

2022 West Jeff Otters Handbook



Copy Number _____

Given To _____

This playbook is provided as a reference, to support and clarify instructions given and to review during games. We expect players to have it available at games. It should be kept with your baseball equipment.

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Being A Part of Something Bigger Than Yourself

This is the single most important concept to be taught in 9 year-old baseball. It's the foundation of everything we are trying to accomplish. Learning to put the team's needs first is essential for our players to:

- Develop the work ethic needed to succeed this season and in life.
- Mitigate fear of the baseball.
- Developing empathy.
- Handling failure of yourself and your teammates.

This is what keeps kids wanting to play year after year.



General Guidelines

The 9 year-old season introduces players to concepts applicable to all aspects of life. Personal growth, friendships and entertainment are byproducts of having a successful team. Our focus is to give the players a successful transition into the joy of playing baseball in a competitive environment. There are five themes to the 2022 season:

- Being a part of something that is bigger than yourself.
- Building confidence and expecting success.
- Managing (not overcoming) fear of the baseball.
- Playing and competing with intensity.
- This is our time, this is your time, this is my time. Respect that.

Practice Rules

Get better not only for yourself, but for your teammates. Evergreen is a great place to live. We have the mountains, cool summers, nice places to eat and great people. Unfortunately we don't have a lot of places to play baseball. It can snow in June too. So we have very little practice time compared to most teams.

In order to attain our goals, we need to have a productive practice every time. To keep our practices productive, we have the following rules:

- 1) Parents are welcome at practice and encouraged to participate. We are fortunate to have a lot of parents with coaching and teaching experience. We want to draw on that. Stay consistent with our goals and philosophy.
- 2) No jeans or tennis shoes at practice. Dress like a baseball player.
- 3) Several aspects of the game have more than one right way to do something. Let us know of any outside individual instruction your son may be getting. We don't want mixed messages.
- 4) Our line-ups will be based on our estimate for our team performing at its best. Practice attendance is not strictly mandatory, but the player's participation and contributions to the team gives them the best chance of playing time.
- 5) If you're not paying attention or hurting the progress we're making as a team, you'll be asked to sit down. This will be remembered when the line-ups are put together.
- 6) It's your gear – you carry it and keep track of it. Your parents and coaches shouldn't have to deal with this.
- 7) Bring your own water and snacks.
- 8) There are 11 other players counting on you to do your share of the work. Attend practice.
- 9) When one player occupies 30% of the coach's time, the team suffers.

Game Rules

- 1) The game starts the moment you walk on to the field. You're in "game mode" throughout warm-up and infield/outfield.
- 2) Only coaches and players in the dugout. Your "posse" needs to be in the stands.
- 3) Bring your own water & snacks.
- 4) Start preparing for your at-bat long before you're on deck.
- 5) No jewelry – necklaces or rings.
- 6) No throwing of the bats – you can be ejected.
- 7) Never walk when you're between the foul lines. Hustle in and out.
- 8) It's your gear – you carry it and keep track of it. Your parents and coaches shouldn't have to deal with this.

- 9) There are 11 other players and families counting on you – vacations should be scheduled around games.
- 10) Respect the baseball field as a golfer respects the course. Respect the umpires, opponents and those watching you play.

Poor Behavior – Players, Families, Spectators

Consistently poor behavior can come in several forms. In general, our approach to poor behavior is consistent with our priority for the team as a whole. We will try to limit the exposure of the bad behavior to the rest of the team.

We're highly sensitive to negative treatment of teammates, umpires, opponents or other parents either verbal or physical.

We'll use progressive verbal measures which can eventually lead to removing the player from practice or games as necessary.

Coaching Philosophy – 2022

Likely, some of our players are ready to compete at a high level while others are just getting started in baseball. The challenge is to give all of the kids the chance to progress from where they are starting.

All teams evolve throughout the season. We will be a different team in June than we are in April. Our competition will evolve too. Each week we will make course corrections and progressively teach the game.

Strengths We Must Have:

Good behavior
A willingness to try
Coachable players

Strengths We Want To Have:

A strong work ethic in practice
Bunting
Coachability
Much fewer passed balls than our opponents
Great team attitude
Never quitting
The ability to put the needs of our team ahead of our own

Catching

About 50% of all batters make it to first base either by hit, error or walk. That's about 15 base runners per game. The probability of stealing second base is about 90%. We know the opponents are going to get to second base often. What we have to prevent is letting them score because of our own miscues. This starts by preventing them from stealing third base. We do this by holding the runner close to second. When they do steal, we want the catcher to come out firing with the confidence that the 3rd baseman can handle the throw and the leftfielder can back it up.

If and when they do get to third, our opponents should only score on a batted ball. We have to be the best team in the league at blocking pitches in the dirt.

Confidence!

Confidence trumps everything else in baseball. Confidence is generated by individual results. Individual results come from coachability and motivation (reference being a part of something bigger than yourself). Ironically, most coaches and parents focus only on fundamentals and failure – destroying a player's best asset. As parents and coaches, our challenge is to make 80% of the conversation about what a player does best (positive). Hint – if a player fails at bat or in the field, he's probably aware of it. You don't need to point it out.

Coaches seem to focus only on repetitions and fundamentals. They may spend all their time on gripping the bat, stances, the crow hop, and a two-seam fastball while putting none of their energy into giving their players the most important tool – confidence.

PARENTS: THE GRIP, THE SWING AND THE STANCE ARE THREE OF THE LEAST IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF HITTING A BASEBALL. LAY OFF THESE TOPICS. THIS ISN'T GOLF OR A BATTING CAGE, AND THE BALL IS NOT ON A TEE.

Hitting a baseball in a live game is more like boxing than golf. We'll talk more about managing fear of the ball (including stepping in the bucket), motivation to hit the ball, dealing with pressure and selecting a pitch to swing

at. The grip, stance & swing impact hitting velocity. But you can't talk about that until the player is comfortable and making consistent contact.

So if 80% of the conversation is positive, what's the other 20% reserved for? Well, I believe that all our players want to be successful. So when they're not successful, we need to talk about specifics that could help next time and going forward.

Examples of Appropriate and Inappropriate Coaching Responses

<i>Event</i>	<i>Wrong Coaching Response</i>	<i>Good Coaches Consider</i>
Strikeout-Swinging at bad pitch	"That was way out of the zone!"	Staying out of 0-2/1-2 count Pitch selection techniques
Strikeout-Looking	"Get The Bat off Your Shoulder"	Preparation on deck Confidence/hit with attitude
Stikeout Swinging	(Sneering at the batter)	Give the credit to the pitcher.
Infield error	"You gotta have those!"	Ready position Fatigue? Confidence low?

What we can and can't control...

From bad bounces to bloop singles, there are so many things that are outside of our control. Because of that, it is essential that we do master those things which are in our control:

- Come to games and practices rested, hydrated and ready to play.
- Have a good ready position on every pitch.
- Know the signals.
- Prepare for your at bat in the dugout and on deck.
- Visualize hard hits and great defensive plays.
- Our team is striving for success on the field every time we put our cleats on. That means we work a little harder and have higher standards for ourselves than most teams. For us, we define success as becoming better baseball players, better teammates, and better athletes. Winning is a big part of success for our team.

We always take the field expecting to win. Here are the basic tenants of the Our Way:

The Otters Way

- 1) We're a part of something bigger than ourselves.
- 2) We can control our value to the team in large part by the effort we put into our practice, knowing the playbook and our pre-game preparation.
- 3) We are in a ready position on every pitch.
- 4) We're all responsible for each other. We look out for each other.

- 5) **“What can you do for us” takes priority over “How can we entertain you.”**
- 6) **We will make errors and strikeouts – the umpires will make errors and so will our coaches – that’s what happens in baseball.**
- 7) **We never compromise our sportsmanship, and we never let our opponent compromise our sportsmanship.**
- 8) **We can win any game we play and we can hit any pitcher we face.**
- 9) **It’s always better to do something (even if it’s wrong) than do nothing.**
- 10) **We care more about stopping the ball than getting a bruise.**
- 11) **We’re always honest with each other.**

Line-Ups

What are we thinking when we fill out the line-ups? We think about a lot of things. Some players just want to play. Others are concerned about their position and where they bat in the order. To help you attain your personal goals, here is a quick rundown of what we’re considering when we fill out the line-up.

- 1) What gives us the best chance to win?
- 2) Who may be tired, sore or hurt?
- 3) Who had a good, focused pre-game warm-up? Were they here 30 minutes before warm-up?
- 4) How is their confidence level?
- 5) Have they practiced at that particular position and shown competence?

Some other things about the line-up: At our level, there are no “key” positions. Every player can win the game for us defensively.

So What Are We Looking For?

	Good Ready Position	Quick Release	Strong Throwing Arm	Good Foot Speed	Gets In Front of Ball	Good Concentration	Gets Glove On Ground	Inspires Confidence From Teammates	Apples Tags at Base	Exceptional Athlete	Communications Leader	Handles Short-hops Well	Blocks Pitches
Catcher													
1st Base													
2nd Base													
Shortstop													
3rd Base													
Left Field													
Center Field													
Right Field													

Defensive plays, rundowns:

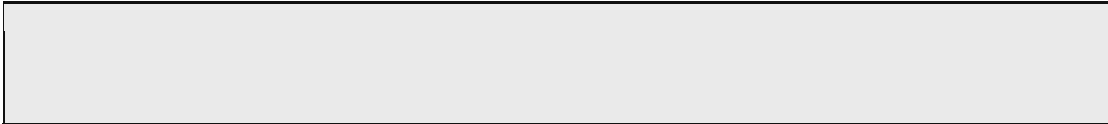
Rundowns are not much different than playing catch. Players at our level make a successful throw and catch 95% of the time. They fumble and fail on a rundown about 40% of the time. Why the discrepancy:

Why Rundowns Fail:

- 1) The fielders stand in the baseline and try to lob the ball over the runner.
- 2) The fielders look at the base runner directly and watch for the ball with their peripheral vision.
- 3) Panic and excitement.
- 4) Selfishness – calling for the ball too quickly and failing to throw the ball to your partner.

How to Make Them Succeed:

- 1) Just play catch – relax.
- 2) Get out of the baseline.
- 3) Receiving player – glove up – give the thrower a target.
- 4) Watch for the ball directly and the runner with your peripheral vision.
- 5) Throw with medium velocity – don't gun it or lob it.



Offensive Signals

We will use an indicator plus a signal. An indicator is a sign which precedes the sign to do a play. It will change from game to game. For example, if we make the indicator one hand on the stomach, then the steal sign is: *hand to the stomach / one hand down one leg*.

<u>Sign</u>	<u>Play</u>	<u>Action</u>
Arms Folded	Take	Do Not Swing
Plus Hand Across Chest	Bunt	Bunt the ball or take if outside the zone.
Hand Down Leg	Steal	Runner steals, batter free to swing or take.
Indicator, Plus hand to either ear	Slug Bunt	Fake bunt, then swing.
First Base Coach Points to Second	Take Second	Done when you're in a 1 st & 3 rd situation and you draw a walk.
Wipeoff	Two fists hitting	Removes all signs given.

2022 West Jeff

Goals

- To be a part of something bigger than ourselves
- To learn individual accountability.
- To learn discipline, sportsmanship and teamwork.
- To strengthen friendships and have a great time.
- To be better in June than in April.

Assumptions

- Baseball is a worthy pursuit, like choir, debate, acting, dance, playing a musical instrument and other sports.
- It's more fun to succeed than to fail.
- If it's worth doing, it's worth doing right.

Concepts We Employ

- We ask each player, "What can you do to help our team?" This takes precedent over the alternative, "How can our team accommodate your wishes?"
- You generally can control your value to our team with your practice habits, effort and attention.
- Ball players are a-dime-a-dozen, it's the attitude that makes the difference.
- As coaches, we are always truthful.
- Your son is in good hands.

Expectations

- Come to practice ready to work and improve.
- Support your teammates.
- Overcome obstacles such as bad umpiring, poor sportsmanship, fatigue & pain (to a degree), and bad breaks.