

Baseball is beautiful. As a coach and fan, I appreciate the strategy, statistics, and history of the game. But the beauty goes far deeper for those who play it because of the limitless life lessons that it teaches.

Baseball will chew up and spit out those who can't handle the game mentally. And it will expose weaknesses that will come up later in life over and over again.

It's why I believe strongly that the responsibility of a coach is more than just moving chess pieces in an effort to win. It's to uncover these life lessons and help young players learn from them so that they respond better in the future — not just on the baseball field but on the field of life.

Here are a few of the many examples of how the game of baseball teaches us life lessons...

## 1. Dealing with Failure

You will get out. You will strike out. How will you respond? Will you respond constructively so that you can bounce back? Or will you make your problems worse?

You will make mistakes. You will make errors. Will you make corrections? Will you take responsibility? Or will you blame others and refuse to make proper corrections?

You will lose. You may even lose often. Will you use this as motivation? Will you lose gracefully?

In the game of baseball, you will fail. You'll fail repeatedly. You need to deal with this failure in a positive way so that you learn from it and improve.

This is no different than the game of life. You won't always get your way. Things won't always go as we planned. And no matter what we do, we will fail.

***You may even have the deck stacked against you.***

Failure is evidence that you tried. Failure is an opportunity to learn something new. It teaches you your limits and capabilities. Those who don't fail aren't taking risks.

## 2. Handling Success

Sometimes, handling success is just as difficult as handling failure. Will you take success for granted? Will you get lazy and assume the game will always be easy? Or will you keep working — or work even harder — to maintain that level of success?

How will you treat those below you — on your roster or opposing teams — as you succeed? There is no guarantee that this hierarchy will continue.

Those who can repeat success — on the baseball field and in life — are those few who can remain hungry even after reaching the highest levels. They continue to work hard, if not harder, because they know that nothing is guaranteed.

Are you satisfied with what you've accomplished? Or do you put in even more work to do something no one has ever done before?

### 3. Being a Team Player

The best teams that can sustain long-term success boast more than a collection of talented players. They have players who work together and for one another in harmony. They realize that they can't carry the team by themselves.

An athlete who can be a positive team player is more likely to be a positive team player later in life. You will need these skills, no matter what you do in a future career.

A selfish player, if not corrected, may be an unemployable adult.

### 4. Taking Direction

Do you take criticism well? Do you follow direction from a coach? Or do you accept some, ignore others, and ultimately do whatever you want?

Your ability to take direction — or not — is important because it could highlight whether you'll be able to do the same later. If not, you may be setting yourself up for a frustrating adulthood.

### 5. Dealing with Adversity

We often practice as if the game will be played under perfect conditions. Perfect weather, no noise, no pressure, little distraction.

That's not reality, of course. The game is played under adverse conditions. This is when you decide whether you can adjust to pressure situations, distractions, and imperfect conditions.

Some players find a way. Many crumble and disappear. They're unable to adjust or prefer the bench over the spotlight.

Life will never go as you planned. No matter how much you prepare, study, and train, a curveball will be thrown your way. In fact, a series of knuckleballs will be thrown to you.

Will you adjust? Will you embrace the challenge? Or will you wilt under this pressure?

## 6. Baseball — and Life — Aren't Always Fair

In baseball, the coach doesn't always make the right decisions. Some players get opportunities that they don't deserve. Umpires don't always make the right call. Sometimes, you do everything right and you get bad results.

Baseball isn't fair. You will deal with situations that don't make sense. But you must work through them. Will you mope? Will you give up? Or will you adjust or work harder?

This is a reflection of life, which is certainly not fair. Some people will have a built-in advantage. Some will get positions of authority without earning them. Others will work hard and not get a payoff. For some, everything seemingly goes wrong regardless of the work that gets put in.

Life isn't fair. There isn't always someone to blame. Sometimes, these things just happen. We can blame others, ignore it, or work harder to either get the results we desire or change the system.

## 7. Being a Leader

Not everyone is comfortable as a leader. But every team needs them. Sometimes, players need to fight through that discomfort and be the leader that their team needs.

Most people aren't naturally born leaders. There are traits that are learned over the years that make them fit for the job. And becoming a leader of a baseball team can provide terrific experience.

Whether you lead by example or are a vocal leader, it's good practice for becoming a leader in other areas of life later on.

## 8. Earning Opportunities

If you play on a competitive baseball team with players who are all on about the same level, you know that you must achieve to earn your spot in the lineup or on the field. If you don't, someone else will be there to take that spot.

Someone must hit last. Someone will sit the bench more than others. Will that person, be you? If so, how will you handle it? Will you complain and blame the coach, or will you work harder?

And if you don't have that competition for playing time now, you will later. There's always someone better than you, waiting to take your spot.

How do you deal with this? Do you work harder to get playing time or more at bats? How you handle this — and how your parents handle this — could set the tone for what you do later.

Most people aren't handed positions of authority without earning them. Will you work harder to achieve more? Will you blame the company or authority for your plight?

## 9. Competing Gracefully with Opponents

One of the many things that make baseball amazing is the competition. Two teams fighting for the same thing, but only one can win. This leads to intensity, pressure, and high drama situations.

How do you handle this? Do you respect your opponents? Do you appreciate the effort that they put in? Or do you belittle them, focusing on the "us vs. them" mentality?

The truth is that all teams have more similarities than we like to admit. Neither team is perfect. Both teams have their warts and their flaws. Both teams are working towards the same goal. Do you appreciate that?

You will have opponents later in life. You will be competing for the same things. This can be friendly and healthy competition, or it can bring the worst out of you.

Your competition now may be teammates, partners, friends, and co-workers later.

## 10. Preparation, Goals, and Slow Progress

A baseball game is a series of events for which you have varying levels of preparation. Some — like a standard ground ball without runners on base — are practiced repeatedly. Other situations are

rare. Will you practice them? Will you know how to handle these rare situations, too?

While some players are born with more athletic ability than others, all will have a ceiling that can't be exceeded without hard work. Practice is rarely appreciated as something necessary for improvement. Do you go through the motions? Do you expect to get better naturally?

It's human nature that we want things now. Progress from hard work is often difficult to spot because it's slow. Do you work anyway? Do you set goals and chart yourself on your progress?

Your preparation and goal setting as a baseball player is good practice for your adult life. Do you prepare for a test? A presentation? A business proposal? Or do you wing it and trust your natural instincts and ability?

## 11. Working When No One's Watching

When you're on the baseball field, everyone's watching. There's a natural inclination to want to perform well and impress others.

But do you use this same intensity on the practice field? How about going above and beyond and putting in work off the practice field that no one else sees? Those who work when no one is watching are those who are most likely to get the best results.

Later, will you only do the required work? Will your focus be on achieving when the spotlight is on? Or will you do all the little things that often go unnoticed and help you achieve in that position?