

In my opinion, the most important job a coach has, is to get his players ready to play the game mentally. This means knowing exactly what motivates the players on the team in a way that makes them truly want to play the game. No coach, or person out of baseball for that matter, has motivated me like my former coach John Musmacker. He coached me from the fall of my senior year through this summer. Because of him, I know that I can compete on any level provided I use my head as a baseball player.

Coach Musmacker met me while I was in the middle of my high school career. In high school, I was playing under a coach who was very difficult to play comfortably under. His coaching tactics included screaming at players, cursing at us, and telling us that we were “not that good.” Once I started playing for Coach Musmacker, my perception on the game changed. There was no hostility. The only consequence from making a mistake was knowing that you let your team down. That in itself is much worse than getting cursed at. He provided a relaxed, baseball friendly environment that allowed us to just go out and play the game. I had never experienced that before. I went from being a kid who loved baseball and never found success in it, to being surrounded by guys who truly believed in themselves and it showed on the field. Coach Musmacker did not try to be the voice that changed our lives. Instead he made us believe that we were the ones who were changing our lives. Coach Musmacker was the one to make me believe in myself. He didn’t know me very long, but he saw something in me as a person. He saw that I truly loved the game of baseball and took it very seriously. Most importantly I knew that it wasn’t the biggest, strongest, or fastest guys who were the victorious ones. He saw in me the smart ballplayer, who used his head.

He is never afraid to put any player in any position. When a player would say, “Coach, I’m not a shortstop,” he would reply, “Are you a baseball player?” The first game I played for him I did not spend it on the mound. I played second base. I had not played second base since little league, but that didn’t matter to him. He knew that I was a smart baseball player and that made me believe in what he told me. He brought baseball back to being something fun for me. Looking back, I am not surprised that this was the only successful team I have ever played for.

This past summer, Coach Musmacker and I decided that I would play on his team again. This summer, after a pitiful freshman year in college, I was second-guessing myself as a ballplayer. I lacked confidence and an overall sense of belief in the game. As soon as I talked to Coach Musmacker, I realized that I still belonged where I was. I’m just as good as the next guy because I am truly a baseball player. No one thing he has ever told me sticks out in my mind. He doesn’t have a motto or a catchphrase. Instead he lives what he talks about. You shouldn’t have to commit to the game of baseball. I’m at FDU because I love the game and I am truly passionate about being the best I can be. The plan of action Coach Musmacker taught me was to live my life by each moment and if you truly love the game and never take a pitch off, then you will be successful. Coaches who say the “magic words” are a dime a dozen. Every coach I have ever had was from the same mold, with the exception of Coach Musmacker. He is the only coach who I feel has truly motivated me, as well as the team. It is no wonder why the only championship I have ever been a part of was on his team.

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