

JOE WILKINS

Catching



Mental Aspects

Mental Aspects of Catching

I. Factors to be considered in catching:

- 1.) You have to be psychologically up for every game. You must feel that you are “pitching the game.” You should realize that you cannot afford one bad because it could cost your team the game.
- 2.) You are totally aware of each pitcher’s assortment of pitches. You know his best pitch, what he is good with in different counts, etc. You also know what he has going into the game by the bullpen performance. You, most importantly, know what he has on the mound in the game and call your game accordingly.
- 3.) You must think like a pitcher, “got to get the 1st strike over”, pick the pitch he can get over and get in front of the hitter.
- 4.) If you get behind, challenge the hitter, make him hit the ball to get on base. Don’t try to pitch “too fine”, you’ll end up with walks.
- 5.) Use the change-up smartly and don’t be afraid to use it.

More effective against opposite hitters to pitchers – LHP vs. right hand hitter and vice versa

Most effective to power hitters

Don’t be afraid to throw it with men on base

Excellent opening pitch to aggressive, first ball hitter

- 6.) You must each pitcher’s psychological make-up. No two are exactly alike. Each needs your individual concern.

<u>Pitcher Types:</u>	<u>Explanation:</u>	<u>Catcher Approach:</u>
a.) Cocky	Great attitude for pitcher	Keep him focussed
b.) Bulldog	Never Gives Up	Recognize when he doesn't have good stuff
c.) Bullhead	Stubborn	Be positive and suggestive
d.) Alabi-Ike	Excuse Maker	Needs Aggressive Approach - No nonsense
e.) Aches and Pains	Always hurting somewhere	Sympathize but remind them what their job is
f.) Non-Believer	Lacks Confidence	Reassure and Let them know they are doing well
g.) Screwball	Loses Focus Easy	Keep him focussed and be aggressive if necessary
h.) Other	Many Other types	There are many types of personalities. Assess your pitching staff with your coaches and figure out what type of personalities you have on your pitching staff and discuss how to approach each pitcher.



- 7.) The catcher must know the hitter's strengths and weaknesses - take mental notes on each hitter if you don't have a scouting report. It is your job to remember the hitters. Line your defense up according to how you are going to pitch to a certain hitter. Help your coaches out! You are on the field...therefore, you should get a feel for what your team needs.

Stances are a great indicator of the type of hitter:

- a.) Crouch Hitter - Pitch Up
- b.) Closed Stance - Pitch In
- c.) Open Stance - Pitch Away
- d.) Tall Hitter - Pitch Down
- e.) Low Hands - Pitch Down
- f.) High Hands - Pitch Up



- 8.) Review and re-assess hitters as the game progresses

- a.) What did the hitter do last time?
- b.) What pitch can we get ahead with?
- c.) What pitch can we get him out with?
- d.) Where do I line the defense up?
- e.) Discuss hitters before the inning
- f.) Use charts and talk about them

- 9.) Know that weather conditions effect a pitcher's mentality - get him focussed to throw the right pitches for the conditions:

If a certain pitch is not working because of the wind direction, wind strength, coldness, etc. figure this out early.

Approches to weather:

Negative:

- "Too cold to pitch"
- "Too hot to pitch"
- "Wind is blowing out today"
- "Stuff isn't good today"

Positive:

- Advantage over cold hitters
- Heat will help the ball move
- Challenge inside and keep them off balance
- Challenges your competitiveness

- 10.) Catchers can not let their hitting get in the way of what they have to do behind the plate. The runs you might have produced for your team, offensively, you will end up losing defensively if you let your hitting effect you. You will always get out some of the time. You have a responsibility to your team...that is behind the plate. Anything you do offensively is a bonus. You are the brains of the defense and pitching. That is a very important task. Accept it or find another position!

- 11.) Leadership is more than just being vocal. Leadership is knowing what to say and when to say it. It is learning what makes your team and your pitcher on the mound successful. It is about earning trust and respect of your teammates. They have to know that you are willing to run through a brick wall for them. They have to know that when the game is on the line, you will be able to keep the ship together and lead them through it. They have to know that you are willing to take risks to make plays behind the plate. Let them know you aren't scared to be the one to make something happen.

12.) In-game instruction - Don't give your pitcher too much to think about. If he is struggling and you see something mechanical, think about how to approach it first. Try to minimize your words (think of key words) to communicate to your pitcher. Maybe these are words that you have already thought of during a practice or bullpen session. A pitcher has a lot going through his mind and keeping it simple for him is the best way to get him though a mechanical issue.

Don't show the umpire up:

- a.) Framing pitches after he calls a ball
- b.) Signalling to the coach by touching your mask (think of something original)
- c.) Bad body language

*If you have a point to make, walk out the mound and let him come out there to discuss it

*Remember, they are people too - if you discuss your point, you will get a lot further

*You can't build relationships with umpires by showing them up - it doesn't help!