

Lessons of Baseball

When I coached [Babe Ruth](#) baseball this year, I was amazed at how many parents and coaches missed the true lessons of baseball and how they apply to life and the kid's future business career. So I have written them down, hoping these are pasted on every dugout wall. And in honor of Kirby Puckett, who truly loved the game, I have 34 lessons.

1. Attitude matters: Tuck in your shirt, run to your position . Don't goof off on the bench, don't throw your helmet. The person with a good attitude makes a good employee.
2. Bounce Back: You will strike out, you will make an error, you will get thrown out stealing. Use these setbacks as a learning experience. Watch the ball into your glove, lay off high pitches, make himself a better player. A bad player dwells on the mistakes and it affects his whole game. Too many people in life are so upset by the past that it ruins their future. Don't be one of them.
3. Collect Yourself: A pick-off attempt is made. You dive back into first. Call time, brush yourself off, straighten your hat, then lead off again. Learn to take small moments in life to collect yourself .
4. Don't be intimidated: It's the pitcher's job to intimidate you. He will throw curve balls at your head. Who owns that plate - you or the pitcher. If the pitcher takes control, you lose. Same lesson in life. Who controls your life? You do. Don't get intimidated, stand close to the plate and get your swings in.
5. Consequences:: If you throw a helmet, you sit out two innings. You use a cuss word, you sit out a whole game. There are consequences for your actions. Again - it's the same thing in life, except the consequences can be a lot tougher.
6. Find your strength: People have weaknesses and strengths. If you're not a power hitter, "hit them where they ain't". I had a player this year with cerebral palsy on the right side. He was the best [left handed](#) pitcher I had. People who find their strengths in life usually succeed.
7. Take chances: You can't steal second with a foot on first. Take a big lead every now and then. Nothing is guaranteed. You may get thrown out. But you may not.
8. Pick your battles: Don't fight every bad call. You can fight one every now and then . But remember the umpire is always right. There is a lesson in fighting authority here. Learn it.

9. Take responsibility: Don't blame your bat, your glove, the sun, your teammates. They did not make an error, they did not strike-out. You did. Take responsibility, blame no one else and move on. The person who can take responsibility and move on to the next task is the person people hire.

10. Focus: When you batting - focus. Ignore the fans, the other coaches, the dugout chatter, the catcher's mouthing off. Learn to focus. You will be in a busy office, a loud classroom, a busy airport - you will be surrounded by distractions in life. Focus on the task at hand.

11. Perspective: People blow things out of proportion. Often it is the parents in the stands. It is a game. If you lose, the sun will come up tomorrow. There will be other situations in life when bosses, co-workers, in-laws, spouses, your teenagers will lose a sense of perspective. Keep yours.

12. Laugh at yourself: You will do something stupid - trip over first base, get hit on the head with a fly ball, throw the ball into the dugout, run into another player -. EVERY player eventually does something stupid. Laugh it off and do your best the next time.

13. Be honest: If you're catching and the coach asks how the pitcher is throwing be honest; the coach must make a decision that will affect the whole team .You may want to protect the pitcher, but if his curve ball is hanging - tell the coach. People deserve honest feedback throughout life. Give it to them.

14. Support your teammates: People make mistakes. In baseball and life. Do not rub their faces in the mistakes they make. If you must say something , say something positive, encourage them.

15. Master the basics: Learn the basics. Know how to bunt. Every job in life has basic skills. The person that masters the basics is the one people have confidence in.

16. Be confident: Always go to bat thinking you WILL get a hit. Be anxious to get into the batter box, so you can show them your stuff. When you give a speech later in life, remember, you will be a hit and this is the chance to "strut your stuff."

17. Adjust: Adjust to the pitcher's off-speed pitches, adjust to the umpire's strike zone, shift your position in the field according to whom is batting. Life and baseball are a series of small and big adjustments. If the umpire calls you out on a low strike, don't complain. You now know the umpire has a low strike-zone. Use that knowledge next time you are up. If you get called out again on the same pitch, it is because you failed to adjust.

18. Analyze the situation: There are ways out of a jam. Should you intentionally walk someone, throw the ball low for a double play, move in to make the play at home, guard the line to take away the extra base hit ?. Challenges have solutions, Look for solutions on the baseball field and in life

19. Think small: Getting nine runs seems like a lot. But if you break that task down , that is only a run an inning. That can be accomplished by bunting, stealing, hit-and -run, sacrifice flies - think of all the ways to get the job done - one inning at a time.

20. Practice: You want to hit a baseball. Hit lots of baseball. You want to be good in math - do lots of problems - whatever you choose - practice.

21. Clean up after yourself: Your mother is not in the dugout. After the game throw away all the water bottles, gum wrappers, put away the helmets and the catcher's gear. Later, your spouse will like you more if you don't leave messes.

22. Anticipate: Where will a left handed-batter hit the ball? Where will he hit it off a fast pitcher or slow pitcher. Anticipate where the ball is going!. Those in life who know where the ball is going, end up in the right place.

23. Be alert: There will be long innings. But keep your head in the game. That's why catchers yell the outs, there's infield chatter, you throw the ball around the horn, you watch how the catcher is shifting for an outside or inside pitch, you keep saying "What do I do if I get the ball?" Baseball trains you to be constantly vigilant - a useful skill in life.

24. Learn the culture: When you get hit, don't rub. Never talk about a no-hitter. Don't step on the foul-lines when running off the field. Are these things logical? No. But many cultural traditions are not logical, yet people expect you to behave in a certain way. Learn the culture you are dealing with.

25. Pay attention to details. If you are on first base, check the pitcher's heel. A right-handed pitcher has to lift his back heel before he throws over. If you know that, there is no reason, you should be picked off. What signs are you missing from competitors, management, peers?

26. Be organized: If you are playing first base, when you come off the field, put a ball in your glove. That way, you won't waste time next inning looking for a ball.

27. Be prepared: : If you are a catcher and the odds are that the runner will take off, don't call for a curve. Call for a fastball on the outside corner. That works like a pitch-out, you have a

chance of getting a strike and gunning down the runner. Think ahead of your competition and be prepared for their next move.

28. Teams win or lose together: If a teammate drops a ball and the winning run scores, don't blame him. A lot of factors go into winning and losing a ballgame, and you just can't blame one incident. People could have hit the ball better, make a few more doubleplays, eliminated walks, avoided pass balls. Remember, it is never one player's fault, failure is always a combination of factors. So is winning.

29. Look for the unique edge. Pulling your pants legs down to your ankles may look cool, but what does it accomplish? Wear your socks high. When your socks show, it is harder for the umpire to call a low strike. The high socks give him a visual clue of where the strike zone really is. This is giving yourself an edge. What do you need to do in business to gain and maintain an advantage?

30. Have a game plan. If you are facing a pitcher who throws heat, don't swing at anything above the waist. Chances are you won't catch up with it. You can catch up with a fast-ball waist waist-high or lower. What is your game plan when you are going to a meeting, seeing a client, your plan for that job interview?

31. Be aggressive: Go up to bat thinking you will get a hit. When you're older, walk into an office, thinking you will make a sale. If you think you will strike-out in baseball or life, you have dug yourself a hole.

32. Recognize the Spin: A curveball has a different spin than a fastball. It has a different speed. The pitcher may have a different release point for each pitch, a different arm motion for each pitch, perhaps you can see him adjusting the ball in his glove. But what is the pitcher throwing you. What spin does it have on it? People will throw you ideas your whole life. But watch for the "spin" they deliver the ideas with.

33. Know where the wall is: If you are playing outfield, as you get close to the wall, put your arm out. Know when you will crash into the wall and not be able to make a play. Same theory in life. We all have limits. Know where your wall is and don't crash through it. Take time off to relax.

34. Enjoy: The baseball season, like life, is short. Enjoy the sun, spitting sunflower seeds, chewing gum, bending your hat brim, playing catch, the smell of glove oil, sliding into second, rounding third at full speed - learn to enjoy moments in life.

Mr. Theibert played college baseball many years ago. His son thinks Dad sat behind Abner Doubleday in the third grade.