

## Questions of the Month

### ■ 1. LARRY FROM PARKER, COLORADO

**Larry:** "Coach, my 14U team is killing the ball in the indoor batting cages. But once we get outside to live pitching they can't even foul one off. What can I do to help them that live pitching?"

**Coach Candrea:** "Even though an athlete plays numerous sports, there is no reason that they cannot continue to develop their softball skills. It does not take a lot of time to continue to swing the bat. Remember that hitting is timing and that will be the first thing that will get rusty. Our ability to get enough live swings off a pitcher will have an effect on this aspect of hitting. I would recommend that she continues to hit off a tee, head on toss and when possible get some live at bats. Core strength is a key factor in any sport so I am sure she will continue to develop strength but I would make sure she continues to execute rotational activities necessary in hitting, throwing etc. Another area she can continue to develop is her visual skills. Dr. Bill Harrison has a program that you can get information on the internet called "Slow the Game Down". Best of luck.."

### ■ 2. WAYNE FROM SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA

**Wayne:** "What is a good age to start coaching the mental aspect of playing the game. For example understanding hitting in different counts, hitting behind runners and for pitchers when to be aggressive, when to nibble and overall the importance of learning tendencies of your opponent. It seems at times that we spend so much time on the physical tools that there is never time or interest in developing a mental edge. What have been your experiences or thoughts on this?"

**Coach Candrea:** "The most important consideration in development is skill development. I would recommend playing with the best coaching you can get to continue your skill development and balance that with game experience. Our ultimate goal would be to have both but depending on age, skill development and the opportunities to practice those skills are very important. Playing other positions to me is a positive and will make you more valuable as a player. Learning to play the game the right way should always be a high importance."

### ■ 3. SCOTT FROM CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

**Scott:** "My daughter plays on a 12U travel team, and I am one of the coaches. The girls seem to hit the ball well during practice, but when it comes to game time, most have a hard time making contact with the ball. Do you have any pre-game rituals you could pass along that might remove the jitters they seem to get?"

**Coach Candrea:** "I believe that there is a process for developing young hitters. The first element is gaining the knowledge of the proper principles of hitting. The basic progression I have used is throwing drills, tee work, head on toss and live. Machines serve a purpose but do not provide a very good timing element for hitting. There are ways to use machines effectively by providing a arm action prior to inserting the ball into the machine. Just remember that the basic principle is 1) stationary object, 2) moving object 3) decision making with speed, location & movement."

## Questions of the Month (Continued)

I hope you find my thoughts on your questions helpful this month. If you want more information, I suggest reading more in the [Responsible Sports Coaching](#) section. I will be answering more questions from you next month, so keep submitting me this great feedback. [Submit your question](#) to be answered next month!

- Coach Candrea