

If you haven't reached the highest level we wish to obtain in NCAA baseball umpiring, there are many resources available that you have control over to continue to learn and grow and reach the next level. Whether it is to get to a conference weekend, a post season conference tournament, Regionals, and beyond, you need to set some goals from year to year to improve your game.

Your goals should come from reflecting on areas of improvement from games you did the previous season. Figure out where you had issues that you would like to work on. **Write them down.** Was your head too high at times? Did you read trouble balls well enough? How are my game management skills? Whatever your personal areas that require improvement are focus on them and design three ways in which you can improve each of them during the course of the upcoming season. **Be specific.** Keep a journal from game to game about situations you handled well and situations you handled not so well. Who did you work with? What skills can you take from their game and incorporate them into your own? Use the journal to set expectations for future games. This type of self-assessment will go a long way in becoming a more focused and driven umpire striving for the next level.

When you hang the gear up in the summer or fall don't just hope someone noticed your hard work throughout the seasons. **Get to a camp!** Continue to hone the skills you've worked on from setting your goals in the early spring. Bring a list of goals to work on with you to a camp and get noticed for the all the hard work you've put in. While at the camp, don't be afraid to ask the instructors what they believe you need to work on. Be open to honest criticism and feedback from the umpires that are working the high level games you wish to be working. This is an essential element to getting to that next level. I still have a video from a camp from a few years ago. The instructor on that video went to a Super Regional last year. I continue to look at that

video in the early spring so I don't return to bad habits year after year. Video is crucial to your development. Anytime you can get video on yourself umpiring utilize it as a valuable tool to improve. In many parts of the country, it is still earlier enough to get into the cage and do some work to see pitches. Go with another umpire and video the session. It will be remarkable what you will find is the difference between what you think you are doing and what you are actually doing with your plate work.

When the spring and summer seasons are over, go back through your notes/journal and reflect again on what you have achieved. Make a concerted effort to take an honest approach about where you are now with your goals as an NCAA umpire and where you envision yourself being next season, next 5 seasons, etc. Are you ready for the next level? Did you do everything that is in your control to get to the next level? You will find that your game will improve drastically if you take the time to do all that you can do to learn and grow.

Reaching your highest potential as an NCAA umpire is something you can control if you put in the work to make yourself better. If you set goals, continually assess your progress, and strive for excellence by setting new goals, the next level of NCAA umpiring is well within your reach.