

## Winter Notes

### 15u Carolina Elite Bulldogs/14u Carolina Elite Eagles/13u Carolina Elite Tigers

Congrats on a very good 2009 season. The improvements within this collection of players have been very evident on the field with our success, and winning percentage at an all time high. It's not about the team "name," or anything like that when it comes to winning games. We simply have a collection of good players at the 14 - 15 age group, which has kept both of these teams strong each, and every weekend out.

Moving forward - the upcoming months will say a lot about your feelings about the game of baseball. I recommend everyone get away from the game for a little bit. It's been a long year, and there is nothing wrong with taking some time to off to recharge your battery. At the same time, I don't recommend taking the entire winter off. These are the months when it makes the most sense to devote yourself to improving your individual skills. Anytime you make adjustments to an individual skill (like changing your hand position in your stance, trying to work more inside the ball, etc...) there is naturally a period of time where you will actually get worse. That is tough to swallow when you're in the middle of a season (who wants to stink it up in games after all)? Therefore, the winter months offer you an opportunity to really devote yourself to making some adjustments, and improvements, without worrying about those adjustments failing you on a tournament weekend.

Moreover, these are the months where "hobby" baseball players won't touch a ball, or a bat. Everyone is practicing in May and June, in the heart of the baseball season, and the temps are in the 80's. You might be improving, but so is everybody else! The winter months offer you a great opportunity to really improve your individual skills at a time when most other players aren't even thinking about the game, let alone working at it!

Hitters - you need to be devoting yourself to your hand/wrist skills. Get your butt outside everyday and do your one-arms, donut, and situational swings (h & r, do the job, plus count, etc...). If you aren't willing to invest 20 - 30 minutes a day to do this, then don't ask me "why" you're not hitting! Baseball is just like a savings account. If you don't invest any money into your savings account, you don't ask the bank teller why your account balance doesn't have anything in it. Therefore, why on earth would you ask a baseball coach why you're not hitting, when you haven't invested any of your time into your hitting account? That sounds silly I know, but believe me I hear it all the time. If you are willing to invest your time, and the skills you are working on are correct (make sure you trust your source - everyone has hitting advice - most of it is wrong on some level. You don't ask a doctor for construction advice, and you don't ask a construction worker for medical advice - make sure your advice is coming from a trusted baseball source) you will get better - I promise you that. The person who is writing this didn't even hit .300 his senior year in high school. 3 years later he was the starting center fielder for a top 20 division 1 baseball team. The only difference was that I surrounded myself with a good source (my juco coach), and I invested some of myself EVERYDAY to doing what he told me to do!

Lastly - you need to try out for other teams, and other coaches next year when you have the opportunity. I've heard some parents tell me their kids didn't want to tryout for another team, that they just wanted to play for Elite. **That is NOT okay**, and not what we are doing here at Elite. The whole point of this program is to give you all the tools, and the confidence to continue to play beyond this program. Only wanting to play for me is a sign of a lack of competitiveness. **I don't want to be your "safety comfort zone."** I want you guys uncomfortable, so you get experience it, and get over it. Part of being a competitor, and ultimately a good baseball player is your ability to find comfort in uncomfortable situations. After all, being on defense with the bases loaded and two outs in the last inning isn't exactly comfortable - but you have to learn to embrace it. My advice - if there is something that scares you (a tryout, an audition, an interview, a test, etc...) go do it **because** it scares you! Then you can experience the satisfaction of overcoming that uncomfortable situation. The more uncomfortable, or the more nervous you are the better - **go do it....no excuses.**

What makes a good baseball career guys is having an excuse to continue practicing. I loved everything about practice. I loved the grind of repetition,....having the opportunity to spend a part of my day swinging a bat (correctly), or fielding a ground ball. Why don't I do it anymore??? I don't have a reason to! I'm no longer playing on a team, so for me to practice would be an insane waste of time. However, as long as I was part of a team somewhere I had a reason to go out everyday and make myself better. This is what makes a successful baseball player. Make a team, so you can have a reason to continue to practice. That's what junior college was for me - a reason to spend my days practicing, and playing the game. It was because of that practice, that I was able to improve and continue playing. I promise you guys - if baseball is important enough to you to go out and make teams (I don't care how good/bad, or where the team is), it will allow you to continue to practice, which will allow you to continue to play. Do that, and this game will stay with you a lot longer than those players who would rather go out partying all night, and so they choose not to go to the games because

they know they'll be tired, and want to sleep in the next morning. Enjoy your "partying" guys, you'll be watching the kids play who chose to get some sleep so they could play the next morning in a few years!

### **12u Carolina Elite Wildcats**

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that we have a collection of good 12u players (more than 9). Therefore, you're going to have to compete even harder than some players in the other age groups for your playing time. My advice is to embrace that challenge - don't run away from it.

Understand this guys - the part of you that is willing to compete for your own spot on a team, is the same part of you that is willing to compete against your opponent. Those players that have quit because they weren't playing enough (and weren't willing to go out and earn their time), are the same players that were intimidated when they were on the field against their opponent. Which player do you want next to you??? The one that competed his tail off to earn that spot, and therefore is going to compete his tail off to help us beat our opponent? Or do you want to line up next to the kid that is always asking for me to "give him his chance," and then reassure him that "he's doing a great job" even when he's not? Constant reassurance is not helpful - it's crippling. Baseball, and life are tough. They are full of adversity, and full of challenges. The only thing constant reassurance regardless of your performance will do is cripple you to the challenges baseball, and life will place in front of you.

*If...* you can accept the challenge from your teammates to be one of the best 9 guys, you can accept the challenge from your opponent to be better than their 9 guys. Again - if you're scared to compete for your spot in the lineup, you're also scared to compete against another team. Which player do you want to be, and which player do you want lined up next to you when we have to play a big game? I know what everyone will "say" if I asked them that question. The question is how many of you guys are willing to make what you "say" into what is actually the truth!!!

### **11u Carolina Elite Mustangs**

This team is small, but it is strong. Remember - what makes a good team isn't a name, or a uniform, it's a collection of good "players." We don't have many players on this team, but the players we do have are good. Plus, the Rays players are improving everyday, which is allowing the Mustangs to stay competitive on their weekends. The Mustangs are following the same path that all the teams prior to them followed - they have a "core" group of good ballplayers that can get onto the field and improve because some younger players are willing to help their roster out. Along the way, we will pick up some more talented players, and the "collection of players" will continue to improve, and the pieces of the puzzle will continue to be filled in. By this time next year - this team will be right there with the Eagles, Tigers, and Wildcats as a title contender every weekend!

### **10u Carolina Elite Rays**

We need to continue to develop our basic baseball skills. This winter, I need all players to firm up their pick-offs, and their ability to throw strikes with runners on base (when we're using their quick delivery). I don't want you guys throwing a lot (our arms need a break). However, every once and awhile go out and throw a few baseballs with a quick delivery to make sure we're very comfortable attacking the strike zone with runners on base.

Also - let's keep the one arms up. The best thing a hitter can have is a short path to contact, and doing the one arms, and high bat drills (where the barrel never drops below the hands) is the best way to ensure our swing is short enough to compete against quality pitching.

Lastly - just like the Wildcat group - embrace the opportunity to compete for time on the field. I can't repeat it enough guys - if you aren't willing to compete for your time on your own team, then you aren't willing to compete against an opponent on another team either. If you win your job, it means you're willing to compete. If you're willing to compete, then you're the guy I want on the field playing for/with me when we play someone else!!!