

What are Scouts Looking For? (Catchers)

What are Scouts and College Coaches Looking for in Catchers?

A lot is expected of those who play behind the plate at all levels. Baseball Factory's Director of Scouting Andy Ferguson describes what he looks for in catching prospects.

The former North Carolina State University catcher said that although arm strength is what initially attracts him to a player, it is that individual's presence on the field that will determine if Ferguson remains interested.

Instinctive, competitive, poised and leader are words Ferguson used to describe successful catchers.

"It is the general way that they carry themselves," said Ferguson. "They need to take in and adjust to different situations because there is a play to make on each pitch "

Ferguson said it is these qualities and the fact that they have a different level of involvement in the game than any other position that lead many former catchers into coaching and managing. In 2002 ten of thirty Major League managers were one-time catchers.

Although a lot of being a catcher is innate ability, most physical aspects of the game can be improved with practice.

"Often times catchers focus only on throwing and never learn how to play the position. They should work on being a well rounded player because there is much more to it than the ability to catch and throw," said Ferguson. "The ability to receive and handle the game separates the good from the great."

A common misconception about catchers is that they are able to succeed without being able to hit. Ferguson said that is not necessarily true and notes that the players with the longest careers can produce offensively.

"While defense is important, you become a more attractive prospect if you can hit," he added.

As a scout the process begins when Ferguson notices a player who can throw which sparks his interest. Next, Ferguson looks for the player's presence on the field and then his level of athleticism. Later Ferguson notes how the player performs offensively and then hones in on his specific skills including receiving, blocking and knowledge of the game, which Ferguson said come with experience.

A catcher's tools are ranked in the following order:

1. Fielding*
2. Throwing*
3. Hitting
4. Power
5. Running

*Fielding and throwing may be reversed in the order of importance depending on the scout's personal preference.

"Catching is a demanding position," said Ferguson. "The players are required to know 1st and 3rd defenses and when someone is running, be able to make plays, call pitches and process what is going on and to be able to do this while having the physical skills and durability to play everyday."

For more information on scouting or other related topics, please send emails to newsletter@baseballfactory.com or to speak with a Baseball Factory Representative call 800.641.4487.