

Who is “Somebody?”



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I hear the word “Somebody” quite often when involved in coaching. In baseball, I will relate some of the more common things that are said in baseball. When a foul ball is hit, I hear, “Somebody get on that”. When there is a bat lying on the on deck-circle, “Somebody get the bat”. When a ball gets by the catcher, “Somebody get that”. If a coach wants a screen or any piece of equipment it’s, “Somebody get that”. When talking about backing up plays you hear, “somebody back that up”. When teaching cut-offs you hear “Somebody needs to be the cut off”. On a fly ball that is not caught you may hear, “Somebody needs to catch that”. When talking to the team and trying to motivate them you may hear, “Somebody needs to pick it up”, or “Somebody needs to step up and be a leader on this team”.

After years of coaching I have begun to try and answer the question of who “Somebody” is. I think if we can clarify who “Somebody” actually is, it would make us better coaches.

Coaches should check themselves and ask themselves who this “Someone” is. I think if we clarify whom these particular people are, it will make your team better. When looking at the players and I hear “Somebody”, more times that not the players can be seen looking at each other and expecting “Someone” else to do the task. More times than not, what the coach wants to get accomplished does not get done. When equipment does not get picked up or balls are not shagged when the coach wants this done, the coach gets upset. When the coach is upset, this usually makes for an uncomfortable situation for the players on the team. If we, as coaches, can put a name on whom “Somebody” is, there is probably a pretty good chance that the task will get done.

If every coach makes a concentrated effort to try and put a name on their “Somebody”, I am convinced things would go a lot smoother. High school kids are still just kids. They look for and need direction. In fact, they welcome instructions. If you tell individuals exactly what it is that you want them to do, most likely it will get done. There are times during games that there are problems shagging foul balls because “Somebody” is always another guy sitting on the bench. A solution to this problem could be to number every kid on the bench and then the player with that number has to get that particular foul ball. That way the players know exactly when it is that they are supposed to go get that baseball. At the beginning of practice have a job list made out ahead if time and post it. Each player is responsible for taking out a piece of equipment. Joe is in charge of the screens, Matt is in charge of getting the bases out, Sam is in charge of helmets, etc. Do the same thing for your games. Make sure each individual is responsible for an item from the medicine kit to baseballs.

Baseball coaches can make life easier on themselves and their teams if each individual understands exactly what it is that he needs to do. When explaining cutoffs, tell the shortstop, second baseman, and anyone else that is involved exactly where it is that they need to be on that particular play. Explain that on Texas leaguers who is in charge. The outfielder is in charge and calls the infielder off, and if the infielder does not hear anything he needs to be the guy catching that particular ball. If you are a sign stealing team, make sure the players have a job to do and that when players are in a position to pick up signs, they should do so. If it takes calling players out and telling them that they did not do something they should have, this is OK. A coach is not berating the player in this situation but is trying to make himself and thus the team better.

When every player is clear on what he needs to do individually, it will make for a better team. Spread the jobs around and make sure every player has responsibility. A thing that has worked for me is if a player was absent for some reason, it becomes the captain's responsibility to make sure the job gets done. Here's another trick, if equipment does not get put away, make the players whose job it was not running, the person who failed to do his job is completing his job. If it is raking the mound, home plate area, or bullpens it could take a little bit. There's a good chance that these jobs will not get overlooked next time.

When "Somebody" on a team achieves a name you will be amazed at how smoothly your team's practices and games can go. We all use that ugly word "Somebody", but if we concentrate on using individual names on jobs that we want done, I believe that your team will be put in a better position to succeed.