

LESSON ONE



What does it mean to Always Play 4 Each Other – Introduce Team Cheer

This lesson will introduce the team to the phrase “Always Play 4 Each Other.” It should be a fun and interactive conversation. The goal is have the players identify each other as important to the team. The level of importance will be reinforced throughout the next lessons as well as in the cheer, which is a great way to get the team to repeat the message together.

These lessons are best presented at the end of practice. I always give the lesson in a place where the parents can experience it as well. In baseball I will bring the team to the fence and ask the parents to join us on the other side of the fence if they like.

Your “lines” are in bold with directions on facilitating the discussion following each spoken segment. This format allows for reflection and discussion.

Coach: “Who do you think is the most important person on the team?”

Let the team members share answers. Acknowledge each answer to encourage participation and validate their ideas. It’s OK if they get silly, that’s what kids do. You can laugh, but then, be sure to move on to another answer.

Coach: “The most important person on the team is “each other.” That might sound strange to you, but it’s true. There are 11 players (*use actual number of kids on team*) on this team. If everyone knows that the other players are the most important, then each one of you will have 10 kids cheering for you. If you think you’re the most important person on the team, you will be the only one cheering for you. That wouldn’t be fun would it?; in fact it would be pretty sad. Each of us is here to help the other players on this team. You know what that means for you? That means that there are 10 players that are all here to help you. All you can do is try your best. If you have a bad play or a tough day, you can know that your teammates are playing for you. We take turns lifting each other up. That’s what it means to Always Play for Each Other.”

After a moment to assess understanding, I move on to the prayer. I always start my prayer off with the same statement to calm any player or parent that is uncomfortable with praying.

Coach: “I am going to pray now. You can listen, you can think of something else, you can say your own prayer to yourself, or you can do nothing. I just ask that whatever you do, you do it silently.”

My prayer references the lesson and reaffirms the message. For the first practice the prayer could be:

“Hello Father, thank you for bringing us together and thank you for baseball (*or whatever sport you are playing*). We play for Your glory, and we will show You that by always playing for each other. You have blessed us with special talents and gifts, and we promise to use them to help others. In the name of Your Son and our Savior Jesus Christ.”

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After the prayer, reaffirm the message by asking the following question:

Coach: “Now I have a question for you. Always play for who?”

The team members may not immediately know the answer so feel free to help them remember that we always play for “EACH OTHER.” Also, let them know that you are going to ask three times and that by the third time you want the entire town to know who they are playing for.

Coach: “OK, I’m going to ask you again. Always play for who?”

Team “Each other!”

Coach: (louder) “ALWAYS PLAY FOR WHO?”

Team: (louder) “EACH OTHER!”

Coach: (really loud!) “ALWAYS PLAY FOR WHO?”

Team: (screaming loud!) “EACH OTHER!”

Coach: Stand up with authority and yell “[TEAM NAME] ROCK!”

Following that cheer, I will always talk to each player after every practice to thank them for “bringing it” to practice. This only takes 10-15 seconds per player, but is worth its weight in gold. There are a few players that will be headed for the parking lot before the cheer is done so you must be intentional and act fast. I typically get right in front of the player and, then, get on one knee, look him/her in the eye and mention something positive about his/her performance in practice and how glad I am that he/she is part of our team. You need to be quick to respect the parent’s time but you also need to be sincere.

Be intentional and remember, Always Play 4 Each Other!™