

COACHING

By

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EXT. OUTSIDE - AFTERNOON

Blue sky fills the frame. Muted crowd noises grow louder as the shot moves downward to the horizon, then the outfield fence before moving to an empty Little League outfield and infield. Now it catches one Little League team running into their dugout as the other team pours onto the field. The grandstand behind the backstop is packed with folks, the fences on either side draped with spectators. The crowd noise is animated and loud.

INT. ANNOUNCER'S BOOTH - SAME DAY

The PA system booms as the **ANNOUNCER** leans into the mic.

ANNOUNCER

What a game, folks! What a battle!
Tied at the bottom of the final
inning. Wow! It don't get much
better than this!

EXT. SNACK SHACK - SAME DAY

No one is behind the counter as **BOBBY LEE** steps up and looks inside. He turns toward the fence by the backstop.

BOBBY LEE

What the - Hey, Ruby! I need a
soda anna 'dog!

EXT. BACKSTOP FENCE - SAME DAY

RUBY, a sunglassed woman in bright 60's attire, is one of many leaning on the backstop fence. She turns toward the Snack Shack.

RUBY

For cryin' out loud, Bobby
Lee! Jest help yersef and leave
the money on the counter.

EXT. SNACK SHACK - SAME DAY

Bobby Lee shrugs and starts to walk around to the door.

RUBY (O.S.)

Hey, Bobby!

He stops to look in her direction.

EXT. BACKSTOP FENCE - SAME DAY

Ruby flutters a backhanded wave in his direction.

RUBY
Gimme a diet soda, won'tcha, Hon?

BOBBY LEE
Yes, dear.

RUBY
You're a good husband, Bobby
Lee. I don't care WHAT my momma
says.

Ruby guffaws with a couple of ladies as she settles back in.

INT. DUGOUT - SAME DAY

DUGOUT COACH, **COACH1**, and **COACH2** fill the frame, the players pour in behind them, noisily settling on the bench.

DUGOUT COACH
Okay. Who we got?

COACH1
The bottom three. Johnson,
Rodriguez, and Wartman. Then it's
the top of the order.

The coaches look at each other. Their voices drop to whispers.

COACH2
Can we get a pinch hitter for
Wartman?

COACH1
Nah. Rules say everyone
plays. And we had to put him in
for this last inning.

DUGOUT COACH
Yeah. I know. If he doesn't play,
we're disqualified. Shoot.

They look at the ground, sneaking glances down the dugout at **MORTON "Mort the Wart" WARTMAN** who sits at the end of the bench in a spotless, barely-used uniform.

(CONTINUED)

DUGOUT COACH (CONT'D)

Okay. If by some miracle Mort gets on base, hold him there. Rodgers is up next. He's already got a homer and a triple.

Coach1 and Coach2 exit the dugout, clapping encouragement as they head to 1st and 3rd. Dugout Coach barks out the lineup as he moves toward Mort.

DUGOUT COACH (CONT'D)

Alright. Johnson, you're up. Rodriguez on deck. Then Wartman.

Dugout Coach stops in front of Mort. He sighs as he shakes his head.

DUGOUT COACH (CONT'D)

Okay, Mort. This is for the Championship. Just don't screw it up, okay?

Dugout Coach moves down the line, giving fist bumps and encouragement to the players. **JUAN "J-ROD" RODRIQUEZ**, sits next to Mort to lightly punch him in the shoulder.

J-ROD

You'll do fine, Mort. We'll do this, right?

MORT

Yeah, J-Rod. We got this. And The Coach has got us.

J-Rod nods as he grabs a bat and batting helmet before leaving the dugout. Mort clasps his hands, elbows on knees, and hangs his head. The shot closes on Mort's cleats as a pair of adult cleats step up and stop in front of Mort's.

T.C. (V.O.)

Don't be afraid, Mort. I have this. Today's the day and now's the time. Trust me completely.

Mort looks up as **The Coach (T.C.)** kneels down to eye-level and clasps Mort on the shoulder. (Mort is the only one who can see T.C..) T.C. smiles.

T.C. (CONT'D)

Do what I say and do it immediately. No more hesitation. Today you go from rationalizing to trusting, okay?

(CONTINUED)

Mort forces a smile. He nods as he blows out the tension. The shot changes to the other end of dugout where Dugout Coach looks down the bench to see only Mort sitting by himself, no T.C.. Dugout Coach shakes his head disgustedly as he watches Mort nodding and smiling.

DUGOUT COACH
Mort the Wart. Oh boy.

EXT. HOME PLATE - SAME DAY

A fast pitch slams into the catcher's glove.

UMPIRE (V.O.)
Steee-rike One!

A bat slashes through too late as the pitch smacks the glove.

UMPIRE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Steeeee-rike Two!

The bat swings high as the ball hits the dirt to glance up into the glove.

UMPIRE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Steeeee-rike Three - Urrrrr HOUT!

INT. DUGOUT - SAME DAY

Dugout Coach smacks something in frustration before barking out instructions.

DUGOUT COACH
Wartman! Get on deck! C'mon J-Rod!
Getta base, buddy!

Mort stands. T.C. nods and offers a fist which Mort bumps before reaching for a bat and helmet.

Shot over Dugout Coach's shoulder shows Mort fist-bumping the air and nodding before reaching for a bat. Mort climbs out to the on-deck circle, leaving the far end of the dugout empty.

EXT. HOME PLATE - SAME DAY

The bat whiffs by as the ball appears in the catcher's glove.

UMPIRE (V.O.)
Steeee-rike One!

INT. DUGOUT - SAME DAY

Dugout Coach watches Mort swing the bat while looking left, talking and smiling at no one. Shaking his head, Dugout Coach mutters to himself.

DUGOUT COACH
Why does he DO that?!

EXT. HOME PLATE - SAME DAY

The ball blazes into the catcher's mitt.

UMPIRE (V.O.)
Stee-rike Two!

EXT. ON-DECK CIRCLE - SAME DAY

Mort cups one hand to his mouth, the bat on his shoulder.

MORT
You got it, J-Rod! You got it!

EXT. INFIELD - SAME DAY

The pitch. Then a metallic "tink" as ball meets bat. J-Rod sprints for 1st.

INT. DUGOUT - SAME DAY

Dugout Coach tenses and leans forward.

UMPIRE (V.O.)
Yerrrrr - HOUT!

Smacking something else, Dugout Coach turns toward the bench, blowing out frustration as he claps excitedly.

(CONTINUED)

DUGOUT COACH
Rodgers on deck!

EXT. HOME PLATE - SAME DAY

Mort tentatively steps into the batter's box as the **CATCHER** sneers and sings songs "Mort-the-Wart".

INT. DUGOUT - SAME DAY

Half-heartedly, Dugout Coach lightly claps.

DUGOUT COACH (CONT'D)
C,mon, Wart. Do
somethin'. Anything.

EXT. HOME PLATE - SAME DAY

Mort nervously taps the bat on home plate as he digs into his stance.

T.C. (V.O.)
Mort.

Mort looks up to see T.C. standing on the other side of home plate.

T.C.
Listen close and do it quick. This
is gonna be fun!

Mort smiles and nods, getting into his stance. He crowds the plate, waiting for the pitch. The Catcher glances at Mort. Looking at the **PITCHER**, the Catcher brushes his free hand across his chest and nods.

EXT. PITCHER'S MOUND - SAME DAY

The Pitcher returns the nod. He goes into his windup and throws a screamer. Right at Mort's head.

EXT. HOME PLATE - SAME DAY

T.C. (V.O.)
Duck!

(CONTINUED)

Mort drops into a squat, turning toward the pitcher, his bat sticking straight up. He lowers his helmet, hunches his shoulders, and closes his eyes. There's a metallic "tink". Mort opens his eyes to see the ball lying two feet in front of him. In fair territory.

T.C. (V.O.)
Run, Mort! Run!

Mort drops his bat and thunders toward 1st base. The catcher frantically looks for the ball. He sees it, lunges forward, steps on the bat, and falls. Mort is running, his eyes wide, arms flailing.

T.C. (V.O.)
Run, Mort! That's it!

INT. DUGOUT - SAME DAY

Dugout Coach realizes what just happened.

DUGOUT COACH
Wha- run, Wartman! RUUUUUUNNNNN!

EXT. HOME PLATE - SAME DAY

The catcher crawls to the ball, grabbing it as he scrambles to his feet. He fires it down the 1st base line. The ball sails over Mort's head, 1st Base, and the **1st BASEMAN** on it's way into right field.

EXT. 1ST BASE - SAME DAY

Mort thunders on. The 1st Baseman is turned toward the outfield. Coach1 is standing next to the bag, clapping and screaming.

COACH1
Run through it, Mort! Run through!

A smiling T.C. is standing directly behind the bag, making the sign for taking the next base, his arm making huge circles as the other hand points toward 2nd base.

T.C.
Take 2nd, Mort. 2nd!

Mort starts to slow as he gets to 1st.

COACH1

No. Wait. Wartman. Stop! STOP!

Mort steps on 1st and turns toward 2nd.

INT. DUGOUT - SAME DAY

Dugout Coach jumps out of the dugout.

DUGOUT COACH

Stop him! Daryl, stop him!

EXT. RIGHT FIELD - SAME DAY

A wide-eyed **RIGHT FIELDER** rushes up to the ball, fumbles it twice, then throws to the **2nd BASEMAN** who came out as the cutoff man. The Right Fielder's throw sails high and wide. The **SHORTSTOP**, who is now on 2nd base, chases the ball into shallow center field.

EXT. 2ND BASE - SAME DAY

Mort looks at 2nd base to see T.C. standing behind the bag, making the same motion, laughing in delight.

T.C.

Keep goin', Mort! You're doin' great!

Mort touches 2nd, panting and flailing. In the background, the Shortstop has snagged the ball and runs toward a wheezing Mort heading for 3rd. The distance closes quickly as the Shortstop pulls alongside Mort.

SHORT-STOP

Eat this, Wart!

The Shortstop cocks his glove across his body to aim a vicious backhand slap at Mort's face.

T.C. is back-pedaling down the baseline in front of Mort. T.C. quickly throws both hands toward the ground.

T.C.

Down, Mort, DOWN!

Mort drops, sliding on the baseline, as the glove slices air where his face used to be. His sliding legs hit the Shortstop's feet just as the glove passes over Mort's head. As the Shortstop falls his glove flies open, flinging the ball into the no-man's land between right and center fields.

(CONTINUED)

T.C. (V.O.) (LAUGHING)
Get up, Mort! Run!

Mort scrambles to his feet and stumbles toward 3rd.

EXT. 3RD BASE - SAME DAY

The **3rd BASEMAN** is stretched out toward center field, waving for the ball. Coach2 has both hands out, shaking his head, and screaming. T.C. is standing next to Coach2, making the circling motion with his arm while both shout loudly.

COACH2
No-**NO-NO-STOP-MORT!!!**

T.C.
RUN, MORT! **RUN!**

Mort's face shows a brief indecision before determination takes over.

EXT. CENTER FIELD - SAME DAY

Both **LEFT FIELDER** and **CENTER FIELDER** charge the ball, getting there at the same time. Both reach for it, rolling it around until one pushes the other away. Grabbing it, he fires it toward 3rd.

EXT. 3RD BASELINE - SAME DAY

Mort has made the turn and is chugging down the 3rd base line. T.C. is running alongside of him. Halfway down the base line, T.C. points to the ground and yells.

T.C.
Slide, Mort! Slide!

MORT
But, Coach - it's too early. It's too far!

Mort fearfully looks at T.C. who smiles back and softly whispers.

T.C.
Slide, Mort. Slide.

Mort looks down the baseline, closes his eyes, and slides.

EXT. 3RD BASE - SAME DAY

The 3rd Baseman catches the ball and spins toward home plate.

EXT. 3RD BASELINE - SAME DAY

Mort opens his eyes. He's sliding! Rapidly! He hears laughter and looks up to see T.C. pushing him. Mort's lead foot is kicking up a huge cloud of dust.

INT. DUGOUT - SAME DAY

Dugout Coach is standing outside the dugout, his incredulous face watching Mort (minus T.C.) sliding toward home, the dust billowing as Mort picks up speed! Dugout Coach starts to point, his jaw dropping.

DUGOUT COACH

That's not - you can't do -

EXT. 3RD BASE - SAME DAY

The 3rd Baseman fires it home. The ball disappears into the dust cloud.

EXT. HOME PLATE - SAME DAY

Mort, home plate, the Catcher, and the **Umpire** have disappeared into the cloud. The crowd is silent. The only sound is the coughing trio at home plate. The Umpire is fanning his hands, trying to see. As the dust settles, the shot pans across the ground, showing Mort's foot on the plate, the coughing Catcher on all fours with his mitt on the plate touching Mort's foot...and the ball lying in front of the plate. The Umpire snaps upright, flinging his arms wide.

UMPIRE

SAFE!!!

The place goes nuts. Mort's teammates spill out onto the field, J-Rod the first one to Mort. The celebration very briefly centers around Mort then quickly moves back to the dugout, leaving Mort and J-Rod alone at home plate.

J-ROD

How'dcha ever do that, Mort?

(CONTINUED)

MORT

It wasn't me, J. It was The Coach. It was all The Coach.

J-ROD

The One you've been telling me about?

MORT

Yeah. That one.

Mort and J-Rod start to walk toward the dugout.

J-ROD

I think I'd like to meet 'im.

MORT

That's easy.

Mort stops and gestures as if introducing J-Rod.

MORT (CONT'D)

J-Rod, this is The Coach.
Coach, J-Rod.

T.C. (V.O.)

I've waited a long time. It's good to finally meet you, J-Rod.

Mort, T.C., and J-Rod are walking slowly toward the dugout.

J-ROD

It's nice to meet you, too, Coach. Soooo. You're real, huh?

T.C. puts his arms around Mort's and J-Rod's shoulders as he laughs.

T.C.

Oh, yeah. Most definitely.

The shot pulls back to the infield, then past the outfield fence, grasping the horizon before climbing to the sky.

FADE OUT