

Q&A WITH TSI COACH CHRIS MCKNIGHT

Contributed by Chris McKnight, Vice President, Tuckahoe Sports Inc

Photos contributed by Tuckahoe Sports

Q: Hey coach, what's the difference between baseball at the high school level versus the college level?

A: Starting with the physical part, college players are stronger, faster, and have a good grasp on what it takes to keep them in peak condition. Most college players understand that eating properly and getting the proper amount of sleep is just as important as strength and conditioning. This is very overlooked at the younger age groups and should be focused on as much (or more) as the mechanics of the swing or throwing. Also, most collegiate teams have strength and conditioning coaches as well as athletic trainers who can assist the athletes with their training needs. High school players have to take it upon themselves to stay in peak condition for the high school season.

On the mental side, college players have an inner passion to keep them strong through a rigorous fall, winter and in-season training schedule. Many collegiate teams also have a mental training coach on staff to help players deal with the rigors of competing at a high level while balancing the social and academic aspects of college life. As a high-school player, you need to develop the mental skills early with the help of your coaches and know that there are qualified mental performance coaches (CMP) available to assist you with any issues you are having.



Most collegiate programs play 50 or more games and travel a lot more frequently than high school. Just the wear and tear of traveling is a big adjustment and college players must prepare and prioritize their baseball and academic schedule in order to be successful at both. Most high school programs travel locally and play 17-21 league games and do not have the ability to train all year long. This is why high school players who want to compete at the next level train with academies during the offseason. It's critical that you align yourself with an academy that emphasizes development over winning and has staff who can develop not just your baseball skills, but the mental, visual and physical aspects of your game.



Interms of the game itself, the collegiate game is aster, both on offense and defense. Perhaps the biggest difference is the depth and talent of the squads. In college, you have 35 or more players on a roster and everyone wants to play. The practices are much more intense, and it's a year-round effort by the coaches, players and staff. Collegiate programs have a head coach, two assistant coaches, a volunteer assistant and a graduate assistant. Some programs have a player development and baseball operations person on staff. In high school, most of the coaches are part time, the head coach has one or two assistant coaches and have about 20-25 players on the roster. High schools have to work within the boundaries set up by their state federation.

High school players need to realize that most college coaches are looking for that special athlete who will perform on the field, in the classroom and represent the program in a first class manner on and off the field. I believe the high school player needs to focus on what's important to him, make a road map (what they want out of their career) with the help of coaches and professionals and pursue the goals that he set for himself using all the resources offered. Do whatever it takes to reach your goals!



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