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A Catchers Most Important Relationship,

The Pitcher/ Catcher Relationship

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There are many ways a young catcher can work himself into a starting lineup on whatever team he is on. It is very rare to have a catcher at the Major League level who can do it all from an offensive standpoint and defensively which is why catchers are a vital part of any teams success. Catchers at any level can work their way into a lineup by working on their receiving, blocking, pop time, or offensively to ensure that your coach puts your name in the lineup. That is the easy part, to be a catcher you need to be a lot of things to a lot of different people on a baseball diamond. Coaches who were former catchers like myself are very demanding on this catcher spot, starting catchers have to be the second coach on the field the point guard on the field. While you have to impress your coaches and work hard there is an important group of people that can be equally important to who is behind the plate any given day. The pitching staff! As the Associate Head Baseball Coach at Post University in Connecticut (DII) one of my responsibilities are working with the catchers and ensuring they have caught each pitcher on our staff and have a full understanding of what each pitcher is capable of and what the pitcher thinks he is capable of might be two different things entirely.

Many people might not like what I am about to say next (they will be pitchers) but pitchers are weird people. They have weird tendencies, they need constant reassurance, and sometimes a kick in the rear. The relationship between pitcher and catcher is an extremely important relationship that has to be a close relationship and one built on trust because as coaches we will gather information from our pitchers and see who do they like catching them, because at the end of the day as much as it pains me to say as an offensive minded coach pitching wins games; and you have to make sure those pitchers are comfortable to throw a pitch in the dirt. Without that trust that a pitcher can throw a slider down and away in the dirt and knowing his catcher will get down and block it will help that pitcher deliver a quality pitch rather than backing off the pitch and have it leave the yard.

The ability to keep a pitcher focused on the mound is more important than if you got a couple of hits or hit a homerun. Your job as a catcher is to make sure the guy on the mound is focused on throwing one pitch at a time. You have to be part psychologist as much as you are a backstop. Some pitchers are the types that need to be patted on the butt and tell them everything is going to be O.K. and some you need to get in their face and kick them in the butt. Most of the times when catchers go out to the mound to talk to the pitcher, its less about mechanics and more telling a joke or keeping them relaxed so they are not focused on the negative part of the game. The catcher has

to know each pitcher and what each of his pitches do, do they have a lot of run on their pitches or heavy sink? It is the catchers job to know all of this and know what his out pitch is. With all of this information to decipher through I never understand how people can call catching wearing the “tools of ignorance”.

Many Major League catchers have built a great career on being a great personal catcher A.J. Burnett in 2009 did not throw to the starting catcher Jorge Posada, rather he opted for Jose Molina because he trusted Jose to call a good game and feeling comfortable lead Jose to starting and getting playing time. The most famous personal catcher was Charlie O'Brien who followed around Greg Maddux around the league and it kept Charlie O'Brien in the game a lot longer than professional baseball intended. It was because of the trust he and Greg Maddox fostered over the years knowing how they were going to prepare for each game and made them a formable duo for many years in Major League Baseball. Confidence for pitchers is huge and it is your job as a catcher to convince that pitcher he has confidence in everything he does on the mound. So when people tell you that a catcher is not the most important part of a baseball team, you will know one thing for certain, they never caught.



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