



SEASON GOALS AND DIRECTION

GENERAL COACHING TIPS:

- Have a quick parent meeting (5-10 minutes) at the start of the season to explain your expectations as a coach. Start the season off on the right foot.

- Encourage parental involvement; practices/games/team parties, ect..

- Remember that your coaching style – how you interact with the players, your tone, the message that you attempt to relay to the players, your behavior during games – will leave a **lasting impression** on the lives of the children of our community far beyond the baseball diamond.

- Have a well-defined plan for your practice. Practices must be organized to minimize standing around or “down time”.

- Be alert and watch out for potential accidents.
 - Make sure kids are not swinging bats near others.
 - Runners must always wear helmets.

- Keep practice, fun, quick, consistent and positive.

- Baseball is not boring, but poorly run practices can cause boredom and get kids thinking baseball is boring.**

- Break your team into groups to maximize time and limit

waiting.

-The development of **EVERY PLAYER** is important

-Do not get discouraged if players progress at different rates or show a different level of interest in the sport

-Give each player the same level of effort and attention

-An average or below-average Little Leaguer could become a talented high school player or better, but only if he is developed alongside the best players in the younger age groups

-Do not sacrifice player development and the player's enjoyment of the game for the sake of winning a baseball game

-Slotting your best hitters at the top of the batting lineup for each game, or having your best defensive players playing the majority of innings at the defensive positions that get the most game action, will slow the development of the players and – worse – could drive players away from the sport.

-Every kid should have the same opportunity to improve their game.

-Let a player play any position they want (as long as it is safe).

- During hitting, place a player at each infield position to make plays even when the hitter isn't running.

-Give praise along with constructive advice.

-Recognize hustle!!

-The best way to learn the game is to **WATCH BASEBALL** ... encourage your players to watch Major League Baseball and college baseball

-Players can also learn a lot from watching the Jimtown High School Baseball Team, and are always welcome at Booster Field.

-We had our chance, now it is their chance.

TEACH SPORTSMANSHIP AND RESPECT FOR THE GAME

-Build a "team". Don't ever let teammates talk negatively about one another. -
Respect your opponent.

-Never blame an umpire. Teach "no arguing with umpires".

-Players watch the coaches' actions very closely. Practice what you preach.

-Encourage players to practice at home.

BASIC SKILLS:

THROWING:

-A good throw is one in which the entire body is used. It starts from the feet. The hand should be the last part of the body involved.

-Point toe and foot in the direction you are throwing.

-Front foot should point at the target.

-When your arm moves forward make sure your shoulder is high.

-Transfer weight forward as the ball is thrown.

-Complete motion by extending the elbow and following through in the direction of the target.

-Proper grip of the ball: Two or three fingers across the seams.

FIELDING GROUND BALLS (S.O.S.):

-Establish good body position ("ready" position)

-Position is crucial. Knees slightly bent, on their toes, upper body bent slightly forward, hands out front, good balance, feet parallel.

- Fielders should be alert and ready to move quickly in either direction.
- Position glove like a ramp, body and glove low to the ground, left foot slightly ahead of right (reverse for left handed players), look ball into glove, secure ball quickly with bare hand.
- Quick release with stride toward the base they are throwing to.
- Charge the slow rollers. Make sure they do not wait for the ball to come to them.
- While it is great to have players experience all positions, make sure only your players who can “always” catch play first base for safety reasons.
- Practice fielding ground balls at every practice. As a coach you want even your least talented player to learn how to pick up a grounder and throw it to first base.

FIELDING FLY BALLS: (This skill may be the hardest to learn.)

- Work on getting the ball to the cut off immediately. Never hold the ball or fake a throw – Just get the ball in.
- When the ball is hit, an outfielder's first step should always be BACK. It is always easier to run IN on a ball than run OUT to catch it.
- Run to the ball and then catch. Do not run with gloves extended.
- Glove is tilted at an angle just slightly closer to the throwing arm and just above the head to catch the ball.
- Always get the ball quickly into the infield.
- Teach running at a 45 degree angle to cut off balls hit deep.
- Work on keeping balls on the ground from getting past. Pick up and quickly throw to the cut off.

*****DRILL: Start the year throwing fly balls. As the players become more accomplished, use a bat to hit fly balls and begin increasing the distance. Repetition, Repetition, Repetition. *****

BASERUNNING:

- Emphasize running through first base (unless the coach is sending you to second).
- Always keep your eyes up to see where you are running.
- Run in a straight line.

- Don't watch the ball when you hit it.
- Don't stand in the batters box and watch after the ball is hit.
- Extra bases: Touch the inside corner of the base, as you approach first base move slightly out of baseline to loop (banana) this allows a straight line to second.

SLIDING:

- Teach players to **ALWAYS** slide into home.
- Work on proper feet first slides into second, third, and home.
- Practice sliding for the first several times in the grass. It provides for a much better first experience.

HITTING:

- Proper bat weight and size are essential (should be able to hold a bat with one arm out to their side—that is their bat size). It is better to err on the side of being too light.
- Teach a short stride forward with front foot toward the pitcher (watch for stepping out toward 1st or 3rd).
- Teach a downward swing. Get the “loop” out of the swing. Get the barrel of the bat quickly to the hitting zone “chop wood”.
- A compact swing is more important in the long run than a long swing.
- Players should hit every practice.
- Try not to “break down” every swing. At this level we are just looking for good eye-hand coordination. The kids are still developing and will change their swing 4 or 5 times before they get to high school.

PITCHING:

- Start early on developing pitchers. Try to have 5-6 pitchers on your team.
- Control is more important than speed.
- Balance: Teach a smooth pitching motion..
- Teach players to pitch out of the stretch. This may be a little controversial, but there are less moving parts, and no change in velocity.
- Keep motions short.
- Head and chin: Keep up and on the target.

- Teach the pitcher to have his target be a part of the catcher, not just the glove.
- If a player wants to pitch he should be given the opportunity to pitch!! This is for kids!!

CATCHING:

- Try to have 3 catchers on your team.
- Keep the glove up and still; help the pitcher.
- Block and stay in front of low pitches.
- Work on not turning their heads.
- Teach them to trust the catcher's equipment. (TIP: use tennis balls)
- Move the body on bad pitches. Don't just take a "swat" with the glove.
- Get the ball back to the pitcher quickly.
- Take off the mask when the ball is hit and be in the game.
- Make sure the catcher is not positioned too far back.

BACKING UP BASES and THROWS: ANTICIPATE THE OVERTHROW

- Outfielders always have some place to move as a potential back up.
- Keep the "theme" of not standing around. Outfielders move as soon as the ball is hit.

Example: Grounder hits to third or shortstop: right fielder moves to back up first base, left fielder backs up third or shortstop, center fielder moves to back up a throw to second base.

- Work on the cut-off position. Make sure the second baseman and shortstop know their role.
- Pitchers need to back up too.
- When a double (or more) is hit, the first baseman must serve as the field general and back up the right side of the infield.
- Teach/encourage hustle and awareness of the game.

PREVENTING INJURIES:

Players this age do not understand potential ramifications of dangerous actions. As coach, you must "error on the side of caution"

- Helmets must be worn at ALL times when hitting, on deck, and on base.

- Do not let a player pitch to a hitter from a short distance.
- When players are warming up, make sure they are spaced apart.
- Be certain the players are playing catch in a line that absolutely avoids being struck by another group either too close.
- When learning to catch fly balls
 - If the player is a beginner, use “soft” baseballs to teach.
- Don't let the players ever climb the fence or dugout.
- Most injuries occur when one player picks up a bat and just starts swinging. -
Players this age don't check who may be behind them, in front of them or moving toward them. Be paranoid about this. Have firm rules regarding swinging a bat —where, when and how.
- All players should wear a cup!!