

# TOP 10 TIPS

## Coaching Youth Fastpitch Softball

By R. E. Martin

### #1 "Be Quick But Don't Hurry" - John Robert Wooden

If you practice slow, that's how it will go... when your girls try to speed it up in the game, they'll be in a big hurry to fail. Use competitive timed drills/games and up-tempo music to ingrain quick execution in practice.

### #2 All Shapes & Sizes – Build Practice Confidence To Achieve Game Success

Different bodies, different efficiencies. Small and quick, blink, wink and gone, speed prevails. Strong and stout... pound it out! Distance hitting game for bruisers and spurt and scoot games for jitter bugs.

### #3 Think Ping Pong Versus Tennis

A smaller playing field and gaps in the outfield in fastpitch softball. Use your race horse, aggressive center fielder to cover the gaps and crowd the lines with your left and right outfielders. Short Throws – Moving Targets Are Hardest - Do basketball practice moving weave toss drill with a softball in practice.

### #4 "If You're Thinkin', Your Stinkin'" - Jessica Ofelia Mendoza

Advise your pitchers' parent(s) to "zip it" BEFORE the season starts when their kid is in the circle ... applies to you and your coaches too...she's got enough to think about out there. NO OFF FIELD DISTRACTIONS. Same advice when at bat. Relaxed in the circle, instinctive reactions in the box.

### #5 Big Inning Versus Advancing Runners

Moving runners is really important for a team that struggles to score and when going up against a dominant pitcher or defense. If you have a better team, you will sometimes be playing into your opponents' hands by automatically sacrificing outs – particularly, early in seven inning games.

### #6 Freeze the Kicker, Not Your Own Pitcher – The Coach Didn't Know

Pitchers pitch in rhythms (usually, the same as their practice rhythm). In crucial situations, coaches like to call time out to discuss the situation – but if your pitcher is on a roll, realize you are interrupting her rhythm. She may have to reestablish her zone after you depart the circle... that one missed location may contribute to a walk-off. The longer you linger, the longer your pitcher is chillin'.

### #7 "Practice As Close To Game-Like As Possible" - John Gagliardi

You hit fly balls straight to a single player... do opposing teams intentionally hit fly balls directly to your players? Always hit fly balls between multiple outfielders (with rotated designated centerfielder). Throw in a designated infielder as cutoffs. Call fly balls until they are in the glove. Always throw low, hard and on-line.

### #8 Patterns... They Matter

Knowin' what's going to happen before it happens tips the risk scale. Watch for opponents' patterns (taking first pitches, throwing the same pitch patterns to batters, etc.) and avoid inadvertently falling into patterns.

### #9 HEY, YOU!

Introduce yourself by first name to officials and opposing coaches before the competition begins... and NEVER yell demonstratively from the dugout or coaching box at game officials... we all know better than that! AFTER time out is granted, calmly and respectfully approach and address your concern(s) with the umpire(s).

### #10 Not Wasted Waste Pitches – Great Hitters Can Hit With Upside Down Bats

Throw EVERY PITCH with a purpose. Great hitters can, and will, drive even well located pitches anywhere near the zone. Set-up pitches thrown out of the zone are okay – they're not wasted - you are moving their eyes. Put them in the dirt, over their hands, way out or in – nothing too close!