

OPINION

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

Box 248, 191 Main St. E.,
Milton L9T 4N9
878-2341
Toronto Line 821-3837
Fax - 878-4943

Classified Advertising: 875-3300

Ian Oliver Publisher
Nell Oliver Advertising Director
Jane Muller Editor
Karen Husman Circulation Manager
Teri Casas Office Manager
Tim Coles Production Manager
General Manager

The Canadian Champion, published every Wednesday and Friday at 191 Main St. E., Milton, Ont., L9T 4N9 (Box 248), is one of The Metroland Printing, Publishing & Distributing Ltd. group of suburban companies which includes: Ajax/Pickering News Advertiser, Aurora Banner, Barrie Advance, Brampton Guardian, Burlington Post, Collingwood Connection, Etobicoke Guardian/Lakeshore Advertiser, Georgetown Independent/Acton Free Press, Kingston This Week, Lindsay This Week, Markham Economist & Sun, Mississauga News, Newmarket Era, Oakville Beaver, Orillia Today, Oshawa/Whitby This Week, Peterborough This Week, Richmond Hill/Thornhill/Vaughan Liberal, Scarborough Mirror, Today's Seniors, and Uxbridge/Stouffville Tribune.

Advertising is accepted on the condition that, in the event of a typographical error, that portion of the advertising space occupied by the erroneous item, together with a reasonable allowance for signature, will not be charged for, but the balance of the advertisement will be paid for at the applicable rate. The publisher reserves the right to categorize advertisements or decline.

Coaching the boys of spring

Regular readers of this space know that I have a fascination with baseball. Despite the wildly divergent topics I pick each week to entertain, instruct and provoke readers, I spend an inordinate number of waking hours trying to understand baseball.

I coach two baseball teams. One of which is a relatively successful senior team, for which I also play. The other, is the Milton District High School Mustangs, who have never played a real game under my tutelage.

The senior team is organized under a loose hierarchical system. The more important you are to the team's success, the more clout your opinion has. I stand as managing-inmate of the asylum.

The Mustangs, however, have operated in the past under the eye of a teacher, John Davis, who has made the necessary decisions, including stepping aside with unqualified speed when I mentioned my interest in coaching. After a month of practices I believe Mr. Davis, in cahoots with every other high school coach in town, decided that I should be allowed the opportunity to experience a high school coaching assignment first hand.

The Milton District team is a study. I know baseball. I know it intimately. As a writer, broadcaster, player and coach, I know baseball. In house league, high school, varsity, senior and professional levels I know baseball. I have coached, played, written or broadcast at every level.

The problem is: I haven't done all those things at every level. Call it a gap in my knowledge. It's these blind spots that fuel my essential fascination with the game.

Having watched high school baseball I know some players have a great backing in the fundamentals of the game. They know how to slide, steal, pick up a grounder, position themselves for a fly ball and do innumerable other things the game requires. Others have no idea. They've never been taught.

What are you doing teaching a bird to talk

When I get home from work, I am invariably greeted with the question "What are you doing?". In fact, this same question may be repeated 10 or 20 times, no matter what my answer is.

No, I don't have a two-year-old child, just a talkative cockatiel who begins to squawk excitedly when he sees my car turn in the driveway.

It's all my fault, really. This darn bird was abandoned by his family at age five, and returned to the breeder because his humans had a baby and were concerned that there would be allergy problems.

When I was visiting the aviary, I couldn't help but notice the pathetic bundle of yellow feathers, fluffed up miserably on a branch. The other birds were happily and noisily flying from perch to perch, eating, drinking and squabbling. Not this bird, though, he clearly felt that his life was over.

Next thing you know, I was on my way home, tenderly carrying a small cardboard box with ventilation holes in it. The fact that it's pretty difficult to ascertain temperament of a mature bird through holes in a cardboard box did not deter me in any way. After all, a cockatiel is not a very large bird, how many problems could there be?

Several days later, as I cursed mightily and sucked blood from a reasonably deep, triangular opening in my finger, I paused to reconsider. This was not fair.

REAUME WITH A VIEW

with BRAD REAUME



I wonder then, if taking an hour to teach sliding is worth it, when all but two guys know how. I would however, tear out my hair, if my failure to teach sliding costs us a game. So next practice we slide. Multiply this by the thousands of little things that a player learns over the years and you're faced with a whole lot of practice time. Unfortunately it's tough to teach mental awareness.

During the eight-game season a couple of breaks here, or a couple of mistakes there will mean the difference between success and failure. Notch a couple of cheap wins and the season's a success.

If we play every inning of every game, which is doubtful due to curfew regulations, the Milton District Mustangs have to make 168 outs on defence while avoiding the same on offence. That's it.

Right now, however, we are concerned about the make-up of the team. The right mix of veterans, rookies, guys who want to play and those whose ability means you have to let them, is necessary.

It's time to scout the other teams, especially those at E.C. Drury and Bishop Reding. The word is that the Spartans are the class of Milton, the team that has all the pieces that a winner needs. I like being the underdog.

So the Mustangs embark on their 1992 season with a home game on Tuesday at Brian Best Park. At the same time I look forward to learning a little bit more about the game I find so intriguing.



PETS AND YOU

with ANNE NORMAN

Here I was, changing food and water dishes, and gently talking to my new friend when he made a totally unwarranted attack on my person. A painful one. Rethinking the situation was obviously in order.

It was not a question of the bird not being accustomed to my presence. He was always quite happy to see me, watched my every move with bright-eyed interest, and even favoured me with the occasional wolf-whistle.

Once I figured it out, I had to laugh at myself. Any idiot should have been able to see that this poor bird had lived his entire life, from the moment he left the breeder's aviary, in a cage. I'm sure he had been well looked-after; he was in excellent physical condition. It's just that he had never had the opportunity to experience the fun of being a pet.

He was not finger-tamed, and greeted even the slowest approach of a friendly hand with suspicion, fear and razor-sharp beak. Another thing which was odd for a cockatiel was his aversion to leaving his cage (most cockatiels spend 90 per cent of their time insisting on



Remedies for underachievers

Studies have shown that underachieving children can make two to four times as much progress in school with a "mastery" program. There is no question they can learn — in fact, they can learn at an extraordinary pace, if the instruction is designed properly.

The following techniques are thought to be important in helping the underachieving child:

- Maximize academic learning time. Studies show that many classrooms provide as little as 30 minutes of academic instruction per day in the early years — much of the day is taken up with socialization, music, art, recess, gym, and outings.
- Identify specific areas of deficit. It is not enough to say we should work on reading. We need to identify specific deficits — the sounds of the letters (phonics), attaching verbal labels to visual stimuli (eg. colours, letters, shapes), and so on.
- Break the task down into small steps, so the child can progress easily from one step to the next. This also insures a high rate of success and a positive experience.
- Individualize instruction so that each



PSYCHOLOGY IN THE '90S

with DR. ARNOLD RINCOVER

child is working at his own rate, and at the academic level most beneficial for his individual development.

□ Require mastery of each task or step before moving on to the next. This is critical. Typically, an underachieving child is doomed when he fails his first task, because the class moves on and he can't handle the new, more difficult material. If he continues on a task until he masters it, he will learn and progress, even if it initially at a slower pace than others.

□ Provide immediate feedback in order to correct errors and praise success. The best way is to show both the child's answer and the correct answer at the same time, to specifically highlight what is different about the child's answer.

□ Practice weaknesses. Practice those areas that children have the most problem with. Review those words that were misread on a page after the page is finished; practice the arithmetic problems that the child got wrong.

□ Incorporate the tasks at home. Parents can incorporate teaching into games and natural events in creative ways. While driving in the car or waiting at a restaurant, we can play games like "I spy (something that starts with the letter ___)"; geography (taking turns naming a city, town, country, continent, etc. that starts with the letter that the previous one ended with), creativity games (eg. giving the kids 60 seconds to name as many things that they can think of that are round, red, metal, found in a bedroom, animals with horns, etc.). Play monopoly, card games, or any of a number of board, computer, and video games that require a child to read, add and subtract in an enjoyable context.

□ Use incentives. These children respond well to incentives. Points or tokens (and praise) can be given for correct performance, and lost for incorrect performance. These tokens can then be traded for special activities or prizes.

□ Don't hold the child to fixed standards of achievement — ie. what other children can or should do. Evaluate your child in relation to his or her own past behaviour — did they improve? Are they progressing?

□ When depression, stress or parenting practices are contributing to a child's underachievement, it is important to get help to alleviate that problem, too.