

## Martha's Vineyard Little League Coaching Manual AAA & Majors

The basics you must do every practice:

- 1) Tell them how to do it, show them, practice it, correct it, repeat it.
- 2) Every drill we do accomplishes the goal/philosophy for that part of the game.
- 3) Build competitions into practice drills.
- 4) Make it FUN

Content:

- 1) Throwing program
- 2) Teaching hitting basics
- 3) How to receive a ground ball, line drive, fly ball
- 4) Running a practice
- 5) Sample letter to parents

## Throwing Program

### 4 Part Concentration Catch

- 1) **Backspins** - Have the player with the ball face their partner 10 feet apart maximum. Tell and show them a 4 seam grip (look it up if unsure), then place the throwing elbow in the glove which is held up in front of them. The are to "spin the ball backwards" with their wrist and fingers, NOT throw it with their arm. 10 spins each.
- 2) **One knee throws** - Players will be 20 feet apart maximum and are kneeling so that the glove side foot is in front and the arm side knee is down on the ground. The player will start with the ball in their glove in front of the chest, then separate their hands with the glove pointing at their target and the throwing hand making a big circle that goes down, back, and up where the ball ends up facing behind them above their shoulder. When they throw and release the ball, the throwing hand will finish across the front knee. 10 throws each.
- 3) Players will start 30 feet apart and walk into their throws and follow their throw for a couple steps after the ball is gone. It is very important that they move their feet into their throws and move their feet after. They can throw

as far as they want as long as they can hit their target in the air with good form. The balls should always be thrown no more than head high.

- 4) This is an accuracy game where players line up against their partner from 20 feet and try to hit their partner in the chest. The player waiting to receive the ball will hold their glove in front of their chest. The points are: 3 points for chest, 2 for head, 1 for waist. Zero for anything else. They alternate throws until someone gets to 21.

## Teaching Hitting Basics

### 1) Pre-Pitch

Stance = athletic position  
Bat grip = loose grip, knocking knuckles lined up  
Bat = just off rear shoulder/ close to neck area  
Arms = relaxed with both elbows pointed at ground

### 2) Swing

Pivot = Start the swing with rear foot pivoting toward pitcher  
Drive = Bat knob gets driven toward the pitch  
Punch= Top hand wrist punches toward the ball  
Finish= After contact both hands stay on the bat until it hits the upper back

### 3) Common Faults & Their Fixes

Stepping away from home plate = Put a bucket or tire behind front foot. Have them dry swing, then add a pitched ball.

Overstriding = Put a tire ahead of front foot to limit the stride.

Casting the hands = set the player up parallel to a net or fence, a bat length away from the front hip. Have them practice swinging the bat without hitting the fence/net.

Pulling the front shoulder out = Have the kids take tee swings with bottom hand only. ½ way grip on bat.

Teaching hitting can be difficult. Only attempt to fix one thing at a time.

## **Receiving the Baseball**

- A) Ground Ball = Triangle. Each foot sets the bottom of the triangle, the glove and throwing hand set the top of the triangle. Feet wide enough to get the butt down while keeping the chest and chin up. The heels of the hands meet to form the alligator mouth.
  
- B) Line Drive = Square. The player's chest should be square to the line of the ball. Extend the glove hand out away from the body so the eyes can look the ball into the glove. Use the bare hand to secure the ball from falling out.
  
- C) Fly Ball = Line. The glove should be in a straight line above the same side shoulder. Extend the glove hand above the head so the eyes can look the ball into the glove. Use the bare hand to secure the ball from falling out.

## **Running a AAA/Majors practice**

- 1) Start with a short competitive game. It doesn't have to be baseball related. Make it fun so the kids want to get there on time. No overhand throwing yet. Some examples; tag games, tennis racquet fly balls, etc.  
5 minutes
  
- 2) Agility movement – Butt kicks, high knees, side shuffles, back pedals, arm circles, carioca, etc.  
2 minutes
  
- 3) Baserunning – Use for correct fundamentals as well as teaching the rules.  
5 minutes

4) Throwing program (see above)  
10 minutes

5) Skill stations – break into 3-4 groups depending on how many parents you have for help.

- A) Ground balls
- B) Fly balls
- C) Pitching/catching

10 minutes each station – 30 minutes

6) Offensive skill stations – break into 3 groups, use the parents for help.

- A) Live Batting Practice on field with Coach pitch – include infield shaggers
- B) Whiffle ball Batting Practice in outfield
- C) Bunt practice in outfield

10 minutes each station – 30 minutes

OPTIONS: Team defense session to teach live action situations, such as cutoffs, bunt coverage, etc.

7) Short competitive game to finish practice. Doesn't have to be baseball related. Keep it fun and short. We want them coming back for more.

5 minutes

8) Clean up and out!

There are a lot of ways to structure your practice. Kids waiting in lines become a behavior problem, so keep them moving. Plan your practice ahead of time. Make as many competitions out of the drills as possible. KEEP IT FUN. If the kids are having fun, you will too. Thank you for being a Coach.

## **Running a AA practice**

1) Start with a short competitive game. It doesn't have to be baseball related. Make it fun so the kids want to get there on time. No overhand throwing yet.

5 minutes

2) Agility movement – Butt kicks, high knees, side shuffles, back pedals, arm circles, carioca, etc.

2 minutes

3) Baserunning – Use for conditioning as well as teaching the rules.  
5 minutes

4) Throwing program  
5 minutes

5) Skill Stations  
A) Ground Balls  
B) Fly Balls  
C) Whiffle Ball Batting Practice  
D) Pitching

10 minutes each station. Get the parents to run stations for you.  
40 minutes

Options for the next practice

- 1) Instead of skill stations, play a mini scrimmage. Divide the kids you have into 3 groups. Coaches are the pitchers. Team 1 bats until they make three outs. Team 2 is in the field, Team 3 is in the field. Start with the count 2-1 to keep it moving. Once three outs are made, Team 2 hits, Team 3 and Team 2 are in the field.

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## **Running a Babe Ruth Practice**

1) Start with a short competitive game. It doesn't have to be baseball related. Make it fun so the kids want to get there on time. No overhand throwing yet.  
5 minutes.

2) Agility movement – Butt kicks, high knees, side shuffles, back pedals, arm circles, carioca, etc. - 5 minutes

3) Throwing program -10 minutes

3) Baserunning – Use for conditioning as well as teaching the rules. - 5 minutes

4) Defense by position stations – This depends on how many Coaches and or parents you can grab.

Infielders - focus on mechanics

Outfielders - focus on mechanics

Catchers/Pitchers – Use this time for pitchers to throw bullpens. Have the catchers work through, blocking, footwork, transfer. JV pitchers will have done this in HS practice, so ask them if they need to throw a bullpen.

20 minutes total

5) Team defense – Work on situations. You can eventually turn this into a game with baserunners. - 20 minutes

6) Hitting – You can do hitting groups. For instance, we have a group hitting, another shagging, another hitting in the cage, and another running the bases.  
30 minutes

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A letter to parents is highly suggested, please see the example below:

Dear Parents,

We're excited for the season and look forward to giving your children a good experience and to grow in their ability and confidence. In order to do so, we have certain expectations that we hope you can help reinforce at home, if possible.

#### Effort:

100% effort 100% of the time means we work hard from start to finish. Every play is important. Hustle on every play and on/off the field.

#### Respect:

For our coaches, teammates, opposing teams, umpires and the field at all times. There is no room for negative behavior from the players, coaches, or parents. We listen when the coaches are speaking, cheer for our teammates no matter what the score is, don't heckle or bad mouth other teams and keep our mouths shut when we don't like calls made by the umpires. Let the coaches deal with the umpires if it's needed. Also, the field and equipment need to be kept neat. Everyone can help clean up trash, put away equipment, pick up loose baseballs, etc. after practices and games.

#### Uniforms:

I would suggest wearing sweatpants/joggers for practice with team jersey. Laundry is a nightmare during baseball season and pants get dirty so easily. Save the clean pants for games. Proper dress is shirt tucked in, hat forward, belt fastened. Let's look like a team out there. On chilly game days, feel free to wear long sleeves under jerseys and/or bring layers for the dugout

#### Timeliness:

All players should arrive to practices 15 minutes prior to the beginning of practice and 30 minutes before the start of games. They should be dressed appropriately and ready to play. This allows for warm up time that doesn't need to cut into our time on the field. I know it's not easy as a parent juggling life - please do your best to make this possible.

#### Food and Drink:

Please make sure kids have had a snack before arriving at the field for practices and that they have water to hydrate. For games it would also be helpful to have a snack in the dugout. Please no junk food or candy. Around the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> inning is a great time to deliver a healthy team snack if you're so inclined. Extra water is always appreciated as someone always runs out.

#### Volunteers:

We do need parents to help out at practices and games. Even if you know nothing about baseball, you can help keep count of throws from pitchers and catchers (this protects players from overuse injuries and we must follow league limits). At games we will need a scorekeeper, 1st and 3rd base coaches, and a scoreboard person for home games. We will also need help raking the infield to keep it neat and usable for all.

During practice, it would be nice to have extra hands to break up the team into groups for skill development in different areas. The goal is to get them as many repetitions as possible to build their skills.

Hope everyone has downloaded Team Snap which will become our team platform for communication. This email has our current list of parents as there were some last minute changes.

Thank you for reading all of this!! Feel free to ask us questions anytime and please encourage your children to do.