

Good People = Good Baseball

2020 is not Johnston's first baseball season ending with a state title or its first class to write this program's legacy. "We've won two other titles since I've been here, '13 and '17, and both of those teams were very, very senior-led teams that were legendary classes," Barta said. "This group, and I kind of told them, early on they drove me nuts a little bit... But then as the year went on, they really invested in our program and in each other, and by the end of the year, they were a pretty mature group that really cared and was willing to do anything to win and anything for each other."

Players like that come from time dedicated to teaching a culture that will set them up for success in the long-term. It is not about teaching them about how to field a ground ball or lay down a bunt; it is about how to be a person of good character.

The culture created in the baseball program is unlike any other. "I think the culture is fantastic," Campbell said. "The kids love it. Barta's done a fantastic job, just kind of taking the reins and pushing for over a decade now. And, for me, I've just never seen anything like it. It's a well-oiled machine..."

that's a fantastic part of the program."

The culture strives to teach players about the details that can bring them success off of the field. "The very little things that apply to me the most, like making sure you're not driving fast in the parking lot or don't put your sunglasses on top of your hat covering up the J, keeping stuff tucked in," Steck said. "Just the discipline that Barta engraves in you that everyone who leaves his program is going to be successful because he doesn't just build good baseball players, he builds people with good character too."

There is a standard set for the members of the team and the level at which they work. "I come in here every day, and I'm expected to give 110% every rep, mentally and physically, and knowing that I have to make this a better place, not only for the people around me but for the people who are going to be here in two, three, four, five-plus years," Smith said.

Good character translates on the field in the form of success. "I'm trying to get our guys by the time they graduate to see that decision and do it perfect, make a great, perfect decision and do it really really well almost every time," Barta said. "If that would happen, then... that person then becomes better, and if we have good people, we'll win every time."

Since becoming head coach in 2012, Barta has won 270 games, lost 86, and tied one. That gives him a winning percentage of 75%, bringing home seven state trips and three state titles in only nine seasons. With a record like that and a program recognized beyond the metro area, it is hard to ignore the impact his coaching has had on Johnston Baseball.

Barta wants to help his players grow and see them get better. "I mean, he's great. He can get on you sometimes, but I feel like it's for the better of us," Wolver said. "If we do one small thing wrong, he'll tell us, and we'll take that as constructive criticism. We want to learn from our mistakes and get better."

The team is as dedicated to Barta as he is to them. "Barta was out of town one weekend, and Friday morning at lifting, he asked the whole group if two guys would shovel his driveway so his pregnant wife could drive around," Ben Wilmes '21 said. "So Owen

Dawson and I decided to shovel his driveway since we were open. The next day we show up at 3:30 a.m. and shoveled seven inches of snow. I'll do anything for that guy."

Even in the face of danger, this program is a priority for him. "I was shocked how he coached us with his daughter," Steck said. "For him to be able to do that, because he was risking so much. I didn't really have anything to lose, but Barta obviously that's family. He has two young kids... I thought there's no way that he's even around us at all. He'd probably FaceTime us at practice or something like that. For him to do all that just to be able to coach us, that was shocking, and that shows the kind of person that he is. He cares more about others than himself sometimes."

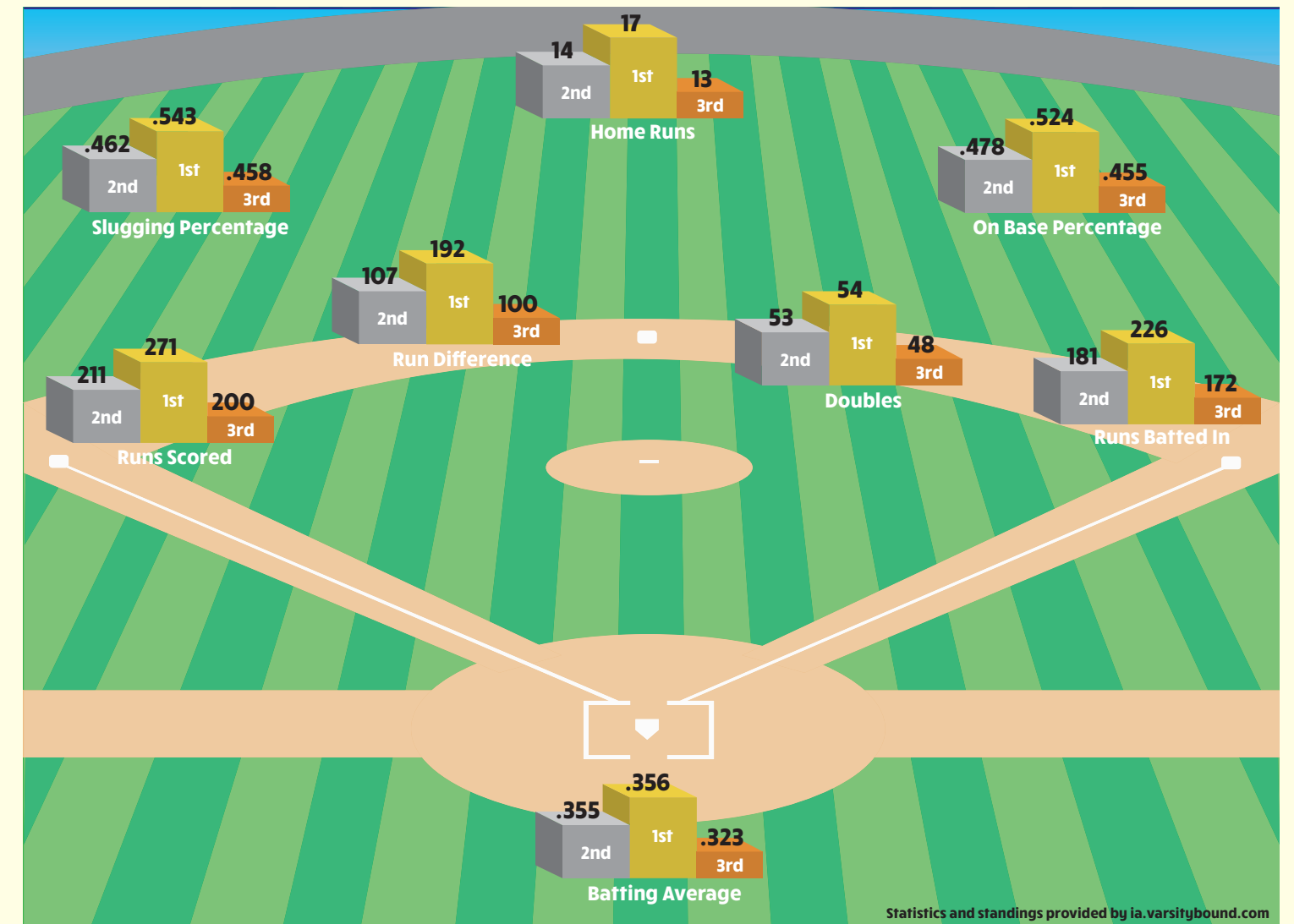
Barta's coaching style is different from other coaches, but it is what the players love

"If I can be half the man that Barta is I'm going to be pretty well off in life," -Caden Steck '20

about him. "Definitely the best coach I've ever had," Campidilli said. "He pushes everyone to get better no matter their skill level. Everyone always improves as a player and as a person if you go through his program or even one of his classes at the school."

That growth and development is the cornerstone of this program. "We develop our kids one through 140," Barta said. "We're going to try and develop every one of those kids. Some of them start from a lower spot, and some of them start from a higher spot. But when that kid gets to be a senior, we want them to be able to step on a varsity field and be successful. Our development beat you. Our development will win every time unless they do a better job."

Johnston led class 4A in the following categories this season:



Statistics and standings provided by ia.varsitybound.com

2020 4A CHAMPS - JOHNSTON DRAGONS

AT BAT	BALL	STRIKE	OUT	INNING	RUNS	HITS	ERR
1	2	0	2	7	8	7	1
ANKENY	1	0	2	4	0	1	0
JOHNSTON	1	2	0	0	3	5	0

"Probably just the best thing I've ever been a part of. All of us are just so committed to be great and win. It's just awesome."
-Miles Risley '22