



## FCA IMPACT BASEBALL HANDBOOK

### OUR MISSION

Train young men in baseball, life, and faith through practicing excellence on the field, serving others, and glorifying Jesus Christ in all things.

### OUR STORY

FCA Impact Baseball was started in response to the rapid growth of travel baseball and the unfortunately all-too-common “win-at-all-cost” philosophy and coaching style. We started the program to be different and to offer an alternative for families and players who want to maximize their baseball skill development in an environment that emphasizes faith and family values.

To that end we focus on the development of the COMPLETE BASEBALL PLAYER and are dedicated to helping our players reach their potential while preparing them to compete at their highest level. This means teaching our players the proper mental and physical approach to all facets of the game while keeping the game fun. At the same time, CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT and SPIRITUAL GROWTH are central to everything we do. As we stay true to our commitment to provide a quality baseball program while giving God the glory—win or lose—we will create a credible platform to share the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

### OUR VALUES

#### Baseball

*Don't you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize?*

*So run to win!*

*1 Corinthians 9:24 (NLT)*

At FCA Impact we believe that a positive and encouraging environment is better for learning and being challenged to grow. All players are important to the overall team and bring unique value to be highlighted. We focus on teaching sound fundamentals and techniques, along with the current mental and strategic aspects of the game.

We play to win, but not at the sacrifice of good sportsmanship and respect for the game.

## Discipleship

*But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.*

*1 Peter 3:15 (ESV)*

Character development and spiritual growth are the foundation for everything we do on and off the field. We strive to create an environment where players can see and learn what it means to be a disciple of Christ wherever they are in their journey.

## Service

*For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

*Mark 10:45 (NIV)*

We believe that service is a fundamental aspect of character development in young men. FCA Impact offers multiple opportunities for players and their families to serve and share the love of Christ within our local communities.

Honoring God in all we say and do is our expectation. We encourage the players to play, the coaches to coach, the umpires to make the calls, and the spectators to positively support the efforts of all involved in the game. We know that God is in control and how we play the game is far more important than the final score.

## MESSAGE TO PARENTS

As with any program, it is important to reaffirm the critical role parents play in building and maintaining a successful program. The success of FCA Impact Baseball is only possible because of the positive support of the parents in the program. This support allows coaches to focus on preparing their players to succeed on and off the field. The following is a list of characteristics of past FCA Impact parents who have been essential in making our baseball teams successful. Remember, your son needs you to be a parent first.

## TEAM PLAY

As team sports go, baseball is one of the most intensely team-conscious. Each team consists of nine to twelve players who are unique in their individual capabilities and yet single-minded in their combined delivery of fundamental skills. Baseball is a game of failure, where three successful at bats in ten attempts is a great accomplishment. In this example failure occurred seven times; learning to deal with those failures is a key to baseball success. Although no one is trying to make a mistake, errors are present in every game. The team's and individuals' performances will improve if parents and players realize this and remain positive. We accept physical mistakes as part of the game, but we strive to

eliminate mental mistakes. That is why our coaches teach players how to anticipate game situations before they happen.

Players must be taught the mental aspects of the game if they are to reach their potential in any sport. Athletes must be taught to positively anticipate the next play instead of focusing on the preceding error. Acceptance of the inevitable errors is a vital component of playing the game of baseball, but it is difficult for these traits to take root in young players when the adults around them fail to set the example. We ask the parents to refrain from criticizing the opposing players, other parents, umpires and especially a teammate of their own child. Being respectful of others will help produce a better athlete and a more enjoyable environment for all.

## **PARENTS COACHING**

Parents are encouraged to continue to work with their son at home. We are blessed in FCA Impact with parents who continue to motivate and develop their sons. They understand their work is supplementary to the Impact program and take suggestions from the coaches on areas for their players to work on. Our parents also realize that we all want the same thing for their son. We want him to reach his potential as a baseball player and also grow into the young man God wants him to become.

We have all seen a parent who coached his son from the stands, bleachers, or from behind the fences surrounding the field. We have all seen a parent make hand or verbal signals. These types of efforts from off the field will likely detract from your son's performance on the field even if they are designed to help. In our infinite spectator enthusiasm, we are often prone to offer instructions to the players that may be contrary to those of the coach. This causes confusion for the players.

Imagine your son is up to bat. His coach has instructed him to take a pitch in order to give the runner at first a chance to steal second. The first pitch is delivered and it is a beauty—right down the middle. Your son takes the pitch just as his coach instructed. Excellent work by your son, but what he hears from you is, "Come on and swing the bat. You can't watch a pitch like that," or maybe worse. Now, whether he was instructed to take a pitch or not it would be better for him to hear, "that's ok, now you've seen one. Be ready to hit the next strike."

Please let the players listen to their coaches. This is not meant to squelch spectator enthusiasm, as your child will love your encouragement. Just try to ignore mistakes (or perceived mistakes) you will likely see, and do not interfere with your son's coaches, especially during the game. Be his biggest fan!

*"I believe that the biggest role of the parent is to be a silent source of encouragement. I think if you ask most boys what they would want their parents to do during the game; they would say 'NOTHING!'"*

*Mike Matheny, former manager of the St. Louis Cardinals  
Matheny Manifesto*

## **PARENTS/SIBLINGS IN THE DUGOUT**

Make sure your son has everything he needs before he gets to the field so there is no reason to visit the dugout before or during the game. Our teams need full concentration on the game; your presence or a sibling's presence in the dugout often becomes a distraction for your son and his teammates. Likewise, players are not allowed to leave the dugout or field of play once warm-ups begin. Hand your player over to the coaching staff and allow them to be in charge for the next three hours. You can sit down and enjoy the game. Players will be given time between games to talk with parents and get food, water, etc at tournaments.

## **PARENT/COACH RELATIONSHIP**

The learning curve for the athlete to reach his potential is steep and at times difficult to navigate. Parents of the athlete may have an even more difficult task in adjusting to the learning curve.

The strength of many programs comes from the trust placed in the coaches to make the right decisions to develop each player in an effort to help him reach his potential. If the coaches spend all of their time talking to parents to reassure them of this basic premise we agreed upon in the beginning of the relationship, it cuts into the time that could be spent developing our players. If a situation develops that you feel needs to be addressed, it has to be handled in a professional manner between you and the manager, and not in the stands, and not during a practice or a game. Please allow a 24-hour window to pass before reaching out to your manager to discuss your son, a game, or practice situation that you feel needs to be addressed. Then approach the manager with a calm question, which will get the best result. If you are not finding the resolution you are seeking after discussions with your manager and coaches, you may bring the situation to one of the FCA Impact board members for mediation. Emailing or calling the contact on the website can be the easiest way to do this.

## **TEAMS**

Teams in the 9U-11U age bracket will be considered Developmental Teams. The goal in our developmental program will be to focus on the fundamentals of baseball skills through repetition and skill improvement drills. Players will be developed at more than one position on the field.

Teams in the 12U-14U age bracket will be considered Feeder Teams. "Feeder" indicates an approach designed to train players in a way that best prepares them for playing baseball at the high school level. Being on a feeder travel team by no means guarantees that a player will be selected for any future travel teams or for a high school baseball team. Players are more likely to focus on more nuanced and higher-level skill development at fewer positions on the field.

The goals of our feeder teams will be:

1. To provide more complex strategy and situational training
2. To provide an opportunity to play in a more competitive environment

3. To provide coaching on more advanced baseball skills

All of our teams will play in a spring/summer league and participate in tournaments. The number of tournaments will be determined by the coaching staff of each team. No team will participate in multi-thousand dollar week long tournaments (i.e. Cooperstown, Ripken, etc).

## **DOMINICAN REPUBLIC TRIP**

Each year the 13U team(s) has the opportunity to go on a mission trip to the Dominican Republic. This is a father-son trip that is coordinated with our partners at GO Ministries and is focused on service of others and baseball. The trip provides opportunities to support an ongoing construction-type project that GO is involved in at the time in the community, partner with 2-3 local churches to spend time with and serve meals to the kids at these churches, and also play a few games of baseball against DR teams.

Significant fundraising is done each year to generate the funds to cover the costs of the trip. It is expected that all players (and their families) going on the trip during a given year will proactively participate in the fundraising events and activities. It is our hope that the entire organization will be supportive of these trips and the fundraising activities, even during the years when their son is not going on the trip.

## **ATTENDANCE EXPECTATIONS**

Attendance is mandatory during the "official" season. You are expected to be on time for practices, meetings and pre-game warm-ups. The team cannot achieve their goals and maintain a winning attitude if players are missing or arriving late for games and/or practices. If you will be late or miss a practice or a game, for any reason, the manager must know about it as soon as possible.

Players are discouraged from being involved with other sports during the "official" travel baseball season from April 1 thru July 15. However, if a player is involved with another sport, they are expected to put their FCA Impact obligation ahead of that other sport during the official travel season. If a player misses a travel baseball game or practice to take part in another sporting event, they should expect it to have a negative impact on their playing time when they return to their team.

## **PLAYING TIME**

As part of our commitment that we are not about winning at all cost, playing time will be shared by all players. However, playing time will not be equal. Attitude, ability, hard work, attendance, and sportsmanship will play a role in determining playing time. In general, all players should expect to sit at least one inning and no player will sit more than three innings.

All players should get playing time at multiple positions to prepare them for high school where they may not get the opportunity to play their primary position.

## **COMMUNITY & FELLOWSHIP**

There will be periodic community events available for player and family involvement. Past events have

included helping at Northern Illinois Food Bank and Feed My Starving Children. Talk to a board member if you have ideas about opportunities for Impact to help in our community.

## **FINANCIAL COMMITMENT**

Team expenses can include (but are not limited to) uniforms, league fees, tournament entry fees, umpire costs, training fees, facility rental, insurance, and equipment costs. Families commit to the team knowing that the cost to operate a team is approximately \$1,330 per player. All managers, coaches, and board members are volunteers; all elements of the fees go toward paying for the operation of the program and for the benefit of the boys.

Player fees are \$1,330 due in four equal payments:

- \$332.50 immediately upon acceptance
- \$332.50 on November 1
- \$332.50 on January 1
- \$332.50 on March 1

Once a roster spot is offered to a player the first payment, which serves as official acceptance of the offer, is due within 48 hours. Failure to provide payment within 48 hours will make the offer of your son's roster spot nonbinding, which may result in him losing his spot on the roster. Payment instructions will be provided in an email upon making the team.

There is no guarantee of a refund in the event of injury or failure to complete the season for any reason. The board will consider each occasion on a case-by-case basis as appropriate.