

A lot happens behind the scenes at Westwood baseball.

In baseball, a sport where failure happens more often than not, the scoreboard only tells part of the story. At Westwood High School, the players who step into the batter's box or take the mound often receive the attention.

Over in the dugout, a second game is being played that is built on communication, observation, and constant preparation.

Players who are not on the field still play active roles, tracking pitch counts, strike percentages, pitch types, and pitcher tendencies in real time.

Those observations are then relayed to hitters and coaches to help shape the in-game decisions.

"We track fundamentals, meaning pitch counts, how many balls are thrown, and what percentage are strikes," Mota said. "We want it to be 60% or higher. We track it for the other team too so we know whether to be aggressive."

For many teams, those off-field roles might seem secondary. At Westwood, coaches and players say that they are vital.

Even in moments when momentum shifts quickly, such as a game where Westwood built an early 3-1 lead before falling behind after a five run inning by the other team, the dugout never goes silent. Instead, it becomes a constant source of energy and direction.

"One inning, that's all we need," said Sam Thompson during a late-game rally situation, reflecting the mindset the team tries to maintain even when trailing.

That mentality is not accidental. It's built into the structure of the program. According to Westwood assistant coach Ray Mota, what happens in the dugout is just as strategic as what happens on the field.

"We track a lot of metrics during the game because our job isn't to teach mechanics in that moment," Mota said. "It's to give them information so they can compete better. If there's a tendency in a situation, we want our hitters to know it."

That approach reflects a broader shift in baseball, where analytics are increasingly shaping development and strategy. In modern player development, "analytics aren't just tools—they're building blocks for player growth," according to Hitters Baseball Academy.

That engagement goes beyond energy alone. That information can directly influence at-bats. If a pitcher is consistently throwing strikes, hitters are encouraged to attack early. If control drops, patience becomes the strategy.

Beyond pitch tracking, Westwood players also monitor tendencies by looking for patterns in pitch selection, timing, and sometimes delivery speed.

“Does he fall into a habit? Does he always throw a fastball? Does he always throw a curveball?” Mota said. “We track that so hitters can get an advantage.”

Even timing metrics matter. How quickly a pitcher delivers the ball to home plate can determine whether Westwood attempts a stolen base or holds runners.

“If he’s usually 1.6 or higher, we’re probably going to put a guy to steal,” Mota said.

For Westwood, the dugout is not passive support. It’s an extension of the coaching staff.

While analytics and communication play a major role, emotional presence in the dugout is equally important. Coaches say that energy can often determine whether a team can recover from any setbacks.

Westwood infield and third base coach Sam Langston emphasized how quickly a game can slip when the dugout loses focus.

“If the dugout lays down, the game is over,” Langston said. “If you’ve got crickets in the dugout, it ain’t going good for you on the field.”

That mindset is especially important in high school baseball, where momentum can shift quickly and games often hinge on a single inning.

Even when results do not go the team’s way, maintaining engagement becomes part of the culture.

That emphasis on consistency helps explain why players who are not starting remain very involved in each game.

Senior pitcher Daniel Parra explained that even non-starters are constantly preparing themselves for potential moments in the game.

“They’re getting those reps in practice every day, whether it’s batting practice or fielding,” Parra said. “So when they do get called in to pinch hit or go play, they’re ready.”

That readiness is critical in baseball, where substitutions can happen suddenly due to pitch counts, matchups, or defensive needs.

At Westwood, players on the bench are also expected to stay mentally engaged. They track the game, reading situations, and staying prepped to contribute in any way.

From the perspective of players and very interested fans, the dugout often provides a clear view of the game.

Riggs Richardson, a student cameraman who stays in the dugout, said he was surprised by how much communication happens off the field.

“It’s such a competitive sport and everybody is just supporting each other,” Richardson said. “Even when they’re losing or doing bad, it surprises me how everyone keeps their head up and stays positive.”

That constant communication and support system helps explain why dugout culture has become such a defining part of Westwood baseball.

While fans typically focus on the players out on the field, Westwood’s baseball program operates with a broader definition of contribution.

Every player, starter or not, has a role in affecting the game’s final result.

Some track pitches. Some analyze tendencies. Some provide energy and emotional support. Others prepare quietly for the moment they may be called on.

According to coaches, that structure is not optional.

“Sometimes it shows character because the work habits you show off the field carry over into the game,” Mota said. “We want guys focused on competing and getting 1% better every day.”