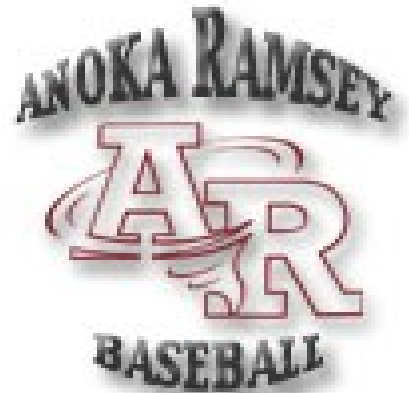




Defensive Keys to Winning a Cha

1. **Have quality pitchers that can first throw strikes.** Located strikes with movement...finally, located strike velocity. Pitchers need to be confident and not afraid of self-doubt will never be a great pitcher. Quality pitchers winning a championship.
2. **Making the routine play over 95% of the time.** Chances allowed three outs per inning. Giving teams more opportunities weren't made will cause serious problems.
3. **Make the big play when it counts.** Great looking defense winning by a big margin is great, but it's the great "pitch" situation that is needed to win championships. Not only times get a team out of a big jam or out of an inning, but and momentum of the game.
4. **Win the "FREEBIE BATTLE."** Walks, hit by pitcher, extra bases, mental mistakes, etc. all add up as "freebie; this battle usually wins the game. This is why the best hitting team doesn't always win games. If the opportunity to get an out is presented it needs to be made. If a strike is needed it must be made. Sometimes the safer defensive play has to be made. Hitting cutoff men, taking extra bases, "taking one for the team" on an inside pitch and all the other "little things" need to be taken advantage of. This can be emphasized and practiced through creating the proper mindset of knowing the situation through drills in practice and going over the positive and negative things that take place in games.
5. **Eliminate the Big inning.** Just by eliminating the big "crooked number" innings teams will be in each game. In well over 50% of all games, more runs are scored by the winning team in one inning than the losing team scores in the entire game. By making the routine play and the big play in big situations teams will eliminate most all big innings.
6. **Big 5's are needed.** After scoring a "crooked number," anything above one run in an inning the team needs to sprint out to their positions and get back in the dugout in five minutes or less. This not only gets the team back in hitting, but it gets the opponent back out on defense, where they just were for a long time. Two Big 5's in one game will result in a win 90% of the time.



7. **Be prepared.** Scouting with hitting charts to recognize possible bunting situations, hit and run situations, running situations is a great preparation tool. Placing defensive players in positions to take hits away can greatly change the outcome of a game.
8. **Stay focused.** Stressing to your players that during a typical baseball game, there are going to be “ups and downs” and changes in momentum is important. The game can’t be turned into a roller coaster ride by losing focus. Physical mistakes will happen. They are a part of the game. Coaches can’t get down on players for making physical mistakes. And players can’t let one play dictate the rest of the inning. Instead staying under control and focused are the keys. This can help eliminate the big “snow ball” inning.
9. **Have players understand that doing the “little things” do actually make a difference.** There is really no such thing as a “little thing.” Some situation might only occur once a season, but when it does happen proper execution may be the difference between a win and lose.
10. **Have a successful pre-game routine.** Everything done in pre-game activities is noticed by the opposing team. Looking good and making plays translates right into the game. An organized and successful infield/outfield routine, which includes hustling in and out, will leave the opposing team intimidated and feeling that they cannot beat us. Heck, just the way a team comes off the bus is important. A team’s general appearance can be an intimidating factor. The more professional a team looks and acts the more confident they will be.
11. **Don’t let adverse conditions with weather, field conditions or umpiring effect the team’s play.** Many teams will have excuses before the first pitch is even thrown. These are the “woul da, could a, should a teams. Realizing both teams are playing in the same conditions and that some crazy things might happen that can change innings needs to be understood and not used as an excuse.
12. **Be strong up the middle with your catching, pitching, shortstop and centerfielder.** With the majority of the action taking place in these areas it only makes sense to have your best defensive players in these spots.
13. **Get players in the right position.** Coaches need to make sure they have players in the right position for every single play. Players need to become team players by understanding their roles and having the willingness to change.
14. **Keep the double play in order:** Those concepts include outfielders hitting the cutoff man, now allowing base runners to move up bases on plays at home plate, holding runners on base, shutting down a team’s running game, etc. And when there is an opportunity to get two outs on any type of double play it needs to be taken advantage of.
15. **Play aggressively but play smart.** Wanting the ball hit to you is a key for all great defensive players, especially wanting it hit to you in the biggest part of the game. However, there are times that one out is better than risking an over throw on a potential double play ball. There are times when outfielders need to play it safe and keep the fly ball in front of them instead of trying to be the hero and dive for the ball.