

## TWO WAYS TO RUN A BASEBALL TEAM

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(1) Over the last decade, the New York Yankees and the Baltimore Orioles have been two of baseball's most dominant teams. Playing in the same division, they have won a combined eight division titles, six league pennants, and three world championships. Even in years when they have not won, they have seldom been very far from the top. But even though both are consistent winners, their methods of getting on top and staying there have been drastically different. Comparing these two methods--one slow, careful, and reliable; the other fast, not so careful, and risky--shows why the Orioles will be winning long after the Yankees have sunk to the bottom of the league.

(2) The major difference is in where the teams get their players. The Orioles concentrate their efforts on their minor league organization. They carefully scout for the best amateur players they can find; they slowly bring these players through the minor leagues, developing their talent to its full potential; and when these players are ready, they intricately weave them into the fabric of their team. The result is a solid player who puts the team's needs before his own ego, has played with his teammates for a large portion of his career, and usually spends most if not all his career as a Baltimore Oriole. The solidarity of the franchise is most clearly reflected in the fact that Earl Weaver lasted fifteen years as manager, an incredible amount of time in a sport where most teams routinely change managers every other year. This solidarity is a major reason that Oriole players give their all to the team effort. This system is clearly the steadier of the two ways to operate a team.

(3) The Yankees, on the other hand, depend heavily on proven players that they acquire from other teams to fill their needs as these needs appear. Whether they use trades or sign free-agents, they get players who they know can perform. Often, however, these players have already played baseball for many years and, because of age, cannot play at their peak for more than three or four years afterward. This fact, combined with the fact that the Yankees are natural showmen who often make a blockbuster trade just for attention, creates a situation in which players seldom last more than a few years with the team. Thus, Yankee players constantly have to adjust to new teammates, have no real sense of loyalty, waste their talent and seldom play their best, and often place their own egos before the team's needs. The lack of solidarity in the franchise is reflected in its managers. The Yankees go through as many as three changes in one calendar year, with some men even holding this position more than once in recent years. Because of this lack of solidarity and loyalty, the Yankees must have more raw talent than the Orioles to win; they waste so much talent through sheer lack of effort that they must compensate for it. This is

clearly the riskier way to operate a team.

(4) Obviously, both teams have been highly successful with their methods. But it is clear that the Orioles will almost assuredly still be a winner five years from now; while the Yankees, with their large player turnover, could sink from the top to the bottom in two years or less. And there is evidence that the slide has already begun. The combination of aging players and poor judgment in some player acquisitions is seriously threatening the Yankees' position as a powerhouse in the American League.