



PLAY WITH A PLAN!TM
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What's YOUR edge?

As a Student Athlete, rising in the ranks of competitive sports, your competition becomes fewer in number and greater in skills. If you were the “all star” on your House League team, there is no guarantee that you will be able to easily claim that title when you enter the elite leagues.

Pure skill often stands out; however, “natural talent” also has its limitations. Your natural talent might have carried you through House League, AA, and AAA levels into the elite level of the Student Athlete, but can it keep you there?

Many of the elite Student Athletes you will play with have “natural talent”. Some may even have “pure talent”. However, the truth is that most of the Student Athletes that you will play with – and against – are talented, passionate, and committed Athletes who are working hard to enhance, fine tune, or improve their existing skills – just like you!

It would be foolish to assume that all “the best” athletes are on your team or in your league. There are talented athletes in your league, in local associations in your community, in your high school, and in high schools all across Canada and the US. You never know where the next “great” will come from.

What you can “know” is how to be better. Only passion, hard work, and commitment are going to take you to the next level. The only question that remains is how many levels you still have the opportunity to attain. So; passion, hard work, and commitment will make you better but how else can you stand out as a potential college player?

Many players rise in the ranks because of their “edge”. Like talent, some “edges” are natural. The batter who gets from Home to 1st in 4 seconds. The reliable switch hitter. The strong, strategic thinking, defensive catcher. All of these “edges” help a player stand out. And what happens when you're “just good” but don't really have “an edge”?

Generally, nothing. If you're a reliable contributing team player, you'll very likely continue to play and produce with your team. Still, you can look further to what happens when nature deals you an irreversible card or a bigger challenge?

Let's say that you're a committed, passionate, skilled baseball player. And, you're 14 years old and 5'5", and headed into Bantam level. That means bases are now 90' away, not 65'. Many Coaches filter out the players who might find the increased distance too much of a challenge. Many coaches believe that the added distance will be too great a challenge for a “smaller” player. So, how does that player counter stereotyping, possible ignorance, and prejudice?

Simple – create your “edge”.

If you're that "small" player, work hard to become that "little bit faster" so that there is no doubt about your ability to compete. Play your position with passion and commitment so that you are perceived as a "player with heart". Most importantly, never give up. There is always a Coach or a Team out there with the willingness and the belief that they can – and will – work with a player with heart.

There are other challenges players might face on their way to elite levels. The trick is to recognize challenges as opportunities to change, opportunities to improve, opportunities to be better! In recognizing that, the players open themselves to creating their edge. And, when you "have an edge", you increase your ability as a player, your value to the team, and your opportunities for the future.

If you have "an edge", let it help you move forward toward your goals. If you haven't got an edge, create one. It can only make you a better player.

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