WHEN THE GAME STANDS TALL

Discussion Guide

For Leaders: Coach Bob Ladouceur runs a winning football program at De La Salle High School in Concord, California. Despite a record 151-game winning streak, Ladouceur values character over championships. His message of integrity, humility, and unity stands in stark contrast to the sports stories that so often make headlines today. As you watch the film, listen carefully to Ladouceur's pre-game pep talks, then watch his interactions with the team members and his family. Encourage your small group to discuss how Coach Ladouceur "practiced what he preached" and the impact his example has on the people around him.

Opening Prayer: *Heavenly Father, please open our hearts and minds, and guide our discussion. Help us to see what it means to live with honor and integrity. Amen.*

Suggested Scripture Readings: *Matthew 23:12, James 4:10, I Corinthians 9:24-27, Philippians 3:7-14, James 1:2-4*

1. Coach Bob Ladouceur held the record for an 11-year, 151-game winning streak – the longest in high school football history. What kinds of skills and disciplines does it take to lead a team to such an impressive record?
2. When a news reporter asks Coach Ladouceur about "The Streak," the coach replies, "The Streak was never the goal." What is his goal for the team? Does the team understand that goal? Do they achieve that goal?
3. A key principle in the movie comes from Matthew 23:12: "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted." How is this truth demonstrated in the movie?
4. At T.K. Kelly's funeral, Coach Ladouceur shares that he is shaken by the young man's death. He begins T.K.'s eulogy by saying, "People always ask me what it's like to never lose. Today I'm lost." He also struggles with asking "why?" and trusting God. Have you ever faced a similar struggle? Do circumstances ever cause you to doubt God's goodness and love? How do you deal with those feelings?
5. The Spartans' 151-win streak is broken after Coach Ladouceur's heart attack and T.K.'s death. While those events affected the team's morale, are they the reasons for the unexpected loss? Why or why not?
6. When the team visits a veteran's hospital, they are surprised to learn that a broken body does not mean a broken spirit. Read James 1:2-4 and think about the trials you have faced. Have those trials made your faith stronger? If you're going through a trial right now, how can your church family support you?
7. During the game between Long Beach and De La Salle, the comment is made, "Bring your A-game and your game heart." How does that comment change the team? What would it look like in your life, family, or job if you brought your "A-game and game heart?"
8. Chris Ryan has the opportunity to set a new state record for touchdowns, and his father is obsessed with the idea – to the point that he destroys his relationship with his son. What causes a person to lose sight of the things that really matter? Have you ever let obsessions or a desire to achieve something come between you and someone you love? How can you set healthy priorities in your life?
9. In the final game of the season, Chris Ryan is one touchdown away from breaking the all-time record, yet he chooses his team over his own personal glory. Does his decision reflect Coach Ladouceur's earlier comment, "It was never about the streak?" What does Ryan gain by giving up his goal? Would you do the same?
10. Talk about Coach Ladouceur's legacy. Did he practice what he preached? What will his team remember most about him? How can you follow his example? What kind of legacy are you passing on to the people in your life?
11. Read I Corinthians 9:24-27. The Apostle Paul encourages us to keep our focus on the things that last. For Bob Ladouceur, this meant training his team to be honorable men – on and off the field. What does this mean in your life? How can you focus on things that make an eternal difference?

Closing Prayer: *God, help us to be people of integrity and to honor you in all circumstances. Amen.*

© 2014 Outreach Films. All Rights Reserved.