

Choosing the Right Private Instruction For Your Child

(Austin, Texas) Private instruction and Sports Academies are popping up all over the USA. With the latest scandals in the Catholic Church and young athletes being burned out in select leagues at an amazing rate, the question arises who can we trust to teach and train our children? Texas All-Star Baseball Academy CEO and Founder, Patrick Reid, addresses these types of questions wherever he travels throughout the United States. Coach Reid was a former College and Professional player as well a NCAA Division I Pitching Coach at New Mexico State University from 1999-2001. Although Coach Reid was an exceptionally successful player and coach, 1984 Pioneer League July Player of the Month, named to Baseball America's Pioneer League Top 10 Prospect List as well as lowering NMSU Pitching Staff ERA by 3 r.p.g. each year, his true passion has always been in the training of young people. I left coaching at the college level primarily because I found that I enjoyed the camps, clinics and private lessons with the young athlete considerably more than all of the travel and time away from my family required in coaching at that level said Reid. So while I was still at NMSU I began to design what I thought was the ideal learning environment and it remains the center piece of our academy today.

The Texas All-Star Baseball Academy, located in Austin, Texas is one of the rare exceptions in the private training business. They have been around since 1995, originally starting in Houston, Texas. They have produced over 125 scholarship athletes as well as 25 former students who have signed professional baseball contracts. The Academy staff includes 2 full-time instructors, a certified strength and conditioning instructor as well as a functional strength specialist who specializes in Baseball / Softball specific movements.

What makes TASBA even more unique is that they only have one primary product or service. That service is private / small group instruction. They do not do leagues, sell uniforms or bats, do birthday parties or hold basketball or karate tournaments.

How successful has the concept of specialization been? The national average for clients to return to repeat lessons is a little above 6 lessons. The average TASBA student will return for 10, nearly doubling the industry average. Many of TASBA students are in the 200+ range. So with that success rate in mind, we asked Coach Reid what advise he would give to parents to help them spot the exceptional learning environment and teaching facilities. I believe there are 5 main concepts every parent needs to keep in mind when it comes to instruction of any kind. I have a child of my own and I would use these criteria for choosing a piano instructor as well.

#1. The first mistake many people make is to be blinded by one driving quality and dismiss the bigger. They search out someone who really knows the subject. Being a knowledgeable baseball or softball person to me is simply an expectation, not one of our most important priorities. I know many knowledgeable baseball people I wouldn't let within a mile of my child. Going back to my piano teacher example: If he or she treated my son like dirt, couldn't relate or communicate to young people, or was very questionable as far as honor, integrity and personal values were concerned there is no

way he/she gets a shot at my child. I don't care how much they know about piano, they must first be a great teacher and a great person.

Every week I get calls from former players who want to teach lessons at our facility. My response to them is always the same. I have no doubt about your baseball/softball expertise, what I need to see is your ability to communicate, share, listen, teach, guide and interact. Before an instructor is allowed to teach in our facility he/she must go through a six week training process. Most of the time the mention of the six week training ends the discussion rather quickly. These people aren't really interested in really helping young people. They just think it would be fun or just an easy quick buck.

Bottom line- Do your homework. Watch them work before you turn your child over to them. Don't be persuaded by their playing resume. You want them for their teaching abilities not their playing abilities. Many of the very worst people are very charismatic, talented and charming. The more they talk about themselves the more I'd be leery of them. These lessons are about your son or daughter and not about them.

#2. Search out an Academy that has the instruction based on sound, solid biomechanical principles such as dynamic balance and postural stability and not the personal style or preference of the instructor. Beware of fads or instruction based upon the hottest star of the moment such as Barry Bonds or Randy Johnson. The very best athletes vary in style. Search out a program that teaches principles and allows your son or daughter to build their own personal signature around those principles.

#3. Search out an Academy with a teaching system. Most academies simply have a series of hired guns. They all teach differently and have different opinions. The danger is, if your instructor no longer can take you for whatever reason, you will be forced to choose another instructor who most certainly will teach significantly different and you will probably need to start all over at square one.

#4. Search out an Academy that utilizes video and today's technology in their training. I have actually heard coaches tell me they were so adept at breaking down hitting / pitching faults and flaws with their naked eye, they didn't need video. Typically, after I recover from my amusement, I have two responses 1) isn't video as much for the student as it is the teacher? The athlete seeing it first hand is one of the most powerful teaching aides one can find. 2) The typical video can break down the movements into frames between 1000 frames per second and 50 frames a second. Even the slowest video is several times faster than the human eye can discern. My final comment to the expert eye witness is: wouldn't you rather know exactly where a certain body part is than guess? I know that I would.

#5. Search out an established, professional instructor or Academy. You are looking for consistency. You are looking for an instructor or a program that has a track record. They will be here tomorrow. You will be able to get lessons at the times that fit your schedule and your calendar. They have a cancellation policy. They have a schedule. The lessons aren't dependant upon the weather or the possibility that the instructor won't remember or won't show up.

Giving their children the best instruction available is a goal of more and more parents in today's busy, hectic and competitive world. Obviously there is so much to be concerned about and to be aware of. Obviously finding the right instructor for your children is one of the more important decisions you will make in their development as an athlete and as a young person.

The Texas All-Star Baseball Academy is located at 7632 Hwy 71 West, next to National Elite Gymnastics Facility in Southwest Austin.

For more information, you can contact Patrick Reid at 512-293-9762 or visit their website at www.tasba.com.