

# BATTLIN' BULLDOG BASEBALL PHILOSOPHY



## BATAVIA BATTLIN' BULLDOG BASEBALL



As you are aware, cuts are made at each level of our program. With this in mind, we believe we have the best baseball players from each class in our school. In selecting these players we consider depth of positions, game situations, and determine which players have the best ability to contribute to our program. We make all decisions as a staff at each level, discussing each player as an individual. As a result, those who make the squad are seen as the best in their classes by the entire staff, and you should be proud of your son's accomplishment. As we near the first games, your son's coaches will speak with him individually about what is expected, and the player should be clear as to what his initial role is on the squad. As the season progresses, these conversations will continue as roles change, or develop.

### **PLAYING TIME PHILOSOPHY:**

As a Freshman, your son can expect a reasonable amount of playing time; however, everyone will not get equal playing time, nor will each player necessarily play in every game. Additional B games will go a long way in addressing this issue. As the games progress the coaches will substitute based on strategy and situations. Pitching rotations and development of certain positions are considerations that are made on a daily basis. Understand that certain players will earn more playing time based on a program decision. As an example, a player that may end up being a three-year varsity player may play everyday, most innings. In turn, he may be moved to the sophomore squad to fill a spot there. We make all such decisions as a staff.

At the Sophomore level playing time may become more limited for some players. Core players will start everyday in order for the team to compete. Again, we look closer at potential as varsity players. That is not to say that certain players are slated for future line-ups, but it would be silly for us not to consider the future of the program as players develop. At this level certain players do begin to stand out more on the field. On the sophomore team roles become more defined. Yes, we do want all players to get on the field and have experience, but to a greater extent, that is determined by situation and strategy.

As Varsity players, the competition between three classes can become quite intense. Seniors, juniors and sophomores (very rarely, Freshmen) help us find the chemistry in a great variety of situations, for the betterment of the team. Some players do become Bull Pen Catchers, and others Pinch Hitters and Courtesy Runners, or Designated Hitters. Their roles are very important, but their time on the field will be limited compared to those in starting roles. Each game contains entirely new situations, and we need each player to understand their importance in the scheme.

With all this in mind, we will not have spur of the moment conversations with parents about playing time. We will do what we believe is best for the program and team in our scheme and philosophy. If you have concerns about your son's playing time, we will have a scheduled conference with you, as mentioned in the parent-athlete contract. We believe that part of the maturing process of your son is for him to be able to speak openly with his coach about his concerns.

## **SUPPORT YOUR SON AND SUPPORT HIS TEAM**

Your son should be very clear about what his role is within the team and program. If he isn't, he needs to speak with his coaches so that his expectations are clear. Not everyone is happy being a situation player, bull pen catcher, pinch runner, etc. GOOD! Their drive to improve only makes the team and program better. As players prove themselves they will be given greater responsibility. We have many examples of players who rose through the ranks to be great contributors. Support your sons in this venture! Don't knock a player or coach down to try and make them feel better. If you are belittling others with your son, at home, it has a huge negative impact on the team and program, and WE BELIEVE THAT SUCH CONVERSATIONS ARE DESTRUCTIVE. **If you or your son believe that he is being treated unfairly, or not given adequate playing time, the player should speak to the coach, man to man. We will NOT speak to parents about such issues if we haven't spoken to the player first.** The parent obviously has his or her son's best interests in mind, but is not always aware of the circumstances. When a parent calls without the player speaking to the coach first, both parent and coach become defensive, and such conversations are rarely constructive. Have your son talk to us first, if he still thinks there is a problem that has not been resolved, then call Coach Holm, and he will set up time to speak about the issue.

The staff wants to win, too. The staff spends a great deal of time and effort trying to better our team and program, and the Coaches will not treat a player unfairly or sit a player for personal reasons. The staff is dedicated to Bulldog Baseball. The coaches will be examples of men of strong character and integrity. Any concerns will be addressed fairly with the best interests of the entire program in mind. Your sons should not hesitate to speak to any coach. The staff will work hard to earn the players' trust.

## **PROGRAM CHARACTER**

Over the past decade, schools and parents have become very aware of problems that have arisen from intense competition, namely aggressive physical violence and verbal abuse. We have all seen players, coaches, parents and officials involved in horrible displays of poor sportsmanship at the professional, college and prep levels of competition. **Such behavior has no place in any community, let alone ours, and is a black mark on all that is good about the spirit of athletics and competition. We expect CLASS and RESPECT within our program from the coaching staff, players and parents. Anything less is not acceptable.**

We must all work hard to show that our program is a class act. We must all refrain from yelling AT umpires, coaches and players. Do not reactively confront other parents, players, umpires or members of the coaching staff. If an issue arises that you feel must be addressed, contact Coach Holm so that we may calmly address the issue. As emotional people, it is easy to get caught in the moment, but as the Coaches talk to the players about discipline and the ability to have control of oneself, we will expect this from everyone involved with the program. We will focus on being **PROACTIVE** as opposed to being reactive, and earn our reputation as a class organization.

The expectation of respectful conduct will continue off the field. Players in our program, like the parents and Coaches, are expected to be good citizens on the bus, in the locker room, in the halls, in the classroom and in the community. In order to help players understand these expectations, and to help develop relationships within the Program, we have a **BIG BROTHER-LITTLE BROTHER PROGRAM** that hooks varsity, sophomore and freshman players up for mentoring and relation building.

## **STRATEGY**

As there are many coaches and many players, there are many philosophies in terms of baseball strategy. I think it is important to know how a coach and his program approach a game. We look for this more than anything else when we scout. Of course a team's personnel is important, but knowing how a coach uses his players is more important. All coaches have said, "If I had that kid on this club, I'd..." As an example, we know that Morris is the 'Running Redskins' and they will run the bases even when they may not have the players to do it. They want to force mistakes, whereas another team in our conference is very conservative. If I had their speed we'd run all the time. Other teams like Minooka and Glenbard South hit to opposite field so much you think it is just to prove they can.

The Battlin' Bulldogs are the same way. We like to be aggressive, but using the element of surprise. WE have stolen the plate several times. In fact, we beat Wheaton North in the Sectional Final game in 2009 with a stolen plate play. We beat West Aurora in extra innings in 2006 stealing home, and we were successful beating Minooka with a trick stolen plate in 2004. We like the delayed steal, we like to hit and run, and we love to bunt, especially runners from first to third, or even with two strikes when we are really good at it. In fact, two consecutive squeeze plays beat Geneva and started us on a seven game win streak to come back from six games out and win conference in 2010. WE work on base running a lot, particularly getting into scoring position. Most teams don't. We want to score. That is our main goal. Why wouldn't it be? We believe if we can score a run an inning we will win. It worked when we stole 11 bases against Oswego to win the Regional Championship game in 2006.

Of course, scoring a run an inning sounds great, but you must have a sound defense and pitching staff. We teach that the first one to 21 outs will win. Sounds silly put that way when everyone knows you get them in threes, but it is a point we push. In other words: "get the out!" Take the sacrifice bunt they give you. Don't make a risky throw. Don't dive on the line in the outfield. Some times the best play is to not make one at all. "Eat it!" Be active in the infield and back up throws. At the same time we have a solid play book that puts our players in the best defense for any given situation. They must know it. Miscommunication can cost us greatly.

Pitchers need to know hitters. We chart opposing hitters and have a game plan before taking the mound. If a batter doesn't hit the outside pitch, we'll know it, and of course that's what he'll get. If he is the team's best hitter, we won't let him hurt us. We'll pitch around him. We can stifle a walk, not an extra base hit. The great Viking hitter, Nick Herrera only had a handful of hits against us in 4 years. We wouldn't let him have the chance to beat us, and he knew it. It takes patience and pitchers knowing how to not "pitch too good." Our pitchers need to know how to pitch in and out of the zone, situationally. A pitcher who throws strikes every pitch will get bombed. Batters will "dial-up" on him. Because this is such a difficult job, we rest our starting pitchers and maintain a strict rotation on the calendar.

We make sure that our pitchers build stamina and they will run when they are off the mound and out of the game. This is priority to get the blood out of their arms. They will ice immediately

afterwards to keep that blood from coming back. Generally, at 90 pitches, starting pitchers begin to lose, or have lost effectiveness. Of course, this varies from pitcher to pitcher, and level, but they all know the process to keep them as healthy as possible, and they are aware of the plan BEFORE they take the mound. Our trainer helped institute this program and is instrumental in monitoring the health of our staff.

Lastly, we want to keep our bench as involved as possible. We will pinch run, pinch hit, and make sound defensive changes situationally. Starters may re-enter, so we use this option. We may take out a starter to let him get some batting practice, or go to the bull-pen to warm up for relief. Those on the bench must be ready to enter and fill their role. This has a dual purpose: It keeps everyone in focus and involved and it allows strengths to be used where and when they are most needed. In our philosophy, this makes pinch hitters and runners VERY important. "Courtesy" runners were incredibly valuable in our 2009 state run. We couldn't have gotten their without them.

## **PITCHING PROGRAM**

Batavia Baseball clearly recognizes the importance of developing all players, but pitching is a premium. With this in mind, the Bulldogs have a program specifically for pitchers that teaches our philosophy, drills not only the physical but mental part of being on the mound, and develops those skills with continuity for each pitcher's career with us. Our pitching coach will organize rotations, off day work-outs, new pitches, scout reports and pitching game plans, and monitor weekly progress through in-depth stats. He will communicate daily with each head coach to ensure the efficient progress of our entire staff.

## **SUMMER BALL**

During the summer we witness a metamorphosis of our program. We have two teams instead of three, and two classes, Juniors and Sophomores come together as the new Varsity squad. In addition, our Freshmen take on a few extra players, and further hone their solidarity as a squad. We take this time very seriously, not in terms of wins and losses *per se*, but in terms of forming a new chemistry. Players may move into new positions, take on a greater role, and develop maturity and responsibility, while their pals are out whiling away the hours. We expect that our players also take this time seriously. We expect their commitment and their best effort, as we pull together all of our talents to provide another strong Battlin' Bulldog Baseball Club.

This is also a very important family time. We believe that family is more important than getting to play this wonderful game. Family vacations should be a part of your summer. We ask though, that your son provide us with a **written list of dates or a calendar** that tells us when he knows he won't be able to attend a game due to a trip. Please don't expect us to remember by just mentioning it to us.

We also want players to be two and three sport athletes. We are well aware that other programs have demands similar to ours. We do want to make it clear that we want your best effort to balance that schedule. Again, a list or calendar that provides dates your son will be missing is appreciated. We know how much running between sports our athletes do, and we want to be sure that we can maintain a successful, positive growth for the Baseball Program, as well as others here at Batavia High School.

Lastly, we are also aware that many players play on tournament or traveling teams. Our IHSA Summer League formed with the idea that High School Teams would play during the week and

travel and tournament teams would play on the weekends. We hold to that. While some players may seek more games than what our league schedules and want to play on the weekends, we expect that they will be with us for the four games we have scheduled during the week. As mentioned earlier, vacations and other BHS contests are accepted.

In recent years, we have had enough players to carry a split squad through the summer. This allows us to tell players specifically when they will be playing. They will not show for a game and not play. With this in mind, be as specific with your calendars as you can.

## **OFF SEASON WORK OUTS**

Baseball's off season is from August through February. We begin strength and conditioning workouts in the fall for players not in a fall sport. These workouts include conditioning, core, long toss and weights. Usually these workouts are at the West Main Complex. In early November starts our workouts for those athletes not in a winter sport. Often times players organize games or activities on their own during these two hour sessions. **COACHES ARE NOT ALLOWED TO ORGANIZE THIS TIME.** We may open the gym and provide equipment, but we may not run activities or coach players. More than anything it is a time for players not in another sport to stay active and build team relationships.

Strength training, cross training and conditioning take place during this off season. A good core workout (Abs, hips and buttocks) is essential to a baseball player as a hitter and fielder, as well as pitcher. Any weights should be with dumb bells, cables or bands. This allows for full range and the flexibility that is essential for a mobile athlete. We also do a good deal of footwork and speed development. Any gym can provide trainers that can demonstrate or coach these activities, but we prefer team mates do these workouts together. Our off season work-outs cannot be required. It is at this time that players decide their own level of commitment and push each other. With all this in mind, we do want players to play basketball, or wrestle if they want to. We do hope players can get into accelerated PE, but we would still like to see them with their team-mates at team work-outs. Again, teammates are important in pushing each other.

In January we begin open-gym workouts for players to hit and throw. Again, coaches are not allowed to organize practices or drills.

## **TWO SPORTS DURING THE SPRING**

As much as we desire for our players to be well rounded athletes, and we want them to balance their time in the summer, we do not condone two sports during the spring. Classes and study are most important. Practices are too intense. The game schedule is too demanding, and we believe it is not healthy for the athlete. In the spring, unlike the summer, this has the athlete burning the candle at both ends. Not only is it unhealthy for your son, it is not good for the Baseball Program. We do believe that dedication to a team means that a player will be giving his all to the family that we create here. Cutting corners to do two things at once undermines that commitment. If a player feels that he must give another team time during the spring, we will release him from ours.

## **PRACTICES, ABSENCES AND GAMES**

We believe whole heartedly that baseball is a strategic team sport, and while much of the game is based on individual performance, it is the ability of a team to gel together that makes it a winning

team. Chemistry develops in practice. Players get to know each other personally, but also technically. They learn to read each other and how they will react to any given situation. The same is true for relationships between Coaches and players to their coaches. With this in mind, it is essential that a player is at practice. He should be on time (BULLDOG TIME) to practice, and prepared to start hitting on all cylinders when practice begins.

A player may miss a practice if it is excused. Academic work and family situations (Weddings, funerals, family situations) that must come during practice time are legitimate and are excused. Concerts, ball games, or other activities are not included in excused activities. I myself love concerts and ball games, but must make arrangements to a more suitable time when it comes during practice times. Allowing such activities to be excused would be counter to what we are trying to achieve. I once played on a team of that caliber. We were all headed in different directions. It was like six people in a canoe paddling in different ways. We went nowhere. In fact, we stunk. Unexcused absences will not be tolerated. Players must earn their place back onto the field, and expect that to be an arduous process.

Many Freshman come into the spring with Spring Break trips already planned for them. They can do nothing about that, but we do have a schedule that includes 6-8 games during our Spring Break. When players are gone, it hurts the team. We understand that Freshman families may have already made plans. These will miss the number of games that they were gone over break in addition to the Break. This will realign them with the team, and prepare them for the games ahead. Our Sophomore and Varsity players know that they don't go on spring break as a baseball player. It is a spring sport. Such trips are also counter productive to any success we have had in preparation for the season. We encourage families to plan their trips as the school year ends. I realize that this sounds very demanding. But the same team that I was on that allowed players to miss practices allowed players to leave for Spring Break...You guessed it. We never recovered...and we stunk.

## **ACADEMICS**

Above all we need to remember that we are in school to learn. We believe that a great deal of learning about becoming a responsible dedicated member of a team takes place in the program every day. An essential part of that learning is performing in the classroom. Every year we see a direct correlation between the number of wins and number of Honor Roll students we have. Students are held to a high academic standard in our building and we want to raise that bar even higher. Students who appear on the ineligibility list will cause everyone else in the program "to Run" as a reminder that we are our brother's keeper and we need to make sure that we are getting it done in the classroom.

WE have our own tutoring program for those who need help. Each level has a tutor or two, and the whole program is headed by a Varsity player who has been nominated by his teammates. Hopefully students will seek help when needed and avoid any academic pitfalls. Many people are not motivated to perform in the classroom. If baseball is their one motivator, then we will make sure that it helps our players succeed. At the other extreme, please remember many more players go to college every year with Academic Scholarships than Baseball Scholarships; receiving both is the ultimate sign of success.

Lastly, we demand the same level of respect in the classroom as we expect on the field. If a teacher approaches me about a player's behavior in the classroom, I will speak plainly with the player about the impact on playing time. Further incidents will result in game suspension. Of course with the great men we have in our program that is a rarity indeed!

## **SERVICE**

Our staff also believes that service in the community is important. At some point during the spring or summer each year we have a team service project. Each team develops that project together. If you know of any part of our community that could use the help of the Dogs, please speak to your son's coach.



## **A PERSONAL NOTE**

I want to thank you for letting your son be a part of what we do. I respect the efforts and demands that a young man faces every day. I know the demands it makes on life at home. We all have so many aspects of our lives that can distract us from the important things: building character, becoming responsible, making wise decisions, taking care of our families at home and here, and developing lasting bonds with people that give us fulfillment. These are all important. I think that is why this program is so important to me. It allows me to work with great men like your sons, and the wonderful men who make up our staff. I thank God, and my family, for supporting me in a part of my life that gives me energy every day. AND we get to play Baseball doing it!

I speak for our whole staff,

**THANK YOU!**

Matt Holm	Manager	
Bob Polinsky	Program Pitching Coach	
Larry Gay	Assistant Varsity Coach	
Alex Beckmann	Assistant Varsity Coach	<b>BIG BROTHER PROGRAM</b>
Craig Martin	Head Sophomore Coach	
Billy Vigliotti	Assistant Sophomore Coach	
Brandon O'Kray	Assistant Freshman/Sophomore Coach	
Tim Kauffmann	Assistant Freshman Coach	
Kevin Sullivan	Assistant Freshman Coach	