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## **Homeschool Baseball at the High School Level**

*by Robert Stephenson*

Like most homeschool parents, Kenny and Deborah Goetze of Rolesville are not content to sit by and hope someone else will meet the needs of their children. When their oldest son, Kenneth, reached 9<sup>th</sup> grade in 2000, they knew he was good enough to play high school baseball, but there were no homeschool teams in their area. In fact, they were not aware of any homeschool teams in North Carolina.

Most entrepreneurs quote the old saw about necessity being the mother of invention. The Goetzes knew of several other homeschool families whose sons were talented enough to compete in high school baseball. For them, that was necessity enough and Wake County Homeschool Baseball was formed with Kenny serving as head coach.

Again, like most homeschool parents, Kenny is not one to just go through the motions or to just have his kids participate in order to keep them busy. No, Kenny's byword is *Excellence*. If he merely wanted to keep his kids busy, he could sign them up for a local recreation baseball league. Now there's nothing wrong with rec leagues, they just aren't high school baseball. In other words, Kenny was looking to field a team to compete at the highest-level possible. He wanted to recruit the very best players. And he wanted to create a Christ-centered environment where young ballplayers could channel their competitive drive in a positive manner.

From the start, Coach Goetze and Assistant Coach Jim Sherrer emphasized to their players that excellence honors God, that the way we prepare is how we will play, and how we carry ourselves on the field reflects upon our families and upon our Lord. Coaches and players are held to the highest standard of conduct and sportsmanship, learning to carry themselves with grace in victory and to rejoice in all things, including defeat – though frankly, as we'll see below, the team has had more practice at the former than the latter. After games, WCHS players invite the opposing team to join them at the mound for prayer.

Someone once wrote that how we spend our minutes is, of course, how we spend our lives. The opening moments of each practice are devoted to prayer as the team lifts its time together to our Lord. The next two to three hours are then filled with drills designed to turn already skilled players into a sharp and cohesive unit. Each drill is focused on developing habits of excellence.

In many ways the pursuit of excellence has been its own reward, and Kenny says that watching adolescent boys grow into Christ-like young men of character has been a tremendous blessing. But WCHS Baseball has also grasped excellence on the field, as reflected in the team's win-loss record. In 2000, with a roster primarily of 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>

graders, the first edition of the team played eleven games against a mix of high school varsity and junior varsity teams from Christian high schools, winning nine of them. In 2001, playing mostly a varsity schedule, the team went 11 – 3. In 2002, the team traveled to Huntsville, Alabama to kick-off the season in the National Homeschool Preseason Baseball Tournament. Teams from Atlanta, Nashville, Birmingham, and Huntsville came together for the three-day event. WCHS Baseball went 12 –3 during its regular season.

Three seasons of young men growing in Christ. Three seasons with an overall record of 32 wins and 8 losses. Three seasons of excellence.

In 2003, the team has set its sights on the Homeschool World Series, which will be held in Fort Walton Beach, Florida in May. With most of its starters returning and with players commuting from as far away as Henderson and Winston-Salem, the team looks to be even stronger this coming season. To prepare for the rigors of the Homeschool World Series qualifying tournaments, WCHS will expand its schedule to 30+ games and will travel to Atlanta for a season kick-off tournament the first week of March against seven homeschool and private high school teams from across the Southeast.

If you have a son interested in trying out for this very competitive high school baseball team, contact Kenny Goetze at 919-562-6937. Visit the team's website at [wchsbaseball.com](http://wchsbaseball.com).

*Robert and Cindy Stephenson have two sons, whom they have home-schooled for five years. Sixteen year-old Brooks plays for WCHS Baseball, and twelve-year old Bryan has set his sights on making the team when he reaches high school.*