

# Attention To Detail

## Lynch Gets Most Out Of His Players

By **BRIAN CAIN**  
Special To Collegiate Baseball

TOMBALL, Tex. — Rick Lynch, the 2004 American Baseball Coaches Association National High School Coach of The Year from Tomball High School (Tomball, Tex.), took an interesting approach to preparing his team for the 2008 season.

Already one of the premiere high school baseball programs in the nation, Lynch knew that if he was going to prepare his team to play championship baseball, it was going to be done with a one pitch at a time mentality with attention to detail and a "Don't count the days, but make the days count" attitude.

In this article, Lynch shares some of the interesting techniques he has used to prepare his team to get the most out of every day.

### Obstacle Course Warm-Up

One of the only programs in the nation that uses an extensive obstacle course during pre-game warm-ups both at home and on the road, Lynch had to first convince his players that stepping outside of the box and bucking the norm was actually the best practice in modern baseball and would give his team a competitive advantage.

"Dennis Faye and Ron Wolforth introduced me to the rugby stretch and dynamic warm-up and it has evolved into a cornerstone of our program here at Tomball," said Lynch.

"I think the final sell for the team happened when we brought in Spark Training last fall to evaluate our kids, and they put them through a similar warm-up like the one we had been doing already.

"Our kids have totally bought in and have started to take pride in doing their warm-up.

"Often the other team will be looking over at us watching what we are doing, rather than focusing on their own warm-up. The use of the dynamic warm-up allows our players to get loose, break a sweat, and get physically and mentally prepared all while having fun."

### Use of Fishing Analogy

Lynch and his assistants, Rusty Reeder and Kirk Youngdale, were looking for a team building activity that they could use to break up the monotony of pre-season and decided that a catfish outing was the best medicine.

"One day coming home from a game where we did not play all that well, we pulled the bus over by this roadside fishing place and the kids thought we were going to run them," Lynch said.

"We had just played at less than our best and when we told them that we were going to flush the game and go fishing, their smiles were from ear to ear.

"The fishing trip is one of the best things we have done this year. From the trip we came up with the slogan 'Don't Get Hooked.'

"We use that slogan with our players as a demonstration of all the outside circumstances that can hinder their performance such as fans, weather, the other team, the umpire, the professional draft and all the other things that they can't control.

"We talk about staying away from the bait and the hooks (things outside of your control) and constantly talk about focusing on things that they can control, to play the game pitch by pitch.

"The concept here is that the

One way to develop the ability to overcome adversity is to "throw in the monkeys" and prepare for adversity in practice. By getting your players to be comfortable with being uncomfortable and by practicing adverse situations in practice, players learn to handle the adversity that comes in games.

"We brought in Peak Performance Coach Brian Cain, who has worked with some of the top college and high school baseball programs in the country, and he really educated our staff and players on *how* to be comfortable with being uncomfortable," Lynch said.

"I heard Ken Ravizza once talk about how a heart surgeon must always be focused and confident during each operation, or he risks the life of his client. It is the same in baseball. We must be confident on every pitch and every at bat. We practice this on a daily basis.

"In practice we will intentionally blow calls to test if our players will respond appropriately. This is one of the things Brian Cain has really helped us with. His time here with our kids was a 12-hour plus bootcamp where he was in a classroom and on the field with our guys. It has made a remarkable difference.

"The other day we were at the plate with a 3-1 count, an obvious ball 4 crosses the zone and is called a strike.

"Our hitter steps out of the box, clears the pitch by taking a deep breath, and then gets back in the box focused and ready to go, the same way we practice everyday in batting practice. You should have heard the guys in the dugout get behind him. It was incredible."

"The term WIN means to focus on what's important now. To WIN this pitch we must be collectively more focused on this pitch than our opponents.

"Our players understand that when the ball leaves their hand, or their bat, they no longer have any control over what happens. A good pitch/bad pitch, good hit/bad hit, we play the game one pitch at a time, no matter the result. It's about the next pitch."

### Routines Help Players

Lynch and coach Reeder work individually with each player to develop a routine to help keep the players positive and focused on each pitch.

"Understanding your routine and how to breathe will help you to focus and play pitch to pitch," Lynch said. "We also spend a lot of time talking about signal lights and what situations cause our guys to speed up their routines. When our guys do speed up their routines, we remind them to step off the mound and take out the hook.

"Having the ability to understand your inner thoughts and emotions can allow a player to let go of a hook they may have been snagged on, and allows them to focus on the current play."

### Dealing With Adversity

Baseball is a game of adversity and it is often the sudden adverse turn of events that lead teams into inconsistent performances. The team that is able to adapt and overcome the best will be the team that plays most consistently and will have the best chance to ultimately win more games.



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outside circumstances are just like baited hooks in the water. A distracted fish, or a fish that is swimming without a purpose, looking for a non-specific meal, can easily bite on to the hook, and end up getting caught. This leads to a complete loss of control. In baseball the ability to remain in control is everything. It is very easy to let the small distractions overtake a player's performance."

### Mind In The Moment

Lynch and his staff have developed a language with their players that they constantly use to keep the team positive and focused on the present moment.

"'Win this pitch', 'flush it', 'zone in zone out', 'stay big', 'your best game now', 'W.I.N.', those are all things that our kids and coaches say on a routine basis," Lynch said.

## Teaching Life Skills

Lynch has had success incorporating team building activities and teaching life skills through sport such as, self control, responsibility and accountability.

"One of the best things we have been able to do is to get our kids to buy into something that is bigger than all of us individually," Lynch said.

"We have got them to collectively buy into that in ten years it won't matter who batted in the 4 hole, or what the score was, but we will remember what kind of teammate Robbie was, or what kind of coach Russel was. We have really focused on building strong relationships and team synergy."

## Advice For Young Coaches

Lynch admits that as his hair color has changed with age, so have his philosophies on the game and coaching.

"Early in my career it was all about winning. There was no process involved," Lynch said. "Eventually I came to realize that winning was a byproduct of doing the right things and from having quality relationships with the young men in my program.

"If you can create a tight bond amongst your staff and players, and get them to buy in to the team mission, you will be successful, regardless of what the scoreboard says. However, I have come to find, that if you invest in relationships and the mental game, that the scoreboard will often take care of itself."

*For more on the Mental Game of Baseball or to bring Brian Cain into your program, visit [www.BrianCain.com](http://www.BrianCain.com). To become a member of the Brian Cain Mental Game of Baseball Inner Circle and start receiving FREE Mental Game Training tools, log onto [www.firstfoundmentalcoaching.com](http://www.firstfoundmentalcoaching.com) and [www.briancainblog.com](http://www.briancainblog.com).*