

Coaching Management

BASEBALL

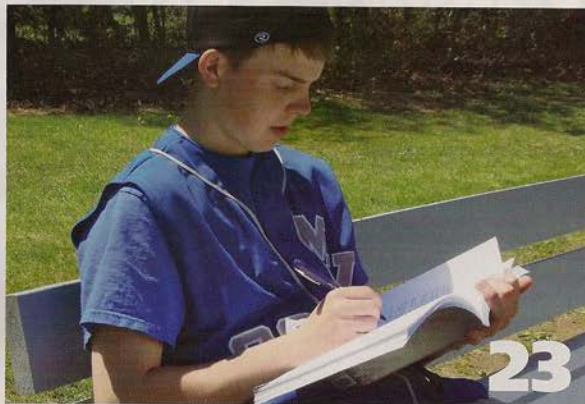
- > Team Notebooks
- > Energy Enhancers



**BETWEEN
THE LINES**
*Examining baseball's
unwritten rules*

POSTSEASON 2012 | VOL. XX NO. 7 | \$7.00

Coaching Management



23

16 COVER STORY BETWEEN THE LINES

The rules of baseball are not all recorded in black and white. Coaches also have to negotiate a set of unwritten codes with no firm definitions, but serious consequences for transgressions.



29

29 NUTRITION BURST OF ENERGY

Many athletes today are using energy supplements for a quick pick-me-up. Here's some advice to pass on regarding best ingredients and when to use them.

23 LEADERSHIP THE WRITE APPROACH

Looking for a way to help players learn about the game and themselves? Team Notebooks will make them reflect on their performance after each contest.



3

3 POSTSEASON BULLETIN BOARD

MLB draft changes good for college game ... Tornado leaves HS team without a home ... Big 10 coach proposes new summer league for schools ... Helping a Little League Challenger program ... Benedict College coach builds his own field ... Honoring a top teammate.

12 Q&A RON BRADLEY

After winning three state titles in 21 years as a high school coach, Ron Bradley started the baseball program at Rogers State University and led the team to a runner-up finish at the 2012 NAIA championship.

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

33 TEAM EQUIPMENT
34 HITTING & PITCHING AIDS
35 PRODUCT LAUNCH
37 BASEBALL FACILITIES

39 MORE PRODUCTS
36 ADVERTISERS DIRECTORY
40 COACHES NETWORK

ON THE COVER

Bunting is one of the plays that can create ill will if performed at the wrong time. Coaches talk about the unwritten rules of the game beginning on page 16.

PHOTO BY GORDON BATES/JUA ATHLETICS

Publisher Mark Goldberg
Marketing Director Sheryl Shaffer
Editorial Dept. Eleanor Frankel, Director
Abigail Funk, Dennis Read, R.J. Anderson,
Patrick Bohn, Mike Phelps, Kristin Maki

Business Manager Pennie Small
Art Director Pamela Crawford
Production Dept. Maria Bise, Director
Neal Betts, Trish Landsperger
Special Projects Dave Wohlhueter

Circulation Dept. Dave Dubin, Sandra Earle
Business and Editorial Offices
20 Eastlake Rd., Ithaca, NY 14850
(607) 257-6970, Fax (607) 257-7328
info@MomentumMedia.com

Advertising Sales Associate
Diedra Harkenrider (607) 257-6970, ext. 24

Advertising Materials Coordinator/Sales
Mike Townsend (607) 257-6970, ext. 13

Mailing lists for Coaching Management Baseball are provided by the **Clell Wade Coaches Directory**.

The Coaching Management Baseball edition is published in February, September, and November by MAG, Inc. and is distributed free to college and high school coaches in the United States and Canada.

Copyright © 2012 by MAG, Inc. All rights reserved. Text may not be reproduced in any manner, in whole or in part, without the permission of the publisher. Unsolicited materials will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Coaching Management, P.O. Box 4806, Ithaca, N.Y. 14852. Printed in the U.S.A.



THE WRITE APPROACH

Looking to help players learn about the game and themselves? Team Notebooks will make them reflect on their performance after each contest as well as their goals and aspirations. By Dr. Richard Kent

After games, it's not unusual to see players go separate ways with their own friends and family. But Jim Dawber, an American Legion coach in Rhode Island, watches his players head straight for the books after each game—their Team Notebooks, that is. A combination workbook and reflective journal, Team Notebooks guide players in critiquing a game and their own

performances. Such writing helps athletes prepare for the next game by thinking more objectively. The Notebooks also keep the coaching staff informed of what players are thinking.

As a coach, I have used various writing activities with my high school and college teams since the early 1980s. Writing has helped my athletes learn many lessons while thinking more deeply about their training and competitions. Over the past six years, I have studied the use of Team Notebooks on a wide variety of teams across the nation. This article showcases some of what I have discovered.

MANY BENEFITS

Adding Team Notebooks to an athletic program won't make up for out of shape athletes or ill-designed training sessions. However, coaches have found that writing provides many benefits, from helping athletes work toward their goals to linking to their school's academic mission. During interviews, coaches and athletes also spoke about how Team Notebooks added variety to practice sessions and frontloaded team discussions.

For me as a coach, the athletes' writing provides yet another way to enhance communication. Reading entries from my players' Team Notebooks or Journals keeps me more in tune with their needs. Coach Dawber, who has also coached high school teams, sees writing in Team Notebooks as a way "to involve the players in understanding that their learning and improvement is far more in their control than they realize."

At Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake (N.Y.) High School, Head Girls' Soccer Coach Brian Bold especially likes how Notebooks allow him to better understand and react to his athletes. "Writing provides another avenue for strengthening the player-coach relationship," he says.

Other coaches cite that writing improves their athletes' learning. "My players were able to look at the game from a coach's point of view and learn how to deal with situations that the other team presented," says Anthony Neeson, Head Girls' Soccer Coach at St. Michael the Archangel High School in Baton Rouge, La.

Ski racing coaches Darrell Gray and Jake Fisher of Burke Mountain Academy in East Burke, Vt., assigned writing activities to their athletes during a training camp in Chile. I asked the athletes on the ski team if writing could make someone a faster racer or a better athlete.

"Writing makes you learn about yourself," explained Chris McKenna. "Knowing yourself physically and mentally as an athlete is very important. Writing made me think about what I was doing well and what I needed to work on. This made my training and motivation much better."

In *Writing to Learn*, William Zinsser explains the value of writing as a learning tool: "Writing organizes and clarifies our thoughts. Writing is how we think our way into a subject and make it our own. Writing enables us to find out what we know—and what we don't know—about whatever we're trying to learn."

Writing as a learning activity also connects athletics to academics. In the academic arena, high school and college faculties emphasize the importance of writing across the curriculum and across disciplines. Schools like Burke Mountain Academy work to inte-

PROMPT RESPONSE

This was the response of Kyle Gauvin, a baseball player at Mountain Valley High School in Rumford, Maine, to the Journal prompt: "What makes a good teammate?"

- Someone who can communicate with you on and off the field.
- Someone who can push you beyond your limits to that next level.
- A teammate who would rather go to the field to practice his skills than go to a party.
- Someone who knows how to push his teammates forward through tough times.
- A teammate who is more interested in seeing you improve than himself.
- A person who is constantly thinking of new ways he can help improve the team's performance.
- A player who shows up to work at practice and stays after practice.
- A player who gets right back into the game if he makes a mistake instead of giving up.
- If a player is hurt, he still shows up to practice and games to help out and to support his team.
- A teammate who always has your back during tough times outside of the sport.

grate writing in all facets of a student-athlete's life, from the classroom to the ski slopes. Coaches who adopt writing as a learning activity on their teams may find faculty members and school administrators cheering them on. In fact, at some schools, coaches and teachers have joined forces through classroom assignments, such as using sport journals in English class.

At Maine's elite ski school Carrabassett Valley Academy, English teacher Mary Poulin gives her student-athletes a choice for daily writing at the beginning of class. They may write about "the opening line of a notable poem which they can spring board off in prose or poetry" or a prompt about athletics from my new book *Writing on the Bus*. With this approach, she merges writing with her students' passion for ski racing. According to Poulin, the would-be Olympians delve into themes like performance pressure, humility, and sportsmanship.

Because our teams are comprised of student-athletes with different learning styles, writing can play a unique role. For those who are more tuned into writing and reading, Team Notebooks offer a welcoming way to learn beyond the more traditional coaching methods. And even for student-athletes who shy away from the written word, I've found that writing in the Notebooks builds academic confidence as they write about a subject they know well.

Sport psychologists use writing activities to help athletes sharpen mental approaches, curb performance anxiety, and eliminate negative thoughts. In *Creative Journal Writing: The Art and Heart of Reflection*, author

Stephanie Dowrick explains that writing and journaling can reduce stress and anxiety, increase self-awareness, sharpen mental skills, promote genuine psychological insight, advance creative inspiration and insight, and strengthen coping abilities. Team Notebooks may offer the same benefit for athletes.

Meg Hostage, an NCAA All-American in diving at Stanford University, found that writing kept her focused. "Writing worked to keep me accountable for what I wanted to achieve, and in a way helped me to reach my goals," she says. "Putting it all in writing reminded me what I was working toward every time I opened the journal to make a new entry."

ORGANIZING THE BOOKS

The basic Team Notebook can be adapted for different sports and to align with program needs. Coaches determine what and how often athletes will write, and that can change from week to week or season to season. Coaches may use *The Athlete's Workbook: A Season of Sport & Reflection* or design their own. If the concept of using a full-blown Team Notebook is overwhelming, coaches may decide to use sections of the notebooks as stand-alone activities.

RICHARD KENT, PhD, has spent over 30 years coaching soccer and skiing at various competitive levels and is an Associate Professor at the University of Maine as well as Director of the Maine Writing Project, a site of the National Writing Project. He recently authored *Writing on the Bus: Using Athletic Team Notebooks and Journals to Advance Learning and Performance in Sports* and *The Athlete's Workbook: A Season of Sport & Reflection*. He may be reached at: rich.kent@maine.edu or on his resource Website: WritingAthletes.com.

Regardless of the structure chosen, the key is that the pages of Team Notebooks serve as a place for athletes to reflect, analyze, and note-take. The prompts on the various pages create opportunities for players to set goals and work through challenges.

The following provides a look at some of the sections of Team Notebooks as well as an example of how to organize one:

Coach's Informational Letter: It's a good idea for the notebook to begin with an opening letter by the coach. Coaches might write briefly about the program's history or the goals for the season and include team rules and contact information.

The letter should include thoughts on why the coach feels Team Notebooks are important, as well as directions for their use. For example, the coach may state: "The *Game Analysis* section is due immediately after a game unless you make arrangements with the coach," or "If your writing is illegible, I'll ask you to write the page again."

Preseason Thoughts: At the beginning of an athletic season, many coaches ask players to formulate personal and team goals. It's not uncommon for such writing to end up being overly generalized. Including a page for preseason thoughts, with specific prompts, can make this exercise more meaningful. Here are some prompts that can be utilized:

- My strengths and weaknesses last year as a player
- My preparation for this season has been the following
 - My goals for this season
 - Last year our team strengths included
 - Last year our weaknesses included

The prompts on this page create opportunities for athletes to look back and think forward, and thereby make specific connections to their performances. (See "Preseason" at right for an example.) Writing Preseason Thoughts takes an athlete roughly 10 to 15 minutes. Depending on the number of athletes on the team, a coach will read and perhaps take notes on the collection of pages in 15 to 30 minutes.

Using *Preseason Thoughts* generates deeper conversations, provides players with a forum for goal setting, and keeps the coaching staff informed. For athletes who have fully involved themselves in off-season training and arrive at preseason fit and determined, writing *Preseason Thoughts* can build confidence and be motivational when shared with the coaching staff. For athletes who have only marginally prepared, writing *Preseason Thoughts* can be an empty experience that leads to a reality check.

PRESEASON

The following are Preseason Thoughts from a shortstop on a high school baseball team.

- **My strengths last year as a player:** Last year I felt confident at bat. I always studied the pitcher from the dugout because I usually batted 6th, 7th, or 8th. I had a plan when I went up to bat and actually never got nervous. I loved coming to the plate. When I was a sophomore that wasn't always the case! In the field I wanted the ball to come to me. I worked hard on holding runners close at second and improved my throw by staying on top of it.
- **My weaknesses last year as a player:** Last year I got mad at some teammates because they weren't serious at times. When I got mad, some of my energy went toward that instead of into my own game or practice. I need to learn to help players by saying positive things instead of whining. I need to speak up more. Balls hit to my left caused me problems.
- **My preparation for this season has been the following:** After last season I played Legion ball and went to baseball camp at the university. I did the weight room three days a week. And yes, I played basketball and that helped with my cardio, but it wasn't really pretty! I'm not a basketball player—it kept me from couch potato-ing. I feel great about my preparation for this season.
- **My goals for this season include the following:** Improved talk, work on fielding to my left, leadership on and off the field.
- **Last year our team strengths included:** Senior leadership. Positive talk. Playing all seven innings. Making the best of practice sessions. We liked each other!
- **Last year our team weaknesses included:** We won the conference so we did good. I think we needed to spend more time with the JV team—you know, play some more scrimmages. I think we need to go to a middle school game, too.
- **I am taking the following classes this spring:** Chemistry, Calculus, Writing Center English, History, Economics.
- **Other thoughts:** I think we should go to some college games. Also, I'd like to have the team up to my house for some Sox games and we could use the Game Analysis II sheets to analyze the games. We're ready. Let's play ball!

IN-SEASON

The following is a Game Analysis by the same athlete in "Preseason," a shortstop on a high school baseball team. The team has just won, 12-0, and upped its record to 3-0.

- **My strengths as a player in today's game:** I stayed focused in the field 100% of the time. I really watched the pitcher while sitting in the dugout. 2 for 3 and that double to the gap was sweet!
- **My weaknesses as a player in today's game:** Maybe I could have said more to John after he booted that ball. When I encourage him he plays better.
- **Team strengths in today's game:** Great chatter. Positive talk... Except for one error, we were solid.
- **Team weaknesses in today's game:** Honestly, we were hot today. Focused, organized, good talk. I suppose we could have hit some home runs!
- **Opponent's strengths:** Even when we were up by 7, they kept playing hard. They never let down. Their first baseman was a class act. He kept encouraging the younger players especially the pitcher.
- **Opponent's weaknesses:** Young.
- **The "difference" in today's game:** We had more years of experience.
- **Team adjustment you suggest for the next game against this opponent:** Don't take them lightly. They may be young, but they never give up.
- **Other comments about team strategy, attitude, preparation:** We earned this win by being a "team" and by being well prepared!

Game Analysis I: This page of the Team Notebook is completed after every game, and builds on the preseason writing. It guides athletes in reflecting on their individual game performances as well as those of their teammates and opponents. The prompts steer players away from reducing a game result to one-dimensional accounts like, "the umpires had it in for us." The page helps players gain perspective and moves them toward thinking as coaches.

The one-page reflection takes an average player three to five minutes to complete. Depending on the number of athletes, coaches will read and perhaps take notes on the collection in 10 to 20 minutes.

An example of a Game Analysis I can be seen in the sidebar titled "In-Season" on page 26. The shortstop's analysis of a game against a younger team shows his team's strengths but also reveals the player's understanding of how his team won.

Game Analysis II: The prompts on this page assist athletes in writing about a game or competition that a team watches together. The observation takes athletes approximately 10 minutes to complete and may be used as a discussion guide.

Postseason Thoughts: On this page players are asked to think about the past season while making plans for the future. As with *Preseason Thoughts*, an athlete may take 15 to 20 minutes to write and a coach may read and perhaps take notes on the collection in 15 to 30 minutes. The prompts on *Postseason Thoughts* are similar to *Preseason Thoughts*.

Athletes' Notes: These pages are for keeping notes, sketching plays, and storing information like handouts from the coach. The pages may be blank pieces of paper or the coach may create different page styles.

It's not uncommon for coaches to create their own program-specific notebook pages. Dawber created a weekly Personal Evaluation Checklist, Team Report Card, and Quality At-Bat Card, which poses questions to players such as "Did I study the pitcher from the dugout?" before hitting.

Some coaches expand the concept of the Team Notebook to an Athlete's Journal, which can help athletes delve deeper into their motivations and stumbling blocks. Here are some examples of athletic journal prompts to use for these athletes in *Preseason Goals and Notes*.

- What do you dislike about yourself as an athlete and why?

- What is your favorite place to compete and why?

- Why can this statement hold true: "Some days, doing poorly is the most important result that could happen?"

- Think back to a time when an athlete or team you admired failed in an event that the athlete or team was favored to win. Describe your feelings.

- What's a great memory that you have as a competitive athlete?

MAKING IT WORK

A lot of coaches I've met like the idea of Team Notebooks but feel overwhelmed at having another thing to keep tabs on. My advice is to keep the process simple, at least to start. The *Preseason Thoughts* section may be a good first step. Athletes will write and the coach will read, and this exercise won't take more than 20 minutes for either to complete. Then, a coach might use the *Game Analysis I* sheet for a few games. Or before a team discussion, the coach can ask athletes to write responses to a few questions to prime them.

A coach can also vary the amount of time he or she spends reviewing the writing. As a soccer coach, I photocopied the pages and

Game-On
Sports Field Conditioners

Keep your field in top notch shape with 4 great products

Call for Fall Ball Special Savings on Bag or Bulk Product.
(Good until December 1, 2012)

1-888-593-0395
www.hayditegame-on.com

Game-On Regular
Game-On Red
Game-On Drying Agent

Also Available Warning Track Blend

Circle No. 123

LEADERSHIP

kept them in a large three-ring binder. I liked comparing my athletes' responses from game to game. But other coaches simply read the notes quickly and hand the pages back.

Some coaches write back to players as a way to show concern, offer advice, and build

relationships. While I have not done this, I do speak with athletes if I have concerns about an entry or if their writing indicates they are struggling.

relationships. While I have not done this, I do speak with athletes if I have concerns about an entry or if their writing indicates they are struggling. Coaches should also be prepared to read athletes' honest opinions. There are times when players' frustrations come out in their writing. Perhaps they didn't play in a game or, in their eyes, played too little. As long as an athlete didn't call me a nitwit, I had to allow

them to express themselves, reminding myself how this kind of writing has a wide range of benefits. In the end, the writing in a Team Notebook belongs to the athlete.

It is important to decide who will read the Team Notebooks and to communicate

this to the athletes. In some cases, having assistant coaches read the athletes' thoughts can be helpful. But athletes should always know this up front. For the most part, the athletes' writing is not secret or personal. Every once in a while, however, private writing surfaces, and those words deserve a level of confidentiality.

For some coaches, it may be more efficient to construct the Team Notebooks online.

These days, our athletes are wired. An online form that allows privacy and convenience can keep Team Notebooks at your athletes' fingertips. I have no doubt that someone will come up with "an app for that."

It's important that coaches set up a structure that works for them and their team in their particular setting. And finally, Coach Edwards offers a great piece of advice. "Make sure you value the information you are collecting," she says. "If the players do not feel you value their words, then they will be very hesitant to put much effort into it."

In terms of communication, player development, and learning, writing has the potential to make a powerful difference in the world of athletics. One of my favorite times as a coach is the silence when athletes are writing in their Team Notebooks. Something is happening during those few minutes of reflection, and I know it is helping my players and our team. **CM**

Versions of this article have appeared in our sister publication, *Athletic Management* and other editions of *Coaching Management*.

As long as an athlete didn't call me a nitwit, I had to allow them to express themselves, reminding myself how this kind of writing has a wide range of benefits. In the end, the writing in a Team Notebook belongs to the athlete.

Muhl Tech
QUALITY BASEBALL AND SOFTBALL
GEAR FOR COACHES
1-888-766-8772
www.muhltech.com

**Making Your Practice Time
More Productive**

**CALL FOR FREE DEMO
DVD AND BROCHURE!**

Circle No. 125