

Area Scouts: The “Carfax Report” for Athletes

Danny Cahill Interview 2020-10-21

Joey Myers 00:00

Hello, and welcome to Swing Smarter Newsletter Monthly. This is your host Joey Myers from the Hitting Performance Lab. And with me today, I'm honored Mr. Danny Cahill, it's "K-Hill" right. Am I saying the last name, right? Yeah, k Hill. And Danny is an instructor like myself, we've been back and forth on social media in a good way. Over the last couple years, he knows a lot. He's one of those guys that's out there researching, studying and learning all the time.

Joey Myers 00:28

And Danny has a unique perspective, aside from the mechanics, which we could get into in this call, but maybe more of a part two, but because this edition of this issue of Swing Smarter Monthly Newsletter is, the theme is timing. I wanted to talk a little bit more about the timing of recruiting. And Danny, first welcome to the show.

Joey Myers 00:53

And number two, Danny is involved in a scouting group, scouting program. And we're going to go into that because the whole COVID thing I wanted to ask you, Danny, what is the difference because we had a call with Coach Rob Bruno, who has a development organization in Northern California called North Cal baseball. And we talked a lot about that kind of recruiting. You know Rob Bruno?

Joey Myers 01:24

Tell me what the difference is in what you're doing on the scouting side.

Tell me what the difference is in what you're doing on the scouting side...

Danny Cahill 01:31

We do is we have a platform called Area Scouts. And it started with an initiative towards keeping kids healthy. That is our primary objective. And we have incorporated a three-pronged approach, where we have a doctor of Sports Medicine Dr. Anthony Inzillo, who worked for Dr. James Andrews for over six years. He put together a BASE program, which stands for Biomechanics, Athleticism, Sequence, and Endurance. And it's an Exam that we run the kids through, and we test them out. And they put all the metrics and all the measurements onto their profile page. That's created on the area scout's platform.

Danny Cahill 02:16

Then we do all the typical metrics testing for the kid through diamond kinetics, or blast motion. And then we're also going to incorporate Hittrax data and Rhapsodo in the future. We put all of that in there, and their platform, profile.

Danny Cahill 02:31

And then the third part is a scouting report, and Mike Medici is a professional, Major League scout for 12 years. And he designed a course for us to go through to make sure we understand how to evaluate players correctly. And then he reviews most of the reports to ensure that we're doing it correctly. And then all of that data gets put into an algorithm that spits out a number for each player.

Danny Cahill 02:59

And we start from age eight, which is for the fun stuff. Kids eight to 12, it's really just a fun thing to get them used to making healthy choices and good decisions in life and to play at a high level, stay healthy, all that stuff. And then when they get to 13, it starts to get a little bit more formal. And there's a ranking system that's in place. And it really helps keep the kids on track. We can put game statistics in there for them if they want to.

Danny Cahill 03:28

And then basically what they're doing is over a long period of time, they're building a history of development, that when it comes time for recruiting, so when they are in high school, and a college coach comes along, asking about the player, with one click of a button, they can basically give that coach their entire history of trainers they've worked with, teams they played on, coaches they've played under. Development numbers, metrics, physical attributes, all their growth and history will be in one place. And so that coach will have a really good look at who they're getting as a recruit.

Joey Myers 04:06

I love I love that. I think when we talked a couple days ago, you were telling me a little bit more about the program, telling me basically what you're talking about now, and I said that's kind of like the Carfax report when you buy a car.

Area Scouts: The “Carfax Report” for Athletes

Danny Cahill 04:17

Yeah, exactly. And the cool part is, is that you mentioned COVID. These evaluations can be done over a zoom call. For the most part, we can utilize videos. You know, a kid can go to the field with his father, or mother or friends and they can just film them doing the different exercises and stuff like that, send it over to me, and we can actually analyze it that way. Everyone, for the most part, either knows someone or has those Diamond Kinetic sensors or they're near a HitTrax machine or somewhere where they can go hit and we can get an accurate reading of what they're doing, as far as that goes.

Danny Cahill 05:02

So this is kind of a covid proof system. The difference between Area Scouts that we think I want everybody to know, and what separates this is the reason why I'm so intrigued by it...

Joey Myers 05:15

...versus like beat BeRecruited.com, and all these other ones that the kids are getting into.

Danny Cahill 05:20

Yeah, you have your typical thing. Like you have NCSA, which is basically profile, they'll blast off some emails for you. And that's, that's great. But then you have like a Perfect Game, or PBR, where it's like a showcasing system with a profile. But see, what Area Scouts does is we take it a step further, we actually teach you how to improve all of those metrics.

Danny Cahill 05:47

We have a staff of directors. Fred McGriff is our hitting director, for example, a Hall of Fame hitter. Who puts curriculums together, that with a click of a button, the kids can access a YouTube video from Fred McGriff, that gives them some insight as to what they can be doing to improve in a certain area, they might be deficient in. They also work with individual trainers like myself and like yourself, wherever they are, like, so they already are working with you, that's terrific.

Danny Cahill 06:21

This platform is designed to throw up a red flag in an area that we feel they might want to improve it, and then they take that to you and say, Hey, Coach, you know, it says here that I should probably try to improve on this particular aspect of my swing, or I need to get a little bit stronger in this area. And then they can work with whatever coaches they are already working with.

Danny Cahill 06:43

So that's the difference, is where the player actually gets an alert. And says, based on our data, you are deficient in this particular area, compared to the peers of your age group, and your strength and your size, and whatever. It's really, really unique in that aspect. It's a one-of-a-kind system, we believe it's going to be the future of recruiting.

Joey Myers 07:07

I think so too. And how long have they been online like this doing this particular program?

How long has Area Scouts been online with this program?

Danny Cahill 07:13

So the Area Scouts platform, was designed and was in the works for about eight years, going back and forth, doing all kinds of different things, and then it just rolled out about eight months ago. With the initial phase, bringing on some evaluators, I was actually the first evaluator that was brought on board. And now we have I think 60 or 70, across the country.

Danny Cahill 07:41

We're trying to have every state covered. And within every state, we want to basically have every zip code covered, to make sure that every player in the country who wants to be a part of the area scout's platform has somebody nearby, who they can see in person who can actually go watch and play games.

Danny Cahill 08:01

We want this to be a hands-on thing. I mentioned the COVID proof system that we have, but that's still not optimal. It's always best for kids to have a relationship with a coach. And a trainer, in my opinion.

So we are we are building out a team, we're looking for experienced and hungry coaches, both male and female, we do softball and baseball.

Danny Cahill 08:29

And we want to really help the girls because they don't really have a lot out there, like the boys do, as far as recruiting goes. This is going to help them a lot. But it's just so much fun to be able to track progress, measure results. We have this saying that we use, that says, we want to be able to prove it. There are folks out there who train and do a really good job of helping players get better. And now they have a platform that can actually show their work, which is nice.

Joey Myers 09:06

And then like you said on the other side, there are those out there that aren't doing a very good job of developing kids, and then those will also be seen and exposed.

Program will reveal those effective hitting trainers, and most importantly, those ineffective

Danny Cahill 09:15

That's right. I was just trying to keep it positive.

Joey Myers 09:18

Okay, parents want to know, parents want to know both sides. Yep.

Danny Cahill 09:22

No, that's a really good point, though. There are a lot of folks out there who are taking advantage of unknowing families. I've been in this industry now, I would call it the baseball development industry for about 12 years, and I've coached for about 20 and things are different today. Because everything has become monetized. And, whether you're for it or against it is kind of irrelevant. It's happened. And now I believe that I'm in a position where I can help people navigate the scary landscape that's out there and really make sure that they're not being taken advantage of, and not going to multiple showcases where it's just the same coaches there and looking at the same players, and they're really just collecting checks from people.

Danny Cahill 10:15

We want to make sure that we're actually helping families and the kids get better. I don't really think there's much value, anybody can create a profile, they can do that on the Facebook page, or an Instagram page or Twitter and put themselves out there, that's easy. What do you do afterwards to improve the profile itself and make all the numbers better? That's where we come in.

Joey Myers 10:39

Right. And that was the downside to a lot of the Zepp, at the time, and now they're not in the baseball space anymore. But blast motion and swing tracker and hittrax. All those things are great, we just call them... Some of them are really, really expensive calculators. The problem is, is that you can have

those numbers, but how do you improve those numbers? How do you get a player to hit the ball farther? How do you get a player to hit more consistent line drives? How do you get a player to be on time more often?

Joey Myers 11:07

And that's what you're talking about, is how do we develop and help that hitter get better in those different areas in both baseball and softball? And that's where I think the divide is right now between data and those former major leaguers out there as they think well, data schmatta. And then the other guys are talking about what data is everything. And you got to have these numbers...

Joey Myers 11:32

But we have to have, I think a mesh of both. We have to have an interweaving of both. You need the former's input knowledge. But you also need the data to back up whether good or bad whether this is working, or it's not working. And that's where I feel like you guys are ahead of the game, when it comes, you're much more agile, much more mobile with this area. And I think you're showing a pretty good hole of where BeRecruited.com is.

Joey Myers 11:57

And some of the other ones you mentioned are the showcase type ones, they're all good, they're all good. But what's going to happen is, is sure they cost money. But at some point, there's going to be so much competition that that price is going to get driven down, and then everybody in their mother is going to be on the sites. And so then how does the coach or recruiter or scout going to sift through a lot of the noise. And I think like you said, a Carfax for athletes having that report.

Joey Myers 12:25

And I assume you guys are doing like if their players injured, and that's going to get put on to and then how they recover from that injury. Coaches get to see that.

Do recruiting coaches get to see a player's injury report?

Danny Cahill 12:36

Everything you just said was spot on, and the injury portion of it. Remember, that is our foundation, our primary goal is actually to help kids stay healthy. And that's those metrics in the base exam, comes with hundreds of exercises, corrective exercises, to help strengthen areas of weakness, and improve red flag areas, whether it's a delivery issue for a pitcher, and we call on Josh Zeid is our national director of pitching. He works for the Chicago Cubs.

Danny Cahill 13:11

Getting all these videos set up for the kids to help with mechanical stuff. But then you have factor in those exercises, which strengthen important areas that kids get hurt all the time. We don't want to see kids get Tommy john surgery. There's this notion out there that just because you play baseball, your arm should always hurt. That's just not true. You do everything correctly. In the areas at a young age, and you're careful, you can reduce that risk of injury significantly.

Danny Cahill 13:44

Nobody's guaranteeing that you're not going to get hurt, you are throwing a baseball. But there's... a lot, that's a good, that's a good word to use. We have pitch numbers, charts and stuff that we've used that we've taken from Dr. James Andrews and choosing the implement that into our program to try to help Little League, and the younger kids stay healthy. Overuse is a big deal. But then again, we don't want to under use either. Sometimes we baby the kids too much.

Danny Cahill 14:19

But with regards to the tech versus I know that it's a new school, old school. Those are the words that are used. I don't know that that's the way you want. I get that with them right in the middle. I'm 48 years old. I'm old enough to know what it was like before all the technology and just go outside and play when the sun comes up and come home when it gets dark. I grew up that way.

Danny Cahill 14:45

But I'm not so old to where I don't understand the technology and the new distractions that kids have today that we never had. I think these kids sometimes get a bad rap. Because they're called lazy and they don't want to just go out, but the work and other stuff when in fact, they have so many other options now that we didn't have. It takes a certain mindset to get involved with training, and using technology to me keeps those kids involved.

Danny Cahill 15:16

Like hitting with a HitTrax machine, you mentioned how expensive it is, like \$20,000 for a machine. And that's expensive for sure. At the same time, we're not having the kids buy one, they just need to be near a facility that may have one, use it every once in a while, or whatever. But anyways, as far as the measuring everything, I think is important. That's how you show progress. But you should not be training towards the number. In other words, I've seen kids ruin their swing just because they're trying to ramp up that exit velocity number. Or I think you understand that part of it as well.

Why you should not be training towards the “number”

Joey Myers 15:58

Yeah, blindly trying to increase it. Yeah.

Danny Cahill 16:01

Yeah. You want to increase it for the right reasons. And through the right type of training. I think something that we need to improve on, speaking from the hitter's perspective, a hitting coach can't be measured. There's a term out there that used but I think it's a misunderstood phrase called launch quickness. To me, what that means is when the hitter decides to swing, how long does it take from that decision in their brain to get to the actual act of swinging, and that's really something we can't measure them as they have some sort of wires attached to their brain. Brain waves. I don't know how you'd ever know how long that takes.

Danny Cahill 16:44

I understand that triggered to impact. But that a physical movement. Talking about the thought itself, okay, um, I got to go. And then from there, how long did it take you to actually go? That we could measure that somehow, and maybe some technology will come out someday to where we can measure that. And you can prove that I believe that's what separates the best of the best from the rest. And they just have a longer time to wait, they can see the ball longer. They can decide, make better decisions, and get there.

Danny Cahill 17:16

But all that fighting and stuff, I've been through those wars. I have friends who are data only. I'm not a fan of that at all. I think at some point, you got to kind of just have a feel for the game as well. And I have old school guys who just don't believe in any technology. And I think that's ridiculous.

Joey Myers 17:38

I was talking about the Goldilocks Golden Rule, right? That she didn't want the porridge that was too hot. She didn't want the one that was too cold. She wanted the one that was just right. So I think you got to have enough understanding of the analytic side to where you can look at numbers and sabermetrics. And not all of them because they're getting much more specific every almost like every passing day, you get what like, was a movie Mr. Baseball with Tom Selleck, one of my favorites, for get out of a slump when I was playing.

Joey Myers 18:05

And for those who have seen that before. And he goes, when they were trying to get him out of I think he was at the Yankees at the beginning of the movie. And they were going to release him and he's old, years veteran stuff, and they're going to release him and he's putting up a fight and he says, "I lead this this team in ninth inning doubles in the month of August? The coach looks at him like what?

Joey Myers 18:28

Okay, so some sabermetrics... Yeah, it's getting pretty specific. I mean, they can almost get down to the granular a lot of times, but just your basic ones, even your Moneyball if you can stick the Moneyball the movie or the book, and just stick to the OPS and slugging percentage on base percentage, even if you just can know those and know why batting average, maybe not the best metric. And those kinds of things are, it's good to know that.

Joey Myers 18:53

But you also got to know, on the swing side, what feel cues are, what happens, the difference between real and feel, what's real, what really happens versus what the player feels like a Barry Bonds saying he gets on top of the ball or he swings down or whatever. Of course, that's not what they really do. But in order to get the result that they get, they use that cue and it's not for everybody.

Joey Myers 19:15

There are certain hitters that use it, swing down. There certain hitters that we use swing up too, although rare, I would say but it's a good adjustment cue and I would even piggyback on what you said with the launch quickness, where that decision in the brain to take the swing, the decision to commit.

The other thing that I think the best do really well is they make adjustments. They make on the fly adjustments more often more frequent than the average player.

Joey Myers 19:41

And I was one of those average players. It took me, I'd have to fly out four times in the game before I'd say you know what, maybe I need to try and swing down a little bit more, to get that line drive more of a line drive. Right. So it would take me four at-bats and then the next game I was back but the guys like Mike Trout, they'll take a swing and based on how that swing was, in the result, they'll make an adjustment right away. Is that what you're saying too?

How the best make more frequent swing adjustments...

Danny Cahill 20:05

Yes, that's actually a great point. And you are correct. I believe can do that. I think when you're talking about pitch to pitch, my favorite right-handed hitter of all time is Manny Ramirez. How meticulous he was. And he told stories about how he would sit on a pitch an entire series. Yeah, and you're facing different pitchers each day. It's like you're talking about different pitchers, but one pitch in the back? Yep. I'll just sit on this curveball. And when I got it, I never missed it.

Danny Cahill 20:43

And then, I would also see him or hear him talk about setting pitchers up. So what you see, or we see as an adjustment that somebody is making, they're so good that they've actually put a game plan in place to where they make themselves look a certain way and a certain pitch just so they'll get that pitching again. Yeah, we see that as an adjustment when all along he had that as his plan the whole time.

Danny Cahill 21:10

Yeah, these guys are at a different level when it comes to the thought process and stuff. But with just the physical swing itself, as somebody who's never played at that high of a level, I almost feel guilty, questioning anything that they do. But at the same time, I'm more of a teach what actually happens kind of guy. And I believe that these guys talk about their feel, and this is meant as no disrespect to all of the Hall of Famers on TV,

Joey Myers 21:44

Or the current players...

Danny Cahill 21:45

...not like that. But I can tell you, from personal experience, as the guy who works with kids, is when they see someone like Arod, mimic his swing down to the ball like that. And then they come and try to do it themselves, it really, really harms their ability to hit the ball. And because kids are literal learners, they see it, they hear it swing down to the ball. They do it. And every one of those guys is guilty of that Pujols, Arod, and Trout and they all live it and that's great. But that's what they're doing. All I'm asking them to do is not show it to everybody else.

Joey Myers 22:23

Or at least explain it and say, Hey, I swing up as Trout, right, I swing up, I'm really good down in the zone, and away in the zone, and I have more of a tendency to uppercut so I tell myself to get on top of the ball. And that helps me to stay flatter with the plane of the pitch. If they would say that, I would be okay with what they're saying, with swing down and all that but they don't like you said kids are literal learners, and you tell them to swing down and you don't tell them why you do it. Then they're swing swinging down versus Mike Trout getting on top or Pujols swinging down, is going to look completely different.

What's real and what's feel are two totally different things

Danny Cahill 23:06

That's all I ask is maybe I'm overstepping. You know, whatever. But they I just feel like there is a natural sweep, where the kid when he's five years old, and he takes the ball in your backyard and he throws it up and tries to hit it as far as he can. I think that's the closest to what he's supposed to be swinging like. His body will organize the way it's supposed to and all that stuff. And I think every major leaguer can tell you the same thing.

Danny Cahill 23:38

All these guys are different to the way they learn in training. I'm not a one size fits all kind of guy and my hitters all look different. Because I think they should, if you watch a major league lineup, they all look different. They all do get to certain points in the swing. You know like that is true. But they all look different doing it with different body types. Different length of arms, weight, some see better than others. So how could they possibly move the exact same? It's just not how...

Joey Myers 24:14

Right yeah, and along the lines on the major leaguers. I think people that discount what they say is completely wrong. And instead of saying well, Arod said that and he's completely off you should ask almost, "Well, how can that work?" How can what he said work and instead of just completely discounting so yeah, we're on the same page there. We don't want to discount the Big Leaguers, the Hall of Famers, the former ones, the current ones and the future ones, right?

Joey Myers 24:48

But I think both sides both data and the like old school new schools, which you said. I think there's a joining interweaving of the two. We just got to get them to come to terms. But hey, before I ask you where we can find more, I wanted to circle back to Area Scouts.

Joey Myers 25:07

And I know we were talking about money and cost money, and hey, your things got to you can't do stuff for free. And Area Scouts it does cost. It does cost money to do and to be able to use the system because there are people that are involved that are doing work behind the scenes and there is software that's being used. And there's uptime on that. There are all kinds of things that go into it. Go ahead and briefly just describe what some of those costs are with Area Scouts.

What are some of those costs with Area Scouts?

Danny Cahill 25:35

That you brought that up, because I did skip over that part. And it is really another reason why I was all in with Area Scouts is because the cost. It's really inexpensive. And in today's travel ball, age, it feels as though we are pricing out some kids and I don't like that. I think everybody should be able to play as possible. The cost, like I said, there are people to pay, web design, and the software designers, we have folks in different countries working on the back of it. It's \$97 is what it costs to get an initial evaluation done. Which is that three-pronged approach, you get all the basics in, metrics testing. Takes about an hour.

Joey Myers 26:28

And you recommend that quarterly, right quarterly?

Danny Cahill 26:30

Yeah, that's a good idea to get that done at least three times a year. And depending on the type of program you're in, like if you're in a development program already. That price can be can be built into whatever you're already doing. \$97 is a little flexible on the future evaluations. But yes, still, the initial cost is 97. And then it's only \$25 a month to have the platform profile. To store all your data, you can go in there and upload your own videos, your evaluator is going to go in there and add videos, you get access to exclusive access.

Danny Cahill 27:12

So those videos I mentioned from Fred McGriff, for example, only the folks that are on the Area Scout platform, paying as a premium subscriber that \$25 a month can access. It can't be shared with anybody. It's, you get a pretty cool access by having the premium subscription, which is just \$25 a month, there's no kind of where they call it, like annual, like...

Danny Cahill 27:43

And we do offer discounts for those who do want to pay for an entire year, upfront subscription, 20 bucks a month and you get three evaluations on an average of \$60 each, something like that.

Joey Myers 27:57

Very cool. Very cool, man. Well, hey, I want to be respectful of your time. Where can people find you? Where you're at right now online? Where can people find you?

Danny Cahill 28:09

As far as social media goes, I'm on Twitter @CoachCahill. I'm on Instagram @HitDr. AreaScouts.com. And you'll be able to find everything you need to in there, you'll get directed to, it's state by state. We have evaluators all over the country. But there one of those question boxes, and as you can always request to talk to me personally if you want to, and the Area Scout folks just direct everything there, direct those types of questions towards me.

Joey Myers 28:48

And where are you located?

Danny Cahill 28:50

I'm in Connecticut, and I'm the Northeast hitting director and regional evaluator for area scouts. I am excited and really just, I like serving the youth community and just helping kids get better. I like ruining the pitcher's day. I like teaching my kids how to hit. I don't have an agenda beyond that. It really is just as much as trying to be a positive role model to kids.

Danny Cahill 29:25

I know you have to go. I really would like to take just 10 seconds. In this day and age, we live in a country where the father is just not present in the home as much as in the past. And I believe the coach's role is vital to our kids' future here in America. And I just want to be one of those guys that a kid feels they can look up to and they can lean on for support, provide them with a real male figure to follow.

Joey Myers 29:56

Amen to that man, and that's a great way to end this call on and I'm sure we'll have other part twos and part threes but yeah, that is a great one and having that male figure, a lot of great moms out there doing double duty having to be mom and dad and so not taken away from all the moms out there but man, I have friends that are single parents and it's tough but nothing like having both mom and dad there to help out.

Joey Myers 30:23

Danny Hey, we're honored to have you in hitting community. Thank you for your time today and I'll be in touch I get all your stuff, the audio and the transcription over but Thank you, sir. Have a good rest your week brother.

Danny Cahill 30:36

Thank you, thank you.

Joey Myers 30:37

Keep up the good work.

Danny Cahill 30:39

You too.

Joey Myers 30:40

Bye.

Danny Cahill 30:40

Bye.