

Your current primary position does not define you. It's a lesson that players and parents need before it's too late.

I regularly hear from parents looking for a team, telling me about their son. **"He's a shortstop,"** they say. **"Are you in need of a shortstop?"** Or catcher. Or third baseman. You get the point...

I understand the pride of having a position. It means you beat out other kids on your current team to get the most playing time there. And if it's one of the "glorious" positions, more reason to mention it.

But you aren't a shortstop. If that's how you define yourself, you're setting yourself up for disappointment and frustration.

## A Shortstop No More

For argument's sake, let's say that shortstop is what you have always played. You play shortstop well. I add you to my roster. Whoops, there's a better shortstop on the team. Maybe two. Then what?

- You're a shortstop no more. Maybe now you're a third baseman. Or second baseman. Or outfielder.
- How will you handle this emotionally? Will it anger you? Will you feel wronged? Will it deflate you?
- And how prepared are you for this situation? Have you played other positions? Do you understand the responsibilities associated with them?

## Be Prepared

You may think that you're a shortstop now. The higher up the ladder you go, the more players there will be who have always been the shortstop. And the more likely that you won't be the shortstop for long.

I use shortstop as the example here only because it's the most popular and prestigious defensive position. Often, it's the best athlete who plays there. Everyone wants to play shortstop. And parents love to brag about their sons playing there.

But the example could just as easily be catcher or first base or third base or centerfield. That position cannot define you as a baseball player.

You've always played first base. You're the prototypical big kid, big target. You've never had much competition for playing time. Until now.

What happens when you try out for the high school team and there's a better first baseman there? What if there are two?

***I sure hope you have a backup plan...***

My ideal coaching scenario is a roster of 11 kids who can and will play anywhere. Injuries, absentees, benching's, none of it matters because there's always someone else who can play a position well. And no egos about the glory received or missed by playing at one position over another.

## What Coaches Covet

Okay, maybe this isn't what all coaches covet. But I do. When I'm filling a roster, I'm not looking for a shortstop. I look for...

**1. Athletes.** A good athlete who has historically been a shortstop can learn to play the outfield. Or third base. Or catcher. Or second base. This isn't necessarily the case for a lesser athlete.

**2. Versatility.** This is not only the ability to learn how to play other positions, but the willingness to do so. If you come to me saying that you are "Position X," I worry about how flexible you'll be if isn't your best position for our team.

**3. Experience.** The older players get, the harder it is to convert them to a new position. Do you have experience playing in multiple positions?

**4. Knowledge.** Simply playing multiple positions is only half the battle. Do you understand the roles and responsibilities involved with a new position? Or will you need to learn it from scratch? It's why I encourage my players to learn not only the backup, relay, and cutoff responsibilities of their primary positions, but of every position.

**5. Leadership.** Competitiveness is a good trait, but not when it's interrupted by selfishness. Leadership means a willingness to do what's best for the team. It's setting an example for teammates. It's making the best of a situation that may not be ideal or expected. It's understanding that your reaction to adversity can influence the tone of the entire team.

## You're a Baseball Player

Embrace the challenge of competition. I've seen players who were always shortstops at younger levels develop into amazing third basemen, second basemen, catchers, and outfielders. I've also seen players, too stubborn to change, mope and fade away.

- If you love the game, you'll find a role. If you have a good coach, he'll find a spot that fits your skills and puts you into position to succeed.
- Work on being the best at fielding ground balls, running down fly balls, and making strong, accurate throws. Understand the game — the roles and responsibilities of each position and why.
- Do these things, and you'll be a valuable asset to any team, no matter where you play.