

Pass It On®...

The Art of Pitching.

A little confidence at the right time goes a long way.

Summertime brings out miniature baseball players, sliding in the dust, chasing errant balls and constantly adjusting caps. It is the season for kids to be out in the sun, working on eye-hand coordination and, most importantly, dugout chants. A game with so much time spent standing around requires clever chants to keep young minds occupied.

But not every kid is so easygoing about the game. Spencer is tall and lanky. At 11 years old, he throws a mean fastball — straight down the tunnel to the strike zone. Spencer is the kind of kid who takes everything seriously. He irons his uniform, makes sure the stripes on his socks match perfectly, keeps his cap clean and his glove oiled. Anything out of place, and Spencer loses control with wild throws that have the umpire ducking for cover. Coach Dan knows this. So he uses Spencer as a closer, pitching the last two innings to ensure the win. It's as long as Spencer can focus without falling apart.

That's why, when the championship game came around, and Coach Dan's team was up by three, Spencer took the mound. He promptly struck out the first two batters. And then it happened; perhaps he noticed a stain on his shirt or a fly on his sleeve. Spencer walked the next five batters. His face was purple, and there was no replacement pitcher left. Coach Dan shouted encouragement, but balls were flying into the backstop like random mortar shells.

Finally, Coach Dan called a timeout and walked to the mound. A few more walks and the championship would be lost. So he put his hands on Spencer's shoulders and tried to steady the young pitcher.

"Look," he said. "I know what's wrong. Your lead foot is facing the wrong way." And with that, Coach Dan pulled down Spencer's left sock. "That will remind you to step in the right direction." At first, Spencer was mortified at being unkempt. But Coach Dan smiled at him. "This always works," he said. "You've thrown a lot of strikes. You can throw three more."

The next pitch was a strike. Spencer's teammates cheered loudly. On strike two, the entire team, and Coach Dan, pushed their left socks down to their ankles. On strike three, they all rushed the mound, and Spencer hid his face in his perfectly starched jersey. Facing down a batter is one thing. Facing down failure in front of all your peers is something quite special.

Confidence... PassItOn.com

By The Foundation for a Better Life®

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