

THE 10TH INNING

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“Every great batter works on the theory that the pitcher is more afraid of him than he is of the pitcher”
- Ty Cobb, HOF 1936

COACHES CORNER



SAL BANDO, JR.

CAGE TRAINING & HITTING - One unfortunate reality I've noticed over the years is when kids go to hit in a cage they have no goal or agenda. While their intentions are good, often, the hours spent in a cage is a waste of time. Learning how to hit in a cage is integral to development and proper muscle memory.

For starters, cage work is about taking your time and being intentional. It's not a race and *quality* has to trump *quantity*.

Seeing the flight of the baseball is also very important because of the immediate feedback it gives you, so hitters should *avoid standing in front* of a net. Batted ball flight provides both positive and negative feedback, telling you if you hit it where you should have and if you back spin or top spinned the baseball.

So the natural follow up question is where should you be hitting a ball, what is the goal? The answer is simple, *every ball should be hit gap to gap and up the middle with back spin*. A great place to start is up the middle. Place a tee on the front and middle of the plate, then try to back spin the ball to the back net. A hitter's ability to hit a still ball on a tee consistently up the middle tells you a lot about where that hitter is, especially when the tee is at the top of the strike zone. Back spinning a ball generates an upward force and lifts the baseball, top spin does the exact opposite, but back spinning a baseball should not be confused with hitting the top net. The *top net is something hitters need to avoid*. Top nets are permissible when its the back of a 1/2 cage or at the mid point of a full cage, but anything other than that is a can of corn.

Lance Berkman, a 6x all star with 15 years in the Big Leagues said it best, "If you're not willing to be bored, then you don't want to be a great hitter." Hitting in the cage can be boring, hitting off a tee can get monotonous, but it's necessary if you want to be a good hitter. So the approach in a cage should be meticulous, intentional and goal oriented.



SAL BANDO, JR.

Author

Sal breaks down 20+ years of his coaching experience and has packed it into our seasonal newsletter, *The 10th Inning*. Exclusive interviews, coaching tips, rule clarifications, and game insights, are only some of the topics he covers each issue. Additionally, Sal is an RT Elite coach and has been the head baseball coach for Marquette High School Hilltoppers since 2011.

THE INTERVIEW



December 2022, the Milwaukee Brewers promoted Marti Wronski from General Counsel (GC) to Chief Operating Officer, making her the only woman in Major League Baseball to hold that title. Born in Neenah, WI, Wronski graduated *summa cum laude* from St. Norbert College in 1994, and with honors from the University of Wisconsin Law School in 1997. She began her practice with Foley & Lardner LLP, while also becoming a member of the faculty with Marquette University; where she remains an adjunct professor for both the Law School and MBA Programs. The Brewers hired Wronski in 2004, as GC, and for a time, she was the team's only in-house attorney. Wronski's purview has expanded significantly since her start with the Brewers. In November 2017, she was promoted to GC and Senior Vice President of Administration. From there she came to oversee the Legal, Information Technology, Human Resources, and Business Analytics departments. Wronski and her husband, Andrew, their four boys (Jonah - 21, Luke - 20, Sam - 18, Charlie - 15), are all veterans of the travel ball circuit.

What advice would you give to someone with aspirations of getting into the business of baseball?

I know this is an often-used cliché, but one should generally view the process of achieving an opportunity in professional sports as a *marathon, not a sprint*. At base, the market is very competitive, and teams have the ability to be extremely selective in the hiring process. As a result, these opportunities must be earned. This often means starting in positions outside of baseball, or in the most junior internship roles with a team. Regardless of where you start, be a sponge. **Think. Work hard. Focus on and develop strong communication skills.** Do not be afraid to fail. If you remain persistent and put in the time and hard work, windows and doors will begin to open.

As a baseball mom, what have you learned to pass on to current and future baseball moms?

Ha. It is so easy to put in writing the "advice" I would share with other baseball moms. But, the reality is that most of us are rational, logical people who intellectually understand that our children are not defined as humans because of their success on the playing field. Separately, what I think is most difficult to see and understand, are the *hopes/dreams* of our sons - *that so often become our own*, juxtaposed to the amazing - *though not always enjoyable* - *life lessons, life skills* - *think resilience*, and *relationships* the game presents to our sons in ways we simply could not.

If your child has what it takes to play at the *next level* - *whatever level that may be*, and they choose that, it will likely happen.

Who has been the most influential person in your professional life?

My professional life has been "influenced" by so many people who have each made an impact on my career – some because they were naysayers and some because they were champions. Starting with **my parents**, who encouraged me to go to law school, to the **attorneys** at Foley who recommended that the Club reach out to me, to the **Dean** of the Law School who told me to take the chance in baseball, to our current **President** who hired me and has been my mentor, teacher and champion ever since – I have truly been blessed. However, my **family** has undoubtedly been the most influential. I could write a book on this topic - *I will spare folks for now*, but suffice it to say that my husband and our four sons have been my constant cheerleaders and voices of reason. They have admittedly "*sacrificed*," and repeatedly encouraged me to step outside my comfort zone - *often with a kick in the tush*. The six of us are a team, and I would not be where I am today without them.

