



The Stewards of the Game Philosophy
"Taking it to the Field"

1. **BALANCE:** (Instruction / Fun / Challenge / Discipline)
 - 1.1. Great coaches maintain a good balance of providing players with good fundamental instruction, a fun-filled experience, challenging competition and constructive discipline. A proper balance of these will result in genuine skill development AND character development...and the players and their parents will come back for more - season after season.
 - 1.2. In delivering both instruction and discipline, coaches should inspire players by maintaining a proper tone; balancing encouragement, decisiveness, honesty, consistency and...a sense of humor to keep the game fun. "Praise in public.... criticize in private."
 - 1.3. Constantly raise the bar in terms of player expectations (i.e. level of effort, team play, skillful execution, head in the game, etc.). This must be done gradually with respect to age, maturity, and skill level. But we have to start early. T-ballers *can* learn to take a knee and eyeball the coach.
 - 1.4. If players are disruptive, do not hesitate to take age-appropriate, disciplinary measures to correct their behavior (i.e. time-out at practice, run to the pole, reduced playing time, etc.) Coaches must be respectful, consistent and fair in communicating expectations up-front and following through with appropriate *consequences* in response to undesirable player behavior. Delivering on consequences may not be *fun* or what the player *wants*, but it is an essential ingredient in character development.
 - 1.5. BALANCE is the key. Run your team like a Boot Camp.... and players will quit and you've lost any opportunity to make a difference in their life. Run your team with an "Anything Goes" mentality.... and character development and teaching life lessons will fall by the wayside. Coaches, don't hesitate to lean on one another to achieve this Balance!

2. **EFFORT**
 - 2.1. Players run on and off the field. If one player doesn't, the entire team goes back out and tries it again. We *never* walk on a baseball field.
 - 2.2. Players should be moving *somewhere* on every hit and every throw. *Anticipate* the next throw and then back-up your teammate who is about to field a hit or a throw.
 - 2.3. When we go after a ball, we go after it full speed. When we run to back-up a base, we go full speed. Our teammates expect that of us...and in turn, we should expect it of them.
 - 2.4. At the plate, we run-out ALL hits - full throttle. If the ball looks like it's foul...run it out anyway. You can always come back on a foul ball. Dog it on a fair ball and you might just get thrown out; even from the outfield.

3. **TEAMWORK**
 - 3.1. When the coach pulls up to the field, players should race to the coach's car to unload the gear.
 - 3.2. When a practice/game is over, players pack-up the "team gear" before they pack up their own bat bags. Team snacks are distributed after coach talks with team and gear is packed-up.
 - 3.3. No "prima donnas" when it comes to uniforms. Every player wears the same uniform with their shirttail tucked-in, hat on straight, shoes tied, and pants legs pulled-up to just below the knees. Look like a team...and play like a team. All players use Stewards of the Game brand helmets. If they want to use their own black helmet, they may purchase a SOTG decal to place on it.
 - 3.4. Back-up your teammates every chance you get...and they will do the same for you.
 - 3.5. Put the team's interests before your own. Play whatever position the team needs you at most.... and play it with passion and thankfulness. If you aren't playing as much as you like, whining won't

get you more playing time. Working even harder and getting better are your best bets on earning more playing time.

4. PREPARATION

- 4.1. Go to the Lord in prayer as a team before every practice and every game. Nothing sets the tone for a great effort by coaches and players more than a chat with God.
- 4.2. Take time at every practice to talk with the team about a character-building value. Relate it to the game. Relate it to HWJP? Seize opportunities for teaching life lessons as they arise....and the lessons will stick.
- 4.3. Warm-ups & stretching is done as a team before EVERY practice and game....led by the players once they have been instructed by coaches on proper warm-up techniques
- 4.4. Set an age-appropriate curfew for your ballplayers on the night before a game. Sleep-overs the night before a game should be discouraged by the head coach.
- 4.5. Over-exertion (i.e. more than 30 minutes swimming) on a game day is not good preparation for a game. Reckless activity before a game (i.e. skateboarding, horsing around in the house) is not only putting yourself at risk; but it is putting your team at risk.
- 4.6. Look like a ballplayer when you come to the field. (See point 3.3) Be ready every day to play the game of your life.
- 4.7. Fielders: Be in good fielding position when the pitcher goes into his motion (i.e. Balls of your feet, bottom down, head-up, palms out, eyes on the ball). Coaches, after one warning, if a player is not in "ready position", put in a substitute for him – right in the middle of the inning. He'll learn quickly.
- 4.8. When the catcher throws the ball back to the pitcher, the shortstop breaks for 2nd; while the 2nd baseman breaks for the spot halfway between the pitching rubber and 2nd base. Back up your teammate by preparing for an overthrow. The pitcher backs-up any throw to a base from the outfield.
- 4.9. Baserunners-Eyes on the ball. Don't get caught sleeping. Once the pitcher makes his move to the plate, get your secondary lead. Be prepared for a hit, a passed ball or a throw-back to your base.
- 4.10. Coaches...prepare your parents. Set expectations and discuss the Stewards of the Game youth sports philosophy with your parents prior to the start of the season. (See sample Parents Meeting agenda on Coaches Corner at www.stewardsofthegame.org)

5. RESPECT

- 5.1. Players should all take a knee with their eyes on the coach during a team discussion.
- 5.2. Encourage your teammates; as well as opposing players.
- 5.3. Team chatter is all directed towards encouraging your teammates. Fielders/catchers do NOT taunt opposing batters.
- 5.4. Players and parents should never challenge an umpire. That's a coach's job...respectively.
- 5.5. Before a game, line-up and wish your opponents "good luck."
- 5.6. After a game, line-up and congratulate them with "good game."
- 5.7. When traveling, be respectful of others in restaurants, hotels, etc. Parents are responsible to see that their children get plenty of rest, are respectful of hotel guests, etc. Travel tournaments can be a blast...but let's remember we are representing Stewards of the Game everywhere we go.

6. HEAD IN THE GAME

- 6.1. Each player must survey the field after every pitch and reevaluate the situation and reassess his job based on game situation (i.e. location of base runners, outs, count, score, etc.)
- 6.2. Team parent brings water cooler & cups to practices and games. No food or drinks in the dugout; other than the team water cooler. This will help keep the players focused on the game.
- 6.3. If a player is on the bench, he is still IN the game. A player on the bench still has an important job; that is to encourage his teammates and watch & learn from what's happening on the field.
- 6.4. When an opposing pitcher makes a pick-off move to a base, we should hear every player yell "BACK!" from the dugout. This helps out their teammate and ensures players are IN the game.