

When the Game Stands Tall: Discussion Guide

Inspired by a true story, *WHEN THE GAME STANDS TALL* tells the remarkable journey of legendary football coach Bob Ladouceur (Jim Caviezel), who took the De La Salle High School Spartans from obscurity to a 151-game winning streak that shattered all records for any American sport. —IMDB plot summary



- This program was founded on certain ideals – Perfection, Commitment, Compassion, Brotherhood, Faith.*

 - What are the ideals you have founded your program upon?
 - Give examples of how you teach and model each one.
 - Give examples of athletes who have lived those ideals in a memorable or unique way.
 - How do you help other athletes do the same?
- We're not asking you to be perfect on every play. What we're asking of you and what you should be asking of each other is to give a **perfect effort** from snap to whistle.*

—Coach Ladouceur

 - Every athlete Bob Ladouceur has coached knows and understands his coaching philosophy. It is a call for each member of the team to give “perfect effort.”
 - It’s easy to understand the words, but what does a “perfect effort” *mean*?
 - How might your athletes interpret “perfect effort?” What does that look like in your sport? Your program?
- One of the De La Salle football players states, “The streak is our legacy.”

 - Is there a legacy that defines your school? your program?
 - What do your athletes believe is “their legacy?”
 - To what degree can a legacy be an unwelcome thing?
- “I got caught up in the streak and it nearly killed me.”

 - “The streak” causes more stress on Coach Ladouceur than he realizes.
 - How do the demands of coaching affect you? Your family? (Include both the positive and negative)
 - What helps you to deal with the stress of coaching? How do you celebrate the joys?

5. Terrance Kelly is offered a full ride to play football at the University of Oregon. He shares his jersey with his close friend Cameron Colvin and says “it’s not just a jersey, but an answered prayer.”
 - What are your athletes praying for?
 - What might be tangible “answered prayers” for them to have and hold?
 - How might you help your athletes realize those graces?

6. Coach Ladouceur faces a common struggle that many seasoned or veteran coaches confront... *Can I still reach kids today?* And coaches who hold a program up to a counter-cultural standard at times may wonder: *Is my message falling on deaf ears?*
 - Does this struggle resonate with you? How have you responded?

7. The credits of the movie reveal that Terry Eidson and Bob Ladouceur have been best friends and coaching together for 30 years.
 - Who on your staff compliments your personality?
 - Who has become a friend through coaching?
 - What have you learned from them?

8. A turning point in the movie occurs when the team completes a day of service at a VA Hospital.
 - What was most believable and/or powerful about this component of the story?
 - How does service to others change a group’s dynamics?
 - Is service to others always a risk? Why or why not?
 - Once a season is underway, it’s tough to make time for service, and yet we want to. How do you make it possible?

9. At the team meeting the night before the championship football game, the coaching staff asks the players to share their emotions with their teammates, their brothers. When one player says “I would rather die than lose tomorrow’s game” Coach Ladouceur interjects: “Collapse. Not die. It’s just a high school football game.”
 - It’s easy to lose sight of the fact that what we do is just what it is—a high school game. How do we keep our athletes, their parents and ourselves mindful of this truth?

10. Two questions “When the Game Stands Tall” asks coaches to confront are “Why do you coach?” and perhaps more importantly “Why do you stay?”
 - Respond.

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Resources: “40 Leadership Quotes and Lessons from When the Game Stands Tall”

<http://www.briandoddonleadership.com/2014/08/21/40-leadership-quotes-and-lessons-from-when-the-game-stands-tall/>