

PAT DAUGHERTY
ATHLETIC DIRECTOR
CENTERVILLE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
CENTERVILLE, IOWA

A coach of any sport, it would seem, is vitally interested in getting his team to perform before as many people as possible. Attendance and interest in a school's athletic team is the culmination of many factors. With few exceptions it would be safe to assume that on an interscholastic and intercollegiate level that football and basketball dominate the sporting scene from an attendance point of view. The reasons for this are many and varied and we shall not attempt to elaborate on the advantages and disadvantages of one sport over another in regard to crowd appeal. Tradition, equipment & facilities, the coaching staff, the season of the sport, publicity, and the competition would probably all have to be analyzed in detail to come up with a workable answer relative to a particular sports popularity in a given school, conference, or state.

Baseball, which has been, and is still recognized as one of the "major" sports in schools and colleges, along with football, basketball, and track is the only one of these sports that is not regulated by a clock. It is my contention that this is one of the reasons that baseball has not enjoyed the fan popularity experienced by football and basketball. I do not intend to propose that we have a drastic change relative to the present procedures utilized to constitute a baseball game. What I am contending that in many cases we are killing baseball by prolonging a contest that although was not meant to have a specified time restriction, was designed within an accepted code to run off as rapidly as possible to determine the superior team.

As baseball coaches we must re-evaluate our program to see if our ball club is doing everything possible to keep the playing time in a baseball contest to the absolute minimum. If a well played baseball game can be completed in one hour and twenty five minutes, than it is a cardinal sin to have this game drag into one hour and forty five minutes. This, whether we recognize it or not

is a major problem the baseball programs are facing as they vie for the increased leisure time of the prospective sports fan.

We must face the facts that our baseball fans do not attend a baseball game to watch a pitcher search for his warm-up jacket after drawing a walk. Nor do they attend to watch a team make three wild throws around the infield after each strikeout. I also doubt that too many dedicated baseball fans come to the park for a 7:00 game that gets under way at 7:20. These are not exceptions, but happen all too frequently at baseball parks throughout the country. If one team is disorganized to the point where they are wasting time in a baseball contest, both teams specifically, and all baseball in general must pay the consequences.

The problem is not one of diagnosis, but one of treatment. What measures can be taken to insure that a baseball contest will be run off in the minimal amount of time without altering our present rules; and who is responsible for time consuming procedures?

The problem could very easily be traced to those directly responsible for the hiring of the individual coach in charge of the baseball program, whether it be the board, supt., or athletic director. However, for numerous reasons, prospective baseball coaches are not subjected to the scrutinizing interviews, etc., pertinent to their qualifications in baseball as is the practice involved in the hiring of most basketball and football coaches. This is not as it should be and certainly puts a burden on the schools baseball program from the onset. However, even with this disadvantage facing us I would like to offer some solutions to the problem of prolonged baseball games. What I present are not earth shattering discoveries, but are the time consumers that your fans did not leave other types of diversion to watch. If each coach conditions his squad to the following procedures it will be startling the time saved. Not only will this time elimination be a factor to your own program, it will exert

a tremendous influence upon the general health of baseball.

1. DELAY OF TIME FOR PITCHER-RUNNER TO SECURE A JACKET.

Does the pitcher need a jacket during this particular game? It has been noted on numerous occasions where a pitcher wasn't wearing a jacket in the dug-out but now that he reaches first base, time is called and people begin to scramble looking for his jacket. If it is the custom for him to wear a jacket between innings irregardless of the temperature and humidity, then a definite procedure should be followed every game. If the popular light warm-up jacket is used, it can be folded neatly and placed in the pocket. If this is not satisfactory, the on-deck batter can hold the jacket and if needed help the pitcher into it when he becomes a base runner. Possibly it works better if the first base coach has the jacket. Whatever procedure is followed should be followed by all the teams pitchers and the coach should police the procedure until it becomes a habit with his squad.

2. PROVIDE AN UMPIRE WITH ENOUGH BASEBALLS TO RULE OUT ANY POSSIBILITIES OF DELAYING THE GAME WAITING FOR A SHAGGER TO RETURN A BALL.

Each coach should know how many baseballs he will need to keep the game moving. The location of the ball park, the number and quality of the ball shaggers, and the weather will usually dictate the number of balls to run a game with. When an umpire starts with four balls and tells you he only has one ball left, this isn't the time to start looking for the other three. The umpire should be given more balls immediately. It is for this reason that it is impossible to say you'll get by on, say four baseballs. For baseballs sake, it is better to throw in a baseball that is not as new as the one fouled back rather than delaying time waiting for a shagger to return the "good" ball. Before the game someone should be placed in charge of balls and the umpire should know who it is and where he is sitting. The same individual can shag fouls off the backstop.

3. DELAY OF OF GAME EACH TIME CATCHER IS BATTER-RUNNER WHEN LAST OUT IS MADE.

A player should be assigned before each game to warm up the pitcher each inning. It is his duty and responsibility to beat the pitcher out anytime the regular catcher is not ready to go when the inning ends. The regular catcher should place his gear in a uniform, non-congested area at the end of each inning. The usual area around the bats and helmets is not recommended. His mitt should always be with his gear, not on someone else's hand down the foul line warming up another pitcher. Straps and buckles should be checked at the conclusion of each game. If they are in need of repair, they should be repaired before the next game.

4. DELAY OF GAME DUE TO HELMET AND BAT SELECTION.

Each helmet should be identified in a conspicuous place so it can be found easily. This can either be by painted numbers, letters or any other method that you have found functional. The next three batters should all have helmets on their heads at all times. Helmet selection should be large enough that there is no confusion over selecting the headgear. In the case of bat selection, the bat that a player steps into the batters box with should be maintained unless it breaks. The next three batters at the start and throughout an inning should have their bat in their hands. If they are going to use the bat ahead of them, they should have their second choice in their hands in case of breakage.

5. DELAY OF GAME DUE TO ERRATIC THROWING AROUND THE INFIELD AFTER EACH OUT.

This should not be the problem that it is. A coach will get a much better effort if after the first bad throw "around the horn" the ball is immediately returned to the pitcher. If after two bad throws during the game it is a rule that the ball will not go around the horn for the remainder of the game, throwing accuracy will pick up. The three outfielders should "hawk" around the horn activity.

6. DELAY OF GAME DUE TO CONFERENCES AMONG FIELDING TEAM MEMBERS.

Nothing can be accomplished in a conference that could not have been taken care of the preceding weeks of practice. Only a coach should need to call time for a conference and only then very rarely. Conferences among infielders, pitcher and catcher illustrate a poorly coached baseball team, yet is a major time consumer. Rules control the coaches activity relative to conferences, but it will always be the coaches duty to see that his ball club keeps the game moving.

7. DELAY OF GAMES DUE TO GENERAL LACK OF HUSTLE ON THE PART OF ONE OR BOTH TEAMS.

The key to getting an inning started promptly rests in the hands of the pitcher. After his five warm-up throws the batter is ready to step in. Assuming that a catcher is ready to warm up the pitcher, he should get to the mound in a hurry. It is accepted by most that the pitcher doesn't run to or from the mound. This has been construed by numerous coaches that he should take his time. Why have eight other members bust out on to the field and let the key man adjust his shirt, get a drink, look for his glove and in general kill valuable time? He should be ready to go when the inning is over, walk smartly to the mound, take his warm-up throws and get the inning started.

General hustle must constantly be foremost in the coaches mind. This will get to be a habit with a team, even though in some cases it doesn't come quickly. The buddie system should be used on gloves. All starting players with the exception of the catcher should place

their gloves together each inning in the same place. At the end of each inning, the first baseman and one of the outfielders should place a warm-up ball in their gloves, so they will be ready to go when they take the field.

8. CONSTANT ENCOURAGEMENT TO UMPIRES TO BE AWARE OF THE TIME ELEMENT.

Too often coaches have taken offense to an umpire that works overtime to keep the game moving. Encourage your umpires to hustle the game along.