

March 2013

**Richmond County
Baseball Club**

1400 Travis Ave.
Staten Island, NY 10314

If you have any
interesting info or news
you would like included
in a future newsletter,
please email to
jim@rcbclub.com.

Visit our website at:



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RCBC Newsletter

A Message From Coach DeFendis

Before I start, I would like to thank our entire coaching staff for their commitment to the program and dedication in getting their teams ready for the 2013 season. Also, welcome back to the program Anthony Ferrante and Pete Guinta. Both are good friends and I'm glad to see them back in blue attire.

Perfect practice makes perfect play!!!

As we approach our spring season, I expect our younger teams to start the process of getting outside and utilizing the fields for practice. Coaches—remember to log onto the RCBC website to book your practice times. As we get ready for the season, please remember to take care of your bodies. The summer season is just around the corner and it will be here before you know it. Staying healthy should be your first priority. Remember to stretch and give yourself enough time to properly warm up your arms, legs and lower backs. Avoid injuries!! In addition to the physical practice, work on your mental approach and become a student of the game by reading as much baseball material and watching as many college and pro games as you can. Watching will get you familiar with the proper techniques of the game and help you prepare for the next level.

Be the best baseball player you can be. Work hard at your craft. Be able to look yourself in the mirror and be accountable for your success.

Good luck and I'll see you all on the diamond.

Coach DeFendis



College Showcase Camp

www.rcshowcasecamps.com

Thanks to Coach Frank Amadeo for creating our new Showcase Camp and Tournament logos



RC Tournaments

www.rctournaments.com



Now Live!
Online Apparel Store

College Showcase Camp

In addition to our Future High School Prospect Showcase, we will be hosting a College Showcase Camp on August 20-21. Many of the top local Division I, II and III programs will be represented and their coaches will help orchestrate the camp's workout agenda. Registration is only \$495 for the 2-day workout session and written evaluation summary. Visit our new Showcase website at www.rcshowcasecamps.com for more information and to register.

Welcome New Teams and Coaches

This season, we have added two new age divisions to the program. Our 8U team will be managed by head coach Rob Salafia, also new to RCBC. Our 9U team will be managed by head coach George Quinn, in addition to his 12U coaching duties. We also welcome Jon Lamattina as head coach of the 14/15U National squad. Jon is an assistant varsity coach at Xaverian High School and brings a wealth of experience to the RCBC program.

Patriot League

The 13U Patriot League begins in April with 9 teams participating, including our three 13U squads. Visit the Patriot League website (www.rcpatriotleague.com) for the game schedules. The 17U division will begin mid-June after the conclusion of the spring high school baseball season.

Richmond County Tournaments

Our 2013 tournament schedule kicks off with the 13U April Fools Follies tournament April 13-14 at the complex. Our three 13U teams will be competing along with teams from Staten Island, New Jersey and Long Island. Come out to watch and show support for the boys in royal and gray. Visit our tournament website at www.rctournaments.com for the schedule.

Online Apparel Store

The online apparel store is now live, featuring a variety of tee shirts, hoodies, pullovers, jackets, hats and bat bags. Proudly display your RCBC colors. Order and pay online and your merchandise will be delivered to your front door. Go to the RCBC website (www.rcbclub.com) and click on the Online Store link.



Coach Mike Lopiparo
College Placement Coordinator
Quality Control Coach

This month's baseball quote:

Sports and political reporter George Will, who has written books on baseball, says *"If you think baseball in ONLY a game, then you also believe the Grand Canyon is ONLY a big hole in Arizona. Baseball is a lot more than a game"*

If you want to voice a comment on anything I write, email me at mikelope19@aol.com



Coach Lope's Baseball Thoughts

The Richmond County Baseball COMMUNITY

As a Brooklyn native, I have always been fascinated at the intensity of baseball on Staten Island. This includes the many Little League organizations, to the talented players on the top high schools, to the growing number of sandlot programs throughout the borough. However...the great competitiveness leads to a large dose of negative feelings.

I am a member of Richmond County Baseball for nearly six years. While I admire the Staten Island Baseball Nation, it can be brutal. Nobody hears about the positives done by anybody. Some blame the competition, others say there is jealousy. I'll let you attach a reason for the verbal criticism.

Like others, RCBC gets its share of sniper fire from opposing groups that cloud the achievements of our organization. Mud-slinging occurs from all directions with the speed of a Stephen Strasburg fastball. Nobody likes to pat themselves on the back, but in this era of having to duck the shots, you have to sometimes recap the achievements for our members who also have to defend RCBC.

Nick DeFendis and George Quinn run the show and have always had their eye on helping the Staten Island community. This includes:

- Johnny Ray Foundation—More than any other achievement, Richmond County gets a gold star here. Johnny was an RCBC players and a high school baseball and football star at Moore Catholic when he died in a car crash in 2009. Starting the next year, RCBC made sure his name would live on by a) establishing a Johnny Ray Memorial plaque at the complex, b) a Johnny Ray Fall High School Baseball Tournament that raises money to be used to help those through scholarships and

other needs and c) a donation to the Catholic High Schools of Staten Island who always need help fundraising for their athletic programs and d) his very own sandwich at the concession stand (the Johnny Ray). Ask Johnny's parents if they have anything negative to say about Richmond County.

- Drug Awareness Seminar—Coaches DeFendis and Quinn hosted this to warn our young people about the dangers of pills which have become a recent problem throughout NYC. There will also be a "Dynamite Softball Tournament" at the complex to raise money for the Dynamite Youth Center.

- Grants—have been given and a writing contest (won by Ryan Bartley!) took place for players to get money to help with tuition and other school necessities.

- Wounded Warriors—RCBC has donated to this organization that helps veterans who have fought in American wars.

- Hurricane Sandy—Coach Quinn and his wife Karen are still delivering supplies to victims of this hurricane. RCBC has lent a hand to one family that was hit very hard. Richmond County also wants to thank the players and parents in our organization who, on their own, helped with the cleanup since that horrible Monday night last fall. Coaches DeFendis and Quinn always brag about the caliber of student-athlete we get.

- RCBC donated money to a family who lost their house and a child in a devastating fire.

- The complex was used by the Port Authority for a tournament that raises money for the victims of September 11th.

- And most of all—RCBC has helped over 125 players get to the college baseball level. This is just some of what RCBC has done for the COMMUNITY. There is more. So without hesitation, let the critics sniper fire begin!!!!

Featured Article — 7 Important Points For Using Indoor Batting Cages - By Coach DeFendis

If you want to use the batting cage for actual swing development, the following is a breakdown on how to use a cage to your advantage.

1. Speed of machine

When selecting the speed of a machine, a common problem is the speed or velocity is far too advanced for the player. Often times, I will hear kids say “the speed is too slow” or asking “to speed the machine up.” Well let’s first look at what the hitter is trying to accomplish...that is, to refine the swing and the necessary movements associated with the swing. Pitching machines that are set too fast DO NOT promote efficient movement patterns in the swing. In fact, they promote poor swing habits, causing players to rush their timing; or failing to get the body into a good solid hitting position; or if their timing is so bad, they get frustrated with all the swings and misses and lose confidence in their swing. The speed is critical and should be set approximately 60-65 percent of the speed at which they will see in a game. Now, one can argue this percentage does not actually duplicate true game-like speed, but the argument can also be said for those that truly want to work on swing development...it must be done at a speed substantially slower than what they would face in a game (how fast is the ball travelling on a tee?!). Case in point...what do you think the average pitch speed of MLB batting practice is? It is certainly not near the speed of what hitters face day to day; it is approximately 60-65 percent of the actual velocity each hitter will face in a game. Furthermore, have you ever watched Home Run Derby? Granted, the concept of the Derby is Home Runs, but I would be surprised if the speed in the Derby comes close to 65 percent! So now why do MLB hitters take batting practice at approximately these types of speeds? Because the primary focus of their cage work is total swing development. It would be very difficult for the MLB player to work on the honing of their swing when facing a machine that is delivering pitches at speeds at or near the actual game-like velocities.

2. Height of the pitch

Often times, coaches, parents or players will stand in the cage, with the machine on, and lay their bat out, in the perfect location and ask “can you raise the pitch” or “can you lower the pitch.” Now, look at a game...does the hitter stand in the batter’s box, lay the bat out at mid-thigh height and ask the pitcher to throw the ball in that exact location? Don’t think so! Obviously, the location of the pitch from a machine must be set so that as many pitches as possible cross the strike zone at the expected velocity and height, but, it should be up to the hitter to visually make the decisions as to whether they should swing or not swing based on the pitch. Pitching machines in cages are not perfect, and thus, hitters need to use discretion when swinging. That means, don’t swing at every pitch, but expect to swing at every pitch and learn to develop an eye for the strike zone and develop an eye for what you can drive rather than just swing at.

3. Don’t set up in the same place

Many hitters have tendencies to stand in the same place all the time and thus get the same velocity and generally the same pitch location (remember, machines are not always perfect) on each pitch. This does very little to help develop the swing. Instead, hitters need to work on hitting pitches in different locations and with different velocities. This is accomplished by simply moving up, back, in and out. As an example, if the hitter were to take 200 swings at the same location in the batter’s box, yes, they would work on swing development, but it would certainly not assist in helping the hitter make adjustments in their swings.

Hitters should take some swings in one location, say, at the back of the batter’s box, then move up two or three feet.

This would then mean the pitch velocity has increased forcing the hitter to make an adjustment. Then, the hitter should move back in the box and now, he is essentially getting an off speed pitch and once again, another adjustment will need to be made. The same type of adjustments can be made on in and out locations. Move in to work on pulling the ball, move away from the plate to work on hitting the ball to the opposite field.

4. Timing the pitching machine

When working on the timing of the pitch off a machine, hitters need to try to get away from timing the pitch, but instead, work on seeing the ball out of the arm or out of the wheels. Timing only serves to make hitters guess when the ball is coming out. This can often lead to negative effects when trying to produce efficient movement patterns. When hitting out of the machine, they become much more in tune to the visual elements needed to be an accomplished hitter. Many machines are set up so that the ball will come out at certain timed intervals, say 5 seconds or 6 seconds. Hitters will often try and time their swing relative to the timing of the outbound ball. This is not wise or prudent when it comes to any type of swing development. Don't time the pitch, but instead see the pitch and get the timing off the pitch.

5. Start opposite field first

Many hitters jump into the cage and the first thing they try to do is pull the ball. Not wise to say the least. A much better approach would be to train your cage work the same way you would be trained if you were taking batting practice. That would be to begin the swing development process by working on hitting balls the other way (opposite field). This will allow more efficient timing and promote the ball to be tracked deeper into the hitting zone (although it is impossible to watch the ball hit the bat, contrary to popular belief). Once the hitter has been able to get his timing to the velocity and the feel of the swing has begun to ramp up, the hitter can begin the process of moving around in the batter's box to start the process of making adjustments. After all, isn't hitting about making adjustments?

6. Create games and competition

A great way to work on swing development without actually thinking about the swing is to create games within the cage itself. For example, a common game that is played is Home Run Derby, where certain parts or locations of the cage represent certain base hits. Because each cage is different in height and width, each game will be played with different rules. Use a selected number of pitches per at bat as the number that you will use before the at bat is over. So, if a cage is pre-set at say 10 pitches per round, then each hitter would get 10 outs. At the completion of the number of outs, add up your runs and keep a running tally. Your number of innings could be as few as one to an infinite number. Targets can be set up as well as Grand Slams, HR's, etc...to give hitters incentive when trailing late in their match. (Keeping track of results over time is also a great proven practice.)

7. The fatigue factor

Probably the biggest issue with players using cages is the pure number of swings they take in a row or over the duration of their cage time. Far too often, they just keep swinging and then the fatigue factor (FF) takes over. When FF comes into play, the body breaks down and swing development has now taken a back seat...now we have begun to create bad habits. So always consider the number of swings in a row and the rest needed between each set of swings. Swing smart rather than just keep swinging.

So next time you make your way into an indoor batting cage, make sure you keep a few of these points at the top of your mind to make better use of your time and ultimately help you become a better hitter!