social trends of recent years. Current observation confirms the continuance of this trend. Tutko and Bruns (1976) believed that when coaches forced competition prior to a child's capability of handling pressures involved, the long-term detriments would outweigh any supposed benefits. They further contended that adults

tell some children they are losers by having screening devices in team selection, handing out trophies, keeping league standings, and emphasizing statistics. Martens (1978) warned:

> Just as play, games, and sport have the capacity for positive socialization, they may also breed deceit, hatred, and violence. It is the interaction with parents, teammates, and coaches that determines if sports help the child develop morally or immorally. (p. 274)

On the positive side, youth sports give many youngsters who will not be skilled enough to play in junior or senior high school a chance to play organized competitive games. Proponents of youth league sports point to the development of self-discipline, cooperation, motivation to achieve, courage, persistence, preparation for life, health, and fitness as positive aspects of their programs. Youth league sports are therefore useful to promote values and attitudes about competition, sportsmanship, discipline, authority, and social relationships. The original certificate of the federal charter granted to Little League Baseball provides an illustration. The charter provides that Little League Baseball programs will voluntarily assist boys in developing qualities of citizenship, sportsmanship, and manhood using the disciplines of the native American game of baseball to teach spirit and a competitive will to win, physical fitness through individual sacrifice, the values of team play, and wholesome well-being through healthful and social

association with other youngsters under proper leadership

(Certificate of Federal Charter, 1964).

Hale, president of Little League International, said:

> The numbers turned on by the program far exceed
> those being turned off. And I see the extension
> of something unique to America--the volunteer
> movement. When you see thousands of adults giving
> their time for nothing, it's an admirable quality
> to continue in this country. (Warner, 1976,
> p. 11)

Martens (1978) found the debate about the value of

competition meaningless. He believed that competition was

neither good nor bad, but was a process where individuals or

groups compared themselves with others using agreed-upon

criteria for evaluation. He said the environment determines

whether the process is positive or negative. Martens and

Seefeldt (1979) identified 20 objectives of youth sports

programs from an analysis of over 400 published articles:

1. To develop motoric competencies
2. To develop physical fitness
3. To teach children how to cooperate
4. To develop a sense of achievement, leading to positive self-concepts
5. To develop interest in and a desire to continue participation in sports in later years
6. To develop healthy, strong identities
7. To help develop independence through interdependent activities
8. To promote and convey the values of society
9. To contribute to moral development
10. To have fun
11. To develop social competencies
12. To help bring the family together
13. To provide opportunities for physical-affective learning, including learning to understand and express emotion, imagination, and appreciation for what the body can do
14. To develop speed, strength, endurance, coordination, flexibility, and agility

15. To develop leadership skills
16. To develop self-reliance and emotional stability by learning to make decisions and accept responsibilities
17. To teach sportsmanship
18. To develop initiative
19. To teach children how to compete
20. To help children learn about their capabilities through comparisons with others

(p. 9)

Youth league sports can give families a common interest and perhaps furnish a fatherless son with a father figure in the person of a coach. The down side occurs when one finds "youth league widows" of compulsive volunteer coaches and family routines disrupted because of excessive games and practices. Other negatives include coaches and parents arguing vehemently with umpires and even actual fights between coaches, officials, and parents.

Critics further claimed that excessive psychological and physical demands were placed upon children and that the encroachment of adults into a child's world reduced the spontaneous value of play. The danger of physical injury to immature bone (epiphyses) and cartilage was seen as a hazard of youth sports. The rate of injury for youngsters involved in youth sports varied from 2 percent to 15 percent (Southmayd & Hoffman, 1982). Healing takes time, but often there is a subtle pressure for youth to "play with pain" or to "sacrifice their bodies for the good of the team" (Hutslar, 1985). This may not be in the best long-term interest of the child.

Studies by Chu and Griffey (1985) and L. R. Rees (1985) demonstrated that when interaction took place in a competitive atmosphere among groups of different status, negative feelings may be reinforced or increased. Parents often exerted subtle pressures on children to meet their expectations (Chalip, 1989). League competition sometimes generated more interpersonal tensions (Watson, 1977). Though Weiss (1987) indicated the positive aspects that occur when youth sports were guided by caring, sensitive, and informed coaches and parents, dropping out could be the result when youth sports programs were administered with the wrong priorities. Researchers generally agree that competitive stress is a negative emotional state generated when the child is unable to adequately respond to competitive performance demands, thereby risking failure, negative evaluation of his abilities, and loss of self-esteem (LeUnes, 1989). Iso-Ahola and Hatfield (1986) maintained that intrinsic motivation for competent behavior was present in all humans. When children felt they did not meet expectations, the resultant negative stress could lead to burnout and dropping out. Duda (1985) linked children's concern about the evaluations of parents and coaches of their performance to post-game stress. Youngsters wanted to please significant adults. Indeed, they <u>must</u> please someone!

What do the children think of youth league sports? They usually had positive attitudes towards their experiences (Eitzen & Sage, 1986). The fun of being on an organized team, the chance to meet others and to make friends, and the opportunity to improve their skills were the things participants liked most about their sports experiences. Not getting to play, poor umpiring, and being scolded for mistakes by coaches and/or parents were the things they liked least (Gill, Gross, & Huddleston, 1983; Sapp & Haubenstricker, 1978; Smith, Adams, & Cork, 1976; Wankel & Kreisel, 1985).

In one study, 75 percent of eight- to nine-year-olds did not participate because they thought they were not good enough (Orlick, 1972). Not getting to play was the major reason for dropping out among those who did play.

In a later study (Orlick & Botterill, 1975), 67 percent of dropouts left because of over-emphasis on competition, and 31 percent left because they developed other interests. Of those who quit because of competitive emphasis, 50 percent blamed the general environment of the program (too serious), while 17 percent blamed their coach (too much criticism, not fair to all, didn't let me play).

Petlichkoff (1982) found that achievement, affiliation, and arousal or excitement were the most important incentives for sport participation across different age levels. Conversely, Passer (1982) provided evidence indicating that

extrinsic factors became less important in comparison to intrinsic motivational factors as age increased.

A study by Feltz and Petlichkoff (1983) revealed that "not having skills improve" and "not being as good as desired" were the most frequent reasons for dropping out. It was further revealed that dropouts scored significantly lower in perceived physical competence than current participants scored.

As part of a longitudinal study at the University of Michigan, researchers asked participants in over 10 sports why they participated. "To have fun" and to "improve sports skills" were by far the most important reasons given (Sapp & Haubenstricker, 1978). When asked whether they planned to play again the next year, a high percentage said they planned to drop out. "Involvement in other activities" was one of the most common reasons given for both the 6- to 10-year-old and the 11- to 18-year-old age groups. It seems that youth want to have fun and learn skills, but a great many drop out when encountering pressures to win.

According to Seefeldt (1985), adults have contributed to children's elevated expectations by exaggerating their talent. We have increased their aspirations by substituting extrinsic for intrinsic motivation. Seefeldt felt that few children would voluntarily select many of our demanding training schedules, as evidenced by the high dropout rate, estimated to reach 75 percent by age 15 years, in most

sports. Further study was recommended on this issue (Gould, 1982).

Brustad (1988) found that objective success experiences, namely, high-ability level and playing on winning teams, were not associated with favorable affective outcomes for either boys or girls. Many coaches and parents implicitly assumed the opposite!

In a study of two youth baseball teams, Harris (1984) found that involvement in the action of the game and opportunities for exercising control contributed to the level of fun experienced. Wankel and Sefton (1989) concluded that a positive fun experience in youth sports depended upon an organizational structure wherein skill development was emphasized, realistic challenges were provided, success was defined largely in terms of personal skill mastery, and there was not excessive emphasis upon winning.

Wankel and Kreisel (1985) found that factors that were interpreted as being intrinsic to the sport activity (excitement of the sport, personal accomplishment, improving one's skills, testing skills against others, and just doing the skills) were consistently rated by youth league players ages 7-14 years as being most important, whereas more extrinsic or outcome-related factors (pleasing others, winning rewards, winning the game) were consistently rated

least important. "Being on a team" and "being with friends" were consistently of intermediate importance.

Because the vast majority of youth sports participants perform under volunteer coaches and because sport contributes to positive outcomes only when properly conducted (Martens, Christina, Sharkey, & Harvey, 1981), a word concerning the significance of these coaches seems relevant. Few of these coaches coach youngsters for the sheer reason of teaching skills and to open avenues for kids to have fun (Warner, 1979). Yet, these coaches have tremendous influence. Greenspan (1983) stated:

> From Little League volunteers to luminaries within sports, coaches exert tremendous influence on athletes, for an athlete's abilities--an important source of self-esteem--are reflected in the eyes of the coach. A study by Linda Gustavson and Dr. Bruce Ogilvie found that six to twelve years after swimmers had stopped competing, they still rated their former coaches as the most significant adults in their lives. (p. 103)

Because mistakes become part of the process in skill learning, children need encouragement and a feeling of success. Smith, Smoll, & Curtis (1979) recommended the "sandwich approach" to instruction: Respond to an error with encouragement and positive reinforcement about what was done correctly, follow with instruction, and end on an optimistic note. Too often untrained adults respond negatively to mistakes, defuse the child's enthusiasm for learning the skill, and contribute to the high dropout rate in youth sports. These researchers found that players with

low self-esteem benefit most from playing for coaches who were positive in their interactions with players (Smith, Smoll, & Curtis, 1978). Coaches who were trained in effective communication skills produced players who demonstrated significant increases in self-esteem from the previous year, relative to players whose coaches did not receive the training (Smith et al., 1979).

Eitzen and Sage (1986) estimated that most of the youth sports coaches have had little or no formal instruction in the developmental or educational aspects of teaching/ coaching. They suggested training was long overdue.

Characteristics of Preadolescent Youngsters

The personality of a youngster develops significantly during the preadolescent years. Not only does physical growth occur, but the child also develops attitudes concerning authority, adults, competition, responsibility, right and wrong, and rules. Many live in a constant state of flux. Children must learn to handle losing, and it is important for the coach to be more concerned with the development of the individual than with winning games (Tutko & Richards, 1971).

Willgoose (1984) reported that 9- to 11-year-old boys enjoy rough and tumble activities and were usually well-coordinated. Many physical skills are automatic, and reaction time is improving, though muscular strength is behind physical growth. A noticeable growth spurt is just

around the corner for many youngsters, as interest in food and appearance increases. Children of this age group need instruction in body mechanics, engagement in strenuous physical activity and wholesome recreation, recognition as individuals, and chances to appraise themselves through self-testing activities. These youngsters are developing a longer attention span and interests in a wide variety of activities. They crave recognition and have a strong sense of rivalry and independence. They value membership in teams or "gangs" and seek peer approval more than teacher approval. These children enjoy competition, but may become angry or easily discouraged when tired (Willgoose, 1984).

Preadolescents probably face more anxiety than at any other time in their athletic career. Understanding on the part of a coach is essential to the player's development. The coach has the obligation to make his involvement a valuable part of the growing-up process (Tutko & Richards, 1971). It is during this period that the child needs to build confidence. Yet, the complexities of the game are incomprehensible to a beginner. The youth may make mistakes and lose poise. Preadolescents may fear a fastball when trying to make contact with it. They are inclined to respond to immediate success or failure, rather than looking at the long-range picture. The child may play because certain friends play, because the uniforms have become a status symbol, because players' names may appear in print,

or because parents push the child into playing.   Idolization

of a sports personality and fantasizing are other reasons

for the participation of the preadolescent youngster (Tutko

& Richards, 1971).

The preadolescent takes booing very personally and may

become depressed, break down into tears, and withdraw

completely.   These children need support and help.   Parental

opinions carry a great deal of weight at this age.

Preadolescents want very much to please their parents.

Tutko (cited in Tutko & Richards, 1971) lists five

principles to remember when coaching the preadolescent:

1. Be concerned with the person--not the
    performance.
2. Understand and attempt to meet the needs of
    the child.
3. Make athletic participation a positive
    experience.
4. Protect and support the child in situations he
    is not prepared to handle.
5. Focus on small but meaningful goals,
    reinforced by rewards.   (p. 62)

Piaget and Inhelder (1966/1969) described each of four

distinct stages of child development.   The third stage takes

place at the ages of 7 to 11 years and is the target age for

coaches who will view this video.   During this stage, called

the "concrete operations" stage, the individual becomes

capable of reasoning about problems which arise and is

capable of drawing certain conclusions from truths.   The

child also begins to perform "hypotheticodeclarative or

formal thought processes" (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969,

p. 132).

Nichols (1978) presented a developmental theory of children's motivations. According to Nichols, performance outcomes were based upon effort as seen by children seven to nine years of age. In other words, a child of seven to nine years would perceive that success was based purely upon how hard he/she tried. Such children do not understand that ability can limit effectiveness. At 9 to 10 years of age, children attribute performance to both ability and effort. At 11 to 12 years of age, ability and effort are completely differentiated, and the fact that ability level can limit the effect of trying hard is understood. Challenging tasks were seen as requiring both high ability and maximal effort.

Ewing, Roberts, and Pemberton (1983), found that children of approximately 9 to 11 years of age tended to emphasize task-involved goals in sport, while young adolescents of approximately 12 to 14 years of age were more likely to be ego-involved. It is not clear whether differences in goal orientations among children and young adolescents were due to cognitive maturity, years of participation in the sport, or the competitive pressure at different age levels.

Importance of Visual Cues

What we see with our eyes and hear with our ears greatly influence our behavior. Visual cues have a great effect on learning and retention. Use of pictures aids recognition, recall, and the learning of procedural tasks.

Visually presented material provides information that is clearer and more accurate than material that is verbally presented. Pictures provide the learner with a proper readiness state, reference image, learning cues, and a focus of attention. Use of pictures can provide helpful information to a student who is studying independently and has no teacher feedback (Juiare & Pargman, 1990).

Further research showed that children, as well as people of all ages, remembered more information from audiovisual presentations than from audio versions of the same stories. Some authors concluded that by age 10 years children can comprehend verbal and pictorial cues equally well. There is some disagreement in the literature regarding how processing of pictorial- relative to verbal- material changes during development. Some argue that movie viewers show better long-term retention because they exert greater mental effort to comprehend a narrative (Hoffner, Cantor, & Thorson, 1988).

Visual attention increases from very low levels during infancy to a maximum during late elementary school years, declining somewhat during adulthood (Anderson, Lorch, Field, Colling, & Nathan, 1986). Three experiments with college students and sixth-graders demonstrated the usefulness of videotape in facilitating learning and comprehension. Use of videos helped college students: (1) interrelate seemingly unrelated topics or lessons, (2) make inferences

needed to fill gaps in messages, (3) understand meanings of
unfamiliar words, and (4) improve subsequent problem-solving
(Sherwood, Kinzer, Hasselbring, & Brunsford, 1987).

When viewing television with a purpose, people watched
more thoughtfully and drew more inferences (Kozma, 1991).
Use of videotape has been shown to enhance affect (promote
empathy-thinking), along with cognition (Mackey & Sheingold,
1990).

Several factors influence visual attention (Huston &
Wright, 1983). These include different voices, music,
laughing, sound effects, animation, cuts of different types,
zooms, and pans. Special visual effects and high physical
activity attracts visual attention, while men's voices, long
zooms, and inactivity offset visual attention.

Studies indicate that when there is high or even medium
correspondence (matching) between audio and visual
presentations, memory of facts is much superior to
presentations where there is no correspondence. It is felt
that this is why people remember very little of television
news! The audio and the visual actually <u>compete</u> for
simultaneous processing (Grimes, 1990). When a video
presentation shows a document as it is verbally summarized,
viewers inevitably read the document and avoid the verbal
summary. This appears to be involuntary. Subjects report
they "can't help" but read the accompanying document.
Reading is automatic. If the written word conflicts with

the visual channel, the subject reads the message first (Reese, 1982). The implications for designing a video presentation are obvious.

There is some disagreement over the effect of media on learning and motivation (Clark, 1991). Some claim that learning is influenced more by content and instructional strategy in a medium than by the type of medium (Schram, 1977). Some claim that media offers no learning benefits (Clark, 1983). This has been a most maligned and unpopular position, needless to say. American businessmen don't spend billions of dollars on television advertising for no reason!

While there is great need for videotaped instruction of players, there is also much need for instruction of parents and volunteer youth league coaches. An increasing number of these coaches and parents are illiterate. In America, 21 million adults cannot read at a fourth-grade level, and many entry-level workers lack the basic skills to study training manuals in business and industry. Among high school graduates, 40 percent cannot read at a ninth-grade level (Grayson, 1992). The results of the most recent literacy test administered to young adults (ages 21-25) by the National Assessment of Educational Progress indicate that 40 percent of those tested had difficulty locating information in a typical news article (Mikulecky, 1990). In today's culture, many who can read never do so! They have become mesmerized by what they see on a monitor, and their actions

reflect the visual media. Many youth league coaches come from blue-collar backgrounds with little or no experience in higher education (R. C. Rees, Feingold, & Barrette, 1991). As "nonprofessionals" in the education of young people, these coaches need to be taught how to teach and be motivated to do so. In training seminars held by L. R. Rees (1985) and other university faculty, adults were greatly relieved at not having to do "school work" or be responsible for "book learning." A video enables them to learn teaching skills and the physical fundamentals of the game of baseball and to further understand the developmental characteristics of youth. This is imperative if we are to reduce the "emotional child abuse" that goes on in the name of youth sports in many programs (Tutko & Bruns, 1976).

In research related to computer-assisted instruction, Jones (1989) stated that graphics can greatly enhance a program if used correctly. He mentioned that one screen of graphics can meet the need for many screens of text. He further stated that if the computer screen displayed only text the student might as well read a textbook. Finally, he added that attractive screens in computer-assisted instruction (CAI) programs increased interaction and stimulated and maintained interest.

Aspillaga (1991) studied the effects of computer-screen design to determine whether displaying text information over the graphics enhanced learning and whether displaying

information at consistent locations on the computer screen enhanced learning. His results showed that information which is overlapping a relevant aspect of the graphics does facilitate learning, as compared to information placed in a random location. His research also showed that information placed in a consistent location within the monitor screen facilitated the transfer of learning.

It is well-established that humans think in pictures, not in words. If the phrase, "pink elephant," is suggested, one pictures such a nonexistent animal. People do not think of the words, pink elephant. From his research, Gagne (1985) stated that pictures and diagrams may be used in instruction to provide concrete visual images to serve an encoding function. The use of pictures on video also supports the student's ability to recall information.

<div align="center">Selected Review of Previous Videotapes</div>

Following is a selected review of previously produced videotapes teaching baseball fundamentals and/or coaching principles and designed for youth league coaches, parents, and players.

Teaching Kids Baseball

Teaching Kids Baseball, narrated by Jerry Kindall in 1987, was produced by ESPN's Home Video Series for youth league coaches and parents to learn how to teach children the fundamentals of baseball. Kindall covered techniques of fielding, hitting, pitching, catching, running, and sliding.

Several drills were included. This video was stronger in fielding and hitting, weaker in pitching. The four-minute segment of comments of three sports psychologists make it the only video found which is strong in teaching fundamentals and includes information on coaching in the affective domain.

Skills and Drills Series

Dr. Bragg Stockton covered the fundamentals of baseball for youth league players. In 1984, he produced a total of five videos and received endorsements from Little League Baseball, Pony Baseball, Dixie Youth, and Babe Ruth Baseball. He addressed the coaches and suggested drills to use to help young players. He did an especially good job teaching the fundamentals of pitching. The videos were almost entirely devoted to skill instruction.

The Dodgers' Way to Play Baseball

In 1986, Video Sports Network International produced a 90-minute video narrated by Vin Scully. This video was directed to both coaches and youngsters. Los Angeles Dodger players demonstrate the fundamentals of every skill in the game. Color and graphics were excellent. This video failed to detail teaching techniques and drills, however. It may take for granted that younger players are ready to play at a level higher than they are capable.

The Winning Trap: Sports and Our Kids

Bob Chandler and Peggy Fleming narrate a video produced by Barton Cox, Jr. Films. This video was excellent in pointing out the values and pitfalls of youth league sports. The statements concerning priorities, coaching in the affective domain, communication, and motivation were outstanding. This video was much-needed to improve the handling of young players. There was no skill instruction, however.

Selected Instructional Theories Utilized

Following is a brief summary of the central concepts of selected theories of learning (Thorndike, 1925); instructional methods (Gagne, 1977, 1985); phases of motor skill learning (Fitts, cited in Adams, 1991); and competence motivation (Harter, 1978, 1981). Each of these theories was important in the construction of the video.

Thorndike (1925) outlined laws of learning which certainly apply to the development of a young baseball player. The child must be ready to learn (law of readiness) at the level of the information presented. The 8- to 12-year-old age bracket was targeted in the video. The child must have a positive experience upon the performance of the skill (law of effect). If he does, he will repeat the skill. Finally, the child must practice (law of exercise). This is where the coach and parents exert a guiding and encouraging influence.

Gagne (1977, 1985) followed his extensive work on the learner's attitude and relationship to his instructor with several instructional recommendations. Gagne (1977) defined attitude as an internal state which allows for choices of personal actions made by individuals. Gagne (1985) noted that attitudes are influenced by both intellect and emotion and that outcomes of human performance provide a reference point. Imitation or human modeling affects attitude. According to Gagne (1977), the learner will have respect or admiration for the person whose behavior he is imitating. To increase learning, Gagne, Briggs, and Wager (1988) suggested the following nine instructional events which can be employed by the teacher:

1. Gaining the learner's attention;

2. Informing the learner of the lesson objective or goals;

3. Incorporating recall of prior information which will activate and stimulate prior learning;

4. Presenting the stimulus through distinctive features;

5. Providing learner guidance by associating subsequent material;

6. Eliciting performance by requesting the student to recall information learned;

7. Providing feedback about correct and incorrect responses;

8. Assessing performance by requesting information recall using various methods; and

9. Enhancing retention and transfer by spacing the materials to be learned and the recall of those materials.

Fitts (cited in Adams, 1991) identified three phases in the course of motor skill learning: (1) early, cognitive; (2) intermediate, associative; and (3) final, autonomous. In phase 1, the learner must understand the goal of the motor task and the movements and strategy that will best produce success. In phase 2, the movements become fused into well-conditioned patterns. This is achieved through repetitive practice of the skills and use of recommended drills. Phase 3 involves increasingly affective evidence of spatial and temporal aspects. Interference by conscious thought partially disrupts the movement pattern. Instinctive reactions must, therefore, replace mental processes in refined skills.

Harter's (1978, 1981) theory of competence motivation has great bearing upon the child's success in youth league sports and his motivation to continue participation. If we are to be successful in maintaining youths' participation in sports, we must consider the child's motivation and design training programs that enhance it. Harter (1978, 1981) maintained that individuals were motivated to be competent in academics, sports, or peer relationships. Therefore, he suggested the development of mastery in these areas.

Positive effects result when people experience success. This in turn enhances competence motivation. It is the <u>perception</u> of competence that determines subsequent motivation to participate. Those who perceive themselves successful will continue to play; those who perceive themselves incompetent will likely not continue to play that particular activity. Studies by Feltz and Petlichkoff (1983) found that sports dropouts scored significantly lower in perceived physical competence than current participants scored. "Not having skills improve" and "not being as good as desired" were the most frequently stated reasons for discontinuing involvement.

This chapter has summarized the pros and cons of youth sports, the characteristics of preadolescent youngsters, and the importance of visual cues in learning. A selected review of baseball videotapes and a summary of instructional theories utilized in the production of the video conclude the chapter.

The following chapter includes a discussion of the pilot study, the selection of the filming site and subjects, and the procedure to be followed in writing the script.

CHAPTER 3

Method and Procedures

The method and procedures for the production of the video are presented in this chapter. This chapter includes: (1) the pilot study, (2) a selection of the site and subjects, and (3) procedures utilized in the writing of the script.

Pilot Study

The writer has a background of conducting camps, clinics, and private lessons for youth league baseball players and coaches. Coaches occasionally requested a videotaped presentation. A 25-minute pilot video was completed for academic credit at Middle Tennessee State University's Department of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Safety in October 1991. The timing and organization of shooting sequences, sequence in script writing, subject selection, and skills and drills which were appropriate to be included in the final project were supervised and criticized by Dr. A. H. Solomon, Professor of Physical Education.

Selection of Site, Participants, and Cameraman

Four youths (ages 8-12 years) and four youths (ages 13-18 years) were selected as participants in the demonstration of correct fundamentals. Each player's parents signed a human subjects informed consent form

(see Appendix C). One player, a former professional pitcher, was selected for his ability to demonstrate correct pitching mechanics. Ernest Stockton Field on the campus of Cumberland University in Lebanon, Tennessee, was selected as the site for photographing the video. A qualified cameraman was hired to shoot the footage. Twelve hours of videotaping were required to produce eight hours of footage. The finished product required an additional 34 hours of editing in a Nashville, Tennessee, recording studio. The camera used was a Beta BVW5 700 Line Sony Broadcast Betacamera. This was a totally portable camera and is the type used by news media to film sports and news stories.

Writing of the Script

The video script was written with clarity of presentation utmost in mind. The video was divided into six sections and limited to 90 minutes. This format allows for the accommodation of school class periods, public meetings, and television. It was decided to feature the skills of hitting, infield play, pitching, outfield play, and catching, as well as baserunning, bunting, and sliding. Drills and affective (emotional/psychological) suggestions accompany each segment of the video. Background music was selected from a Nashville recording studio. Introductory highlights were selected with permission of the management of the Nashville Sounds Baseball Club (see Appendix B).

The following chapter includes the script with its various components. The teaching techniques utilized were primarily directed towards right-handed hitters and throwers.

CHAPTER 4

Presentation of the Edited Script

The purpose of this video is to produce an instructional videotape on baseball which will benefit youth league coaches in their teaching of young players. This video covers the following skills of baseball: hitting; infield play; pitching; outfield play; catching; and special skills of bunting, baserunning, and sliding. Basically, the format followed for each section is as follows: (1) mental aspects, (2) fundamentals, (3) visualization, (4) drills and coaching points, (5) team practice, and (6) teaching keys.

Introduction

Underlined terms are defined in the glossary at the end of this chapter.

Video	Audio
Title/Music	
Sounds	Baseball--the great American sport
highlights	that has spread around the world--and every boy who has ever picked up a bat and ball has felt the same way. He wants to excel--to show others what he can do--to play the game!
	But he may not be equipped to play his best.

EJ head	I'm Elliot Johnson. Becoming the best you can be starts on the practice field. We're about to examine the skills of baseball and see how you, as a youth league coach, can be equipped to help young players fulfill their potential in this great game.

Section I: Hitting

Mental Aspects

EJ with bat	Hitting a baseball is probably the most difficult skill in all of sports. You must strike a small, moving, round ball (which may curve or float in any direction) with a long, round bat--and hit it squarely! It's a problem for all ages.
TJ swinging **(slow motion)**	A young hitter must know what his ideal swing should look like at the moment of contact. Let's look at the swing at that point and then see how we can best get there.

Fundamentals

Notice, as Todd makes contact, his arms are extended out in front of his body. His back foot has pivoted with heel raised, enabling his hips to open towards the pitcher. His front knee is firm and

not collapsed. His head is down because
he has concentrated on <u>tracking</u> the ball
with both eyes. He has shifted his weight
from back foot to front as contact is
made.

Sounds hitters   From 60 feet away, a 90-mile-per-hour
fastball takes .4 of a second from release
to the catcher's mitt. The average major
league hitter can get the bat into the
hitting area in a little less than .3
second. So he must recognize the pitch,
its spin, and location and decide to take
it, swing at it, or duck it in a little
over .1 second! Besides, to hit a fair
ball, the hitter has only a 15-degree
margin of error for the bat angle at
contact!

EJ with bat   The important thing in hitting is to
get the <u>fat part of the bat</u>--the <u>meat</u>
<u>part</u>--into the hitting area (the strike
zone) where contact is going to be made.
Let's talk about how to do that.

We'll start with the stance. A
hitter wants to assume the stance a
comfortable distance from the plate. He
should be able to reach out and tap the

inside corner of the plate so when he
raises the bat to the level of the knees,
which is the lower part of the strike
zone, he has plate coverage. From here,
we want to be sure we have our feet spread
wide apart in a good athletic position.
Athletic position in basketball, if you're
playing defense, is with the feet a little
wider than the shoulders and the knees
flexed. It's the same way in other
sports, and baseball is no exception.
Athletic position for a hitter is with his
feet spread wider than his shoulders and
knees flexed. Notice when we get into
this position, though, we don't want to
tilt our head so that it tilts as we watch
the ball. We're not used to walking
around with our head at an angle. We want
to stay upright and turn our head so we
can see the pitch with both eyes.

Once we have our feet in this
position, the only movement we need with
the feet is to pivot on the back foot as
we swing and shift our weight towards the
front foot. We don't really need to
stride to hit. A _stride_ is a timing

device, and we can replace that with a slight hand movement back towards the catcher. So, as the pitch comes in, as far as the feet are concerned, we're going to pivot on the back foot, raise the back heel, and shift the weight towards the front foot as contact is made.

Now, what about the hands? The hands need to be held at the top of the strike zone, in towards the body and back. I like to align these "door-knocking" knuckles on each hand in this manner. This way we're sure our back elbow is down and we're able to proceed with a "karate-chop" motion through the strike zone as we swing. Sometimes you see hitters with the back elbow up. When that happens, the tendency is, as they swing (the front arm acts as a karate chop to the ball, and the back arm has to come down in order to get to the same place), to drop the back elbow and the <u>barrel</u> of the bat, causing an uppercut swing and possibly a pop-up. So we like to see the back elbow down, the "door-knocking" knuckles aligned, and the <u>trigger</u> (just a slight movement of the

hands) back towards the catcher as the pitch comes in. So we have the <u>trigger</u> and the plane of the swing taking place in this manner. The hands lead through to the baseball quickly, but the most rapid part of the swing is where the <u>barrel</u> snaps through to the hitting area (the objective). Again, we have the <u>trigger</u>, pivot, and throw-the-hands; the <u>barrel</u> comes through quickly; and we follow through with the hands high. We want a short, quick, compact swing as opposed to a long (we say <u>barring out</u> with the lead arm) swing. A long, slow swing takes too much time, and when a player gets to the upper levels, he'll have trouble getting the <u>barrel</u> through. We would rather have a short, quick, compact swing, hitting the ball out in front of the body, <u>tracking</u> it all the way to the bat (if possible), and following through. Those are the mechanics of a good swing.

Visualization

TJ swinging

The human mind thinks in pictures, not in words. Try to remember this picture. Note the trigger with the hands,

the brief pick up and set down of the front foot which replaces the <u>stride</u>, and the back foot pivot.

Drills and Coaching Points

EJ head

EJ teaching
  kids

1. **Pivot Drill.** Here are some drills that will help build better hitters. The first drill is called the pivot drill. Put the bat behind your back and hook your arms around it. Spread your feet wide to good athletic position. The weight is on the balls of the feet. When I say, "pivot," we're going to pretend the pitch has come in, and we're going to turn on our back foot. The weight is shifted on the ball of the back foot and thrust forward as we swing. Do not collapse the front knee. We want a semi-rigid front leg. We want to be sure we aren't falling away from the plate. Our momentum is going into the pitch, and we want to drive the ball up the middle.

Reminders

EJ head

  three points

a. Remove the pressure.

b. It's okay to fail.

c. Learn from your mistakes.

Remember, it's very hard, almost impossible, to develop a skill while being put under pressure to perform that skill during a game. Remove the pressure. If a player tries hard and fails, it's okay. That's why we practice! The best major league hitters fail 7 out of 10 times! Admit mistakes, learn from them, and go on towards perfection.

EJ teaching
kids

2. **Compact Swing Drill.** Drill 2 is the compact swing drill. The purpose of this drill is to emphasize that we must get our hands in front of the plate to contact the ball and swing with a short, quick, compact <u>stroke</u>. Get up next to the wall; put the end of the bat on the wall and the other end at your bellybutton. We do the drill to show that, after the <u>trigger</u>, we throw the hands forward and hit the ball out in front, rather than <u>barring out</u> and coming around hitting the wall with a long swing. Here's the way the drill works.

Take your stance. Spread your feet. When I say, "swing," throw your hands forward and swing with a short, quick,

compact stroke. Swing all the way through. Don't pull away from the wall with your front shoulder.

Reminders

EJ head

   three points

a. Teach proper fundamentals.

b. Unlearning bad habits is difficult.

c. Correct repetition reinforces muscle memory.

Remember, a young player who is stronger and faster may have initial success, even with a long, incorrect swing. But when the competition gets tougher, he'll be glad he developed a short, compact swing. Coaches at older age levels know that a young player who learns a skill incorrectly must relearn at higher levels before he is able to improve. This is very difficult. Let's teach proper fundamentals when kids are young and save them future problems caused by bad habits. It is correct repetition that reinforces muscle memory and leads to an efficient swing.

EJ working
with TJ

3. **Tee Work and Soft Toss.** Drill 3 is _tee work_ and _soft toss_. Tees are useful to isolate on one problem at a time. Todd, let's work on hitting the ball where it is pitched. Here's a double-tee set up to show that on a pitch on the inside corner you must turn on the ball and hit the ball in front of you. On the outside pitch we want to hit the ball to the opposite field by letting it get a little deeper into the strike zone. So turn on the inside pitch and try to pull it. On the outside pitch, don't pivot quite so far (only halfway) and hit that one to the opposite field. I'll call which one to hit, and you react accordingly.

By calling where the pitch is located at the last minute, it's almost like a pitch. You don't have to chase any balls when hitting into a net.

EJ with BJ

Ben, you have a little different problem--a tendency to drop the _barrel_ and uppercut. You sometimes will _bar out_ and come around the ball instead of taking your hands directly to it. We can use a

tee to help you as well. I'll put a ball on the front tee of these two (the tees are the same height), and you take your hands directly to the ball and drive the ball into the net. If you drop the <u>barrel</u> too soon, you'll hit the back tee. We don't want that. Take your hands to the ball, get your hands through quickly, get the <u>barrel</u> through, and drive the ball into the net. The <u>trigger</u> is another matter. Now, we're just working on your stroke.

EJ with WH

Will, let's work on your <u>trigger</u>. It's especially important that as the pitcher extends his arm back to deliver the ball that you take your hands back towards the catcher. <u>Soft toss</u> is a good drill to use in working on the <u>trigger</u>. When I drop my hand, that's a signal that the pitcher is reaching back to throw and I want you to take your hands back towards the catcher.

EJ head
and toss

As a coach, the way you <u>soft toss</u> the ball is important. You don't want to <u>jam the hitter</u>, getting the ball too close to his body so he can't extend his arms.

Toss the ball on a flat trajectory so it's
not confusing for him. Flip it out in
front of his body and not back even with
the plate. That's a little more dangerous
for you (the tosser). Get down on the
same level as the player and flip it right
out in front.

Reminders

EJ head

three points

a. Coach individuals.

b. Attack the major problem first.

c. Confidence breeds more success.

Remember, not everyone has the same
major problem with his swing. Coach each
individual at his current level. Build
success by working first on the major
problem that keeps him from hitting the
ball hard, then attack other areas of
weakness. Success breeds confidence, and
confidence breeds more success.

Team Batting Practice

TJ and BJ

throwing to

WH and NM

Now, here's a practice plan to double
the number of swings for your team. Use a
divider and let two players hit at once.
The fielders toss the hit balls back to a
shagger who stands behind second base and
collects them in a bucket. For young

hitters, both pitchers can throw from one knee so the trajectory of each pitch is not downhill. In throwing to older players, a protective screen would be necessary. Pitchers must alternate pitches.

Teaching Keys

Five Keys

Now, here are five keys to building baseball players:

1. Never overload a boy with too much information at once. The mind can only focus on one thing at a time.

2. When a player steps into the batter's box in a game, he must focus on the ball. He cannot be thinking about other things, no matter how important they may be.

3. Remove pressure by using positive reinforcement. It usually works much better than punishment. After all, nobody strikes out or makes an error on purpose.

4. Treat each player as a unique individual. Not everyone will have the same problem.

5. Make sure players have fun. Have fun yourself and project that impression.

If kids don't enjoy youth sports, it's pretty hard to justify them.

<u>Section II: Infield Play</u>

Mental Aspects

EJ head

Now, let's talk about infield play. Before we discuss the action, let's think about what must be going on in the fielder's mind before the pitch is made. The infielder must be thinking about what he's going to do with the ball if it's hit to him. He must know the number of outs, the score, the inning, who is at bat and how fast he runs, and the direction of the wind. He must want the baseball to be hit to him, looking forward to making the play. He thinks through the situation before the pitch is delivered.

Fundamentals

TJ with EJ
  pointing out
  fundamentals

As the pitcher delivers the ball to the plate, the infielder gets into the ready position. His hands go down and away from his body; the weight shifts to the balls of the feet; the back is flat; the tail is down; and he's in position for a hard-hit ground ball. He's also ready for a ground ball that's hit to either

side because his weight is evenly distributed on both feet. When the ball is hit, he "glides" to it with his hands low, fields it, <u>cradles</u> it into his body, and points his throwing shoulder in the direction he will throw. It's easier to field the ball in the middle of the body or to the glove-hand side than it is to field to the throwing-hand side. Always try to field the ball in the middle of the body and not to the throwing-hand side. The momentum is always coming forward, and the weight is never back on the heels. Hands are out in front. He fields the ball, <u>cradles</u> it into his body, and makes a good throw to first base.

Sometimes youth league players "flip" the glove. When that happens, they carry the glove with the backside towards the ball and flip it at the last minute. You can see the problem with that. If the ball is hit hard, they're not going to get the glove down in time and, consequently, may make an error. At other times, a youth league player will have a problem being an <u>eagle</u>. In other words, he'll

come in from the outside and sometimes not get his glove there in time. So we want to avoid both these things and field the ball not like an <u>eagle</u> or a <u>flipper</u>, but field the ball with our hands out in front, always keeping them extended and <u>cradling</u> the ball into the body.

EJ talking
to kids

On balls hit to the right side, it's important to get a good first step in that direction. The most efficient way is not to pick up the right foot, but to cross over (to pivot on the right foot and cross over with the left foot). You may have to make a backhand play. If possible, get your body in front of the ball and field the ball on your glove-hand side. Anytime you can't field the ball on your glove-hand side, you're better off to cross over, backhand the ball by reaching out to the ball and giving with it. Do not reach out parallel to your body, but reach out, give with it, and get the feet underneath you before trying to make a throw. Lots of bad throws are made because infielders reach out to make a play and throw while they're running away from their target.

We don't want that to happen. After making a backhand play, the fielder must get his feet directly under his body before he attempts to throw the ball.

On a ball hit to the left, we likewise use the cross-over step. Pivot on the front foot, cross over, and go for the ball. You may have to forehand the ball out in front of the body and cradle it, bringing it into the body. Don't reach out with stone hands. If we reach straight to it, we're liable to have a stiffer wrist. Cradle the ball, get the feet underneath, turn the body towards first base, point the shoulder in the direction you're going to throw, and make a good throw to the base.

TJ, NM, and WH fielding

When fielding slow rollers, field the ball as the left foot comes forward and throw off the right foot. Use two hands if the ball is moving. The second baseman must throw across his body. This works only because the throw is short. Whether making the play from second or from third base, the fielder must make sure his

momentum isn't taking him away from his target.

TJ and NM on double play	In turning the double play, the second baseman must get to the bag in plenty of time, with his body under control and light on his feet. He straddles the bag, receives the ball in front of his body, gets it quickly into his throwing hand, makes the throw to first base, and gets up off the front foot quickly to elude a sliding runner.
TJ turning double play	Todd, let's try it. This is one way to turn the double play. It's the "straddling-the-bag" method.
NM turning double play	Okay, Nick, get the ball and get rid of it quickly without a <u>long-arm</u> throw. It's a <u>short-arm</u> throw. He then gets out of the way of the sliding runner.

If the throw is off to the right, the second baseman shifts to the outfield side, tags the bag with his left foot, and gets out of the way. If the throw is off to the left, he comes across the bag, plants both feet, and throws.

The second baseman starts the double play on ground balls right at him by

dropping to one knee. His body is turned, and all he has to do is make a good throw to second base.

On balls hit to his right, the second baseman gets his body over in front of the ball. He makes a short underhand or backhand toss.

On balls hit to his left, he may have to go a great distance. He fields the ball out in front, plants his right foot, turns his back towards the infield, and makes a good, strong overhand throw to second base.

On balls hit straight at him but not too hard, the second baseman must charge the ball and make a short, backhand flip to second base. He maintains his momentum and with his wrist flips it straight to second base. Charge the ball.

Sometimes it is possible for the infielder to tag the runner with the back of the glove, while holding the ball with both hands, and make the throw to first himself.

The shortstop starts the double play on balls hit right at him with a short

throw from the fielding position. He doesn't have time to straighten up. He throws about three-quarters overhand.

On balls to his left, he makes a quick underhand or backhand flip.

On balls hit to his right, he backhands the ball, plants the right foot, and makes an overhand throw.

Visualization

TJ skills

Here is infield play in pictures.

Drills and Coaching Points

EJ head

Five players
   duck walking

1. **Duck-walk Drill.** Drill 1 is called the duck-walk. The objective is to encourage the infielder to approach the ball in good fielding position with the glove held low. Strong thigh and abdominal muscles are needed to duck walk.

Reminders

EJ head

   three points

a. Discipline is good for kids.

b. Parents trust a coach's judgment.

c. Be trustworthy.

This drill is not necessarily fun. It requires discipline, and it is good for a young man to be under some discipline in the process of improving his skills. Parents trust coaches to use good judgment

in drills that are selected. Let's be worthy of that trust.

2. **Short-Hop Drill.** Drill 2 is

EJ coaching

eight players

called short-hop. Partners skip the ball on the ground in front of each other so each can work on catching the ball in front of his body and <u>cradling</u> it into his body. Each toss should be short and brisk. The fielder must be careful to look the ball into his glove.

Reminders

EJ head

three points

a. Ability levels vary.

b. All players are of equal value.

c. Show consideration to each player.

You will have players with every level of ability. It's important to remember that a player's ability has nothing to do with his worth as a person. All players aren't equal, but they are of equal value as people. Treat the less-skilled player with as much consideration as you show the star performer.

EJ coaching

eight players

3. **Quick-Fire Drill.** Drill 3 is the quick-fire drill. It is designed to teach the shortstop and second baseman to catch

the ball in the pocket of the glove with both hands, remove the ball to the throwing hand with lightning speed, and return the ball quickly and accurately. Notice the importance of a small glove for the middle infielders. With a large glove, it's too hard to find the ball and get rid of it quickly. Also, it helps to turn the glove sideways and catch the ball away from the body. With this method, the throwing hand doesn't have to reach around and pick the ball out before it can be thrown.

Reminders

EJ head

three points

a. Be patient.

b. Kids won't be perfect.

c. Move in the right direction.

Be patient. Don't become frustrated and lose the slow-developing player. No one is perfect, and no one has to get it down perfectly today. The important thing is to be moving in the right direction.

Team Infield Practice

Two drills

together:

Here's a practice plan to help infielders work on their skills.

second-base/ shortstop drills	Remember, it's very important to keep everyone busy with relevant tasks during practice.
Shortstop/ second-base drills	The shortstop and second baseman work on the double play at second base. An extra player or coach rolls grounders to them, and the relay is made to a player standing halfway between first and second
Third-base drill	bases. At the same time, the third baseman works on slow rollers. Start with a row of three baseballs, each of which the player picks up and throws to a player standing halfway to first base. Field the ball as the left foot comes forward and throw quickly off the right foot. There's no time to stop, set up, and throw. The throw doesn't have to be a hard one as the skill is being learned, but it must be accurate. Later, progress to slowly rolled baseballs.

Teaching Keys

Five keys   Now, here are five keys to building baseball players:

1. Discipline is good for kids, but use good judgment as you ask them to work harder than they are used to working.

2. Expect all levels of ability to be represented on your team. Show consideration for each boy.

3. Each person is of equal value, no matter what his skill level.

4. Kids won't perform perfectly. Neither will we coach perfectly.

5. The important thing is for all of us to be moving in the right direction.

Section III: Pitching

Mental Aspects

EJ head

Some people think pitching is 80 percent of baseball. If so, it's fitting to spend a lot of time helping young pitchers develop good mechanics on the mound. Let's analyze the essentials for a young pitcher.

Fundamentals

MM delivery

Here's a professional pitcher from the start of his windup through to the delivery of the pitch. Notice the balance of his body and the continuity from one part of the delivery to the next. At the moment of release, he has every body part moving towards home plate, and his weight is shifting from back foot to front foot.

EJ body shot
with MM in
background

What are the mechanics of pitching?
Let's start with the grip. A pitcher who
has a pretty strong arm has a chance to
throw the ball hard enough to get it past
a hitter before he can get the bat into
the hitting area. This pitcher should
grip the ball across the <u>wide seams</u>, with
a lot of space between the palm of the
hand and the baseball. As he releases the
ball, he gets a lot of wrist snap as he
releases the pitch. The ball rotates in
such a manner to provide what we call
"four-seam" rotation on the way to the
plate. Another kind of pitcher, one who
needs to get a little more movement on the
ball in order to deceive the hitter,
should grip the ball with the <u>narrow</u>
<u>seams</u>. He would place both fingers on, or
just inside, the narrow seams. As he
releases the ball, he'll impart the same
kind of spin to the ball, but a little
finger pressure on either side will cause
the ball to dip or sink one way or the
other on the way to home plate. In either
case, the thumb should be placed on the
seam underneath the baseball. There is a

lot of space between the palm of the hand and the fingers holding the ball so it will take off "live" from the hand. In fact, one of the principles of throwing a change of speed pitch (a pitch that doesn't get to the plate as fast as it appears it should because of the arm speed) is to <u>choke the ball</u> (hold it deeper in the hand) so it can't be thrown with as much speed as it would have if held out in the fingers.

The next grip is another way of throwing a change-up. The pitcher could split his fingers a little wider than normal, with the seams inside of the fingers. He releases the ball without full velocity behind the ball, but with the same arm speed. Therefore, the batter is deceived into thinking the ball will arrive faster than it actually arrives. It's a good way to cause a hitter to react too quickly. This is also the beginning of the so-called split-fingered fastball, which (on a higher level) is a very effective pitch.

MM pitching   Let's limit our pitches to just a
fastball and a change-up in youth leagues.
A change-up can be thrown by splitting the
fingers a little more or by jamming the
ball deeper into the hand and using three
fingers on the ball. It's important to
use the same arm action and try to get the
batter to swing at the arm motion and not
at the ball. The spin on a curve ball
often causes young hitters to get excited
and swing. However, because of the stress
on the elbow when it's thrown improperly,
wait until kids are mature enough to shave
before trying to teach a curve or a
slider. Sometime in high school, the
testosterone levels are such that the
ligaments and tendons can withstand more
stress without permanent damage. It's
also at this time that appropriate weight
training can begin.

The pitcher _takes the sign_ with feet
together on the rubber. He wants to keep
the batter from seeing the ball as long as
possible so he hides the ball and his
wrist in the webbing of his glove. He
begins by stepping back slightly, but not

so far as to lose his balance. As he does so, he turns his pivot foot parallel to and up against the front of the rubber. Notice, he does not stand on the rubber, but up next to the rubber. Sometimes a hole is dug in front of the rubber through the wear and tear of repeated throwing as the game progresses. The pitcher or the coach must make sure the area is flat so the pitcher can be balanced throughout his delivery.

The lead leg is lifted smoothly until the thigh is parallel to (or above) the ground. Extremes can throw a pitcher off balance. We are now at the balance point.

Next comes the stride. As the pitcher strides straight towards his target, his hands separate. He lands softly, as if stepping on eggshells. His hand reaches back with his elbow up. His hand stays on top of the ball, and his hips remain closed.

When delivering the ball, the hips rotate as forcefully as in hitting. The elbow stays up and leads the way. The arm angle varies slightly among pitchers. To

find your best arm slot, go to the
outfield and throw long and naturally. It
may be overhand, or down to three-fourths
overhand in relation to the head. The
foot pivots as it leaves the rubber; the
lead elbow drives down; and we throw
against a bending front leg.

Be sure not to stop body momentum too
soon. Follow through by bending over and
letting the arm reach all the way to the
ground. The back heel is raised towards
the sky, and we are in good fielding
position in case the ball is hit towards
us.

When the league permits the base
runners to lead off, the stretch position
is required. Start with the pivot foot
already turned and the hands relaxed in
the chest area. The pitcher can throw
home or to an occupied base from this
position. Often, instead of raising the
knee as high at the balance point, use a
slide step to get rid of the ball towards
home plate a little sooner in case the
runner is trying to steal. The pitcher's

concentration, however, is still on making a good pitch.

MM pitching (slow motion)	**Visualization**

Now, here's an artist at work.

Drills and Coaching Points

EJ head	

When working with a young pitcher, remove all excess motion and focus on the basics of the delivery. These drills are designed to do just that.

EJ demonstrates drill	

1. **Balance Point Drill.** Drill 1 is called the balance point drill. Here are a group of players working on the balance point drill. Start the motion and get to the place where all pitchers must reach-- the balance point. The left knee (right-handed pitcher) is approximately parallel to the ground, the foot relaxed, the hands out away from the body, and the weight on the back leg (which is slightly flexed). This is the position we want to reach. Don't rush through the balance point. Gather at this point so momentum can be generated straight towards home plate.

WH, SC, JM, and NM with EJ

Get to the balance point and see how long we can hold it. Sit down a little bit on the back leg and make sure you're not leaning backward so you lose balance towards first base. Imagine yourself as a picture on a baseball card. Keep the hands out away from the body and the ball in the glove so the hitter cannot see it. Hold it several seconds.

Reminders

EJ head three points

a. Kids need role models.

b. Kids are easily led.

c. Kids aren't miniature adults.

Remember, young players need role models to emulate in both skills and behavior. The younger the athlete, the more easily he is impressed and led. All adults are role models for either better or for worse. But don't expect kids to be miniature adults. They need time to grow and mature. They can't be expected to perform as adults perform.

EJ coaching four kids

2. **Hand-on-Top Drill.** Drill 2 emphasizes the hand placement in relation to the baseball as the hands are separated during the windup. This is important for

any baseball player who has to make a throw from any position. The hand must come out on top of the baseball. The hand must be above the elbow, and the elbow must be above the shoulder. Let's apply that to a pitcher. Grip the baseball with the seams in your throwing hand. Spread your feet and pretend that you've already strided towards the target. Extend the arm behind you with your hand on top of the ball. Keep the hand on top of the ball. Grip the ball with the seams. Keep the arm loose and flexible and the elbow above the shoulder. The glove is in the chest so the lead arm can be used to pull through, helping you to stay on top. The wrist is loose, and the ball is held out in the fingers. Keep the hand high and the thumb underneath the baseball. Throw the ball into the net on command. Remember, this action occurs after we have strided directly to home plate. The hand is out of the glove and on top of the baseball.

Sometimes youth league players get their hand underneath the ball, <u>cast the</u>

<u>ball</u>, and lose control. Keep the hand on top and the elbow above the shoulder. All they have to do from this position is bring their elbow forward, and they'll be in excellent throwing position, behind the ball at this point.

Reminders

EJ head

three points

a. Encourage, but be honest.

b. Don't flatter players.

c. Unwarranted praise is counterproductive.

Be encouraging, but honest in telling players when they are doing something incorrectly. At the same time, don't flatter with unwarranted praise. Unwarranted praise diminishes the effectiveness of positive, legitimate praise.

3. **Follow-Through Drill**. Drill 3 is designed to improve the follow-through. Imagine yourself as a picture on a baseball card at the conclusion of the drill. Start as you were on Drill 2, with your hand on top of the baseball, elbow above the shoulder, and glove in the chest. Drive the lead elbow down and come

forward with the back elbow (of the throwing arm) so the hand is behind the baseball. Follow through, reach over, and touch the ground. Finish in a good fielding position (like every pitcher should) just like you see on many baseball cards.

Keep the hand on top of the ball and the elbow above the shoulder. Throw the ball into the net, follow through, and grab grass. Remember, we've already strided. Our front foot is at a 45-degree angle to home plate, and we've strided directly towards home plate. The wrist is loose, and the elbow is up. Reach through and throw. The glove is in the chest. We're going to use that glove to help pull the throwing arm through more quickly.

Reminders

EJ head
   three points

a. Self-image is vital to performance.

b. Parents and coaches can build self-image.

c. Kids value your opinion.

Most people feel insecure in some

way. A player's self-image is vital to his performance. He'll seldom perform up to his potential until he sees himself in a positive light. As a parent or coach, you have a lot to do with his self-image. He highly values your opinion.

Personal Practice

EJ head

A pitcher who hasn't got control hasn't got much going for him. Here's an idea to help a pitcher develop his

NM throwing
   to a wall

control: throw balls to a strike zone painted or taped on a wall. There are

View of softer
   ball

softer balls now made which are of the same weight and size as a regular game ball. Make up all kinds of games to add

NM throwing

interest. Pretend that a pitch outside the strike zone is a ball; one in the zone is a strike; and one right down the middle is a hit.

DG catching
   NM

Sometimes a friend will be your catcher. Always throw to the target that he gives you. Throw several pitches to each spot before changing targets. The catcher should give a target up and in (we're assuming we have a right-handed batter), then low and away, then up and

away, then down and in. You never get
enough target practice. Control is your
biggest ally. Good control comes from
correct practice--then more practice.

Teaching Keys

Five keys

Now, here are five keys to building
baseball players:

1. Kids need positive role models.
Adults have the responsibility to set a
good example.

2. Young players are not miniature
adults. It takes time for them to grow
and mature. Expect them to play like
kids, not like adults.

3. Be honest with kids, but be
encouraging at the same time.

4. A healthy self-image is critical
to a player's success. Try to build a
positive self-concept by setting
achievable goals with him.

5. Parents, most young people value
your opinions more than anyone else's.
They want to please both you and their
coach. Parents and coaches must work
together.

<u>**Section IV: Outfield Play**</u>

EJ head   **Mental Aspects**

Outfielders have a unique set of challenges and are often neglected by coaches. They need just as much instruction as do the infielders. Outfielders are the last line of defense, and it's a lonely feeling to have to turn and chase a ball to the fence after you've missed it in the outfield! They must catch fly balls, field grounders, and throw accurately to bases and relay men. The outfielder must know the wind direction, where the sun is, how far away the fence is and what it's made of, and the speed of the adjacent outfielder. Besides these things outfielders must know the number of outs, the score, the inning, and the hitter and his speed, if possible. They must expect and want every ball to be hit to them and know what to do with it after it is caught or fielded.

Fundamentals

BJ stance   The outfielder assumes a stance on the balls of his feet. As the pitch approaches home plate, the outfielder

leans forward, taking a short step to get
his body moving. He can then react
quickly to balls hit in front of him,

BJ drop,   use a <u>drop step</u> and crossover on balls

  crossover   hit to his right or his left, or

BJ straight   <u>drop step</u> and pivot straight back on balls

  back   hit over his head. The outfielder tries

to catch fly balls above his cap, with

BJ catching   both hands, and on his throwing-arm side.

  fly ball   He wants his momentum going towards

the target to which he will throw and uses

a <u>jump step</u> or <u>crow hop</u> to generate

momentum.

BJ catching   On ground balls right at him, the

  grounder   outfielder can become an infielder,

fielding the ball in front of his body.

BJ do or die   If he must make a quick throw to

retire a crucial run at home plate, he

<u>runs through</u> the ball, fielding it off to

the side. This is the so-called

<u>do-or-die</u> play.

BJ on one   If the outfielder is fairly shallow

  knee   and the field is rough, he can drop to one

knee to block any bad hops, field the

ball, and stand to throw.

BJ circling ball	On balls to the side, he circles the ball (if possible) to get his momentum going towards his target.
BJ to fence Relay to TJ	On balls to the fence, he quickly picks up the ball and gets it to the <u>relay man</u>. This throw need not be as hard or as long as most people make it, but it must be quick and accurate. If he receives the throw at chest level, a good <u>relay man</u> can do the rest. Remember, throw high to a <u>relay man</u>, but low to a base.
BJ throw to second base	In throwing to the bases, a hard, low, long-hop is best. Never short hop the infielder. Practice just as much as infielders, and you'll be able to get some big outs and prevent runners from taking many extra bases.
BJ outfield skills	**Visualization** **Drills and Coaching Points** Here are some drills that will help build better outfielders:
EJ with outfielders	1. **Y-Drill.** Drill 1 is called the Y-Drill. We're going to throw the ball to either the left or the right of the outfielder. After he has stepped forward, he's going to <u>drop step</u>, cross over, and

catch the ball above his cap, with his momentum going in the direction to which he will throw.

Reminders

EJ head

three points

a. Develop team loyalty.

b. Unselfish players play well together.

c. Build respect and admiration.

Try to develop team loyalty as you work on skills. Unselfish players usually play well together. Mutual respect and admiration result. That's the joy of playing a team sport.

EJ with four

players

2. **Tweener Drill.** Drill 2 for the outfielders is called the tweener drill. It's designed to establish priority between two outfielders who are going for the same ball. If the center fielder calls for the ball, he's always going to catch it because he has priority over the left fielder or the right fielder. The outfielder who does not catch the ball immediately goes to a backup position in case something should happen and the ball should be dropped.

Reminders

EJ head

three points

a. Provide success experiences.

b. Planned practices improve skills.

c. Many factors help develop confidence.

Enthusiasm is the result of a learning environment that provides success experiences. When channeled into carefully planned practice sessions, this enthusiasm results in improved skill levels and confident readiness during competition. Confidence usually develops from interest, a healthy environment, good instruction, and having fun.

EJ with

outfielders

3. **Wall Drill.** The third drill for outfielders is the wall drill. This is especially good for older players who play deeper and make outstanding catches next to the fence to save home runs. For younger players, it's a lot of fun, and it's good preparation for when they'll be playing at older ages. This drill is designed to keep players from hurting themselves by keeping them from running headlong into a wall while chasing the ball. Get back to the wall first, find

the wall, and jump straight up, rather than running back into the wall and making contact while running full speed. Get to the wall.

Reminders

EJ head   a. Be flexible.

  three points   b. Try something new.

c. Let players have input.

Motivation is helped by the coach who is willing to be flexible. Don't be afraid to try something new. Experiment with different drills. Let the players have input into making them up.

Team Outfield Practice

EJ with NM   Here's a team outfield drill to use

  BJ and PJ   when hitting fly balls and throwing to bases. Hit from behind second base. Hit fly balls right at them, to their right, and to their left. Hit ground balls at them, to their right, and to their left. Make sure each player catches the ball properly, gets his momentum going towards the target, and throws low into the base where the infielder simulates a tag.

Teaching Keys

Five keys   Here are five keys to building

baseball players:

1. Work to develop togetherness on
the team.

2. Enthusiasm for planned practices
results in improved skill levels.

3. Improved skills lead to
confidence which overcomes fear.

4. Coaching flexibility improves
motivation.

5. Let players have input into new
drills.

Section V: Catching

Mental Aspects

EJ head   The catcher is the "quarterback" of

the team. Because he sets the tempo, he

must demonstrate hustle all the time.

Though coaches can't change personalities,

they do have a chance to help mold a boy's

attitude towards his position.

Fundamentals

BJ   Let's look at a basic catcher's

demonstration   stance. While in a squat position, the

weight is evenly distributed on the balls

of the feet, and the heels are close

together. The knees are kept in as the
sign is given. Note the glove preventing
the third-base coach from stealing a
signal. As the pitcher comes to a set
position, the catcher shifts his weight
forward, spreads the feet slightly, and
brings his left foot slightly forward for
greater stability and agility. Now, he is
ready to block a low ball or to come up
and throw. The hands are extended and
remain inside the elbows. The throwing
hand is hidden behind the mitt for
protection from foul tips, and the thumb
is covered. With no runner(s) on base, an
alternative is to put the throwing hand
behind the back. You can't play baseball
with a broken finger! In receiving the
pitch, the catcher tries to catch the ball
with as much of the mitt in the strike
zone as possible. The high pitch is
caught with mitt facing towards the
ground. The low pitch is caught with palm
up. The inside pitch is caught with a
smooth wrist action and towards the strike
zone--so is the outside pitch. This is
not a jerky movement. Don't try to

deceive the umpire, but only to gain the benefit of any doubt.

BJ blocking

If the ball is in the dirt, the catcher must immediately go to his knees, round his shoulders, and provide as big a "backstop" as possible. He doesn't try to catch the ball that bounces way in front of him, but only to block it, keeping it in front of his body so as to retrieve it quickly.

BJ throwing

When a runner attempts to steal second base, most catchers execute a jump-pivot. The idea is to get rid of the ball quickly, with the momentum going in the direction of the throw. After catching the ball, the catcher turns his body so the shoulders are closed by using a jump-pivot action. The front shoulder and hip are aimed towards the base to which the ball will be thrown. The right elbow comes straight back, and the throwing hand is above the elbow. The elbow is above the shoulder. It is important to throw the ball with four-seam rotation to ensure greater accuracy.

BJ   **Visualization**

demonstration   Here's a picture to remember.

Drills and Coaching Points

Here are some drills to help develop better catchers:

EJ throwing   1. **Blocking Drill**. Drill 1 is the

dirt balls to   blocking drill. This is done when the

BJ and DG   ball bounces in front of or on home plate. The catcher goes to his knees immediately, rounds his shoulders to make himself as big as possible, and tries to block the ball. He must keep the ball in front of him so he can pounce on it and make a throw to a base or keep a runner from advancing. Throw balls in the dirt to the catchers. First of all, throw in front of them. Then throw to the right. Finally, throw to the left. Catchers need to practice going either way. Softer baseballs work very well for youth league athletes. The catcher goes to his knees, makes himself as big as possible, and blocks the ball towards home plate if possible. As long as he keeps the ball in front of him, he has a chance to pounce on the ball and make a throw.

Reminders

EJ head

three points

a. Many kids lack emotional stability.

2. Development varies within each age group.

3. Try to understand each player.

Remember, emotional stability is lacking in many youngsters. There may be as much as five years' difference in physical, mental, and emotional development among boys of the same chronological age. If you understand each player as a person, you may be able to help a boy through a very tough time in his life.

EJ coaching

BJ and DG

2. **Throwing Drill.** Drill 2 is a throwing drill for the catchers. This drill isolates the upper part of the body. The catcher works on catching the ball out away from his body with two hands, bringing the glove and the ball back over the throwing shoulder, and driving the throwing elbow straight back. Keep the hand above the throwing shoulder. Drive through and throw. This drill is good to reinforce the fundamental of catching the

ball and taking the mitt back into the throwing area. Concerning the grip, catchers should always try to grip the ball across the wide seams to get good four-seam rotation so their throw carries all the way to second base. The more we practice, the easier it is to get the ball out of the glove and to grip it across the wide seams to achieve four-seam rotation.

Reminders

EJ head

three points

a. Practice is very important, but—

b. Saturation can't replace maturation.

c. Coaches develop players only to a certain point.

Practice is very necessary, but saturation won't replace maturation. A coach can accelerate the development of a young player only to a certain point. The maturation of the youngster will, in time, take him the rest of the way.

BJ and DG

demonstrate

3. **Fielding Drills (Bunting, Pop-Ups, and Wild Pitches).** The third drill series for catchers are the fielding drills. These include fielding bunts, catching pop-ups, and chasing wild

pitches. These are very important because the catcher is the quarterback of the defense and he's got to show hustle on each play. First, we'll field bunts out in front of the plate. It's important to approach the ball with a low center of gravity, get the momentum going in the direction of first base, get over the baseball, field the ball with two hands, gather, and make a good throw to first base. On a ball that is up the line towards first base, get your head right over the baseball, swoop it up with both hands, <u>crow hop</u>, and make a good throw to first base. Always throw inside the line on a ball that is in fair territory down the first-base line. Finally, on a ball that is down the third-base line, we must get right over the ball, swoop it up with both hands with our back towards the infield, and make a good throw to first base. Stay low and come out throwing hard. That's the fielding play the catcher must make on a bunt or slowly hit ball in the infield.

EJ coaching

BJ and DG

On a pop-up behind home plate, the catcher must pivot in the direction he feels the ball has left the bat, find the ball as he removes the mask, throw the mask in the opposite direction (away from the ball), run to where the ball is coming down, and make the catch above his head if possible. Remember, the spin on a ball hit behind home plate will always bring the ball back towards home plate.

Pivot, find the ball, throw the mask, and catch it.

EJ head

Many times in youth league baseball (also at higher levels) there is a wild pitch or passed ball. The catcher must hustle back, retrieve the ball, and make a good throw to the plate in hopes of retiring a runner who tries to score from third base. Often he doesn't retire the runner, but if the ball bounces off a wall and comes back to him, he has a chance. He also has a chance if the ball hasn't gone far away. It's much more efficient for the catcher to slide alongside the ball; reach down and pick it up bare-handed; and make a short, quick

"dart-throw" to home plate in hopes of
getting the out. This is better than

EJ coaching
BJ and DG

running to it, bending over, and picking
it up. Coaches, you might save yourselves
a lot of runs with this drill.

Reminders

EJ head
three points

a. Intimidation has no place in
youth sports.

b. How you say it is important.

c. Never use sarcasm or ridicule.

Coaches are physically bigger and can
yell louder than kids. Remember how you
used to view your coach as you grew up?
Fear and intimidation are never justified
in getting youngsters to perform. How you
say something is as important as what you
say to a player. Never use sarcasm or
ridicule a player.

Teaching Keys

Five keys

Now, here are five keys to building
baseball players:

1. Physical, mental, and emotional
development varies greatly in youth of the
same chronological age.

2. Try to understand where each player is concerning his developmental traits and characteristics.

3. Saturation can't replace maturation.

4. How you say something is as important as what you say.

5. Fear, intimidation, sarcasm, and ridicule are not valid means of motivation.

Section VI: Bunting, Baserunning, and Sliding

EJ head **Mental Aspects**

Doing the "little things" well often makes the difference between victory and defeat. Sacrifice-bunting to move a teammate to the next base, bunting to get a key hit in a certain situation, taking the extra base because of efficient baserunning, or making a good slide into a base before a tag is applied--these "little things" all add up to make a complete ballplayer and increase chances for success.

EJ   **Bunting Fundamentals**

demonstration

of bunting

What are the fundamentals of the sacrifice bunt? The first fundamental is to remember that the hitter is going to give himself up (sacrifice himself) in order to advance a base runner to the next base. To most efficiently do this, be sure you are at least standing even with the plate. It's even better to be up towards the front of the batter's box when bunting. The footwork is the same as in actually hitting the baseball, except as the pitcher begins his move to home plate we pivot on the back foot so the bellybutton faces the pitcher. Slide the top hand up to the middle of the bat. Grip the bat softly, being careful to protect the hand by keeping it behind the bat. Be sure the arms are extended and bunt the ball (actually "catch" the ball) with the bat out in front of home plate. Make sure the barrel is above the level of the hands. If you drop the barrel level below the hands, often you'll bunt the ball on its bottom half, and it will be popped up. Therefore, bunt the ball with

the <u>barrel</u> above the hands and out in front of home plate. The arms must be extended. Guide the ball either down the first-base line or the third-base line with the bottom hand. Those are the principles of the sacrifice bunt. Don't take off for first base until the ball is down. Be sure to advance the runner to the next base. If you get thrown out, that's okay. It is a sacrifice.

<div style="margin-left:0">MM bunt
  demonstration</div>

Bunting for a base hit is a different matter. Bunting is very good strategy, especially for a smaller player who has good speed.

<div style="margin-left:0">EJ--bunt
  for hit
  discussion</div>

When a hitter is able to bunt for a base hit, he influences the third baseman to play closer to home plate. As a result, the hitter might be able to hit the ball past him in that or another situation. In bunting for a base hit, don't give away your intentions until the last second. Slide the hands up the <u>barrel</u> of the bat as the pitcher delivers the ball and <u>drop step</u> with the back foot so your body is pointing towards first base (if a right-handed hitter). You are ready to get a good jump towards first

base. See the ball on the ground before taking off, however. Don't leave too soon. "Catch" the ball on the bat, drop the ball down one of the two lines (first base or third base), and take off for first base with a crossover step directly on the line towards the bag. When bunting for a base hit, either bunt the ball foul or just barely inside the line. If you bunt the ball foul, you always have another strike to try again or to hit the ball. If you bunt the ball straight to the pitcher, it's going to be an easy out.

Bunting Drill

MM bunt for hit demonstration	

Now, here's a drill to help you work on your bunting. First, we'll work on a sacrifice bunt. We'll put cones on the first-base side and on the third-base side for a target.

EJ introducing bunt drill

Now, let's bunt for a base hit. Move the cones out towards the line. When

JW and WH bunting

WH and JW bunting

bunting for a base hit, make it either a foul ball or a base hit. If it's a foul ball, you've got another chance to bunt so bunt closer towards the line.

Visualisation (Bunting)

MM

  demonstration

Remember this picture as Mike sacrifices, then bunts for a hit.

Coaching Points (Bunting)

EJ head

  three points

1. Demonstrate or show visually.

2. Overlearn through drills.

3. Practice at game tempo.

Remember, in teaching skills, make it clear what you intend for the player to accomplish. Use demonstration. Show the skill by video or in a photo. Overlearn through repeated drills, continuing well beyond the number of repetitions it takes to learn the skill, yet not to the point of boredom or fatigue. Practice at game tempo.

Baserunning Fundamentals

EJ head

Baserunning is a basic athletic skill and is often the least coached! Can a player really improve his running speed? He can if he hasn't been using the proper mechanics for running and gets proper instruction. There are several principles that are crucial to helping a player run his fastest.

EJ running
demonstration

In getting out of the batter's box, the player (after he has completed his swing) crosses over with his back foot straight down the line towards first base. There are several running fundamentals that are very important for all runners, whether they are chasing a ball in the outfield or running to first base. These include pumping the arms with elbows bent, placing upper and lower arms at right angles. We don't want to lengthen the arms or bring them across (in front of) the body. Keep both arms pumping all the way to and beyond first base.

Be sure the head is held steady and not weaving from side to side. The neck, jaw, and head are relaxed as we run. Make sure that you place one foot down in front of the other on a direct line, with the toes pointed straight ahead. Any deviation from this line will subtract inches from each stride. If you multiply inches lost per stride by the number of strides it takes to get to first base, it makes a substantial difference in speed. Run at a good <u>body angle</u>. That angle will

vary with each person, depending on the physical makeup. The <u>body angle</u> I would use is the point at which I lose my balance. Running is just losing one's balance and regaining it. Let's make good runners out of players.

EJ running to
first base

On an infield ground ball, the runner sprints hard to a spot past the bag without watching the ball. He tags the nearest part of first base with either foot. He does not leap at the bag, nor does he veer off the line after passing the bag. If there is an overthrow, this path keeps him closer to second base. After passing first base, he checks for an overthrow, discovers whether the catcher has backed up the throw, and reacts accordingly.

WH running to
second base

If the batter has hit the ball to the outfield, he immediately begins thinking about going to second base. He begins running on an arc to cut down a wide turn around first base. He must get as wide as the first-base coach's box. As he touches first base on the inside corner of the bag, he lowers his shoulder to keep his

momentum from taking him too wide on his way to second base. If the outfielder has loafed and is still reaching down for the ball after the runner has rounded the bag, an aggressive runner can often take the extra base.

WH running to first, rounding the bag, and returning

If the outfielder has already come up with the ball, the runner must hustle back to first base. This drill helps to develop aggressive base runners. Running in this arc before reaching each base is always necessary if the runner has any chance to take an extra base.

MM leading off

In leading off first base, the runner must make sure the pitcher has the ball. He never takes his eyes off the pitcher. The pitcher is the only one who can get him out. Three and one-half steps is a good lead, and one quick step and a dive will get the runner back safely to the bag.

MM steal

On a steal attempt, the runner pivots on his lead foot and crosses over with the left foot. The left arm is thrust forward (towards second base), and the right arm follows with a quick pump to establish

rhythm with the feet. The runner stays low on the crossover step and reaches full speed and a lengthened stride as soon as possible.

MM shuffle

If no <u>steal</u> is on, the runner needs to gain some ground towards second base in case the ball is hit. This is called a "secondary lead" and is achieved with two quick <u>shuffle steps</u>. If the ball is hit on the ground, the runner accelerates to second base.

WH running

Visualization (Baserunning)

Drill and Coaching Points (Baserunning)

WH, SC, and
   JW leading
   off

Now, here's a drill to work on baserunning from first base. Take a regular three-and-one-half-step lead, which is a step and a dive back to first base. Keep your eyes on the pitcher. We're going to steal second base.

Lead, hold, and break.

WH, SC, and
   JW shuffle

Now, we'll work on a situation in which the steal is not on. Watch the ball as it travels to home plate. Imagine that the ball has been hit and you must run to second base. We want a secondary lead (a two-step <u>shuffle</u>) as the pitch is on its

way to home plate so we can gain ground before the ball is hit. Lead, hold, <u>shuffle</u>, break.

Reminders

EJ head
  three points

a. Teach in practice.

b. Keep it simple during games.

c. Correct when players are receptive.

It is important to do your teaching before the game. Once a contest begins, limit the information given and keep it very simple. Many players are least ready for correction immediately after they have committed a mistake, though certain situations may require it.

Sliding Fundamentals

EJ head

Another neglected "little thing" is the art of sliding. How many times have you seen a player called out in a youth league game because he didn't know how to slide? Many injuries are preventable at all ages if players are taught to slide correctly. The best thing about teaching this fundamental is that sliding can be a lot of fun to learn.

Drill and Coaching Points (Sliding)

EJ coaching

WH, SC, and

JW

It's important to learn to slide for a couple of reasons. It's much safer to go into a base sliding and popping up than it is to go in standing up and trying to stop. Secondly, when a player goes in sliding, his momentum is stopped, and he's better able to turn and go on to the next base. So it's very important to learn to slide properly. It's also important to learn not to slide too late, landing right on the base and turning or breaking an ankle.

EJ

demonstration

In approaching the base, maintain momentum, throw the feet out in front of you, and sit down, keeping the hands up. Let there be no chance of jamming a finger or a thumb into the dirt so you are out with an injured hand. As you sit down, your momentum carries you into the base. The force of the body is carried on the calf and the thigh of the bent leg. Momentum carries you to your feet, and you're able to continue on to the next base.

There are several ways to work on sliding. One good way is to use wet grass in the outfield. Another way is to remove your shoes and put a piece of cardboard in front of a base. Let's try the cardboard today.

Reminders

WH, SC, and
  JW sliding

a. We reap what we sow.

b. We reap more than we sow.

c. We reap at a later date.

EJ head
  three points

Remember the law of the harvest: we will reap exactly what we sow. Like a crop that is planted, we will reap more than what is sown, and we will reap at a later date, but we will reap the same kind of crop as the seed we have sown. Therefore, help kids to sow good habits.

Teaching Keys

Five keys

Now, here are five keys to building baseball players:

1. Overlearn at game tempo.

2. Use practice time for most of your teaching.

3. Keep instruction simple during games.

4. Correct when players are most receptive.

5. Sow good habits.

<u>Finale</u>

EJ head

Three things are necessary if a player is to improve as a baseball player:

1. He must realize his need to improve. If he thinks he's already got it made, he won't be open to coaching, and his progress will be limited.

2. He must acquire knowledge of technique. Someone must impart knowledge, and the player must receive information.

3. He must have discipline and dedication. If he's not willing to use the knowledge he has, he may as well not have it.

EJ talking
to all
players

There will come a day when he must "step it up a notch" if he is to keep playing. He must realize this and be internally motivated. It will make a difference in his play, but to badger and harass a youth league player is not only futile, it is contrary to the purpose of youth sports. Remember, the sport must be fun; everyone must be allowed to

participate; and everyone should be put in a situation where they can succeed at the youth-sports level.

Clips of drill sessions

A true sportsman should never ask odds he is unwilling to give. He should never seek unfair advantages. He shouldn't gloat over winning or sulk over losing. The coach's job is to teach kids how to compete, realizing that we really do need our opponents. The word "compete" means to strive together. A friendly, competitive game makes contestants better.

Sounds
  highlights
  and
  celebration

Very few players will go from youth leagues to the major leagues. Not every team will win a championship. But you can be the best player, coach, or parent you are capable of being, have a whole lot of fun, and become a stronger person if you'll work hard at this great game. Play to win, and remember, the real winners are the ones who consistently give their best effort in the spirit of fair play, respect their opponents, and stick with it until the last out is made.

WH skills

Credits.

Glossary

Barring out--stiffening of the front arm prior to swinging.

Body angle--the angle at which a runner runs.

Cast the ball--to push the ball from underneath instead of throwing it.

Charge--to rapidly approach a ball hit on the ground.

Choke the ball--to hold it deeper in the palm of the hand.

Cradle the ball--to bring it close to the body smoothly.

Crow hop or jump step--a short, preliminary hop or step and hop to generate momentum in the direction the player is going to throw.

Do or die--a play made hurriedly or not made at all.

Drop step--to step back with the rear foot while bunting for a hit in order to get the body moving towards first base. Also, to step back before crossing over with opposite foot before pursuing a fly ball.

Eagle--a player who "swoops" down on a grounder with hands outside his knees.

Fat (meat) part of the bat--the area near the end of the bat used to strike the ball; also called the barrel.

Flipper--a player who approaches a ground ball with the back of his glove facing it.

Jam the hitter--to throw the ball close to the batter's hands, making it difficult to hit it with the barrel.

Jump-pivot--a quick jump executed by the catcher to get into position to throw to second.

Lead off--to move off the occupied base towards the next base.

Long-arm throw--a throw achieved with full extension of the throwing arm.

Narrow seams--the part of the baseball which has the least distance between the seams.

Overlearn--to continue repetition of skills past the point at which they are learned.

Popping up--to come quickly to the feet after sliding into a base.

Relay man--infielder who receives a throw from an outfielder with the intent of throwing it to a base.

Runs through--to continue running towards a target after fielding the ball.

Sacrifice-bunting--to strike the ball softly, allowing oneself to be put out as a runner advances from one base to another.

Shagger--a person who collects hit balls and returns them to a batting-practice pitcher.

Short-arm throw--a quick throw achieved with minimal arm extension.

Shuffle steps--short, quick steps a base runner may take without crossing his feet.

Sign--signal from the catcher to indicate which pitch is to be thrown.

Slide step--a short, quick step used by the pitcher from the set position with runners on base.

Soft hands--giving slightly as the ball is received.

Soft toss--a short flip to a hitter.

Steal--to run to another base when the pitcher begins his throw to the batter.

Stealing a signal--a tactic used to gain an advantage for the hitter.

Stone hands--hands that are too rigid when fielding a ball.

Stretch position--a method of modifying the windup to enable a pitcher to prevent a base runner from running too soon to the next base.

Stride--a short step with the front foot prior to the swing.

Stroke--the swing.

Takes the sign--the pitcher's acceptance of a signal given by the catcher.

Tee work--drills a hitter performs using an upright tube which supports the ball.

Testosterone--male hormones that produce secondary sexual characteristics.

Tracking--to watch the ball with both eyes as long as possible.

Trigger--short movement (cocking action) of the hands preliminary to the swing.

Wide seams--the part of the baseball which has the greatest distance between the seams.

CHAPTER 5

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to produce an instructional video on baseball to help youth league coaches in their instruction of young players. After producing a 25-minute pilot video under the direction of Dr. A. H. Solomon at Middle Tennessee State University in October 1991, the writer composed a new script; selected the site, participants, and cameraman; timed and organized the taping sequences; selected skills, drills, and affective principles to be featured; and taped eight hours of footage. The video was taped at the Ernest L. Stockton Baseball Field of Cumberland University, Lebanon, Tennessee, in October 1992. Two professional video producers assisted the writer during 34 hours of editing in a Nashville, Tennessee, recording studio.

Summary and Conclusions

A 90-minute instructional video was prepared to help youth league coaches in the development of proper attitudes and skills of baseball players. Skills were demonstrated, drills suggested, and affective suggestions were made. The videotape will be housed in the Curriculum Laboratory of the Todd Library of Middle Tennessee State University. This formal instruction with affective suggestions should

enhance the effectiveness of youth league baseball coaches and as a result: (1) increase the number of players who want to play baseball, (2) increase their enjoyment levels, (3) help improve young players' skills, and (4) contribute to a lessening of the high dropout rate of preadolescent youngsters in youth baseball. This and other similar videos should help prepare more effectively those college students planning to coach, particularly at the youth sports level.

<u>Recommendations and Implications for</u>
<u>Further Research</u>

As a result of the development of this instructional video, certain recommendations and implications seem appropriate. They are:

1. Youth league videos, including the affective domain, should be produced for other youth team sports at all age levels.

2. An evaluation form should be developed in an attempt to compare statistically the effectiveness of youth league coaches who have viewed the video to other youth league coaches who have not viewed the video in an attempt to validate its usefulness upon the completion of the baseball season.

3. A coaching manual should be developed to accompany these videos.

4. Other videos should be developed, including one especially for parents who wish to instruct their children at home.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

OUTLINE OF VIDEO

APPENDIX A

OUTLINE OF VIDEO

An Instructional Video for Coaches

INTRODUCTION

SECTION I: Hitting

Mental Aspects

Fundamentals

Visualization (The Swing)

Drills and Coaching Points

Team Batting Practice

Teaching Keys

SECTION II: Infield Play

Mental Aspects

Fundamentals

Visualization (Infield Play)

Drills and Coaching Points

Team Infield Practice

Teaching Keys

SECTION III: Pitching

Mental Aspects

Fundamentals

Visualization (Pitching)

Drills and Coaching Points

Personal Practice

Teaching Keys

SECTION IV: Outfield Play

    Mental Aspects

    Fundamentals

    Visualization (Outfield Play)

    Drills and Coaching Points

    Team Outfield Practice

    Teaching Keys

SECTION V: Catching

    Mental Aspects

    Fundamentals

    Visualization (Blocking and Throwing)

    Drills and Coaching Points

    Teaching Keys

SECTION VI: Bunting, Baserunning, and Sliding

    Mental Aspects

    Bunting Fundamentals

    Bunting Drill

    Visualization (Bunting)

    Coaching Points (Bunting)

    Baserunning Fundamentals

    Visualization (Baserunning)

    Drill and Coaching Points (Baserunning)

    Sliding Fundamentals

    Drill and Coaching Points (Sliding)

    Teaching Keys

FINALE

      Improvement, Motivation, and Sportsmanship

CREDITS

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF APPROVAL

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF APPROVAL

P O BOX 23290
NASHVILLE TN 37202
PHONE 615 242 4371

October 26, 1992

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

The Nashville Sounds hereby grant to Elliot Johnson permission to use footage of Sounds games in his video, "The Building of a Baseball Player."

Jim Ballweg
Director of Marketing/Public Relations

JB/sc

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

INFORMED CONSENT FOR USE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS

The filming of "The Building of a Baseball Player" requires the modeling of human examples. Subjects will be asked to perform the skills of hitting, running, fielding, throwing, sliding, and catching a baseball as they are filmed. They will be asked to remain on location until the taping is completed.

FREEDOM OF CONSENT

Participation in this project is voluntary. You are free to terminate participation in this project at any time.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

I hereby acknowledge that I have read this form in its entirety and that I understand the conditions of the project and my voluntary participation. I consent to my own as well as my son's participation in the production of the video "The Building of a Baseball Player."

APPENDIX D

COACHING REMINDERS

APPENDIX D

COACHING REMINDERS

SECTION I: Hitting

Fundamentals

___Wide stance

___Knees flexed

___Grip

___Hand position

___Elbows down

___Head upright

___Trigger

___Back-foot pivot

___Front knee firm

___Head down

___Weight shift

___Short swing

Drills

___Pivot drill--hands behind back, flex knees, pivot on ball of back foot.

___Compact swing drill--bat length from wall, swing with hands out front.

___Tee work/soft toss--hit ball where pitched, avoid uppercut, trigger.

___Team batting practice--divider to double the number of swings.

<u>Five Keys</u>

___1. Never overload a boy with too much information at once. The mind can only focus on one thing at a time.

___2. When a player steps into the batter's box in a game, he must focus on the ball. He cannot be thinking about other things, no matter how important they may be.

___3. Remove pressure by using positive reinforcement. It usually works much better than punishment. After all, nobody strikes out or makes an error on purpose.

___4. Treat each player as a unique individual. Not everyone will have the same problem.

___5. Make sure players have fun. Have fun yourself and project that impression. If kids don't enjoy youth sports, it's pretty hard to justify them.

SECTION II: Infield Play

<u>Fundamentals</u>

___Ready position

___Glide to ball

___Hands front/center

___Soft hands

___Cradle

___Cross over to L/R

___Point shoulder, throw

Slow Rollers

___Field, left foot

___Throw, right foot

Double Play

___Under control

___Hands extended

___Weight shift

___Jump

Drills

___Duck-walk--walk in fielding position.

___Short-hop--throw one-hoppers from 40 feet.

___Quick-fire--catch ball out front, return throw quickly.

Five Keys

___1. Discipline is good for youth, but use good judgment as you ask them to work harder than they are used to working.

___2. Expect all levels of ability to be represented on your team. Show consideration for each boy.

___3. Each person is of equal value, no matter what his skill level.

___4. Kids won't perform perfectly. Neither will we coach perfectly.

___5.   The important thing is for all of us to be

moving in the right direction.

SECTION III: Pitching

<u>Fundamentals</u>

___Grip

___Footwork

___Balance point

___Stride

___Hands separate

___Hand on top

___Lead arm

___Hip rotation

___Follow through

___Stretch

___Slide step

<u>Drills</u>

___Balance-point drill--balance on back leg, tuck at
waist, thigh parallel.

___Hand-on-top drill--stride position, glove in chest,
hand on top above elbow, elbow above shoulder.

___Follow-through drill--pull through with lead arm,
heel to sky, reach to ground.

___Personal practice--throw to target on wall or to
catcher. Move ball around in zone.

Five Keys

___1. Kids need positive role models. Adults have much responsibility to set a good example.

___2. Young players are not miniature adults. It takes time for them to grow and mature. Expect them to play like kids, not like adults.

___3. Be honest with kids, but be encouraging at the same time.

___4. Self-image is critical to a player's success. Try to build self-concept by setting achievable goals with him.

___5. Parents, most young people value your opinions more than anyone else's. They want to please both you and their coach. Parents and coaches must work together.

SECTION IV: Outfield Play

Fundamentals

___Stance

___Drop step/crossover

___Catch above head/glove side

___Crow hop

___Do-or-die play

___Block ground balls

___Circle/cutoff grounders

___High to relay/low to base

Drills

___Y-drill--throw left or right to players. Drop step and cross over.

___Tweener drill--throw fly ball between two outfielders. Practice priority calls.

___Wall drill--find the wall, go straight up.

___Team outfield practice--hit from behind second base.

Five Keys

___1. Work to develop togetherness on the team.

___2. Enthusiasm for planned practices results in improved skill levels.

___3. Improved skills lead to confidence which overcomes fear.

___4. Flexibility in coaching improves motivation.

___5. Let players have input into new drills.

SECTION V: Catching

Fundamentals

___Stance

___Signals

___Weight shift

___Hands extended

___Fingers protected

___Receive towards zone

___Block dirt balls

___Throwing

___Jump-pivot

___Rotate shoulders

___Glove to shoulder

___Elbow and hand up

Drills

(Caution: Use of a protective cup is highly

recommended.)

___Blocking drill--go to knees, round shoulders, block

   towards home plate.

___Throwing drill--glove to shoulder, jump-pivot, elbow

   back, follow through.

___Fielding drills

   ___Bunts--circle ball, head above ball, sweep with

      two hands.

   ___Pop-ups--pivot, find ball, throw mask.

   ___Wild pitches--slide, bare hand, dart throw.

Five Keys

___1. Physical, mental, and emotional development

      varies greatly in youth of the same

      chronological age.

___2. Try to understand where each player is

      concerning his developmental traits and

      characteristics.

___3. Saturation can't replace maturation.

___4. How you say something is as important as what

      you say.

___5. Fear, intimidation, sarcasm, and ridicule are not valid means of motivation.

SECTION VI: Bunting, Baserunning, and Sliding

Bunt-Sacrifice

___Forward in batter's box

___Pivot/slide top hand

___Arms extended

___Barrel above hands

Bunt--Hit

___Slide top hand

___Drop step

___See ball down

___Foul ball or base hit

Bunt Drill

___Cones for target

Baserunning

___Elbow at right angle

___Arm pump

___Head relaxed, steady

___Toes straight

___Body angle

To First

___Run past bag

___Touch front side

___Check for overthrow

<u>To Second</u>

___Arc

___Touch inside corner

___Dip shoulder

<u>Lead off</u>

___3 1/2 steps

___Eyes on pitcher

___Steal--pivot, cross over

___Secondary lead

<u>Baserunning Drill</u>

___L-H-B

___L-H-S-B

<u>Sliding</u>

___Sit down

___Hands up

___Bent leg

___Pop-up

<u>Sliding Drill</u>

___Cardboard

<u>Five Keys</u>

___1. Overlearn at game tempo.

___2. Use practice time for most of your teaching.

___3. Keep instruction simple during games.

___4. Correct when players are most receptive.

___5. Sow good habits.

APPENDIX E

VIDEO EVALUATION

APPENDIX E

VIDEO EVALUATION

SECTION I: Hitting

1. What was the most helpful advice in this section?

2. What was the least useful advice in this section?

3. What was the most clearly described fundamental in this section?

4. What was the least clearly described fundamental in this section?

5. Comments or suggestions:

SECTION II: Infield Play

1. What was the most helpful advice in this section?

2. What was the least useful advice in this section?

3. What was the most clearly described fundamental in this section?

4. What was the least clearly described fundamental in this section?

5. Comments or suggestions:

SECTION III: Pitching

1. What was the most helpful advice in this section?

2. What was the least useful advice in this section?

3. What was the most clearly described fundamental in this section?

4. What was the least clearly described fundamental in this section?

5. Comments or suggestions:

SECTION IV: Outfield Play

1. What was the most helpful advice in this section?

2. What was the least useful advice in this section?

3. What was the most clearly described fundamental in this section?

4. What was the least clearly described fundamental in this section?

5. Comments or suggestions:

SECTION V: Catching

1. What was the most helpful advice in this section?

2. What was the least useful advice in this section?

3. What was the most clearly described fundamental in this section?

4. What was the least clearly described fundamental in this section?

5. Comments or suggestions:

SECTION VI: Bunting, Baserunning, and Sliding

    1. What was the most helpful advice in this section?

    2. What was the least useful advice in this section?

    3. What was the most clearly described fundamental in this section?

    4. What was the least clearly described fundamental in this section?

    5. Comments or suggestions:

    Overall, do you feel this entire video will be useful to you as a youth league coach?   ___Yes   ___No

    How do you plan to use it?

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