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The Matheny Manifesto

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Book Review

Matheny Manifesto

Mike Matheny is a former MLB manager and is most known for the time he spent with the St. Louis Cardinals while also spending time with the Kansas City Royals. In his first 4 seasons with the Cardinals, he made it to the post season every year. While he was the manager of the St. Louis Cardinals, he also coached his son's youth baseball team. At the beginning of the season, he wrote the parents a letter about his coaching philosophy. The letter took the internet by storm, and soon became known as the "Matheny Manifesto." In this manifesto, he talks about the problems within youth sports, as well as his eight keys to success. Matheny is also known for his old-school advice that is not always popular or politically correct. He believes that the biggest problem in youth sports is the parents, so he chose to coach his sons little league team and wrote this letter to let them know what was going to happen in the upcoming season.

This book is split into three different parts the first is titled, The Problem. In this section, he talks about his love for the game of baseball and sports in general. He was always a super competitive kid when he was growing up. He grew up living the Sandlot lifestyle. They would play whiffle ball all day long and even got their dad to put up lights so they could play well into the night. He explains that he doesn't see that in kids anymore, and their love for the game and competing is gone. Another thing that he talked about in this section was the problem with new school parents. His biggest thing is that he wanted the parents to let the coaches coach, and they watch and enjoy the game. Too many times every parent is coaching from the stands, and it can hurt kids. Screaming and yelling at them does them no good especially when it's something different than what the coaches are telling them in the first place. Another problem that Mike

Matheny has with youth sports is that he doesn't believe that everyone should get a medal or trophy for participating. That is not what happens in the real world and if we continue to teach our kids that, then they will be lost in the real world.

The second part of this book is titled, A Better Way. His goal with his son's little league team was to teach them lessons that would last a lifetime. One of the ways they did this was during practice times they would talk about honesty and teamwork, instead of practicing baseball the whole time. He wanted his boys to know the difference between right and wrong and be leaders in their schools and in their friend groups. Another thing they did as a team was to go out and do service projects on the weekends. Other teams in their area would be going out of state every weekend to play in tournaments, while that is fun and gives kids good memories, he chose to have his players and families help the less fortunate. Now they still went out of state and had fun at tournaments, they did not do that every single weekend like some other teams. His purpose in creating this little league team was not to spend thousands of dollars and get all his players on top of recruiting lists from major colleges, it was to create better men and to teach the men that there is more to baseball than winning and losing. He wanted to use baseball as a platform to teach them about life. It was hard at first because his philosophy was not glamorous, and many people want glamorous now. He knew he had to stay true to who he was and what he believed in. During his practices, he would take the first 90 minutes to work on baseball related stuff such as hitting, running, throwing, etc. The final 30 minutes was devoted to character building and work on the mental side of baseball. He would take his team through exercises that would help strengthen their mental approach to the game, because baseball is a hard game and if you don't have a good mental approach then it is going to be hard for you to succeed. He finished this section talking about what a great coach looks like. He talked about how you could

ask any coach from any sport, and they will tell you they have a role model they look up too. Someone that made them want to be a coach. And all these coaches had one thing in common, they made a difference in kids lives. That is what a good coach does, he makes a difference in multiple kids' lives every day. In this section he went into great detail about John Wooden and what his coaching philosophy was at UCLA all those years and what allowed him to be successful year after year. Although Coach Wooden coached basketball, Metheny still looked up to him and his coaching style, as did many coaches in that era and still to this day.

In the last section he talks about his keys to success and gives stories for examples of each one. His 8 keys to success are leadership, confidence, teamwork, faith, class, character, toughness, and humility. One of the ones that stuck out to me was confidence. As a coach you must have confidence in your players, or your coaching isn't going to help them much. Matheny was a catcher, so in his case his coach trusted him to call the game and was confident in that. As a coach, you must have confidence that your players will take what they learned from you during practice and use it in the game. If you don't have confidence in them, then they will never reach their full potential because you will be holding their hand every step of the way. You need to let them go and fail on their own as well as succeed on their own. Another key that stuck out to me was leadership. You need to have a couple guys on your team that you know are the leaders and players you can always turn too when you need something. The best way to find your leaders in to look at your team and see who is respected among the team. Leaders are respected individuals who do things the right way and always have everyone's eyes on them. They are players that you can turn to in a late game situation or when things aren't going your team's way. Players that the team will listen to if something needs to be done. The other keys to success have a lot to do with

how you carry yourself, and he explains that in the book with stories and example from his playing days.

I enjoyed reading this book and hearing what he thought of youth sports, because a lot of what he believes, I do too. I don't believe that everyone should receive a medal participating and that in order to be recognized with an award you must accomplish something through hard work. I also liked the part where he talked about his team and how they didn't go to the biggest tournaments every weekend but instead they focused on becoming better people. When I was 11, I had a travel ball coach that was like Matheny. He wanted us to become better people first and foremost, but he also expected us to give everything we had and to become better baseball players. He taught me a lot about life and how the game of baseball can teach your life lessons, a lot of these lessons I learned I still apply to my everyday life. One of the biggest ones was treating people with respect. Not only did he expect us to treat the other team and umpires with respect, but he also expected us to treat our teammates and ourselves with respect as well. We played baseball the right way and had a lot of fun doing it. We weren't going out there and throwing the same pitcher every game to guarantee us a win, and we weren't cheating our way to any win. Reading this book brought back a lot of memories of my childhood and where my love for the game of baseball really started to develop. It was during this time that I decided I wanted to play college baseball. Reading this book also gave me insight on how I was to be as a coach with my young team. I want to teach my kids about respect and how to play the game of baseball the right way. I think I will use the things I learned in the Matheny Manifesto to do that.

Works Cited

Matheny, M., & Jenkins, J. B. (2017). *The Matheny Manifesto: A young manager's old-school views on success in sports and life*. Three Rivers Press.