

# TIPS FROM THE COACH

*I have considered writing a book “EVERY WORD OUT A YOUTH LEAGUE COACH'S MOUTH AT GAMES IS WRONG”. Catchy title, huh? Its a little over stated but I think you will recognize some of the worst examples, in no particular order.*

## COACHING GAFFES!

1. There is an archived tip on this site titled ‘FIRE UP YOUR TEAM’. It goes into detail, but suffice it to say that it is completely counterproductive to give a rousing pep talk before the game. There are NO BIG GAMES! You are not playing the other team. You’re playing the ball, and the ball doesn’t know it’s a big game. If kids try to play harder they will get out of rhythm and perform worse. I witnessed this during the JUCO World Series as coaches exhorted their players to step up and win the big game only to get crushed by a great Jr.College coach, Grayson CC’s Tim Tadlock. Tim’s speech prior to the championship game went something like this... *“Well, you guys been playin’ this game what 12 or 13 years, right? Well, it’s another one. Lets go get us a trophy!”*. His teams were the loosest, goofiest bunch of ballplayers you would ever want to see. But they brought home 2 straight JUCO Championships!
2. ***“Come on Johnny... You’ve GOT to make THAT play!!”***. Johnny is 11, and just booted a ground ball. He knows that he should have made that play! The question is whether he is going to let booting one get into his head so that he “gator arms” the next one? Well, the coach’s admonition increased the odds that Little Johnny will perform more poorly on the next chance. I have *actually* heard coaches yell this at players during pre-game infield drills! The poor kid started the game with a messed up head. E-Coach!
3. ***“You’ve got 2 strikes. You’ve GOT to swing at ANYTHING close!”***. Of course, the next pitch is going to be cap level and Johnny is going to take a hack. Hey Coach!... Define close, or better yet, be quiet. He knows how many strikes he has. You’ve just ballooned the fear of striking-out looking. K-Coach!
4. ***“Watch the Curve!”*** This is usually only uttered with two strikes, and guarantees that any fastball will be blown by him as you *can’t* look curve and *react* to the fastball. This often is combined with #3 (above). The results are the same. A batter with a screwed up head.
5. Any instruction on mechanics while the hitter is at the plate such as... ***“Get your elbow up!”... “Get your bat back!”... “Keep your front shoulder down!”... Etc.*** This stuff should have been addressed in practice or the dugout. At the plate a hitter should be thinking only about *speed, spin, and location!* Quality mechanics should have been grooved into his swing through reps in practice and home training. If he is thinking about his mechanics while at the plate he is doomed to failure. O-fer Coach!
6. So now the game is over and the coach gets to give his post-game recap. DON’T! Its over! Look around and you will see parents, arms folded or looking at their watch. They want to go home and feed their kids, get them a bath and help them with their homework. But most coaches think it’s important to have a 45 minute recap of every mistake made in the game. Make mental notes and address the mistakes in the next PRACTICE. When coaching teenaged players in the

Summer, you must understand that there are two things that teenaged boys want in the Summer... to play ball and meet girls! When the game is over you are cutting into meeting girls time. So I came up with a standard post-game speech. The next game is against \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ field, at \_\_\_\_\_ O'clock. Be there at \_\_\_\_\_ O'clock. Go have some fun! They were a very happy team!

Think of games as off-Broadway plays. The players get to perform under the lights and you are the director that notes the improvements that can be made and implemented in the next rehearsal. The Director can't shout out the lines, where you should stand, or how to act *during* the show!

Always think of what the repercussions from your words may be, before speaking.

COACH