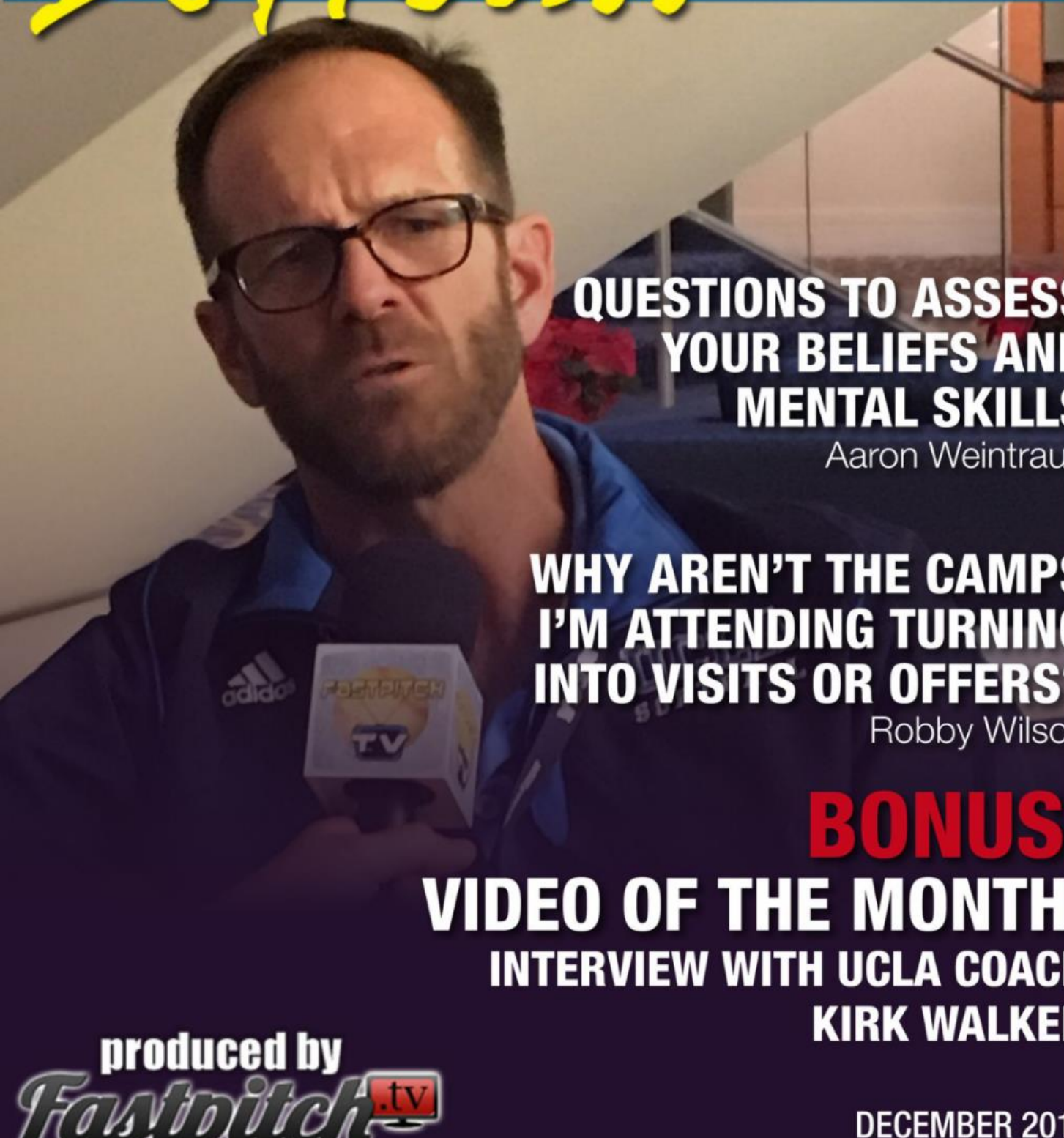


FASTPITCH

Softball

MAGAZINE



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YOUR BELIEFS AND
MENTAL SKILLS**

Aaron Weintraub

**WHY AREN'T THE CAMPS
I'M ATTENDING TURNING
INTO VISITS OR OFFERS?**

Robby Wilson

BONUS:

**VIDEO OF THE MONTH:
INTERVIEW WITH UCLA COACH
KIRK WALKER**

produced by

Fastpitch.tv

DECEMBER 2016

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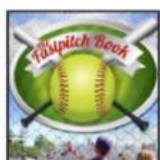
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SOFTBALL ACADEMY

with Mitch Alexander

Ten Holiday Gift Ideas for Youth Softball Players

It's that time of year again! Fall ball is over for most teams and winter workouts are about to start. This is my fifth annual column of gift ideas for that special player on your holiday list! As always, there are plenty of great gifts available for that special Fastpitch player in your life! The following are my top gift ideas for 2016.

GIFT #1 Arm Care System from The Packaged Deal \$195

One of the most important aspects of a player's training is arm care. I can't say enough about this. The top injury for softball players are arm-related. Most are preventable with proper training. Youth players from 8-18 can all benefit from a well-designed arm care program. 4 amazing softball players have teamed up to bring high level training to players all across the country. Amanda Scarborough (pitching), Jen Schroeder (catching), Katie Schroeder (hitting), and Morgan Stuart (fielding) developed a program in conjunction with Cross-over Symmetry that is softball specific. It will help any softball player strengthen and protect their arms. It includes a training guide, wall/fence chart, access to online videos, two sets of resistance bands, and a carry bag. There are higher resistance bands available that allow for player growth. There are two models. One for 8-14 year olds,

and the other for 15 years old and up. Only available from packaged-deal.com.

GIFT #2 Jugs Radar Cube \$270

One of the most used measurable stats in softball and baseball is ball speed. Whether this is pitch speed, overhand throwing speed, or batted ball speed, all can be measured with a radar gun. However, a gun typically requires someone to operate the gun and decide when to press the trigger, where to hold it, etc. The Jugs Radar Cube is a self-contained radar system with large front facing display. It can be used by pitchers by themselves to practice various speed changing pitches. The unit has the same accuracy index as other Jugs radar gun products, which are considered the standard used by most sports trainers and coaches. It has a large 3" tall LED display that can be easily seen from 40-60 feet away. It can sense and display ball velocities of 32 to over 100mph. The unit is lightweight at 1.5 pounds and can be brought out to the field or indoor practice for accurate speed tracking. Don't forget a tripod to mount it on! Available from many online retailers.

GIFT #3 Backspin Tee \$230-\$350

Classical tee work teaches players to hit the top half of the softball resulting in ground balls. According to the folks at hitrunsteal.com, this is just what pitchers want you to do. Their backspin tee was designed by a professional pitching coach with this in mind. With this unique tee, the ball is suspended from above, forcing the hitter to learn how to hit the middle and bottom half of the ball. Hits in these locations should create optimal backspin which translates into optimal distance. Working with the tee should help teach players where to best hit the ball for line drives and dingers. Two models are available. The standard model that is height adjustable to 20", 28", 34",



and 40" or the pro model that has completely variable height adjustability from 18" to 48". Available from hitrunsteal.com or Amazon.

GIFT #4 Shagster – softball pickup tool \$90

Here's an awesome product to help speed up practices. This is a tube that can be used to pick up a dozen 11" or 12" softballs. You hold the tube over the ball that is sitting on the ground/grass and push down. The ball pushes inside the tube and stays there until you empty the balls collected out the other side of the tube. Its genius is in its simplicity. This can be used by pitchers and batters during practices. You don't need to bend down to shag a dozen balls, or juggle them in your arms and shirt. The tube can also act as a way to transport a dozen softballs to the field. Only available at shagster-store.com.

GIFT #5 Empowered Recruiting: The Student-Athlete's College Selection Guide by Julianne Soviero \$15

Student athletes who are considering playing softball in college need to understand the recruiting process to improve their chances of success. There are many different ways to get recruited. This book describes the best practices and differing ways student athletes get recruited. If you only buy one softball related book this year, this one should be it. It also includes actual recruiting stories as told by student athletes themselves. A step-by-step plan is presented with actionable items so you or your favorite softball player can create their own personalized recruiting plan. The writing is clear and easy to follow with lots of great advice. If you've been following my column, you know that I have written a lot about recruiting. The author of this book and I are in agreement about the recruiting process and the importance of the academic component. It's 120 pages long and available in paperback and Kindle form only on Amazon.



GIFT #6 Xtender Home Batting Cage \$300+

Every softball player needs a place to practice hitting, throwing, and fielding. If they're a pitcher or catcher, they especially need to practice. It can be difficult finding practice space or time to travel to a field. With an Xtender cage, you can set one up in your own backyard. The base model is 24 feet long, 12 feet wide and 10 feet high. Imagine all the practice you can get done in this cage! If you have enough room in your backyard you can put a full-length 48-foot cage or as long as you want. The cage is expandable in 12-foot increments. It's easy to assemble and very durable. The netting is small enough to accommodate golf balls and baseballs too. I assembled a 48-foot cage in my backyard in an afternoon and shared the process in a past article. This cage is the real deal, yet it's reasonably priced. Available from many online retailers.

GIFT #7 DeMarini CF9 Fastpitch Bat \$350

The holiday gift list wouldn't be complete without a bat. This year's hot bat is the DeMarini CF9. DeMarini has designed an all-new bat with Paraflex composite material that is significantly stronger than the Paradox+ composite material used in the CF8. The D-Fusion 2.0 handle minimizes vibration. This two-piece bat makes use of a double wall design for maximum performance. I've seen several of these used straight from the wrapper into games and they have all been game ready and delivered great results. The bat comes in -8 to -11 drop so it should be a great bat for players from 10u-18u. It also comes in a drop 10 hand-loaded slapper version and a drop 10 end-loaded version. Available from many online retailers.

GIFT #8 H2OMG Double walled insulated 17oz water bottle \$13

Every player struggles at times to have cold or hot beverages when



they are practicing or in a game. That problem ends today with the H2OMG. This 17oz insulated water bottle will keep beverages cold for up to 24 hours and hot beverages warm for up to 12 hours. Want ice cold water? Now you can have it without a cooler. Need more than 17oz (and who doesn't), then buy several of these and throw them in a regular bag or your equipment bag. Since they're insulated they won't sweat! They're made from BPA free stainless steel and they even have a wide mouth so you can put ice inside. Available on Amazon.

GIFT #9 Torege Polarized Sunglasses with 5 Interchangeable Lenses \$22-\$60

How many broken sunglasses has your player gone through in the last season? Last year? Time to buy the last pair you may ever need. These sunglasses are similar to some of the designer brands except the price, and they have a lifetime breakage warranty too. The package comes with 5 different lenses for all situations: 1 – colored lens for general use, 2 – yellow for night games, 3 – light blue to remove glare, 4 – clear for cloudy days, and 5 – black for bright day games. These glasses block 100% UVA & UVB, restore true color, eliminate reflected and scattered light and they are very light and comfortable to wear. Available on Amazon.

GIFT#10 Team USA Olympic Gear \$15-\$100

In case you haven't heard, Softball is back in the Olympics and our athletes will be competing in 2020! I can't wait to see who will be representing the USA in Tokyo and to see how they do. Now is a great time to show your support for the Olympic games and give your favorite player the gift of some Team USA gear! They have some great gifts, including: gold foil shirts, sweats, blankets, hats, etc. Available only from TeamUSAShop.com .



Mitch Alexander is the creator of www.varsityfastpitch.com, a new web site to help students play softball in college. His area of focus is on youth sports and college recruiting. His wife Marie was one of the first female student athletes in the country to play Little League softball after Title IX was passed and played in the first Little League World Series. Over the years, both have managed and coached Little League and select/travel teams at all levels and helped spark a love for softball in their student athletes. Mitch can be reached at Fastpitch2001@varsityfastpitch.com.

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