

In Season/Game Adjustments: Mechanics vs Mentality

I have thought about this a lot. Should I talk to a player about making a physical/mechanical adjustment during the season or should I talk to him more about his approach or mentality when playing the game?

Obviously in the offseason, there is a heavy teaching emphasis on mechanical changes because we are less worried about the results and more worried about the process. Once the season starts, it is tough to ask a player to make a tough mechanical adjustment at the fear that it might send his results into a negative free fall. What I find myself talking to players more about is adjusting their approach to a certain play, at bat, pitch, or situation rather than telling them to step straight to their target as a pitcher, or “don’t shift your weight too far back during your swing.”

Obviously, if there is a very simple mechanical adjustment with little problems mentally...I am all for trying. But if it is a change/adjustment that the player will have to put a significant amount of time into then I would not do that at the risk of the player having terrible results in the games which will have a completely negative effect on his ability to change in the future.

As for in game adjustments, I will almost never tell a player to make a physical adjustment/change. For example, a hitter is in the batter’s box and the 3rd base coach yells “Keep your hands inside the ball, make sure you don’t step open.” THIS IS BAD TIMING FOR ADVICE. It is hard enough for a hitter to determine what pitch is coming in, let alone remembering a physical adjustment.

Game time is for a mentality or approach discussion. Ideas like, “hit the ball hard”, “know what pitch you are looking for”, “stay confident” are all better pieces of advice for a player than a physical adjustment.

Each player is different and will respond better to different ways of communication and teaching. Ultimately, it is up to the coach to determine how each player ticks and how to effectively communicate with his team.

I want to eliminate the pitfalls for you. I have been on both sides of this conversation and have seen players struggle due to me asking too much in the heat of competition. I have also seen players benefit from simple mental reminders.

Keep it simple, have fun, and best of luck out there!

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