

Coach Them With Confidence... Not Fear!

A coach told me after a game that "his team just didn't come ready to play". I'm thinking gee! Did they forget their pants? Of course they had lost and the coach was already thinking of the pep talk he was going to give before the next game.

You've all heard these talks. "Don't let these guys 3 and 13 record fool you... This guy has a really good curve (it doesn't matter if he can't throw it for strikes) ...he can beat you.... yada yada! Firing your team up to play the big game is the most counterproductive thing a coach can do!!! They are not playing the other team...they are just playing the ball!!!! It doesn't matter if Jr. Griffey or little Bobby Griffey hits the ground ball; the fielder is going to execute a play that he has done in practice a thousand times. It doesn't matter who throws the pitch, he must throw it through the strike zone and the batter is going to execute a swing to contact it in a particular location just as he has done a thousand times in practice. It is downright insulting to encourage your team to play the best game of their life to have a chance to win. They can't play better than they can play and they should realize that their best is good enough to prevail. Most hitters when facing a hard thrower will try to swing harder to catch up. Look at the muscles in their forearms. Veins will be bulging. This will actually inhibit bat speed! Encourage them to grip the bat lightly and think "quick' bat and they'll rip him.

I give each team my "Big A" speech:

When faced with a pressure situation, adrenaline pumps through our bodies. That's the "butterflies" you feel in your stomach. Adrenaline is the most powerful stimulant known to man. With it, moms can lift a car off a child. There are three ways people react to a rush of adrenaline in a pressure situation.

1. Fear it and they will choke.
2. Deny it and they will be flat.
3. Embrace it and know that the Big A is just naturally going to make you stronger, faster, and better able to perform! Encourage your players to embrace the rush of competition, play the ball and they will perform the best they possibly can. What more can we ask?

*Yours in baseball,
Bruce Lambin*