

Understanding Adversity, Adjustments, and Failure

Two of the most common deciding factors in whether or not a player will achieve his highest potential are how the player reacts to adversity and if he is willing to make adjustments. This may not seem as important as a pitcher's velocity or an outfielder's speed, but in most cases I find it to be much more of an impact on the player's future. This is generally the deciding factor in how far the player will go in the game of baseball. Will he hit his peak at freshman level baseball? Will he become a contributor to a varsity baseball team? Or will he make it beyond high school baseball to the next level?

Adversity, adjustments, and failure have a lot of ties to each other. Players at times will be forced into making adjustments to become better players. Sometimes, the adjustment will be something easy and the player will face minimal failure and minimal adversity. But other times, the adjustment that the player will have to make is going to be hard. Much harder than the player thought it should be. Now the player is at a crossroads.

Do I give up on the adjustment because it is ruining my initial results or do I stick with it understanding that it will ultimately get me better?

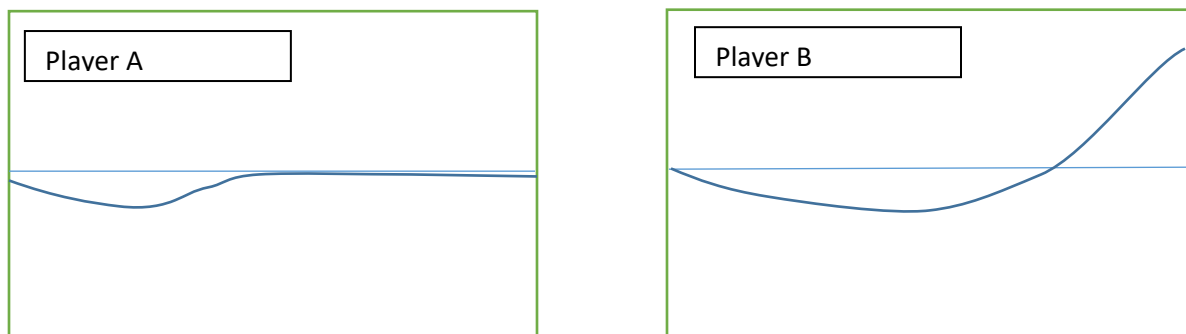
Unfortunately, I see more players these days going back to what is comfortable to them and not sticking through process of adjusting.

Now for the why. The primary reason why players go back to what is comfortable is because they are more results oriented than process oriented. A coach talks to a player about an adjustment and most players will try that adjustment. The immediate results are often really bad and that scares many players. What the player needs to understand is that of course the results are going to be bad... He is trying something completely NEW that his body and mind have never done before. He has to give that adjustment time and be detail oriented with that adjustment to see the process through. But that is really hard for this generation of players. It has been hard for almost any generation of players. That can be attributed to being self-conscious about looking bad in front of his peers or being uncomfortable with failure. There are a lot of reasons out there why players will shy away from the adjustment process and stick to what they are familiar with. But trust me, no player ever got to the highest level of baseball by being comfortable and not pushing through their comfort zone.

I tell my players all the time, there are two types of baseball players. Player A gets told by a coach to change and make an adjustment. That player tries to make that adjustment and gets really uncomfortable with the immediate results and switches right back to his comfort zone. That player ends

up flat lining out and never sees much improvement in his game and will be the same player 2 years down the road as he is today. Player B gets told by a coach to change and make an adjustment and he sticks to it. He works diligently through the adjustment process understanding that there will be failure and that there will be bad results but has his eyes on the finish line. He understands that if he continues to work at this and asks the right questions he will be better at the end of the adjustment. That player continuously improves and 2 years down the road that player has transformed his game into something totally different than he was just 2 years prior.

Below is an image I use of the two players in the above description.



The middle line going straight is the talent line assuming that both players start with the same amount of talent. The line that isn't straight depicts the players talent line and results line through an adjustment phase. Player A and B both make the adjustment. Player A doesn't like it and goes right back to where he was. Player B pushes through his comfort zone and as you can see becomes better than he previously was.

Teach your players to be ok with failure. Understand that it is a part of the game and it is a part of becoming a better player. Teach your players to always be on the lookout for an adjustment or the next piece of advice that can help their game. And always teach your players that adversity is your friend and not your enemy. Adversity pushes you to become a better player; embrace adversity as a tool that will lead to future success.

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