

DON. Same difference. So me and Mrs. Timmy are going class to class talking about standardized testing. Next thing I know we're hunkered down in her Subaru in the darkest part of the parking lot. *(Yells.)* Two out, Timmy, run on anything!

MICHAEL. What happened?

DON. What do you think happened, Michael? *(Yells.)* No leading, Tim-ster!

MICHAEL. That's a lousy thing, Don.

DON. What?

MICHAEL. You're married.

DON. What's your point?

MICHAEL. You shouldn't be doing that.

DON. You think I don't know that? I'm only human and so is Mrs. Timmy. I just can't help thinking if my wife took better care of herself she never would have got the flu and put me in that position with Mrs. Timmy. *(Yells.)* Aw, what are you swinging at, Rusty? Run to your positions! Show some character! *(To MICHAEL.)* How'd you know Mrs. Timmy's ex is in the city?

MICHAEL. She told me.

DON. You talk to her?

MICHAEL. She helps me put the equipment in my car sometimes.

DON. Huh. You're in sweet shape, my friend. You got a desperate woman holding on for dear life, plus a dead wife, which is money in the bank. Man, you're living my dream.

*(THE BALLFIELD. Practice. DON is addressing the team.)*

DON. I just want to say I am so proud of you kids. Granted, you're not the most talented players I've ever seen. You drop fly balls, you throw wildly, you strike out, and I don't remember another team at any level that cries as much as this one. Frankly, you don't match up against the elite teams in our league. But you showed me something. You rose to the challenge. You made friends with adversity. You got into the playoffs. Nice work.

*(MICHAEL enters with the duffel bag.)*

MICHAEL. Quick question, Coach Don. Don't *all* the teams get in the playoffs?

DON. Yes, they do, Assistant Coach Michael. But let's not let that detract from what these young men have accomplished. Incidentally, you're in violation of our first condition, relating to punctuality.

MICHAEL. I let you know twenty-four hours in advance.

DON. No you didn't, but we'll take this up in a special coaches' meeting after practice. *(To the team.)* How do we succeed in the playoffs? Answer: by winning games. How do we win games? Answer: by scoring more runs than the other team. That's why we're instituting some new and exciting strategy for the playoffs. *(Motioning them closer.)* Everyone around me. This is so top secret I don't even want you telling your parents. Can I trust you? *(Beat.)* Pay attention—over here, Frankie. This is our new signal. *(DON turns his baseball cap around backwards.)* Pretty easy to spot, even without your glasses. What does it mean? As soon as you get on base, you look at me. If my hat is turned around like this,

when you get to the next base, you *slide*. And when you slide, pretend to injure your leg. Hold onto it, yell, squirt a few tears. That shouldn't be a stretch for most of you. Why do I want you to do this? So we can take you out of the game and put in a faster runner and maybe get a run we wouldn't have scored otherwise. This is a special signal for our slower runners. Rusty would be an excellent candidate. Frankie, if lightning strikes and you find yourself on first base, by all means, wipe off your glasses and check my hat.

MICHAEL. That isn't strategy. That's called cheating.

DON. Assistant Coach Michael, because of your many years of inexperience, you're in no position to debate the finer points of the game with the likes of me.

MICHAEL. This isn't about baseball, this is about right and wrong. I will not be a part of this.

DON. That's your decision, and I accept it. You can go sit quietly in your car till we're done.

MICHAEL. I'm not leaving practice, if that's what you're thinking.

DON. I'm thinking I cannot allow you to take shots at my strategy and confuse my team.

MICHAEL. It's my team, too, and I don't want them to cheat. If we can't find a way to win fair and square, then I, personally, would rather lose.

DON. You can't stand up in front of people in their formative years and say you would prefer to lose.

MICHAEL. I would prefer to lose than cheat.

DON. Please don't waste our time quoting from the Handbook of Curling. This is baseball.

MICHAEL. This is wrong.

DON (*to the team*). Team? Why don't we start by taking a lap around the field. I've decided to move up the coaches' meeting to an earlier time. (*To MICHAEL*.) We have lost our best player. I feel responsible that it is my kid putting on makeup and prancing about in tights instead of whiffing guys with his fastball. I lie awake nights thinking about how we can make up for that terrible gaping hole in our lineup. I owe this to the kids.

MICHAEL. Let them play, Don. Just let them play. It's okay.

DON. That's very impressive strategy. "Just let them play."

Did you come up with that while you were the only car stuck in traffic?

MICHAEL. Let me ask you something. What do you think the commissioner would have to say about this?

DON. Our commissioner was convicted of transporting cigarettes over state lines for the purpose of illegal sale. So I can't imagine my Little League game strategy will put his panties in a twirl. Now let me ask you something about dedication and commitment. Do you ever think about the team when you aren't actually here?

MICHAEL. Yes, I do.

DON. How much?

MICHAEL. A lot.

DON. Waking hours, what percentage?

MICHAEL. What percentage of my waking hours do I spend thinking about the team?

DON. I would say with me it's fifty-five percent. Easy.

Then I think about money maybe twenty-five percent of the time. And the rest is all sex and revenge fantasies. You honestly don't know your percentages?

MICHAEL. I haven't stopped to figure it out, Don.