

Hit a Home Run with Little League Baseball

By Liz Holzemer



Major League baseball's Opening Day is just a few weeks away, and Little Leaguers across Colorado will be playing in leagues of their own, dreaming of being the Todd Heltons and Randy Johnsons of tomorrow.

And it's never too early to learn the team sport. "Baseball is a fabulous training tool to master early in life," according to Slammers Baseball General Manager, Robbie Carson. "Even if your child isn't going to play sports, you can apply the skills and techniques to your daily life, academics; it's endless."

Carson, a former Metro State pitcher, is Little-League-product proof. He credits his years of Little League training as the reason he earned a college scholarship and a relief pitcher position. Carson says about 89-90% of their Slammers Select team participants go on to play college baseball somewhere.

Since Little League mimics major league baseball in terms of being played throughout the spring, summer and fall, off-season training is critical for Colorado Little Leaguers. Lakewood-based Slammers Baseball is one of many year-round training facilities that enable Little Leaguers, as well as high school athletes, to train year round with their indoor facilities. Their clientele includes kids from Highlands Ranch, Littleton and Lone Tree, to name a few.

For Steve and Susan Stone of Littleton, athletics and academics played a dominant force in their respective high school and collegiate careers. Now they hope to instill the value of both in their seven-year-old, son, Jack. The Stones' have seen the benefits since Jack started playing T-ball four years ago. "Jack's more confident and even his first grade teachers notice his discipline," says proud mom, Susan.

Steve Stone believes that baseball is an ideal sport to teach kids about the business world. "There will always be strong players and weak players and you have to learn early on how to work

well with both," he says. "Everything we do in life starts with sports, and baseball teaches kids how to work together and respect their boss. Sports are such a socialization thing—you have to learn how to speak the language."

Jeff Wasden knows all about that language, too. With over 12 years of coaching experience, Wasden says baseball works with a child's development beginning as early as T-ball. "As a parent and a coach, I know sports teach life long lessons," says Wasden. "It's no secret that kids need the discipline of sports." Not only that, Wasden believes that baseball teaches teamwork, involvement and peer interaction. "Sports instill in kids early on how to deal with failure and rejection, as well as success and promotion."

There are proven studies that students perform better on standardized tests and are more rounded individuals overall to support Wasden's beliefs. It's why he believes his son, Jordan, a Littleton High senior who played competitive baseball growing up, is now a nationally ranked tennis player and achieved a 1300 score on his SAT's.

Need more proof that Little League baseball lays the ground work for future success in life? St. Louis Cardinal and former Colorado Rockies catcher, Gary Bennett, has spent the last four off-seasons hosting the Annual Gary Bennett Catching and Hitting Clinic at Slammers Baseball. For Bennett it's all about sharing his knowledge with the future players. "I enjoy the kids and teaching them the same techniques and skills that got me to the Major Leagues," Bennett said.

Colorado Little Leaguers have many choices: year-round leagues, camps, clinics and private one-on-one lessons. So, whether your child needs to focus on hitting, batting, catching or throwing and pitching mechanics, check out Slammers Baseball, a 40,000 square foot training facility; their instructors and staff have over 75 years of combined professional playing and coaching experience. ■

Please visit their website, www.slammersbaseball.com or call 303-988-7426 for more information.

To find a Little League in your area, please visit www.littleleague.org/findingaleague.asp.

