



We are in an industry where drills, cues, words, absolutes, models and teaching points have never been more plentiful. Athletes at an early age are bombarded with more information than ever before. The conflict between travel ball coaches and high school coaches rage on. Professional players with private sector resources cause confusion and ego battles with teams to the level that certain clubs have now handed over keys to the "tool box" to new wave thinkings.

Yet, teaching cues are only as good as the game results that follow. The preparation time for the player to fully understand and "own it" will always be the key. Bridging the gap from data collection to performance gains will be the vision in 2020. The daily trench work and the continuous challenge of empowering the day-to-day coaches with tools they can understand and personalize will be the profile of the best teams at both the college and professional level.

The Law of Primary Modality tells us that certain players will "get it" through visual, auditory and kinetic cues. The master teacher will attempt to figure out which channel the player learns best from, or present the fix in all three modalities. How many times have we heard the frustrated coach tell his superior, "I told them and showed him that one hundred times." Is it the player's fault or the coach's fault? How about neither? The key is to expand the coach's tools and allow players to practice and rehearse the new information when no one is around.

An example of classic verbiage that may need to be improved for everyone.. .

Yes, yes, yes, yes . . . No!

This is the hitter's command to always be ready for a strike and then say "No" once it's clear the pitch is a ball. This may work for lower levels of play or for the timid youngster, but it may also be the reason the advanced hitters are making early decisions and are susceptible to breaking balls outside the strike zone.

How about, "No, no, no, no . . . Yes!" as a new rallying cry for some hitters? Or, better yet, "Read, read, read, read . . . Yes!"

This thought process doesn't change the hitter's physical timing to be ready for the pitcher's best fastball, but it may help in lengthening ball-flight reads and committing too early.



Sometimes adjusting or prioritizing mindset over mechanics during games is the better fix. The master coaches talk about and build MAPs with hitters: Mindset, Approach, Plan.

MAPs are created during early work and during the long hours of lab work all hitters and coaches live in. They are personal and can be reviewed on deck or in between pitches. For purposes of this discussion, mindset are the personal thoughts, images and actions hitters access to get quiet and free during at-bats, which allows their eyes to lead the body. Approach is a reminder as to what type of hitter you are and the absolutes that define your swing philosophy. Your plan changes every pitch and every at-bat. They are the real-time strategy and action plans you commit to based on the count, score, defense and opposing pitcher.

Some more expressions that may need some more substance behind them . . .

Stay Back: If you are ever going to change the scouting report that says, "Chases, gets himself out and has no strike-zone awareness," you will have to change your visual-search strategy, not your swing.

Need A Hit: This is ultimately beyond your control. Put an easy swing on a pitch you want to see. This is the classic process versus results model.

Relax: This is a skill, not a command. Share and build relaxation techniques in the lab—four-part breathing, rap chats, or a physical gesture that triggers muscular or visual relaxation.

Focus: We know the danger of over-focusing on the ball, release points or the catcher's glove if you are a pitcher struggling with control problems. Two words: open focus. You will see more when you look at less.

Stop Thinking: This is impossible. Like muddy water in a glass, the brain will settle down naturally, but only if you allow it to. Combat negative thoughts by not choosing them until your brain recalibrates.

No matter the topic, teachers will always be categorized by the following traits . . .

Good: Teachers speak the language of the intellect—words—and communicate clearly so that students understand. They use hindsight to learn by their mistakes and improve.

Great: Teachers speak the language of the emotions—by inspiring, motivating, and encouraging love of the sport. They use insight to access the wisdom of the ages.

Excellent: Teachers speak the language of the body—by showing the muscles, bones, and nerves how an activity should feel if done properly. They use foresight to anticipate the consequences of their actions.

Master: Teachers do all three, using their classroom as a means to teach life and athletic excellence.

Where would your players list you?