

# TIPS FROM THE COACH

## *TAMING A HEADCASE*

"He's a HEADCASE"! How often have you heard a player described with that dreaded term? I know at least 3 players that were not drafted by professional teams largely because they were thought to be "headcases".

What is a headcase? If a player hits a shot that is caught by an opponent making a great play and throws a fit, he is a headcase. If a player loses it because he thinks an umpire has made a bad call, he is a headcase. If a player pops up in the infield and slings his bat while screaming an obscenity and loafing to first, he is a headcase. If a pitcher loses composure because a fielder makes an error, he is a headcase. But as a coach or parent how do we change this behavior?

**The player must be taught to realize that he must only concern himself with that over which he has control!**

Once the ball leaves the bat, he has no control over whether the defensive player catches it. The only things a hitter has control over are; whether he has prepared such that he can execute a proper swing, and, at which pitch he chooses to swing. He has no control over human errors on the umpire's part, and may just have a difference of opinion as to what is the strike zone. The opinion of the umpire is the only one that counts! The irony is that hitters *swing* at many more pitches out of the strike zone than umpires *call* out of the strike zone. Let he who is without sin cast the first stone.

A pitcher can only execute a quality delivery of the ball. From the moment it leaves his fingers, he has no control over whether the batter smacks it out of the yard, the umpire calls it a ball, or a defensive player boots it. At some point someone will throw him another ball and he must focus on making the adjustments necessary to throw another quality pitch. Any other thoughts and he is a "headcase".

Baseball is a game of failure. Fielders will on occasion make errors. It's done! Its over! If the player can't make a mental note about any adjustment that must be made to successfully execute the play the next time, and put the error behind him, he's doomed to make more. Not because he can't make the play, but because he's a "headcase".

Players have no control over the decisions of coaches. How often have you seen a player moved from what he deems to be "his" place in the batting order, hit miserably, and blame the coach! Unless and until a player learns that he can concern himself only with those things over which he has control, he is doomed to never reach his full potential, and will fall short because he is a "headcase"!

If you are interested in other thoughts about the mental side of baseball, check out the book, COACHING PSYCHOLOGY from the video series BASEBALL SKILLS AND DRILLS available at [www.tipsfromthecoach.com](http://www.tipsfromthecoach.com)

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