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MINOR LEAGUE REPORT

By CARRIE MUSKAT/MLB.COM



Getting to know you: Let's say you're a Major League ballplayer, and you are ejected from a game after arguing with an umpire. The media will want to know what happened. Do you say, "No comment" and head to the trainer's room to hide? Do you say, "This is off the record" and then say the umpire was wrong? Or, do you change the subject and talk about winning the game?

1. The third answer is the right one, and that's what Sue Castorino and Randy Minkoff, a.k.a. The Speaking Specialists, teach Minor League ballplayers. This is the Chicago couple's 11th year with the Cubs, and they've also been working with the Atlanta Braves, Kansas City Royals, Toronto Blue Jays, New York Mets, and Baltimore Orioles.

The two were in the Cubs' camp Monday and Tuesday to address the players at Fitch Park. They handle six groups of 20 players each, although the Latin group is closer to 40-45 players.

"This year's group was one of the best in terms of interviews, understanding the Internet, and Facebook and what we were talking about," Minkoff said. "You wouldn't have known they were so young."

The players go through a mock news conference. Apparently, everyone wants to play reporter. Players were asked who they thought should be the Cubs closer between Ryan Dempster, Carlos Marmol and Kerry Wood. The Dominican players all picked Marmol. Why?

"Because he throws hard," one said.

That's good enough.

The sessions include on-camera interviews to help players get comfortable. One year, a young Cubs pitcher stood in front of the camera, saw the lights go on, and fainted from nervousness.

"I'd never seen a camera in my face," said the pitcher, who preferred to remain anonymous. "They asked me, 'what's your name? Where are you from?' I got sick, and boom. When I woke up, I was in the trainer's room."

The pitcher, by the way, is doing fine now, is in the big leagues, and says the sessions helped.

