

# 9 - Teacher or Cautionary Tale?

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**SIGN** Teacher or Cautionary Tale?

**[01:32] bon**

*On days when the Spiders  
are playing at Jingu,*

**[01:34] bon**

*you'll see a staff member in a three-digit  
jersey running around the park grounds.*

**[01:41] bon**

*Then, when the players show up,  
he withdraws into the clubhouse.*

**[01:41] kur**

Heya!

**[01:47] bon**

*Batting practice pitcher  
and scorer, Kuriki Satoshi.*

**[01:51] bon**

*He's four years older than me,  
Bonda Natsunosuke.*

**[01:57] bon**

*Back when I was a rookie,*

**[02:00] bon**

*Kuriki-san taught me a heck of a lot  
down in the farm.*

**SIGN** For a two-seam fastball,

**SIGN** you just grip it down the seams like this, and it'll break toward the arm.

**[02:11] bon**

*Stuff like this, too.*

**SIGN** Listen up, Natsunosuke! Don't move that glove one millimeter!

**SIGN** Okay!

**SIGN** Dead on!

**SIGN** Now, move it two balls higher.

**SIGN** Dead on again!

**SIGN** Now, two balls higher and one ball in.

**SIGN** Perfect accuracy!

**SIGN** Pro pitchers are incredible!

**SIGN** Being a pro is all about control!

**SIGN** Control is what separates us from the amateurs!

**SIGN** And if you want to improve your control, you gotta work out your lower body!

**SIGN** Obviously, you gotta run, run, run, run, run, and run!

**SIGN** Right!

**[02:57] bon**

*Before long, Kuriki-san was  
called up to the majors,*

**[03:02] bon**

*while I got left behind with a leg injury  
from all that running he made me do.*

**[03:08] bon**

*Kuriki-san was, like I am now,  
a left-handed middle reliever.*

**[03:12] bon**

*However,*

**[03:16] bon**

*he'd get hammered.*

**[03:19] bon**

*And so, he came back to the farm.*

**SIGN** My speed is just crummy, you know?

**SIGN** It takes me all I've got just to hit 141 or 142.

**SIGN** If you want more speed, you gotta work out your upper body!

**SIGN** Natsunosuke, do weight training with me!

**SIGN** Okay!

**SIGN** 143.

**SIGN** Not as effective as I'd hoped...

**SIGN** 133.

**SIGN** What's with you, Natsunosuke?

**SIGN** Your speed's really been dropping lately.

**SIGN** I'm sorry...

**SIGN** Natsunosuke, have you been slacking on your weights?

**[04:15] bon**

*No, I don't think that's it.*

**[04:17] bon**

*It's clearly been dropping since  
I started the weight training.*

**[04:21] bon**

*I don't think weights are for me!*

**[04:25] bon**

*As expected, when I cut  
back on the weight training,*

**[04:28] bon**

*my speed came back to me.*

**[04:31] bon**

*But instinctively, pitchers can't help  
but be attracted to speed.*

**SIGN** In games, I try so hard to pitch faster  
**SIGN** that I lose my control and start giving up hits.  
**SIGN** Natsunosuke, that's how it goes for me, too.  
**SIGN** Maybe we shouldn't be so obsessed with speed.

**[04:55] bon**

*Kuriki-san seemed to be on the fence, too.*

**[04:59] bon**

*But I guess that goes for everyone.*

**[05:03] bon**

*Once, Kawasaki-san,  
who was thirty at the time,*

**[05:06] bon**

*came to practice in the minors park,  
and I saw him up close.*

**[05:10] bon**

*At that time, I believe he'd  
racked up ninety wins as a pro.*

**[05:15] bon**

*The pitches of a man with ninety wins  
packed a punch that ours didn't.*

**[05:20] bon**

*But what surprised me was...*

**[05:23] bon**

*Unlike us, he didn't really practice  
keeping control in mind.*

**[05:30] bon**

*He aimed for the center,*

**[05:31] bon**

*and his pitches were just spraying around.*

**[05:34] bon**

*People like him are confident they won't  
get hit even if they pitch over the plate.*

**[05:38] bon**

*They're a whole different breed of pitcher!*

**[05:41] bon**

*Being attracted to speed  
won't get us anywhere.*

**[05:44] bon**

*Kuriki-san was probably right.*

**[05:47] bon**

*That's what I thought.*

**[05:49] bon**

*He was also the first one  
who said those words to me.*

**SIGN** Natsunosuke.

**SIGN** No pitcher wants to fall behind in the count and give up a walk, right?

**SIGN** But guys like us can't be afraid of the base on balls.

**SIGN** We need to have the courage to throw balls.

**SIGN** You're saying that if we refine our control,

**SIGN** we can gain the courage to throw balls?

**SIGN** That's right!

**[06:16] bon**

*That's what he said, but in practice...*

**SIGN** Let's see some speed!

**[06:23] bon**

*This guy couldn't fully throw out  
his obsession with speed.*

**[06:27] bon**

*And then last year, after eleven years  
as a pro, he retired for good.*

**[06:32] bon**

*He'd even had a season  
where he pitched fifty games,*

**[06:36] bon**

*but his total record was  
one win, seven losses, and two saves,*

**SIGN** Contract: 15 Million

**[06:39] bon**

*with a career-high contract of 15 million yen.*

**[06:44] bon**

*If he hadn't been so obsessed with speed,  
I think he could have gone a lot further.*

**[06:49] bon**

*And I saw him as both a teacher  
and a cautionary tale.*

**[06:54] bon**

*Then, this season,*

**[06:55] bon**

*even as lots of pros have to quit baseball  
every year, Kuriki-san got lucky.*

**[07:00] bon**

*As a pitcher who is a lefty,  
has good control,*

**[07:02] bon**

*and is decently fast,*

**[07:05] bon**

*the club wanted him to stick around  
as a batting practice pitcher and scorer.*

**[07:13] bon**

*When his job as a batting  
practice pitcher is done...*

**[07:23] kuri**

Heya!

**[07:26] bon**

*...his job as a scorer awaits him.*

**[07:29] bon**

*Thirty years old this year,  
with a salary of 6 million yen.*

**[07:32] bon**

*In his last year as a pitcher,  
he was earning 6.5 million,*

**[07:35] bon**

*so it wasn't too big of a step down.*

**[07:55] bon**

Huh? Kuriki-san!

**[07:57] kuri**

Hey, Natsunosuke.

**[07:59] kuri**

I'm organizing the data I got down today.

**[08:02] bon**

Used to the job yet?

**[08:04] kuri**

Not at all. How could I be?

**[08:07] kuri**

I'm aching all over.

**[08:09] kuri**

I didn't think being a batting practice  
pitcher would be as draining as it is.

**[08:14] kuri**

So I'm still running every day...

**[08:16] bon**

You're running more than  
you did as a player, I bet.

**[08:20] kuri**

Maybe I am.

**[08:22] kuri**

It'll take a long time before I get  
really used to my scorer work, too.

**[08:31] kuri**

Natsunosuke.

**[08:32] kuri**

I'm still a newbie scorer, so I won't  
get too high-and-mighty about it.

**[08:37] kuri**

But there is something I've realized.

**[08:42] kuri**

I spent eleven years as a pro,  
bouncing between the minors and the majors.

**[08:46] kuri**

I really was second-rate.

**[08:48] bon**

What are you talking about?

**[08:50] bon**

You had a season with  
fifty games on the mound!

**[08:53] kuri**

That was just one year.

**[08:56] kuri**

But even I can tell.

**[08:59] kuri**

Pro baseball pitchers are  
speeding up every year.

**[09:04] kuri**

Since I joined the pros eleven years ago,

**[09:06] kuri**

the average speed has gone up  
by two or three kilometers per hour.

**[09:11] kuri**

But I think batting technique  
is advancing even faster.

**[09:16] kuri**

So, how do pitchers compensate?

**[09:19] kuri**

Obviously, with junk balls!

**[09:23] kuri**

Those are pitches that move just a little bit.

**[09:26] kuri**

But to cope with those junk balls,

**[09:30] kuri**

the batters do a lot of studying  
and refine their art even more!

**[09:35] kuri**

The game of escalation between  
pro pitchers and batters is incredible.

**[09:39] kuri**

And lackluster players  
who can't keep up with it

**[09:42] kuri**

will find their careers cut short  
around the age of thirty.

**[09:46] kuri**

Just like me, you know?

**[09:49] kuri**

Natsunosuke, you've been seeing  
a lot of action this season, huh?

**[09:54] kuri**

Not just games pitched.  
You're getting a lot of innings in, too.

**[09:59] kuri**

You can probably expect a fat raise  
when you re-sign in the off-season.

**[10:03] bon**

Well, we don't know that yet.

**[10:06] kuri**

Natsunosuke.

**[10:07] kuri**

The season I pitched fifty games

**[10:10] kuri**

was when I was twenty-six years old.

The same age you are now.

**[10:15] kuri**

Three years later, I was cut.

**[10:20] kuri**

A man who pitched fifty games, you know?

**[10:24] kuri**

Natsunosuke, the way things are now,  
can you imagine being fired in three years?

**[10:29] bon**

I certainly don't want to think about it!

**[10:33] kuri**

I felt the same way three years ago.

**[10:36] kuri**

Anyway, if you want to have  
a long pitching career,

**[10:40] kuri**

you need to reinvent your game every year.

**[10:44] bon**

Maybe so, but...

**[10:45] kuri**

I couldn't do that because  
I didn't have enough up here.

**[10:51] kuri**

Becoming a scorer has changed  
the way I look at the game.

**[10:55] kuri**

I've learned a lot, too.

**[10:57] kuri**

So...

**[11:02] kuri**

I have an idea!

**[11:04] kuri**

Want to hear it?

**[11:06] bon**

An idea?

**[11:07] kuri**

Maybe you'll want to try it out!

**[11:09] kuri**

I bet it'll show results!

**[11:12] kuri**

It's on this video. Watch it for a minute.

**[11:16] bon**

*Here?!*

**[11:18] kuri**

Just a minute. I'll have it in a sec.

**[11:21] bon**

*To me, he's both a teacher  
and a cautionary tale.*

**[11:37] bon**

Wh-What kind of idea is this?

**[11:39] kuri**

Well, it's not a flash of  
inspiration or anything...

**[11:44] kuri**

I'm taking video every day,  
so sometimes I notice a thing or two.

**[11:49] kuri**

Well, it's up to you whether  
you want to try it out or not...

**[11:54] kuri**

I mean, you're an active player and I'm  
just a batting practice pitcher and scorer.

**[11:59] bon**

*Given our history...*

**[12:01] bon**

*Should I listen to his advice?  
Or should I ignore it?*

**[12:05] bon**

*If I listen to it, it'll be hard  
to just forget it later.*

**[12:09] bon**

*He's been both a teacher and  
a cautionary tale in the past,*

**[12:13] bon**

*but it's not impossible he could  
give me good advice, too...*

**[12:18] kuri**

Natsunosuke, look! Here it is!

**[12:20] bon**

*And while I was thinking about it,  
he's gone and turned it on!*

**[12:26] kuri**

This is footage of Tejima

with the Makuhari Savage.

**[12:30] bon**

R-Right. I think I might  
know what you're getting at!

**[12:34] kuri**

This was taken from the third base side.

**[12:37] kuri**

I'll pause it.

**[12:38] kuri**

That right elbow. The angle of the right wrist.

**[12:42] kuri**

They're bent really sharp, huh?

**[12:44] kuri**

Like this.

**[12:46] bon**

Yes, that's true.

**[12:47] bon**

He's trying to hide his release point, right?

**[12:50] kuri**

Oh, you know it already?

**[12:53] bon**

Yeah...

**[12:54] kuri**

More and more pro pitchers nowadays are  
using a more compact cocking position.

**[13:02] kuri**

Small in the back,  
big in the front, they call it.

**[13:06] kuri**

If you do it right, it becomes  
seriously hard for the batter to read.

**[13:10] kuri**

It becomes a lot more obvious when  
you're watching from behind the backstop.

**[13:14] kuri**

That feeling of an arm hidden behind  
the body that lashes out all at once!

**[13:18] bon**

Fujimura of the Kyushu Sharp Hawks  
does something similar, right?

**[13:24] kur**

C-Come on, Natsunosuke...

**[13:26] kur**

Don't look at me like  
I'm preaching to the choir.

**[13:29] bon**

I-I wasn't trying to!

**[13:32] bon**

It's called stuff like Maneki-Neko Pitching and Telephone Box Pitching, right?

**[13:38] kuri**

What's with you?

**[13:40] kuri**

You even know all the crazy names they give it, huh?

**[13:44] bon**

Maneki-Neko and Telephone Box both refer to a cramped up form.

**[13:49] kuri**

Yeah, "cramped" is the keyword.

**[13:52] kuri**

But this is what I call it!

**[13:55] kuri**

Dart Pitching!

**[13:56] bon**

D-Dart Pitching?

**[14:04] kuri**

*Hang on a minute!*

**[14:05] kuri**

*Did he just want to tell me about the name he thought up for it?*

**[14:12] kuri**

I-If I tried it...

**[14:17] kuri**

Would it look like that?

**[14:19] kura**

Well... Sorta, maybe...

**[14:22] bon**

Maybe I just can't do it...

**[14:24] kuri**

Well, of course it's not gonna be easy.

**[14:28] kuri**

So let's look at one more!

**[14:31] bon**

One more?

**[14:33] kuri**

Look at this one.

**[14:35] kuri**

This is Gotohda of the Sapporo Purple Shadows.

**[14:38] kuri**

They say he's the best pitcher in Japan right now.

**[14:41] kuri**

There!

**[14:45] kuri**

It's like there's a wall  
made from your right arm.

**[14:48] kuri**

The wall has to hold solid.

**[14:52] kuri**

This wall here.

**[14:56] kuri**

Then right as you get to this point...

**[15:00] kuri**

You fold your right arm.

**[15:02] kuri**

Then suddenly, your left arm  
appears from out of nowhere...

**[15:07] kuri**

Got it? One more time.

**[15:09] kuri**

Fold your right arm.

**[15:11] kuri**

There. You get it?

**[15:13] bon**

Well, I think I get it, but...

**[15:16] kuri**

What I'm saying is that Dart Pitching  
by itself won't give you much force.

**[15:20] kuri**

It'll make the ball slower, right?

**[15:23] kuri**

So try adding the "wall" method in there.

**[15:28] kuri**

You'll keep the wall up until the last second

**[15:30] kuri**

and then pull your right arm back  
in one quick motion.

**[15:35] kuri**

To around here.

**[15:37] kuri**

This way, even if you're cramped in the back,

**[15:39] kuri**

your arm will swing big and fast.

**[15:42] bon**

The best of both, huh?

**[15:44] kuri**

This is really hard for batters to read.

**[15:47] kuri**

It's hard to hold that wall, of course...

**[15:50] kuri**

Then there's that feeling  
of pulling back swiftly.

**[15:53] bon**

*Well, just forming the wall in the first  
place is a hard technique to pick up.*

**[15:59] kuri**

I call this Breaststroke Pitching!

**[16:06] bon**

*Damn this guy!*

**[16:08] bon**

*"Dart Pitching." "Breaststroke Pitching."*

**[16:10] bon**

*He really just wanted to tell me  
about the names he thought up!*

**[16:18] kuri**

Of course, since I'm not a coach,

**[16:20] kuri**

I'm not much of an authority  
when it comes to technique.

**[16:24] bon**

*But after all that, I can't just ignore it!*

**[16:28] kuri**

But, Natsunosuke,  
there's one thing I can say...

**[16:32] kuri**

Reinventing your game  
might be going too far,

**[16:35] kuri**

but being a pro ballplayer is  
all about constant minor changes!

**[16:41] bon**

*Well...*

**[16:42] bon**

*He's not wrong.*

**[16:55] bon**

Huh?

**[16:58] sako**

U-Uh, it says 146.

**[17:01] bon**

I-I was just throwing it lightly.

**[17:04] bon**

That's a couple of kilometers per hour  
higher than my usual max.

**[17:08] sako**

But that form...

**[17:12] ko**

Well, it increased his speed,  
so maybe it's all right.

**[17:15] bon**

A-Are you sure,  
Pitching Coach Kozato?

**[17:21] ko**

Well, we won't know until  
you test it in a real game.

**[17:27] ko**

*Kuriki-san's advice helped me  
speed up more than I expected.*

**[17:33] ko**

*And today, I was going to  
try it out in a real game.*

**[17:38] ann**

With two outs, they bring in Bonda.

**[17:40] ann**

Color Commentator Nishi Toshihisa-san?

**[17:42] cc**

It was a surprise watching  
him at pitching practice.

**[17:44] cc**

Did he change his form?

**[17:46] bat**

Whoa! That's fast!

**[17:47] bat**

It's a pop-up to second! Three outs!

**[17:51] ko**

He got him out!

**[17:53] kuri**

N-Natsunosuke!

**[17:54] bon**

*For now, I've shut them down.*

**[17:58] bon**

*And then, the next day...*

**[18:11] bon**

*And the day after that, I shut them down.*

**[18:14] kuri**

*Natsunosuke...*

**[18:16] bon**

*When I want to, I can get up  
to 145 or 146 on the mound.*

**[18:21] bon**

*But this form... I think it's causing  
my accuracy to slip a bit, maybe?*

**[18:28] bon**

Natsunosuke. This is great.

**[18:30] bon**

Yeah, great!

**[18:32] bon**

Maybe this form is a better fit for you!

**[18:36] bon**

*When you're getting good results,  
all anyone around you says is "Great."*

**[18:41] kuri**

*Natsunosuke!*

**[18:42] bon**

*This man...*

**[18:44] bon**

*Is he my teacher or my cautionary tale?*

**[18:48] [SONG] sign**

Speed

**[18:48] bon**

*Generally speaking, when a  
pitcher increases his speed,*

**SIGN** Control

**[18:52] bon**

*his control conversely declines.*

**[18:55] bon**

*The question is where you strike the balance.*

**[18:57] bon**

*Before I changed my form,  
it was maybe around here.*

**[19:01] bon**

*Right now, I might be in this area.*

**[19:03] bon**

*It's the eternal question  
for pitchers, you know?*

**[19:07] bon**

*Incidentally, it was Kuriki-san's  
obsession with speed*

**[19:10] bon**

*that kept him from making  
an impact in the pros.*

**[19:18] bon**

*When you gain speed,  
it clearly jams the batters.*

**[19:23] bon**

*Jamming the batters...  
It's a great feeling I'd almost forgotten.*

**[19:28] bon**

*It honestly makes me happy  
to get guys out like this.*

**[19:31] bon**

*Has Kuriki-san's advice reawakened  
the pitcher instincts I'd started to forget?*

**[19:38] bon**

*However...*

**[19:43] ann**

*Pitcher: Bonda.*

**[19:47] bon**

*The one that shattered all my illusions*

**[19:51] bon**

*was the man I'd shut down  
in a matchup two weeks ago.*

**[19:55] bon**

*The Wild Ones player who makes 180 million,  
exactly ten times my salary.*

**SIGN** Salary 1 to 10

**SIGN** Contract 180 million

**[20:01] cc**

*Last time, Bonda-san really  
got the better of him, huh?*

**[20:05] ann**

*Sekiya hits it!*

**[20:06] ann**

*This one's looking big!*

**[20:07] ann**

*The right fielder goes back, back, back!*

**[20:11] bon**

*That's Sekiya for you.*

**[20:13] bon**

*He really crushed that one.*

**[20:14] bon**

*It's true. Being a pro player  
means constant minor changes.*

**[20:18] bon**

*You really were right.*

**[20:22] ann**

*Sekiya turns it around with a grand slam!*

**[20:26] seki**

*You really slacked in your control this time.*

**[20:29] seki**

*Unlike last time.*

**[20:37] bon**

*I got hit at the worst possible time.*

**[20:41] bon**

*But if not for this,  
I would never have realized.*

**[20:45] bon**

*Now I see! I really do!*

**[20:47] bon**

*If I'd kept this up, my career  
would've ended before I turned thirty!*

**[20:52] bon**

*Just like yours was!*

**[20:54] bon**

*A teacher and a cautionary tale...  
We learn from them both.*

**[20:58] bon**

Senpai!

**[21:03] bon**

*I have to thank you so much!*

**[21:06] bon**

*I can't do it out loud, though.*

**[21:10] bon**

*I'm all about control.*

**[21:13] bon**

*Control!*

**[21:15] kuri**

*He went back to his old form.*

**[21:18] kuri**

*Natsunosuke...*

**[21:20] bon**

*I can't give in to the allure of speed!*

**[21:24] bon**

*Control... Control... Control!*

**[21:28] bon**

*Money Pitch!*

**[23:01] bon**

Natsunosuke here.

**[23:02] bon**

Boy, I'm in trouble!

**[23:04] bon**

I loaded the bases with no outs!

**[23:06] bon**

I hate Koshien Stadium,

**[23:08] bon**

with the Tempters' cheer squads  
getting inside my head!

**[23:12] bon**

But next in the order are  
the golden rookie from college

**[23:16] bon**

and the golden high school rookie  
of four years ago!

**[23:18] bon**

I'm crazy strong against players

with lower contracts than mine!

**[23:23] bon**

Next time:

"High School Recruit, College Recruit."

**[23:25] bon**

Seize tomorrow's success and today's money!

**SIGN** High School Recruit, College Recruit

**[23:27] bon**

Money Pitch!

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