

Thoughts From The Dugout



Worry only about what you can Control

One of the hardest aspects of baseball, sports in general or life, is the incredible affect that outside influences have on our actions. Our actions then become a direct influence on the outcome that follows. It is very difficult to really and truly focus only on what YOU can control. While difficult, it is one of the key attributes of any successful athlete. During the course of competition, there will undoubtedly be numerous outside influences that can have positive or negative affects on the outcome. IF YOU LET THEM. Whether it be umpires (officials), opposing players or coaches, your coach, fans in the stands, your performance, etc., the affect they can have on the outcome of the game is tremendous if you let it. To separate yourself as an athlete, you must master the skill of worrying only about what YOU can control.

I was reading an interview with Pete Carroll who said “if you make the game all about what you can control, then the outcome is essentially in your hands every time.” This

philosophy can apply regardless of the situation or scenario you are encountering.

As a player, how do you worry only about what you can control? A Pitcher, often times can get extremely agitated if an umpire is having difficulty maintaining his strike zone. You really need to focus all of your energy on the area where YOU have control. That area is how YOU REACT to situations. You can throw a ball right down the middle of the plate. BALL ONE! What? Are you kidding me? Of course not, ball one. Guess what that next pitch you put on the black is going to be? Yep, ball TWO. You can not control if the umpire will call the pitch a ball or strike. All you can do is focus on making a good pitch. Once the ball leaves your hand, FORGET ABOUT IT. Another scenario is you make that great pitch. Yet, the hitter get’s a piece of it and flares a base hit. Does it make any sense to expend any energy in frustration? No, you can not do anything about it. You need to regain / maintain your composure and focus on the next pitch. Or how about you’re throwing a good game, routine ground ball to your shortstop, oops, and right through his legs. You step back on the mound, ticked off because your shortstop can’t make a single routine play, you proceed to walk the next batter then give up a 2 run double on a BP fastball right down the middle because now your really frustrated. Game over, you lose. You can NOT control whether the players around you make the plays or not.

As a hitter I love this situation. A player will take 2 fastballs right down the middle. Now they are sitting 0-2 and the pitcher breaks off a deuce just off the plate, strike three. The player comes into the dugout cussing and swearing, throws their helmet and proclaims “that umpire sucks”. Now after the player has thoroughly berated the umpire, possibly kicked his equipment across the dugout and moaned and complained to every other player, here I come. “So, the umpire sucks huh? How about those first two pitches right down the middle?” The reply “yah, but...” But NOTHING. Or maybe Mr. Umpire is having a bad day. Strike Zone is all over the place. This happens all the time. Nothing positive comes from focusing on the fact that everything out of the pitchers hand seems to be a strike. What you must do is find a way to focus on what you can control. This is looking for a good pitch and putting a good swing on the ball. Or maybe you just ripped a line drive sure double into the outfield gap. The outfielder lies out and makes a phenomenal catch. You’re ticked because you didn’t get the hit. Now you are focusing on this for your next 2 at bats where you strike out looking and hit a weak ground ball. Wrong Answer. Focus on what you can control. You hit a good pitch; you put a good swing on the ball and drove it hard. All positives. Nothing negative happened in that first at bat for you, the opposing player just made a great catch. Now you have turned a good at bat into a BAD DAY.

FOCUS ONLY ON WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL. Along the way, realize that the ONLY thing you can control is how YOU REACT to situations. What really means something is what you do about these situations and how you react. That very next step you take will be the most important part of your success or failure. Only you can decide which way it will lead you.