

Thank You Parents

I first of all want to say I appreciate the trust that you all have placed in me to coach your son. I further appreciate your willingness to allow me to do my job for your son, even when you may either disagree, or get upset/defensive about things that I might say, or my playing time decisions during the weekends. The responsibility I feel to help your kids is something I do not take lightly, and I am very humbled at the fact that so many of you have made the decision to allow my experience in the game of baseball to be something you want to be passed along to your children. The irony here is while I am very humbled, and appreciative of the trust you have placed in me as your son's coach, I also understand that to best serve your son I must, from this moment forward, ignore you :)

I want to take a few moments to lay out what you can expect from me, and also my expectations of you. Please feel free to contact me if you have further questions about anything you read.

Travel Ball in General

You all have made a decision to get your son involved in a competitive baseball environment. With that decision must come an understanding that this is not a recreational baseball program, and it will not be treated as one - your son must earn his time on the field. The best players will play, and your son is expected to earn his time on the field through his own performance.

What you are paying for:

It is important that everyone understand that the monthly fee, and any additional fees for tournaments, uniforms, etc...are for me to coach your son, not play your son. This is not a pay to play organization, but a pay to learn organization. Playing time will always be based on the current available roster, and which players give the team the best chance to compete and win. I do not have a child in the program, and I am not off-the-field friends with any of the parents in the program. In addition, the fee for all players is identical. Therefore, there is no political, nor financial incentive for me to play one child over another.

My coaching philosophy

1. Competing to win means everything
2. Whether we actually won means nothing

This is youth baseball, and the reality is years down the road what the actual outcome of these games will have zero impact on all the meaningful components of their character. However, the lessons learned from working together as a team, and competing to win these games will have a tremendous impact on who they become as adults. I want everyone to understand this about my approach: If you allow your kid to believe that these games mean nothing then you are doing them a tremendous disservice, because I promise you he will play the game like it means nothing to him, which is a huge disservice to his teammates who are given their all to try and win. At the same time, if on the ride home you are constantly harping on, or riding your kid for what happened in the last game then you are also doing him a disservice. Fact is I want to de-sensitize your child to the outcomes of these games, so that they are not sensitive to the pressure and adversity while playing in them. If you ride your kid about what has already happened then you are actually making him more sensitive to results, and therefore the next big situation he faces he will be worried about the awful ride home with you if he fails, and not the awesome opportunity he has to succeed.

My approach, and your child's confidence

My approach on the field is very honest, and very matter-of-fact. This is calculated, and designed to build confidence in your child **over time** (which is the only way to build **real** confidence). The downside to this is it will very possibly hurt your child's feelings in the short term, especially if he has a fragile ego (which I will not cater to). Now while I do believe that as a coach I do have to make adjustments on how I deal with kids based on their temperaments, catering to a fragile ego is not one I am willing to make. I am not going to lie to your kid by telling him he's doing a good job when he's not. I am not going to praise him for doing something he is expected to do (like running after a ball - he's supposed to do that). This isn't fairyland, and I'm not going to cripple your kids by creating an environment that does not mirror the real world, and prepare them for the challenges they will face in their futures. At the same time, it is awesome to see the pride in those kids faces when I do praise them for something they did well. Kids are smart, and they know when you're blowing smoke, versus when they are truly deserving of a compliment. Therefore, the pride, and sense of accomplishment they feel when I pat them on the back for something they genuinely accomplished through their own hard work means a whole lot more than if I had given them a bunch of meaningless, fake compliments for things they didn't earn along the way. Less is more - they will earn what they get from me. When they do, that ride home will be awesome, and well worth the wait!

Here's the deal: If your child does things well I will let him know. If he doesn't do things well I will let him know. If his performance won us a game I will let him know. If his performance lost us a game I will let him know. The reason I do this is I want to desensitize my players to their "on-the-field" failures. When you think about it, the best competitors are the ones that in pressure situations don't think about the possibility of failing, they only think about the possibility of succeeding. This approach can only be obtained through an understanding, and an acceptance of the failure possibility. If you don't play well we will lose. If you go out there and walk a bunch of people I will take you off the mound. If you don't compete with 2 strikes you will sit the bench. In the past I have heard some parents make an excuse for their child's performance by saying that they're scared that if they make a mistake they will be taken out of the game. First of all, I will never take a kid out of a game for making a mistake (unless it involves poor sportsmanship, or a lack of effort). I completely disagree with those parents who have brought that to my attention. If your kid is scared of being pulled from a game for making a mistake, or scared of the fact that he has to compete with his teammates for his playing time, then I promise you he is also the kid that is scared to compete against our opponent during times of adversity, or high pressure situations. That is something I want to change in him, and I promise you **I will** do it, but only if you empower me to do it by not trying to "rescue" your son's feelings those times I may hurt them.

What should you do if I hurt your son's feelings? Nothing! Let his feelings be hurt, and then let him get over it. This is a necessary part of his training as a ballplayer. Do not cater to your son's fragile ego. His fragile ego is something he needs to get over, not protect. If his feelings get hurt, he'll get over it - trust me. And then the next time he'll get over it more quickly, and more quickly, until his feeling don't get hurt anymore when it comes to something that happens on the field (a failure, or a harsh criticism from a coach). The only way your son won't get over his hurt feelings is if you as a parent don't let him, by constantly making a big deal about it. You parents have hired me to train your sons in the game of baseball. This includes both the physical, and mental skills necessary for your son to gain real confidence to succeed in a very mean, failure-based game. My job is not to be your son's friend, it's to be his coach. I would rather your son get mad at me in the short term, in exchange for equipping him to be personally successful in the long term. It's not about my feelings, nor my desire to be liked. It is about your son's development, and future ability to handle adversity, success, failure, and challenge.

One last note on this...I am asking for your trust in my baseball experience, and I'm not talking about x's and o's here. I have seen it time, and time again that the players that dominated the game when they were 12 are not playing anymore by the time they're 18. This is because they never had a coach challenge them, or hold them accountable for anything when they were young (this may have been because their respective coaches didn't have the experience to know how important that was for them mentally in the long run, or quite possibly they were worried that kid might have quit and run to another team that would have told them how great they were every 2 seconds). Regardless of the reason, what will inevitably happen is these players will eventually be challenged with a tough situation that they have not been properly prepared to handle (they will have someone competing with them for playing time that is every bit as good as them, they will play a game where they strike out 4 times because they're facing a kid that's going to be a first round draft pick, or they will have a coach that simply doesn't think they're good enough to start on his team). This is when those players quit, and justify it by blaming someone else (most often their current coach). Another excuse I have heard often is "the game just isn't fun anymore." That quote translated actually means "the game suddenly got hard, and I don't have the mental toughness to handle the failure that I'm now being subjected to." I mean it can't be "their" fault right? Because up until that point they've never had anyone tell them anything other than how great they were!

This will **NOT** happen to my players, because I won't allow it. I am committed to teaching my players so many things about the game of baseball. However, if I had to nail down the single most important thing that your child will learn by joining, and finishing Carolina Elite it's to show up the next day...period. My players will learn resilience. My players will learn how to be held accountable. My players will learn how to handle a situation where they think they are being treated unfairly, by not simply running away from it, and blaming someone else in the process. Most important, my players will learn to persevere through a situation that they perceive as unfair, so that when, not "if", it happens they will be the players that show up the next day!

Playing Time Issues

There will no doubt be issues involving playing time. I cannot make everyone on every team happy, nor will I try. Do not address a playing time issue on the field, or during a tournament weekend - I can promise you you will not like the response you get from me if you do this. If you do have questions about playing time they need to be addressed during the week - my weekly schedule is very hit or miss, but if I'm ever unavailable to talk my phone will be on silent, so you don't ever have to worry about interrupting me while I'm on another job. Moreover, if the kid you are talking about doesn't have your DNA, then stop talking.

Relationship with me

My relationship with you has zero effect on how I coach your child, or how much he plays. I do not make an attempt to establish relationships with parents, to the point where I can probably be described as abrasive, or arrogant at times, and this is intentional. My 100% focus is on doing my job for your kids - that is all I care about. Now it is always nice to be liked, and so if you want to be

nice to me because you like me then great. However, if you're doing it because you think it will help your kid get on the field more then you're wasting your time.

My assistant coaches

Give them a break - their job stinks. You are paying me, not them, and they know it. They are volunteering to do a thankless job, one that they know they can't do as well as me (they don't know the kids like I do, they don't know the rules like I do, etc...). However, I simply can't be at all the games, and I couldn't do this without their help, of which I am incredibly grateful.

At the same time at the end of the day the decisions I make on the parents I choose to help me does reflect on the program. With that said, I am very observant. I also consider myself a sane, and rational person. Therefore, if you are a sane, and rational person, and you have concerns over the decision making, or general behavior of one of my assistants, then chances are I see it too. Give me some time to do things in an appropriate way - I promise you I will make decisions that I feel have to be made in the best interest of the program - I consider that an important part of my job, and I have no reservations about doing it.

My Expectations from Parents (the 3 big don't's)

1. Don't address a playing time issue on the field

2. Don't hover around the dugout. If you want to come give your child a gatorade/snack then that's fine. However, please be aware that your constant "hovering" is taking your child's focus away from the game, his coach, and his teammates. Give your son to me a few hours every tournament weekend, I promise I will give them back!

3. Do not undermine the decisions I make, by allowing your son to hear that you disagree with them. I don't care if you disagree with them at all (you probably will disagree with a lot of them). However, allowing your son to hear your displeasure undermines my authority as his coach. He will then think that the mistake was mine (not his), and the lesson will not be learned. Moreover, that lack of respect for my authority will then spill over to his teammates, and I cannot have that. Therefore, if I feel that your actions are undermining what I am trying to do with your son, I will remove him from the program. After all, I don't want to be paid for a job that you will not allow me to do. At the same time I believe this is a two way street. I will always, always, always back up your authority with your kids. If your child is messing up in school, misbehaving at home/school, etc, or engaging in any other sort of behavior that goes against the values that you are trying to instill in him, I am happy to back you up in whatever disciplinary decision you make. This includes allowing me to bench him for games, days, entire tournaments, etc... Please don't ever hesitate to ask me for help if your child is not living up to his obligations in your family, church, or school - you have my 100% support.

Parental Conduct

Everybody knows this, but I will continue to repeat it. Please be mindful of what comes out of your mouth during our tournaments. We are all human, and I understand that in the spur of the moment sometimes we might say/yell things that we regret. There is a huge difference between that, and a parent that repeatedly makes premeditated comments that are hurtful, and insulting towards another player. Many of you have told me you have joined this program because I am not influenced by parents (which is true). The best players will play, regardless of who they are, or who their parents are. I don't want your opinion of where your son should play, hit in the lineup, or your negative evaluation of another player (if you want to compliment another player feel free)! I do, however, want your feedback if it relates to the following:

- If it helps me, help your son. I realize that my kids look up to me, and so many times would never tell me if something was bothering them, or if they didn't understand something that I did. Therefore, if your son has confided in you something that you feel I need to address then I want to know that. If I know what they are confused about, I can take them aside and explain it to them so that their confidence doesn't continue to suffer. Also be aware that what you think may be helping your son, I may feel is coddling your son. Every child, and every player is different, and any coach that is worth his salt knows, respects, and is willing to adjust his approach to each player based on these differences. The challenge for me is always going to be trying to connect with each kid based on what they respond to best, without doing something (or catering to a pattern of behavior) that I know will be crippling them in the future, based on the reality of how the game is approached, and how future teams and coaches will treat them.

Parent to Parent issues

Now I do believe that we have some of the coolest, and classiest families out there when we travel and play in these tournaments, and I am very proud of the way we as an organization conduct ourselves. However, simple law of probability dictates that you will not like every parent of every player on your team. Please do not bring me in on your issues with other parents. I simply don't care who you like, nor what they said about this or that (including what they said about me). I am not going to be responsible for the behavior of people on the other side of the fence. If you make the choice to sit in a group of parents during our games, then

you are making the decision to open yourself up to hearing stuff both that may be positive, but also stuff that you would have preferred not to hear. If you get upset easily over people who are constantly running their mouth, then my best advice is to do what I have seen a lot of parents do, and what I have done when I've gone and watched some of my kids play with their other teams - go sit by yourself somewhere and enjoy the opportunity to watch your son play in peace and quiet. The only issues I will address involving parental conduct are issues that impact my ability to coach the kids - behavior that is either distracting to them while they are on the field, or undermining my authority with them as my players.

Exceptions to talking about other kids

1. If it's me talking to another player in the program. I will very often let players on different teams know what is going on in the other games, both good and bad. If your son has messed up, I may tell a player on the other team what your son did, both as a teaching point, and also to let them know that all players are subject to the same performance evaluation (this often works great if an older player has messed up - I can pass that along to a younger player. It helps not only to teach them, but also for them to see that an older player that they look up to makes mistakes just like they do, and also how the older player handles my criticism (they are accountable to it), which is a great teaching moment for my younger players.

2. If it's one of my volunteer dad coaches talking to me about the game that I was not at. I have to allow my volunteer coaches to feel they can talk freely with me about what happened in the game. If you think this is a privilege for them (they get to talk about your kid to me, but you can't talk to me about theirs) think again. Remember they have agreed to do a thankless job. I can't tell you how many times I've heard parents, and kids say "Yea Moli's here" as I'm running up to the field from another game. My volunteer dad's hear that too guys, and I guarantee you it doesn't make them feel all warm inside. They have volunteered to do a job where they can't succeed, and 99% of the opinions of their job performance will be negative. It's not a privilege what they're doing, it's a sacrifice - thank you very much dad's. Also, please keep in mind that I am capable of thinking, and processing information I receive from my volunteer coaches. For example, I know that many of the dad's may have a slight, subconscious agenda to relay information to me in a manner that least implicates their son for any mistake. If I hear something that doesn't sound quite right, I am fully capable of interpreting the information to come up with the most logical conclusion (i.e. a dad whose son is constantly making bad throws tells me his son made a good throw and the kid that never misses a ball dropped it for an error....well.....hmmmm.....okay dad, I might follow up on that one with some innocent, yet fully loaded questions to the kids themselves to find out if that is what really happened on that play). Bottom line is don't think anybody's son is getting an unfair advantage over yours because of what you perceive their relationship with me to be. Your son will play if he deserves it based on how he practices, and how he performs when he gets his on field opportunities.

Financial obligations

You are expected to pay for all your team's tournaments and games, regardless of whether you are able to attend. If I ask you to play for another team, you will not have to pay (that tournament has already been paid for by their actual roster).

You are expected to keep your account current, and bills are to be paid the beginning of the month, as soon after you receive your monthly statement as possible. Please keep in mind that I am billing you for upcoming tournaments that I must pay for at the time of the tournament. Therefore, if you wait until the end of the month to pay your bill, I have effectively loaned you the money for your son to play in those tournaments. You can imagine with 3 - 4 teams playing each weekend at \$300+ per team, those monthly loans can quickly add up if a lot of people are paying their bills after playing in their tournaments each month.

If your account is not current your son will not be allowed to play unless you have contacted me directly, and acceptable arrangements have been made.

1. I am not going to nickel and dime this. With the fluctuation in tournament prices, team budgets, etc., it is very common for accounts to fluctuate between small red and black numbers. I don't care about this. If your account has a balance of \$4.68 on it because your team budget was adjusted after you made your payment I'm not going to enforce that.

2. I will notify you prior to the weekend when your account is past due, and your child is ineligible. Therefore, you don't have to worry about showing up to a tournament weekend and being blindsided, and embarrassed by your son not playing. That's inappropriate, and I would never do that. Therefore, if you don't hear anything from me your account is in good standing.

Lastly, I prefer not to handle any payment in person. Please mail all payments to P.O. Box 2203, Greenville, NC 27836. When I am at practice, or games I am simply preoccupied with my job as coach, and am not in a position to handle money. It has happened too many times where a check that was handed to me at a tournament has gone missing. Please mail it, or set up your online banking to mail a check each month. Thank you very much for this. I know a lot of you don't like to pay your bills this way, and I appreciate your willingness to do it with me!

Playing on teams outside Elite

All Elite players are welcome to play with any other team(s) on any weekend when your Elite age group is not playing, or your age group is playing, and you have not been invited to join their roster (in the event I have more than one team in a certain age group). The bottom line is you may not decline an invitation to play in your Elite age group to play for someone else.

Team Rosters

Team rosters are never set, and will be adjusted as the program/teams add/drop players throughout the season.

Joining mid-season

Any player may join Elite at any time during the year. The only exception to this is if the player is quitting another team mid-season against that coaches wishes to do so. If you have made a commitment to another team you need to fulfill that commitment before joining an Elite team (practice squad may be joined at any time). If the opposing coach is okay with the way in which you left (i.e. it was handled appropriately, was a mutual decision, etc.) then I will make an exception. I will have a conversation with your former coach before allowing you to join mid-season, so do keep that in mind.

Quitting mid-season

Players that quit Elite mid-season will not be allowed to return to the program. Current members are expected to fulfill your commitment to Elite teams, just like I expect new members to fulfill their commitment to their previous teams. There are always exceptions, and in the event your decision to leave was done in both an appropriate manner, and for an appropriate reason then I will take that into consideration if you decide you want to rejoin down the road.

Players that swap rosters for a weekend

I am committed to putting the best teams on the field each weekend, and this includes younger players that are performing at a high level. When I bring a player from a younger team to your tournament, he will be treated the exact same as the actual rostered members of the team when it comes to playing time decisions. It's not fair to ask someone to give up their off weekend, and then not play them because they're not "technically" on that team's roster. In addition, it's not fair to the other members of that team to not bring a player who can help them win, simply because I want to "protect" a rostered kid's spot on that team. This gets back to my commitment to the team over the individual - there are no "protected" players in this program.

Final Thoughts

All of you have chosen to get your child involved in travel baseball. In doing so, you have made a decision to engage in a higher level of competitive baseball. Make no mistake about it, travel baseball is very competitive, and everyone needs to understand that. When we play in tournaments, we are being matched up against other teams that are recruited, and in most cases are all-star teams from their respective recreational leagues. Because of this, I cannot treat this organization as an "everybody plays" utopia. Doing so blindly would result in games that would consistently get out of hand resulting in mercy rule blowouts, and our players being completely demoralized after almost every game. This is not rec ball, and will not be treated as such, so it's important that everyone understands this when you make the decision to play Carolina Elite Baseball.

Thanks for reading, and I hope this helps you get a better idea of what Carolina Elite Baseball is all about, and my approach to each of these tournament weekends. See you on the field!

Coach "Moli"