

hey batter batter



laura gilligan

london lau, 12

"Before I go up to bat and while I'm in the batter's box, I just take a deep breath and tell myself to be aggressive."



peri kincaid

aaron black, 12

"My motto is work hard, play harder. In the batter's box, I concentrate on the ball and hit it hard. I work hard to perfect my swing and play even harder on the field."



laura gilligan

bennett huddleston, 11

"I think of nothing when I go up to bat. The more things I think about, the harder it is to concentrate on just hitting the ball."



peri kincaid

alex cabezas, 12

"I like to go up to bat with a direct approach or plan. Then when I'm in the batter's box, I just react to the pitch. My plan is see the ball, hit the ball."



laura gilligan

diving in

To avoid getting tagged out, senior pitcher William Zweiner dives back to first base. "We are Westlake," Zweiner said. "We are known for playing hard and giving it our all, which is what we do."



change up

1 After fielding a grounder, sophomore shortstop Sam Koenig throws the ball to the first baseman. 2 With eyes focused on the pitch, senior outfielder Carson Spencer stands at bat at the game against Belton on March 1. The Chaps won 17-5. 3 Senior Jacob Lentz pitches a ball against Round Rock on Feb. 12. "Baseball is about working as a team, making sacrifices and striving for one goal," Lentz said. 4 After receiving a sign from the catcher, junior Paul Kirkpatrick pitches at the game against Belton. "The best part is having all eyes on you in pressure situations," Kirkpatrick said.



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it's only weird if it doesn't work

From avoiding foul lines to wearing necklaces, Chaps live by superstitions

Justin Verlander of the Detroit Tigers ate three Taco Bell Crunchy Taco Supremes before every game. Former New York Yankees centerfielder Joe DiMaggio always ran from the outfield and touched second base before going to the dugout.

From the pros all the way down to Little League, superstitions have been a big part of the game. True to form, varsity baseball team members had their own set of quirky rules they played by.

"I don't step on foul lines, and I have the same pitches in warm-ups," junior pitcher Paul Kirkpatrick said. "I had a team that never stepped on the foul lines, and that just stuck with me. I threw a no-hitter with that routine, so I just kept doing it."

Other Chaps had quirky rituals for luck. "I sleep with my bat every night, and I have to kiss my momma at least one time before every game," senior pitcher Jacob Lentz said. "I also tie seven knots in my shoes because I've always been number 7."

These traditions transformed from trivial charms to game-day routines. Some players believed that if they stopped performing their rituals, it would cause

them to play badly.

"I do those things just because it's a habit and I feel like if I don't, I won't play well," Lentz said. "The last thing you want after a bad loss is to feel like you played poorly because you only tied six knots."

Along with his players, first-year coach Jeff Montgomery had game-day superstitions he believed would bring his team luck throughout the season.

"I wear the same belt to every game," Montgomery said. "I have a plethora of belts, but I wear the same leather belt to every game."

Senior center fielder Alex Cabezas had both quirky superstitions and sentimental talismans that he made sure he used before and during games.

"I don't like to wash my pants during a tournament," Cabezas said, "and I have to wear my grandma's necklace."

Although they may seem a bit far-fetched to some, these superstitions promoted individual success on the field, boosted the players' confidences and – sometimes – helped lead the team to victory.



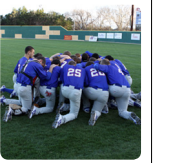
play ball

1 Senior Ryan Cunningham pitches against SACentral on March 2. "We took a lot away from that game," Cunningham said. "It was a close game, and we lost, but we learned what it takes to win close games."

2 Watching the pitcher, senior first baseman Wes Nicol stands in the batter's box on March 2 against MacArthur. "Up at bat, the more I think, the worse I hit," Nicol said. "I try to keep my mind clear and only focus on the ball." 3 Stealing third, junior first baseman Dylan Black slides during the game against Belton. The Chaps won 17-5. "You're seconds away from either being safe or getting out," Black said. "So the only thing you can do is run fast and slide hard."

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& some more



"Our team does the same tradition before every game: we all kneel and recite our prayer as a team."

cory takenaka, 11



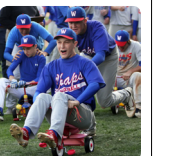
"I like spending time with my teammates because we are all great friends. It doesn't matter what we do — it's just cool to be around them."

aaron black, 12



"There's never a dull moment around Coach Montgomery. This year will be a memorable season for everyone."

duncan brown, 12



"The best part about our team is the team camaraderie. Everyone is supportive, and we have really learned to mesh as a group."

trevor dickey, 11