



# Q&A with Coach Erickson

Ted Erickson, varsity head coach of the Blaine Bengals baseball program, talks character, positivity and life lessons of baseball.

Ted Erickson, 34, is a teacher at Blaine High School, and was recently named head varsity coach for Bengals baseball.

**Q: Where did you grow up?** I grew up in Blaine. I attended Jefferson Elementary, Northdale Middle School and Blaine High School. I played baseball in Blaine from age three, playing tee-ball, all the way up through varsity at Blaine High School.

**Q: What took you to Colorado, and when did you move back to the area?** I met wife, Amy, at Bethel, and she's from Colorado. When we finished school, we moved out there for six years. I coached at two different schools south of Denver. She wanted to be stay at home mom and I said, "Cool, but not in Colorado" so we moved back to Minnesota. We bought a house in Ham Lake, where we live now, and she's working from home part time as an accountant with Rock Solid Financial.

**Q: How does Amy feel about you taking on this new head coaching role?** She's totally on board. She knows it's been my dream to be a head baseball coach. It's even better to be at Blaine High School.

**Q: When did you start playing baseball? What was your path?** I started at age three playing tee-ball at the rec level. I

played rec ball through fifth grade. I tried out for travelling but didn't make the team.

**Q: You didn't make the travelling team?** Right, not the first time. It actually turned out to be a blessing because I moved to the catcher position and caught all throughout high school. In college, I moved to the outfield.

**Q: How do you motivate players?** I motivate through relationships. I want them to know I care about them and that it's okay to make mistakes. I don't want them to fear what Erickson will do if they mess up. I want them to trust me, trust their teammates and play free with their skillsets. Baseball is full of life lessons, and the relationships last a lifetime.

I'm a teacher so I'm in the building every day. My goal is to get to know guys at every level. It's tricky for the new guys coming in as ninth graders because I haven't met many of them, yet, but I will. I want them to know they can come to me, talk to me.



**Q: What motivates you?** Having fun. Having relationships. I'm an extrovert. I love being around people, being around baseball, the guys. I'm passionate about it. What motivates me is being around good people having fun and working together.

**Q: How would you describe your coaching style and philosophy?** When I was preparing to interview for the head coach job, I asked a guy I coached in Colorado, who I happened to be golfing with, "What's it like to be coached by me?" He said, "You always had our back, no matter what you were going to be there supporting us."

I do care, and I want to do well in game but, on top of that, life is bigger than the sport of baseball. Baseball is a giant life lesson. We're going to fail a lot in life – you're not going to get that girl or that job. It's how you respond to it the next time things come around that matters.

Philosophy wise, coaching is more than the game of baseball. I'm not a yeller. I am a truthful person. If anyone wants to ask me why they're this or that, why was something this way, I am very straightforward with kids. It's important to know why they

are why they are or why they're not where they want to be yet and what it takes to get there.

**Q: What do you expect out of your players?** I expect that my players are going to play as hard as they can, all the time. We are not going to take at-bats off. We are not going to take a break. We will be known for hustle and we're going to take advantage of lack of hustle. We're going to love each other. We're going to be group of kids playing game together and hold each other accountable. Being in the building with these guys every day, I can say things like, "Dude, are you lifting?"

**Q: What impresses you most?** What impresses me is when kids are doing everything right, hustling hard, but even more important is when they are seeing things as bigger than themselves. These are great kids. My 3-year-old son loves being around these guys and at one point, one of players got down on a knee to be at eye level when he talked to him. It meant the world to my son. It's all about making someone else feel special. How do we take our platform as Blaine High School baseball and make everyone around us feel good? That's one of my top goals for this program.

**Q: What's on top of the list of things NOT to do or say to Coach Ted?** Do not be disrespectful to your parents or guardians, whoever is bringing you to a baseball game. Being good citizens in the community and school is more important than anything. In my world, I never want see kids disrespect their parents. Parents spend hours, upon hours spending time at the field, sitting on hard bench watching them play and when they're when not nice after the game, that burns me up. I was guilty of it when I was a kid. I didn't get it. I was not nice to be around when I didn't win in college. But, now I get it, and respect is what I want to see in our baseball family.

**Q: What role does character play in how you think about Bengals baseball and player selection?** If two players are of equal skill set and one has a character flaw, that character flaw is not going to be good for the program and I will take the other player. Baseball is cut sport and part of what we look at is what kind of person are you. I'll talk to middle school principals, and I'll be aware of those who have a checkmark coming in.

**Q: How does it feel being at the helm of a strong program that's on the rise?** It's exciting, and humbling. I've already not slept because of excitement. There are high expectations. I'm not coming into a program that's in shambles. It's on the rise



Coach Erickson is a 2003 graduate of Blaine High School and Bengals Baseball alumn.

and there's a lot of expectations. I've been given a great honor, and I don't want to screw up this opportunity. It's intimidating, humbling and really exiting.

**Q: What's the most important lesson baseball taught you?** I feel like I should say something that isn't cliché.

**Q: You mean, like, "Don't do weird things?"** Right – DDWT, that was our motto in ninth-grade ball this year.

Baseball taught me how to fail. It's a common answer. Baseball also teaches you how to be a good person and work as a team, how to trust teammates to get it done. You only bat once every nine times so you have to trust that your team is going to be there. You do not want to be the guy everyone hated playing with. I have a lot of strong relationships with guys played baseball with in college. Baseball also teaches you how to survive with dudes and to be a dude... how to ride a bus with smelly dudes.



**Q: What's the best advice you've received since becoming coach?** Some common advice is it can get a little lonely because now it's on you and not everyone will like you. It's all fun and games until you don't play someone's kid or you lose a game. Eric (Feigum) gave me some good advice the other day, which was don't check your email after a game. Wait until the next day. Find a way to decompress and be with your family. Your kids don't care if you won or lost. Don't dwell on it.

**Q: What's your message to parents?** Parents are important in this whole relationship piece. If I could teach baseball parents one thing, it's that on the way home from the baseball game, there are only two things you should be saying to your kid: one, I love you, and two, I love watching you play. If your kid wants to talk to you more, great. Culture is important and the culture in the Blaine Bengals baseball program is going to be honest, positive and supportive.

**Q: What other sports do you love?** Football. Golf. If I wasn't a baseball player would have been a golfer.



**Q: You've done some work with the Twins and their youth clinics. What do you think of what they're doing this year?**

The Twins are so fun to watch. It's exciting for Minnesota to see people in the seats in August. When you go out, people are still talking about the Twins, when we're usually talking about the Vikings now.

**Q: What advice do you have to young baseball players who want to play high school ball?** Keep working. Keep playing.

Have fun. Don't let your parents drive you to point where you're not having fun anymore. Do other sports than just baseball so when get to high you're not so burned out. Be good people. Be good to your teachers and your parents. If you're decent, we're going to take you at the high school level and make you better.

**Q: When should players shut down for the season?** Some guys play fall ball. Some guys do lessons throughout the winter. But there are guys playing in Arizona, winter teams in domes with travel, and that's too much. Take care of your body. Play multiple sports. Go do football or cross country or something. Use different muscles and motion. Try not be grinding on the same throwing motion.

**Q: Have you read any good books recently?** I was reading John Gordon books for a while. He's all about positive energy. His book, *The Energy Bus*, I hand it to kids. If they're in English and don't have something to read, I'll hand it to them and say "here's one I liked." Having positive attitude is so important. It's one of the reasons I surround myself with people like Tony Boos, he's always positive. I recommend anything by John Gordon. I've read just about everything he's written.

**Q: It's time to hear about some of your baseball favorites.**

**Favorite baseball player?** Today – Nolan Arenado, third baseman for the Rockies. He plays hard. He practices really hard. He works at the craft of baseball and from what I understand, he's a decent human. Favorite player, lifetime, is Kirby Puckett. He was a 5'10" stocky guy, but played the game extremely hard. We used to sit in the Metrodome in the upper level and watch him play -- super fun.

**Q: Favorite baseball movie?** The Natural

**Q: Favorite baseball expression or quote?** "Baseball is 90 percent mental, the other half is physical." – Yogi Berra

**Q: High school team you're most looking forward to playing?** I'm getting Eden Prairie on the schedule. A good

friend of mine is the head baseball coach. We've been waiting for this rivalry. He's been very successful. Like me, he's coaching where he played. He pitched at Eden Prairie, then we played at Bethel together. They won state one year and were runners up another year. I'm looking forward to that match up.

**Q: Favorite baseball field?** Target Field, because that means we're playing in the State Championship. I got to play at Metrodome when I was in school, which was pretty cool.

**Q: Favorite baseball position?** Either catcher or outfield. I was a catcher in high school then in college played outfield. Baseball is way more fun when you're not covered in gear, hot and sweaty.

## Video interview online

Visit the Blaine Bengals Baseball website at [www.blainebaseball.org](http://www.blainebaseball.org) to see a video interview with Coach Erickson as he talks about the things he's looking for in a player, what it's like to play for him and the culture he's aiming to grow in the Blaine Bengals Baseball program.