



Lessons  
in

# Baseball

## P27 Body Shop Baseball Academy

by Todd Shevchik



Nick Bollettieri started a trend when he formed a youth tennis academy in 1978. IMG Sports purchased the academy in 1987 and has grown it a step further and houses top youth athletes in sports like tennis, football, baseball, basketball, and soccer.

Now Lexington has its very own full-time baseball academy. Corey Warner, new owner of the Body Shop, has opened P27 an elite baseball academy for student-athletes varying in ages from 14-19 years old.

P27 stands for Proverbs 27 verse 17 which reads, "Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another." Founder Corey Warner utilizes the Body Shop as a ministry for reaching out to kids, pouring into them and creating an environment where students can be comfortable doing bible studies, academics and baseball training. Warner credits Next Level Academy in Montgomery, Alabama and Pro5 Academy in Raleigh, NC as being his blueprint for creating the P27 Baseball Academy.

During the past two years, Body Shop Athletics has fielded youth travel baseball teams for players from seven through seventeen years old. They continue to

run these programs that are now led by Corey's brother Zack Warner. However, Corey saw a need for a full-time baseball academy based on the conflicting demands placed on the elite high school aged student ball players.

"These kids are trying to juggle school, baseball, and even their spiritual lives," explains Warner. "They are teenagers growing into men right before our eyes and not all these kids come from picture perfect backgrounds." Warner believes P27 will create a foundation of discipline and stability for his students that will help them grow into good Christian men and husbands.

The academy schedule has students doing physical conditioning in the morning, academics in the afternoon and on field practice in the later afternoon. Everything is rooted in biblical principles, plus Corey and the coaches serve as mentors to the young men.

Jonathan Johnson was a former first round draft pick of the Texas Rangers and created a ministry with fellow pitcher R.A. Dickey. Honoring the Father Ministries is a team of professional athletes who seek to demonstrate a vibrant, personal faith in Jesus Christ. Johnson also

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workouts listed on mirror

has served as head coach of the Lexington County Blowfish and shares his professional baseball experience, training, and faith with his P27 students.

Paul Romanoli's son, Andrew, formerly played at Lexington High School and is now at P27. "With Jonathan Johnson in charge of the pitching staff," explains the elder Romanoli, "Andrew gets to learn from a former first round pick who has lived a baseball life." Romanoli, himself a former professional baseball player, continued, "You must want baseball to be entrenched in your daily routine. We are blessed to be part, in year one, of a unique academy that combines faith based academic learning and year round baseball training."

Ryan Ouzts is a junior at P27 Academy. He left Gilbert High School and enrolled at P27. "I felt like playing for P27 my competition would be better and I would have a better opportunity to be seen by college recruiters and get drafted," said Ouzts.

"It's a tough decision for the kids and the families," states Warner. "They are leaving their friends, teammates, and coaches that they have great relationships with. The kids who choose P27 are willing to sacrifice walking the hallways and be-

ing the big dudes at their high schools. All these kids were the best players on their high school teams and they are choosing to leave that behind to become the best man and ballplayer they can." He continues, "These individuals are extremely focused on being the best they can be." The current P27 roster has players from South Carolina, Georgia and even California.

Warner touts the immense potential for the kids involved with P27. "Just seeing their excitement on the first day was awesome," he explains, "these kids made a tough decision and they are going all-in."

Warner's goal is to elevate South Carolina's high school baseball talent level to that of Florida, Arizona and Texas. "Why are more kids getting drafted from the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico than the United States?" questions Warner. "Is it because those kids are more talented or because they are better prepared?"

The goal of the P27 Academy is to prepare pupils for an opportunity to be selected in the Major League Baseball draft or have an opportunity to play high level collegiate baseball. In addition to prepping for a future career in baseball, students are learning about Jesus and His word, earning a high school diploma, and developing friendships that will last a lifetime.

Warner is excited that the San Diego Padres have invited his P27 team down to the Dominican Republic in March to play games against their Dominican counterparts.

"The opportunities are endless for these academy players," according to Warner. "They are working on their craft full-time, getting stronger, improving flexibility, and having their usage strictly monitored." Warner explains that many successful college pitchers can be over-used in both high school and college because coaches want to win. This causes undue strain on a pitcher's arm and results in a higher number of Tommy John arm surgeries for younger players. He maintains strict pitch count and innings limits for his pitchers and explains that academy players play against a higher caliber of competition which MLB and college scouts appreciate.

Lexington County has long been known for its extensive fruit and vegetable farming. Corey Warner aims to farm good Christian men who just might make it to the big leagues. Play ball! ■



Corey Warner