

Monday, March 28, 2011

A Winning Team

A Winning Team

March has two of America's greatest sporting traditions, the collegiate basketball tournament known as March Madness and Major League Baseball spring training.

Spring training is a time where all 30 Major League baseball clubs gather in their respective cities located in Arizona and Florida. The purpose of this gathering is to put together and condition a group of players that will hopefully be a championship team. I've been involved in 19 Major League spring trainings as a player and coach. Each spring the goal is the same as the best possible 25 players are chosen for the team. In general these 25 players are usually the most talented. However; it has been my observation and experience that talent is only one component of a championship team. Teams that depend solely on talent usually under achieve.

If putting a championship team together was as simple as picking the best talent, general managers and managers' jobs would be easy. As there are many components that influences the choice in players, here are a few that are worthy of discussion. In addition to talent, a championship team must have:

25 role players: every player must know, understand and accept his role.

Trust: believe in the system that is in place and teammates. Believe in the process regardless of the immediate results.

Respect: Champions have respect for their opponents as well as a mutual respect for each other.

Humility: Being willing to do whatever it takes to win. The team comes first.

Mental toughness: The ability to overcome adversity, fatigue and bruised egos.

Understanding and acceptance: Players must understand that there are 25 different personalities on the team and accepting those differences makes for a harmonious clubhouse.

Acknowledge its strengths and weaknesses: Acknowledging these will help to plan and prepare. Most teams plan from their strengths and prepare for their weaknesses.

Controlled arrogance: Championship teams have confidence in their abilities but awareness of situations that may force them to change their approach or strategy.

A championship team wins in spite of flawed coaching not because of good coaching.

Spring training is coming to an end and we are faced with the daunting task of making the final decisions as to who will be part of a winning combination- a combination that will eventually displace most, if not all, of the attributes of a championship team. Let's Go Mets!

-Mookie Wilson