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Nate Headley Interview 2021-12-01

[00:00:00] **Joey Myers:** Hello and welcome to the swing smarter hitting training podcast. I'm your host Joey Myers from hittingperformancelab.com.

[00:00:12] We've never met, we've met over email and things like that, but I feel like we are just like baseball brothers in baseball, brothers in softball.

[00:00:20] So I have Nate Headley with me on the call. So first I want to welcome you to the show, Nate

[00:00:24] **Nate Headley:** Pleasure being here, man. It's been a long time coming, man. It's a pleasure to finally get to talk to you face to face and put a voice.

[00:00:30] **Joey Myers:** Exactly. We've been connected for such a long time, and I know I got to put it out there, but Nate holds his own.

[00:00:37] He has a brother, Chase Headley. We were just talking before we started the recording that Nate got to go all over the country, really with Nate playing ballparks and things like that. We were talking about Petco in San Diego and New York and some of these cool ballparks.

[00:00:50] But this call, I got to mention that, but Nate is big into the hitting side. So, Nate just give everybody an idea of what you're doing, I think you have a [00:01:00] facility or a few facilities, you coach teams, stuff like that, give people a sense of what you're into.

“I woke up to my first morning of college with the cops knocking on our door at five o'clock in the morning...”

[00:01:04] **Nate Headley:** A little bit of a different story.

[00:01:08] I went to a JuCo in Kansas Colby, and my very first day of classes there, I had five roommates arrested on eight felony counts of theft. Believe it or not.

[00:01:19] I woke up to my first morning of college with the cops knocking on our door at five o'clock in the morning.

[00:01:24] Long story short, I decided Colby wasn't the place for me to be, but I really wanted to stay in the industry. I finished my undergraduate at Colorado State in Accounting and got my masters at Tennessee in Sports Management, started running a facility here in 2005 and then I was hired by the University of Tennessee.

[00:01:42] My coach at Tennessee from 2007, through 2011, they ended up firing our head coach and I decided it was in my best interest to move on and do something more in the independent world. So, I wasn't having to worry about losing my job at any point in time. Awesome opportunity, man. I absolutely love coaching the SCC.

[00:01:58] The competition level there [00:02:00] is unlike any conference in the country. Once I got done coaching there, I bought a facility here in town. Now I've been running that since 2011.

[00:02:07] We've had upwards of 30 teams and multiple facilities in Knoxville, kind of got a little bit tired of dealing with teams and parents where it just got a little bit more, it took me away from what I care about most and that's developing hitters.

[00:02:21] I guess, after five or six years of having that many teams, the facility outside of the tone that back and I just have one facility now. I have multiple strength and conditioning companies training out of that facility and we focus more on development. But a couple of years ago I got the bug to get back into coaching.

[00:02:35] I've got a 16u team I coach with one of my good friends and former Alabama pitcher Josh Copeland. I helped him coach a team out of home plate. So, I bring down six guys from Knoxville down to Atlanta, and we've got a team that we combine. We're ranked top 25 by perfect game, which, whatever that means.

[00:02:51] I think last year to finish the season, we had four SCC commits already for that time as a 15U group. Sometimes, I'm sure you understand that as being in a tunnel, every single day, [00:03:00] doing 10 to 20 lessons, depending on the time of year a day.

[00:03:04] You want to see the product on the field too. It was a pretty good opportunity for me to bring a high-level group of guys down there and being able to coach with, honestly, one of the best on-field coaches I've ever coached with.

[00:03:14] If you don't see the product on the field, now you are stuck in there working on swings, man. Anytime you do something constantly nonstop, man, it doesn't matter what you're doing, it can wear you out. So, I missed that, and I was excited to get back on the field too.

[00:03:26] **Joey Myers:** I love that and congrats on everything.

[00:03:27] What I like about you is that we not only have the academy side. For those academy owners out there, I'm sure there's some that are starting up and then there are some that are maybe in the mid ages of that, and then there's some that have been in it for decades.

[00:03:38] But you also have not on the academy side, but you have the team coaching side too. The other side that you really love that you talked about is being in the cage, right? Grinding it out in the cage and being a developer of athletes, right? So, you mentioned strength conditioning.

[00:03:50] You mentioned the obviously the hitting side and stuff like that. So, there's a lot of different avenues we can go with this. I think we'll just let it flow and we'll hit one, we may not be able to [00:04:00] cover all three of those.

[00:04:01] I always say there are those team coaches, there are the instructors, and then there are the parents that are maybe coaching team.

[00:04:06] There's those three types of, we call them avatars, so let's start on the academy side. Since you and your academy, I'd love to mention it.

[00:04:13] **Nate Headley:** We're in Knoxville, Tennessee.

[00:04:14] **Joey Myers:** Is that your company?

[00:04:15] **Nate Headley:** Yes, one of the teams I coach out of the younger groups I coach was called headfirst athletics.

[00:04:19] So that's where that came from. So, we have a red stitch, 1-0-8 is one of our groups. What we try to do with our facility is we can brand them based off our specific name and our facility, or if we have teams that want to come in and use us, we look at ourselves as the mothership.

[00:04:35] If we have a team that wants to come in and build new uniforms, new scheme, we try not to limit guys from that. I think that's part of the enjoyment for a lot of these coaches and players and teams is to build their own brand and let us help with it.

[00:04:45] **Joey Myers:** I love that.

[00:04:46] From the academy owner hat, putting that hat on, what do you see as like the top two mistakes that academy owners make? I'm sure you've talked with others, you've seen stuff. If you've got more than that.

What do you see as the top two mistakes that academy owners make?

[00:04:59] **Nate Headley:** That's tough. I [00:05:00] guess, let me hit on some of the ones I feel like, and you always learn, and I think it's an ever-evolving environment in which you must cater to the level of talents you have.

[00:05:11] What is needed in your market and that's changed over the period that I've owned my facility, like I said, we had up to 30 teams at one point in time and we've got five or six facilities in this area.

[00:05:22] For us, it was more about, trying to put a quality product on the field of competitive teams as much as possible, but also providing an atmosphere in which, we have some rec ball players that want to get better and move on and play at a higher level and trying to provide some opportunities for our, AA players, AAA players and not leave anyone out.

[00:05:42] What I've come to learn is, if you try to please everyone in this industry, you're going to fail and doing it the right way in trying to stay within the realm of what your integrity is and what you're trying to build with an organization is important as is anything.

[00:05:55] There's a lot of organization around our area in the Chattanooga and Atlanta area that [00:06:00] have almost grown so quickly that the product is getting watered down a little bit.

[00:06:04] Without naming names of certain organizations, we train players from literally a hundred different organizations. We constantly hear nightmares of, hey, I signed up to play for this team and they've been competitive in the past, then when I got there, there were four guys that could play in Russia, didn't belong on the field.

[00:06:19] Making sure that we stayed within the realm of being able to have enough contact with our players and coaches to make sure that it's not about winning as much as it is about making sure they continue to develop, because when it comes to an 8u, 10u, 11, 12u kid, no, one's going to remember what you did at 12, so they don't care. I don't remember what I did at 12.

[00:06:38] Keeping your eyes on the goal of allowing these kids to play the next level and hopefully, help pay for college and who knows after that? I think the biggest mistakes we've made over the years is just trying to do too much, too fast, reaching out.

[00:06:52] We opened multiple facilities and not that it didn't work, it was just, it was so hard for me individually as an owner of the [00:07:00] facility to make sure I was staying connected with all our players and parents as much as possible on top of being in the tunnel, doing 60 to a hundred lessons a week individually.

[00:07:08] For me, I know you said earlier that you do a lot of group stuff with your guys, and I would love to do that at our facility, but I've been doing individuals for so long. It's just so weird for people to set up. I don't want to give it up.

[00:07:19] I've only got so much room on my book and, ultimately, I think, my thought processes these days is more like, how do I help coaches instead of help players? Heck I'll be honest with you, one of the first books that I read to get me outside the thought process of what I was really taught and taught, growing up was your catapult load system.

[00:07:39] That was the first one I read that kind of changed my mindset of hey, you weren't taught the right things and not because it was bad information as far as they didn't want to help me. It was just right. It was certain cues and things that you're like, hey man, you're trying to trick me into doing something instead of teaching me how to do it and why to do it.

[00:07:57] I think just keeping an open mind and [00:08:00] keeping your hand on the pulse of what's going on within the organization, making sure that ultimately your players are being developed and your coaches aren't acting like idiots on the field and that's tough. I think you probably know, as owner of facility, most of the phone calls we get are the negative ones.

[00:08:14] We rarely get to hear the, hey man, you're doing a great job, your teams are doing well. So, I'm trying to stay positive in that side of things and making sure that we understand what our goal is with our guys.

[00:08:25] **Joey Myers:** Yes and managing expectations for parents.

[00:08:27] I think that's a big thing and I know you've done it. I've done it where parents asking and they're very adamant and I've learned that's a yellow flag. When you've got a parent come in how fast can we see? How fast? And I know that's right.

[00:08:37] You've seen that's a yellow flag. Before I would be a nice person, empathetic person, I'd say, hey, we do this and it should be within a short amount of time, but there are so many factors that you and I coach and instructors can only control, there's only so much.

[00:08:53] We can't say, we don't have that crystal ball to say it's going to take Johnny or Sally a month or two months, because you might have [00:09:00] that diamond in the rough, where that player is on the left side of the bell curve. The ones that are the big leaguers, like your brother, if it's like us, we're on that left side, as college guys we're still not that top 1%.

[00:09:12] Then you have your bell-curve people, which is most of the people, and then you have your other side, the right side of the bell curve, where those players are probably not going to get better because they're not going to work on it or they're just not passionate enough about it. That kind of thing.

[00:09:25] It's managing expectations, I think is a big one. With you guys, as in the academies that are out there, the parents, like you said, the phone calls you get, aren't always the nice ones. You do get them but not always the nice ones, the

parents that are complaining or whatever, I think a lot of it is just the expectations. Would you agree?

[00:09:43] **Nate Headley:** Sure. Yes. I think, on the opposite side of the spectrum too, a lot of times I get the parent that comes in, I'm not expecting my son to play in the big leagues, but, and then for me it's different because I can say guess what, someone's got to do it. I watch my brother do it for 10 years.

[00:09:55] You don't want to tell a parent like, hey man your kid's not going to play in the big leagues. Your kid's not going to play [00:10:00] in college. You ultimately can't come in when a kid's 10 years old and say, yeah, man, he's going to play division one baseball, or he's going to play at a JuCo or I don't know how they're going to develop.

“I think the toughest conversations I have are the ones with the parents that are so over the top that you have to sit them down and say, hey, look, man, if you don't back off, they're not going to make it.”

[00:10:07] They move differently, and guess what, in two years they're going to move even more different. So, I can say staying the course and making sure that not just more importantly, the player, continues to enjoy the process. I think the toughest conversations I have are the ones with the parents that are so over the top that you have to sit them down and say, hey, look, man, if you don't back off, they're not going to make it.

[00:10:31] There's three or four kids off the top of my head, that they stopped playing because of it, normally that, there's not as many psycho moms out there. I do a lot of softball as well, too. So, you get plenty of that there too.

[00:10:42] I think it's a matter of making sure that they stay focused on what is ultimately, developing them, but still allowing them to enjoy the process of getting better.

[00:10:52] We play the game of baseball, we don't work the game of baseball, you and I work the game of baseball, but we don't get to go back and play. That's where we're at [00:11:00] now. So, making sure you're holding kids accountable, but you're also making sure that they see the light at the end of the tunnel and what ultimately, it could get them to.

[00:11:06] I think you and I both have been doing this long enough now that we've got plenty of stories about the good ones, the bad ones, guys that made the guys, and didn't make it, guys that should have made it.

[00:11:14] Frankly didn't work the way they should have, or honestly had the information to allow them to do it and that's why.

[00:11:19] **Joey Myers:** Exactly. You mentioned on the coaching side, and I have a feeling that it's probably because you got all burn out, but you guys had what? 30 teams, team coach side of things.

[00:11:27] I'm sure a lot of it was just burnout, but what would you say from a team, like those team coaches out there that are coaching teams? What would you say the mistakes that you see being made that you either you've made, or you've seen other coaches making?

[00:11:40] **Nate Headley:** Sure. As far as coaching goes, I think, the biggest thing that I would warn coaches on is don't stop learning. Where I'm at now is because basically I took everything that I was told growing up and threw it out the window and relearn hitting.

[00:11:57] **Joey Myers:** Me too. Yeah.

[00:11:58] **Nate Headley:** You had to; you know what I mean? I [00:12:00] don't fault my high school coaches. I don't fault my youth coaches like, because they were doing their best to based off what they knew and you must factor in there's so much more available now, the technology, the social media can be good or bad for that matter.

[00:12:14] I think that a lot of coaches lose the desire and fire to do it when they stop learning. When you go out and say, hey, these cues, or these drills have worked for me in the past, and that's all I'm going to do.

“I think ultimately that's where you start to lose traction in the development process and building teams and I think that the more you can continue on a daily basis to pick up, if it's one thing a day...”

[00:12:27] I think ultimately that's where you start to lose traction in the development process and building teams and I think that the more you can continue on a daily basis to pick up, if it's one thing a day, whether it's a drill, whether it's a concept, whatever it is to make sure that you're trying to better yourself, because when you stop bettering yourself, you stop bettering your team.

[00:12:48] I think the other thing too, that I've learned, especially as I've gotten older, because when I was a young coach, in 2006 I won the 16u world wood bat it's the perfect game where it wood bats. The coach I was at that [00:13:00] time, it was a whole heck of a lot different, at that point in time, I was still learning hitting.

[00:13:04] I had a pretty good concept of the game. I've always been a student of the game and understand the X and O's and pitch calls and defensive alignment. That kind of stuff is, I feel like that's always been a strong suit of mine as well as probably the leadership side of it, because I was a quarterback on the football team, I was a point guard on the basketball court.

[00:13:21] I've always been a leader. I feel like that was at that point in time, that's what I did. It was just a matter of making sure we had the right guys in the right positions and leading them and making sure that when we stepped on the field, that it didn't matter who we were playing with, I felt like we had a chance to win.

[00:13:35] Since then, I think it's just been more like the development of me understanding the intricacies of how athletes move, and the different ways athletes learn. I think the hardest thing that we do in our industry is working with each individual athlete. That's why, a lot of people talk crap a lot about high school coaches and how terrible they are.

[00:13:57] Be in their shoes, you got to understand, like you [00:14:00] have a two-hour practice typically, maybe you're three, you get three hours with those guys if you're lucky and you don't have 30 minutes to work with each individual hitter. What bothers me is when those high school coaches won't allow them to go out and work with hitting guys, if you don't want them to work with a hitting guy, well give them a reason, go do your research on that hitting guy.

[00:14:16] If you don't like what they're teaching and you don't feel like it matches up with what you're trying to do with your program, then that's fine. But if you're just not allowing anybody to work with your hitters, you're hindering yourself. You're hindering your program and you're not allowing you to meet the maximum potential of what your guys can do.

[00:14:33] It went from when I first started in this industry out here, there were certain coaches that wouldn't like, if I was hitting with their guys. They couldn't tell them they basically had to do it, on the wraps. Now those same coaches send their guys to me and when I go to their site scout out.

[00:14:46] **Joey Myers:** You're making their job easier.

[00:14:49] **Nate Headley:** Yeah, and there's no way to work with your hitters on an individual basis like that, especially, they sure as heck don't get paid enough money to do it for that matter as well. I think that don't be stubborn, keep an open [00:15:00] mind and understand that every athlete learns differently, moves differently, are motivated differently.

[00:15:06] Some dudes need a kick in the butt, sometimes need a pat on the butt. If you try to coach every single player the same way, you're not going to be successful, man. That's one of the things I learned coaching in the SCC. They say that you learn just as much about what you wouldn't do working for a head coach, is you would do.

[00:15:22] That's not a knock. It's just Hey, I'm going in a situation where the players are going to talk to me different than my head coach. I was a little bit younger, they felt like they could communicate with me a little bit better, connect with me a little bit better and getting a feel for the environment that you create.

[00:15:37] A comfortable environment in which players feel like they can communicate. They feel like they can open up to you about certain things, but still, are not scared of you, but respect you and understand that, hey, this guy's doing things that are going to make, put our team in the best position to win ball games and give us a chance to be as successful as possible.

[00:15:54] It's ever growing. You're constantly evolving and when you stop, you're going backwards and that's why I love doing things like this. This is cool. [00:16:00] That's why the opportunity to sit down with one of the best hitting guys in the country, in Cali and I'm out here in the Southeast.

[00:16:06] **Joey Myers:** The mindset right is the same, that growth mindset. Do you listen to any podcasts like coaching podcast or anything? For those coaches out there that are looking, they're like, hey, Nate's got a good point where I could learn, 1% more every day.

[00:16:18] I think podcasts are great for that because there's a lot of driving time and whatnot. Are there any podcasts that you would recommend, like on the baseball coaching side or softball coaching side?

[00:16:26] **Nate Headley:** Honestly, I'm probably far less of a podcast guy. I dig in the social media, like the certain hitting guys that I truly like to follow.

[00:16:34] **Joey Myers:** That was another question I had. You and I in this whole journey, we've seen the social media blown up, there are so many options. There are so many coaches out now with social media stuff. So, what's your filter? How do you know to follow a guy or two to give it a try, what's your filter for that?

What's your filter? How do you know to follow a guy or two to give it a try, what's your filter for that?

[00:16:48] **Nate Headley:** I always explain social media hitting to my hitters, like a buffet line. When you go to a buffet, you don't take everything, you take, I like that. I'm going to take a little bit that I like that. I'm going to take a little bit of [00:17:00] that. I'm not really a fan of that.

[00:17:01] So with your swing, you must find out what keeps your swing healthy. So, there's certain hitting guys out there without naming names that some of their stuff, I don't like, or I don't like the way they act or the way they act on social media. But that doesn't mean they suck, that doesn't mean that they're not a good hitting guy.

[00:17:18] Bottom line is once you truly understand how you move and what keeps you healthy and keeps your swing healthy, then you can go through and sift through things. You're like, yeah, man, I like that. I'm going to keep that drill. I tell my hitters all the time, I make them keep a notebook.

[00:17:30] Hey, what did you learn today? What was the one cue or two cues or drills that you really felt like clicked for you today and write those out and keep them in a category to where? All right. Hey, when you struggle with oppo path or you struggle with staying on the ground, maintaining posture, whatever it is, keep those categorized.

[00:17:50] You can go through and basically, have your own notebook to say, hey man, this is what I'm struggling. This is what's worked with me in the past. So, I think, keeping an open mind. Just because the guy has [00:18:00] one or two drills that you don't like, guess what? He probably didn't make up that drill.

[00:18:04] That's probably he picked up or did something to alter it a little bit, to make it a little bit more his own, but just because he has a couple of drills or concepts that you don't really like, that doesn't mean they're bad. Finding someone that uses terminology that clicks with you.

[00:18:18] Like it's if you throw out a couple things that you dislike and all the rest of that information is helpful for you, that's a good follow man. Just because you don't like a concept, or a drill doesn't mean they're a bad hitting guy. It's about understanding you first, hold yourself accountable.

[00:18:34] Once you do that, like I tell hitters as far as like, when they go to the plate, the most important thing you can do is know what you're good at. Period. If you know what you're good at and what you suck at, you can go in and build a battle plan based off, hey man, early in the account, I know what I'm attacking because later in the count, I'm probably going to get this stuff I'm not very good at.

[00:18:55] Making sure that you go in with a battle plan of understanding, not just what you're good at, but more [00:19:00] importantly, what you're not good at. You're going to have a lot better at bat. So, you're going to have a lot more quality at bats and you're going to do a lot more damage on the field. You're going to help your team out a whole heck of a lot more that way.

[00:19:08] **Joey Myers:** I love that when you were saying that there's some guys out there, personality wise, or just a- holes, but what I've learned is even, you and I think we're about the same age. I'm 41. You're 40

[00:19:19] **Nate Headley:** I'm 41 in February.

[00:19:20] **Joey Myers:** All right. Cool. Yeah. So, we grew up in the same generation, baseball generation where it was swing down and all things like that down and through stuff.

[00:19:26] I remember, again, I don't blame my high school coaches, my college coaches in any of that, because they didn't know what they didn't know type of thing. I think I felt hurt to finally realize going through all the catapult loading system stuff, I felt hurt that this stuff was out there, but I wasn't exposed to it.

[00:19:41] That's why I think I was like, yeah, the swing down stuff sucks, barrel above the hand suck. Get on top of the ball sucks. I did that for a couple of years. You probably remember, we were so down on the ground balls for a couple of years, we're just groundball suck and blah, blah, blah.

[00:19:54] I understand what those people that are still there are coming from. But what I found was that those cues, those swing [00:20:00] down cues, they do work. So, you talked about these hitting coaches that maybe you're an a-hole, but their stuff works, but it only works probably in certain scenarios. So, there's some out there that are deep barrels, right?

[00:20:11] Deep barrels, pivoted in the zone early. And I was like, I tried that. I tried that with my hitters for a year or two years. Again, what I found was that there was a lot of popping up going on. There was a lot of swinging missing. There was a lot of having a hard time to get to the fast ball up in the zone.

[00:20:25] Now see, we use that framework for middle away and middle down pitches. It's a perfect framework for that. It did well in the early two thousand when the pitchers were down in the zone a lot, even at the major league level. Then you start getting these hitters that are deep barrels.

[00:20:40] They're attacking that ball down and they're smashing it, but then when the picture started to move up in the zone, that barrel path really wasn't very good. So, then we switch over to the swing downside, the swing down works for middle in, middle up, right? So, it's whatever it is that you're seeing is out there, it works, but you must use discernment and critical thinking to figure out, okay, maybe it [00:21:00] doesn't work as a blanket statement, which really nothing really works as a blanket statement. You must find out where those little nuances are. Where it does work.

[00:21:09] **Nate Headley:** Yeah, absolutely. Now I'll tell you it's a little bit different for me.

[00:21:13] Like I said, because I had to delve into the softball world, with my daughter. I started coaching her at 14. I feel like it's the worst thing I've ever did, and I would never do it again because it was miserable. It didn't matter how good she was. It was never good enough.

[00:21:26] I will say one thing for parents out there, try not to coach your kids if you don't have to.

[00:21:30] **Joey Myers:** At least at the teenage years, right? At least at the teenage years.

[00:21:33] **Nate Headley:** Yes, and it was a matter of if I didn't do it, she wasn't going to get quality coaching. I will say that, for the most part, softball is like five years behind baseball and just like baseball is five years behind golf.

[00:21:41] It's true. The whole swing down thought process and where a lot of that kind of changed for me was the difference in baseball and softball. Baseball, when you get to two strikes, especially at the amateur level, like you're protecting off the plate away, you're protecting off speed, where softball you're [00:22:00] protecting against the rise ball a lot of the times.

[00:22:01] Which is, elevated, forcing basically on the baseball side. When I started to see my high-level hitters struggle with covering the rise ball is when the thought process, how to go Hey look, there's certain pitches that you do have to think swinging down on. It just depends on the hitter too.

[00:22:13] It depends on the competition level you're playing. I think that anytime you try to pack yourself into one frame of thought work, as far as swing up, swing down, swing level, whatever it is then you start to lose the view of the grand scheme. What you think and what you do and produce whether you produce on the field or not, that's all that matters.

[00:22:33] Your coach is going to have the power of the pen. And if you're producing, the only question they're going to have been where am I putting you in the order? So, stop worrying about swing down, swing up, swing flat, and start worrying about what does this situation dictate my thought process to be?

[00:22:47] I think a lot of that too, is, you build off that in a situation where, we always talk to our hitters about, the first two strikes are for you and the last one's for the team and making sure that you go up there with the mindset of Hey, I'm going to do damage here.

[00:22:59] [00:23:00] That's not just to say, we're trying to hit a backside ground ball with two strikes because bottom line is, a lot of times that's going to be an out, especially the older you get that isn't out because those plays being made and it's okay to do damage with two strikes, but completely understanding the situation.

[00:23:14] I think the biggest mistake that I see from amateur hitters is they don't take in the information that's available. I can't stand it when softball players are singing and dancing the dugout and playing drums on a bucket, like, how are you engaged in the game if you're worried about the next dance or lyric that's coming into your song?

[00:23:36] I didn't like my team, like my girls probably hated playing for me because I wouldn't let them sing and dance to drop off pocket, but we won games we shouldn't have won. We really did. Every time we stepped on the field, we felt Hey, we had a three-run lead based off of we're going to make sure our girls are engaged in this game and at least prepared for the situation, and on both sides baseball and softball.

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the dugout, out onto the field when they've got a guy getting loose."

[00:23:56] There's so much information available. If you're just paying attention to the [00:24:00] game, if you're just paying attention to how they're attacking hitters in front of you, we force all our guys to get out of the dugout, out onto the field when they've got a guy getting loose.

[00:24:08] Sometimes our dudes get kicked back in the dugout, which is okay, but you can still get your timing at tempo. It's not about swinging. It's about preparation of when you're getting up off the ground. Not about when you're getting down, it's getting it up on time. I think that teaching hitters what to look for.

[00:24:23] It's like when you go into a test, if you have all the information available, if a teacher gives you, a test prep sheet that says, hey, this is all the information that's going to be on the test. You have no excuse to fail, so many hitters fail because they failed to prepare based on the information that's right in front of them.

[00:24:39] I feel getting back on the field, that was what fired me back up to get coaching on the field again, was teaching these guys what to look for.

[00:24:45] When Chase was with the Yankees and A-Rod was there, he started joking around and he was like, oh yeah.

[00:24:50] I'm like, who's AI? A-Rod. I was like, why do you call him out? When I think of A-Rod, I think everybody hates him. He's one of the best teammates I've ever had. So, I just call him out because that's how I [00:25:00] look at him. He said, look, he said, I learned so much from him.

[00:25:02] Not about just hitting, but if he saw a pitcher face three hitters. He typically at that point in time, saw enough information or had enough information to tell you exactly what pitch was coming in certain situations and those guys that play at that level and did it, if he did at that high of a level.

[00:25:19] Those guys don't just do it because they're physically gifted. They do it because they take in that information, and they prepare themselves for the test. When they step not in the box, but when they step on deck, that prep is already done. I feel like that's so invaluable that, so many immature hitters missed that.

[00:25:35] **Joey Myers:** I agree. That's huge, the pattern recognition, and if it's one thing that just the whole political environment, everything in the last couple of years that I've learned, there are people that lack discernment and critical thinking. There are people that have discernment and critical thinking and over the last couple of years, I don't know if it's a coincidence that we started with my hitters these last couple of years, working on what we call hitting strategies.

[00:25:58] It's everything you're talking about. It's the pattern [00:26:00] recognition. We have six different ones, adjusting verticals, we call them verticals instead of launch angles, so the coaches that don't like the word launch angle, right? So, we're adjusting that the line drive side of it.

[00:26:09] So the ground ball line drive, fly ball ratios, the adjusting horizontals, which is just aligned to line, I got that from A-Rod where he's talking about, the pull-in versus, he says it line to line. So, we're adjusting that side of it, which is barrel path, basically.

[00:26:21] So the middle up middle end swinging down. That's the group of cues that we use. That one. Then we have deep-deep is the middle away, middle down. So that's that side of it. We do a curveball, where we were just breaking off curve balls, but they're hunting a certain curve ball in a certain zone.

[00:26:36] The last three are the kind of the big ones. That's the mixed pitching. That's the random pitching. That's where they're hunting certain pitches in certain zones. So, the first one of the last 3, is 0 or 1 strike. So, we do a fast guy or a slow guy pattern. We're looking for those patterns, right?

[00:26:53] Fast guys, at least they have access to that pitch up and that pitch in versus the slower guy. We've got some slower guys, smart ones, we'll [00:27:00] use that pitch up. But as just a pattern in general, we have a slow, fast guy pattern, slow guy patterns, zero one strike. We have a two strike, two strike, fast guy pattern, slow guy.

[00:27:11] Then in that one with school, we've been really working with that recently. That's a newer one within the last three or four months. What we do with that one is we have a percentage. So, we'll say 60 40 with 0-2, 1-2, when the pitcher, when I'm ahead in the count that we say 60% of the time I throw the fastball ,40% we throw the curve ball, or we'll do that.

[00:27:30] We'll do that, so we'll base it off percentages, right? What we're teaching them, and then the last one is just fast pitch or fast velocity, slow velocity, pitchers. What we're teaching is exactly what you're saying, right? The patterns you're looking at, you're looking for patterns and you're looking for how the pitchers, and then you're going to have a hitter in a situation where they're doing well, maybe above and beyond what their teams doing.

[00:27:50] Now that player can't look at his teammates and how they're being pitched. He basically must take like A-Rod. He's got to get to three at bats before or a bat or [00:28:00] two before he knows what the pattern is. You guys do anything like that?

[00:28:03] **Nate Headley:** Count situation and building an approach, I think that at the high school level and below it's the patterns are so blatantly obvious, like you said, if you just pay attention to what type of pitcher they are, if a dude throws a 90,

when he gets to two strikes, the guys that throw 90 have egos and that's okay. Because if I throw 90, I would too, and I would pound up in the zone.

[00:28:24] Just that information should be so blatantly obvious at that level, if you're paying attention to the game, you're going to know that. At the next level and in high school, you do have scouting reports to a point. But I think the best way hitters can build scouting reports at the high school level is keep notes of the pitchers you faced, because that's what over the course of four years, you're going to see that, they're going to see that same dude a lot.

[00:28:49] If you look back at how they pitched you in the past, I got news for you, it's going to be similar. It really is. At the collegiate level and above, the scouting reports are given for the [00:29:00] most part are good. When I was in Tennessee, I had to put together a lot of our scouting reports and the amount of time that I spent on literally every single at bat.

[00:29:06] We get at least five games, five previous games for every hitter. Sometimes more depending on the opponent we had and, if they had guys that had been in and out of the lineup, we went back 10 to 15 sometimes. I think understanding the type of pitcher, like you said, that you're facing and understanding how they've got other guys out in the lineup, and obviously you're going to have to factor in righty versus lefty because that's going to make a massive difference in how they attack guys.

[00:29:29] If you build a plan that is a thought-out process, and you get in the box and you stick to that plan. If you fail to me, I'm okay with that because you went in with a thought process. If they attacked you differently than you thought, then tip your hat, man. They beat you.

[00:29:45] They were better than you, and guess what? Pitchers are supposed to be better than us. Because you know what you're throwing, where you're trying to throw it, you know how hard it's going to be thrown and, hey, guess what, we built a plan that was built to counteract what you're doing.

[00:29:58] Sometimes, I also tell guys all [00:30:00] the time, like your little duck snorts that fall in over the second baseman's head, or you roll over, so the six hole, they'd be happy as hell about that. Because more times than not, you hit more balls on the screws. They get hit right out, someone that gets caught and that evens out.

[00:30:15] When I was at Tennessee, two of the four years I was there, I did a chart based on like hard-hit balls versus balls that fell in. It was insane how close it was. When they say the game evens out, like it's insane. It's within two or three hits, don't say like balls on the scrolls in that fall in.

[00:30:31] If you're building a proper plan and you stick to that plan. I think the biggest issue with a lot of hitters is they get in the box, and they abort it. You know what I'm saying? I'll talk to a hitter, when I come back to the dugout, I'm like, what

are you thinking there? They have the right mindset and I'm like, guess what, bro, your swing doesn't lie.

[00:30:46] You're telling me, you're trying to hit a ball off a wall in the right center gap and you just buggy whipped four balls in the pull side dugout. You can tell me what you want, but I've been doing this long enough that the swing doesn't lie. You're not barrel hooking balls in the third base dugout is [00:31:00] right at right-handed hitter.

[00:31:00] If your mindset is right center gap, and we tell our guys like two strikes for the most part it's okay. If you hit a 67 shopper back to the pitcher and get your knuckles blown off, I'm okay with it. If you run out of fricking barrel on a frigging soft or something soft away, like that's on you for not having a plan.

[00:31:18] Not just building the plan but sticking to the plan is just as important as anything to be completely honest.

[00:31:24] **Joey Myers:** I agree. I agree.

[00:31:25] We'll end on this. It's really, like you said it right out and put it right on the nose. The pitcher knows everything. They know what they're throwing, where they're throwing it and how fast they're throwing it and we don't.

[00:31:34] We must base it off probability. Hitting is probability. I love what Perry Husband says. He says hitting. I think, I probably wouldn't use the term guess, but it's probability.

[00:31:43] **Nate Headley:** Hypothesis.

[00:31:43] **Joey Myers:** Hypothesis. Exactly. So, you're using the scientific method, and many aspects of hitting, we use it, but you're doing it to look for patterns and see where patterns start to shape and form. Like you said, there's from high school on down. The patterns are pretty blatant, and you can pretty much [00:32:00] with 80 plus percent certainty know, by just watching the pitcher warm up.

[00:32:05] If you're tracking them as well, like you're tracking your bats with that pitcher over four years in high school. You have a pretty good probability how he's going to pitch you. Then also if you hit them well, like we have 11, 12-year-old, he's been with me for a couple of years and we started this hitting strategy stuff with him, he was over rotating a little bit on the hitting.

[00:32:21] Once we got him back where he needed to be on the mechanical side, got him clean. We started working the hitting strategy stuff. He's a bigger kid, not tall, but just big, bigger kid. We got him to a point with our hitting strategies to where everything was predictable. So, he would go into a tournament, maybe not well-known at the time and he'd get fastballs.

[00:32:40] Then he turned around, he turned them around and he hit the wall with them or whatever. Then just like clockwork, curveball start coming and it was to where the next tournament where maybe he was playing similar teams, the next tournament he saw, of the four or five games he played in, he saw three fast balls.

[00:32:56] All the rest were curve balls and then he turns those around. Once he turns those around [00:33:00] then, they just throw around, they start hitting them, they never throw anything in the zone. So, it becomes so predictable at that point. I tell him, and he has supposed to have one more year of little league this next year.

[00:33:11] I said, dude, it's not going to be fun. It's going to be so fun for you, but not fun at all for the other guys, because you probably should be playing up this next year. He was putting up video game numbers last year. I couldn't imagine what kind of numbers he's going to put up this year, but that's the predictability of everything.

[00:33:28] **Nate Headley:** I think that's kudos to what you guys are doing with him and him buying into the process. I think that the hardest thing that you and I, and anyone in this industry do is we're so limited. We give you the information, but what you do with it is on you though.

“We can give you all the information you need to be successful, but what you do with it is ultimately all that matters, because the development process is not going to be there.”

[00:33:41] That's the hardest part about coaching. We can give you all the information you need to be successful, but what you do with it is ultimately all that matters, because the development process is not going to be there. If you take that information, it goes one ear and out the other ear or in a game situation, because you see it all the time.

[00:33:56] I'm sure too, you have hitters that come in and smash in the tunnel.

[00:34:00] Absolutely rake in the tunnel, but it takes a long time for that to start to transition and show up on the field because they haven't truly bought in. I'll be honest with you, that's one of the biggest reasons I like HitTrax or track man or Rapsodo hitting.

[00:34:12] That technology is extremely valuable, but I tell people all the time, I've got a \$25,000 HitTrax machine and I've got a \$4,500 A-Tech three-wheel machine. If I had to get rid of one of those two, I probably would get rid of the HitTrax because I don't need that information to see what a hitter is doing wrong.

[00:34:28] But that information being provided immediately after something happens and something's different and they feel something different and can see it immediately. That's when truly you start to see the progressions occur on the field, and building on the machine there too, like so many hitters hate to hit on a machine.

[00:34:45] I was the same way growing up. I hated it.

[00:34:47] **Joey Myers:** Me too.

[00:34:47] **Nate Headley:** You know why I hated it, I hated it because I sucked. Because I wasn't good at it. That's like my best hitters hit on the machine more than anybody period. It's not a matter of setting up BP fastball is at 75 down the middle. It's a matter of [00:35:00] we're going to set, 88 to 92 at the top of the zone, we're going to set back foot sliders. What do you suck at? Let's battle test that.

[00:35:07] Don't get me wrong, there's going to be times that we're going to go in and I'm going to let a guy have a two-feel good round but like our job is to build hitters, not build egos.

[00:35:16] If we're worried about, hey, every kid walking out of our town, feeling like they're He-Man. Yes, you want them to be confident, but the confidence comes from what has happening on the field and when the hitters are so worried about having building confidence in a cage and not failing in a cage, ultimately that transition time takes longer to show up on the field. I think that, if hitters would learn more on how to deal with failure and stop worrying about, oh man, I just swung and missed six times in a row.

[00:35:45] I've got big leaguers. I've got pro ball guys that were first rounders that come in and swing and miss 15 or 16 out of the first 30 swings they take because we're doing something that they're uncomfortable with, we're building something that's [00:36:00] ultimately going to make them better on the field and just simply building their confidence.

[00:36:03] **Joey Myers:** I completely agree. I love that.

[00:36:05] To be respectful your time, Nate we'll end the convo. I'm sure we'll have plenty more to talk about in future episodes. But I do want to ask you where can people find you if they want to reach out, ask you questions, you got a website, social media, any of that?

Where can people find you if they want to reach out, ask you questions, you got a website, social media, any of that?

[00:36:18] **Nate Headley:** Yes, so our website is <https://www.rbihfa.com/>. Probably the best way to get me is on my Instagram page, it's just @nheadley14. I'm also on Facebook obviously, but I do more stuff on Instagram than anything. Feel free to always reach out to me there. We're doing a camp December 20th to 21st on a home plate down in just south of Atlanta and Peachtree City.

[00:36:35] Any hitters, I would like to give them the tunnel. I've got myself, I've got Casey Smith out front hitting, Cameron Ginger, propel hitting, and Joey Lewis, the hit lab they're coming in and we've got 15 coaches from around the country flying in. We've got a former big leaguer. Who's going back to play this year.

[00:36:49] He's a former first round er player, might've had for years. I was in his wedding. I feel old. New kids.

[00:36:56] He was going to open a facility in Murphysboro and got a few phone
[00:37:00] calls. Guys want him to come back and play. So, I just want to come work with him to get the information.

[00:37:03] We're fired up about that, and anybody like to get in the tunnel with us, we'd love to see them down there.

[00:37:07] **Joey Myers:** Hey, thank you for your time and stay on here while I turn the recording off, but thanks for your time, brother.

[00:37:13] **Nate Headley:** My pleasure, Joey. Thanks for having me.