

VIEWPOINTS

Prepare to fail and get better in long run

By **JOSEPH MANISCALCO**
NY BlueFire Fastpitch

The focus of this article is high school seniors who are off to play collegiate softball. After the accolades of high school, graduation parties, celebration and moments of trophy idealization, you must start your preparation.

COLLEGIATE athletics is by far one of the most rewarding sports experiences you will ever have. While high school championships are wonderful, they are localized, sometimes motivated by external forces and guided by popularity. Unfortunately, one of the pitfalls of high school sports is that one does not learn how to lose. If you play in a consistently-dominant high school program, the team usually wins year after year or is at the top of the leaderboard often.

From what I have seen and experienced, the same top four teams are battling at the end of the season for a high school championship. Players are successful based on popularity of reputation and are rarely challenged with failure.

College softball, on the other

hand, will provide you with true excitement, camaraderie that is unparalleled and an experience you will cherish for the rest of your life. You will learn how to lose first, and then how to succeed.

You will learn how to manage and juggle your academics and social life while being away from home, and not having parents remind you to work hard and do your studying or drag you to your trainer or practice. Instead, this will be on you.

PROFESSORS WILL NOT be guided by the popularity of the high school season when grading. Instead, they will care about their academic subject just as much as your coach cares about winning a championship. That means you will have to be responsible, engage in time management and be prepared. Your maturity will abound in an instant or you will falter like the ones who were unable to be student-athletes.

So, as you embark on your collegiate softball career, look at failure as an act of progression and growth. You will experience failure. You will probably cry your first semester, call home and say “I can’t

do this.” But you can.

You will feel the pressure of the schoolwork and meeting different personalities of students cannot help you overcome the homesick nature of the environment you are in at the moment. You will strike out and you will give up home runs. You will make errors and you will make mental mistakes on the bases.

You will fail and you will feel like you cannot compete at that level. However, the coach who recruited you believes that you can compete at the collegiate level, and that coach has faith in you and the process of your development.

DO NOT BE frustrated. Learn, grow and develop. Look for failure and make sure that it is something you recognize. For many of you who came from powerhouse high school programs, you will not understand what failure is, so be careful not to allow this unknown concept to become your finishing piece. In anticipation of your collegiate experience, look to challenge yourself in the summer.

Perhaps play at a much more competitive level than high school. Complete the program’s summer workout with zeal, passion and determination. And look to read a book of interest to expand your mind. Practice time management during the summer. Become employed, have chores, do your summer training regime, play softball and read several great books. This will prepare you for the collegiate experience you are about to encounter.

Baseball Hall of Famer Lou Gehrig, a man of amazing character, once said, “I love to win; but I love to lose almost as much. I love the thrill of victory, and I also love the challenge of defeat.” This from a man who played 2,130 consecutive games. Many of you have gone through high school without



Joseph Maniscalco is the founder of the NY BlueFire Fastpitch travel ball program and coaches the organization’s 18-and-under gold team. He is a frequent lecturer and writer about softball and performance-related issues topics and regularly conducts mental training seminars.

The former All-America pitcher at Fordham University, where he still ranks among the leaders on the baseball team’s all-time list, Maniscalco has been an NFCA member since 2006.

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experiencing much failure. This concerns me as a mental training coach. This also pigeon holes some into a fixed mindset, which is a recipe for future frustration. Get out of your comfort zone and look to be familiar with being uncomfortable.

WINNING A HIGH SCHOOL championship is achievement, but this is not success. Success is about learning. It’s about growing and being better today than you were yesterday. There is a fine line between the two.

Embrace the opportunity you have been given to play collegiate sports and become a student-athlete. The experience will be rewarding. Use it as a canvas to create your desired masterpiece.

Remember, every failure brings with it the seed of an equivalent success. The key is to recognize this and not allow the temporary failure to be the picture on the canvas you created.

CONTACT US

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The image shows the cover of the January 2016 issue of Fastpitch Delivery, Volume 21, No. 1. The cover features several headlines and photos:

- Four Selected For NFCA Hall of Fame:** Brock, Joseph, Stevens, and Tschida comprise the 2016 Induction Class. Photos of the four inductees are shown.
- Over 1,400 Fill Their Buckets in Atlanta:** Members filled their buckets in record numbers at the year's NFCA National Convention in Atlanta, Dec. 2-5 at the Atlanta Marriott Marquis.
- Fill Your Bucket:** A call to action for readers to contribute to the NFCA's scholarship fund.
- Taking Time For Thanks:** Valparaiso Head Coach Grateful For Inner Circle's Convention Experience.
- Powerful Field For Division III Leader:** Four of the eight teams that finished the 2015 NFCA season are in the NFCA's top field.
- NEW MEMBERS:** LISTEN TO THE VOICES OF THE YOUTH ON THE EDGE.
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