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Building Team Comradery With High School Baseball Players

By Dylan Romero and Jiling Liu 



Comradery refers to a sense of friendship and closeness within a group. For any team to function efficiently, the team needs to have a strong sense of comradery (Bastian et al., 2014). As a high school coach, it is extremely important to ensure all players on the team are close to one another and are fully committed to the team. The reason is that these players may have played on various teams before high school, and they likely lack bonds and the chemistry to work together. There are many ways to build this connection within a team. This column shares a few strategies to build team comradery, including taking on team challenges, signing a commitment contract, and participating in social events. Although the ideas are written with a baseball team in mind, they can be applied to any sport.

Taking on Team Challenges

Comradery is the backbone of any strong team. Difficult tasks breed strong connections. To build togetherness and comradery among a high school baseball team, challenging activities such as King of the Jungle can be used to have a shared challenging experience (see Figure 1). To start the challenge, the coach can let players line up around the batter's box and then signal one player to run along the foul line, the grass line, the other foul line, and back to the starting point. Once the player has started running for three to five seconds, the coach can signal the next player to run and catch the first runner. Once a runner has caught the person in front of them, they are allowed to stop. If a runner is caught, they are still required to run until they catch the runner in front or reach the starting point. Anyone who stops should cheer for other teammates. This challenge can be extended to a number of laps (e.g., three) or a certain amount of time (e.g., 5 minutes).

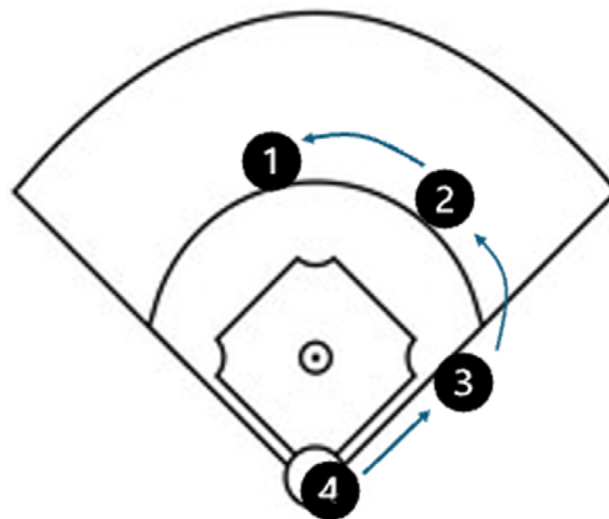


Figure 1. Visual guide for King of the Jungle.

Signing a Commitment Contract

An uncommitted team lacks bonds, support, and communication skills. When a team is full of committed players, the team forms a strong bond and performance is affected positively. If a coach notices a lack of commitment in their team, it is extremely important that the coach addresses this issue immediately by explaining the significance and impact of team commitment. Once this has been communicated, the coach can ask each player to sign a commitment contract. Figure 2 shows a sample contract that can be easily adopted.

Participating in Social Events

A bond may be difficult to form at practice only. However, social events where players talk and interact with one another

<p style="text-align: center;">Commitment Contract</p> <p>I, _____ (Name) _____, promise to remain loyal and committed to this team. I will give my complete effort in everything I do for this team. In addition to the promises listed above, I sign this document and agree to the following terms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help the team to clean up after practice • Never quit, no matter the circumstance • Respect myself, my coach, and my fellow teammates • Spend time outside of practice to work on my craft • Support my teammates and lift them up when they fall <p>Player signature: _____</p> <p>Coach signature: _____</p> <p>Date: _____</p>

Figure 2. Sample commitment contract.

allow them to spend quality time together outside of practice. In addition, the social skills developed in these events can be useful not only on the baseball field but also in a player's future life and career (Gano-Overway et al., 2020). An effective way to do this is for the coach to organize team dinners. Every week, the day before game day, set up a dinner either at a player's house, the coach's house, or a restaurant for the team to eat together. In addition to finding a location, scheduling a time, and inviting players' significant ones before the dinner, the coach also needs to ensure that the team is socializing. Examples of what coaches can do to ensure effective socialization include:

- Make each player say something interesting about themselves.
- Have each player discuss how they got involved in the sport.
- Have them play a game together after dinner (e.g., Wiffle ball, spike ball, basketball).
- Have the team work together to prepare the meal.

Other social events, such as a fundraiser or a college game, are also good choices. A fundraiser can bring the team together and requires players to work as one unit. A college baseball game is a fun experience for all players to go and watch the game they love.

Conclusion

A team that demonstrates closeness and a desire to have each other's back is an extremely strong team. As discussed before, participating in challenging activities, signing a commitment contract, or participating in social events are effective methods to build team comradery. These methods can not only be used to build a strong baseball team but can also be applied to all other team sports.


Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Submissions Welcome!


Readers are encouraged to send "Coach's Corner" submissions to *Strategies* Editor at lstrecker@shapeamerica.org.

The purpose of the Coach's Corner column is to feature short articles about one specific coaching lesson that readers can immediately implement with their team. Articles should contain a brief introduction, followed by quick-hitting information such as bullet points or lists. Submissions should not exceed 1,000–1,500 words (or roughly four typed, double-spaced pages).

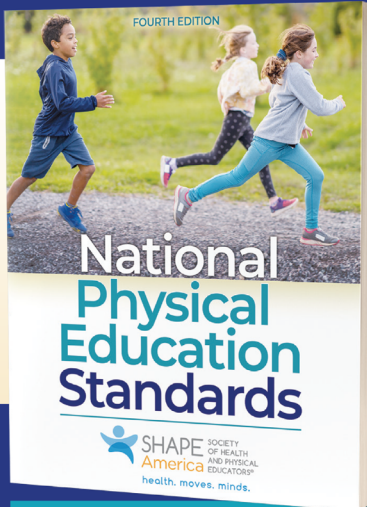

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