

Questions of the Month

■ 1. WAYNE FROM CALIFORNIA

Wayne: "What is a good age to start coaching the mental aspect of playing the game?"

Coach Candrea: "I definitely encourage kids to play other sports to develop their overall athletic skills. Developing your endurance, speed, agility and quickness can only help your physical development as an athlete. There does come a time when you find the passion for a particular sport and that should be the time to specialize. This decision can vary from one individual to the next. No matter what sport, overall athletic ability will only help in your specific skill development."

■ 2. PATRICK FROM MARYLAND

Patrick: "What can I do to help one of my 12U girls get over her fear of the ball?"

Coach Candrea: "Having a fear of the ball is a real thing that many young kids go through. It can be caused by being hit sometime in their development or even some possible vision problems (depth perception, tracking etc.) Using tennis balls or whiffle balls to develop their hand eye coordination can be helpful to overcome fear. Proper protection gear can add to their confidence but this is a slow process that takes time and no miracle cures available!"

■ 3. SCOTT FROM OREGON

Scott: "What is the communication procedure you use for pop ups or short flyballs between your infielders and outfielders? "

Coach Candrea: "Pop communication is something that we work on every week. You must begin by teaching who has priority when a ball is hit to a particular portion of the field. Simply put, the Outfielders have priority over the infielders, the Center fielder has priority over the left fielder and right fielder. In the infield, the shortstop has priority over the second baseman and third baseman. The second baseman has priority over the first baseman. The first baseman and third baseman have priority over the catcher. All infielders have priority over the pitcher. The player who has priority calls the ball multiple times and the other player calls it once. This is it in a nut shell but hard to explain in a paragraph!"

■ 4. HARLEY FROM OREGON

Harley: "As a coach of a 10U team, I am curious of how you have coached your players to have the desire and passion for the game? "

(Continue to Page 2 to read Coach Candrea's answer.)

Questions of the Month (Continued)

Coach Candrea: “Having the passion and desire for the game takes time, interest and enjoyment!

I try to get our players to have a passion for the process of learning how to play and execute the game. I have coached men and women and the difference is very enlightening: Men have to play good to feel good; women have to feel good to play good. Enjoy the process and the end result will take care of itself!!!”

■ 5. BRUCE FROM WISCONSIN

Bruce: “At what stage in a player’s development is it the right time to begin to introduce left handed hitting and how do you go about transitioning them from right side to the left side?”

Coach Candrea: “Speed is a huge weapon in fast pitch softball. If you are thinking about converting a kid to the left side because of their speed, you must do it early in their development and allow them to strengthen their non dominant side. The key is to make sure they learn how to hit from the left side and not become one dimensional. There are many videos on the market that can give you insight in teaching the short game skills from the left side. The best techniques I have seen is putting a glove on their left hand and have them execute the footwork and catch a thrown ball to simulate the contact point. I would always teach technique by first using no ball, then tee work, and finally soft toss and live.”

■ 6. SCOTT FROM ILLINOIS

Scott: “Do you have any pre-game rituals you could pass along that might remove gameday jitters?”

Coach Candrea: “One of the suggestions that I would have is to always include some game situations in practice. We play a game of repetition of fundamental skills and we cannot forget that practice builds a data base and games build its own. The key is to break down skills and to also apply them to game situations. The key to success in our game is to develop each player’s data base in the context of the game. Without game maturity, the decisions and execution in games become too quick and that just tells you that they have not had enough game experience. We would love to be able to slow the game down for our players and this takes a well thought out practice plan and process.”

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