

Bucket Talk – The Mental Game

Bible Verses

Romans 12:2 *"Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing and perfect will of God".*

Baseball according to Yogi

Baseball legend and Hall of famer Yogi Berra has always had a way with words. He has been quoted a countless number of times, saying things that just kind of make you scratch your head and say...Huh? One of my favorite "Yogism is: **"Baseball is 90 percent mental; the other half is physical"**.

A New Outlook

Although Yogi had somewhat of a warped sense of relating things, I believe that as baseball & softball coaches we all understand that the mental side of the game truly is as important or maybe MORE important than the physical side of the game when it comes to determining success on the field. Young athletes very often get down on themselves when they don't succeed EVERY TIME. And as coaches, we have all tried to encourage our athletes with words like "hey, it's a game of failure. If you get just 3 hits out of every 10 at bats, your considered a hall of famer. That means you're actually successful in this game if you fail to reach your goal 7 out of 10 times".

Often times though, the athlete on the receiving end of those well intentioned words just nods his or her head in an effort to appease the coach...believing in their heart that their self worth has been diminished. That attitude then often leads to further mistakes (errors) or "failures" on the field because they have mentally checked out of the game. Even the most physically gifted athletes suffer the consequences of checking out of a competition due to lack of mental toughness.

But..let's think for a moment about the deception that our ball players encounter. The things that they either see or hear in the baseball & softball world that distort their perception, determine their overall attitude and ultimately determine their success or failure. Things such as:

- I can't hit....after going 0 for 4 in the last game
- I can't pitch because I don't throw it as hard as Justin or Kyle, etc
- When playing the infield I can't stay in front of the ball because the ball might hit me in the mouth
- I can't steal bases because I'm not fast
- **Most importantly though...The way you perform on the baseball field determines your value!**

The mental game of baseball runs parallel to the game of life. The great deceiver of this world tells our young men & women all kinds of lies that affect their "mental outlook". Things like:

- Your grades in school determine how much your mom and dad love you.
- Getting the pretty girl in school is part of becoming a man.
- You are not smart.
- Stealing, cheating, lying, etc won't hurt just this one time.
- Talking bad about someone doesn't really affect anything.
- You are not good enough to get into heaven.

The translation of Romans 12:2 from "The Message" by Eugene Peterson says this: "Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what He wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you and develops well-formed maturity in you".

Encourage your athletes not to allow the lies of this world to limit their own possibilities. Each of us should live from the "inside out"...constantly renewing our mind to actually think like Christ. Thinking like Christ is the first step toward ACTING like Christ...and being able to discern His perfect will. And THAT is where the peace lies in our lives. BE BLESSED!