



T-ball / Colt

COACHING MANUAL

2010

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1. INTRODUCTION:

Thank you for volunteering to be a QYBA Head Coach. There is no greater responsibility than the safety and the education of not only your players, but that of all the children playing at QYBA. Our and your objective is to install a love of baseball and the desire to play the sport beyond this organization.

Here is a list of what we expect (QYBA Goals):

- **Have fun:** Kids are here because they want to have fun.
 - Studies have shown that kids learn more in a fun environment; and the main reason kids quit baseball is they are no longer having fun.

******Standing around at practice is not fun.******

- **Teach the fundamentals of baseball** in a fun & safe environment.
- **Teach the value of hard work, develop their self confidence and their God-given talents to their fullest potential;**
 - Teach them proper sportsmanship, teamwork, leadership skills, selflessness, making personal sacrifices for a team, etc.

“Coach the practice and play the games.”

- **Make lifelong friends;**
 - QYBA provides a great opportunity for kids and adults to meet new people in a different and fun environment.

The QYBA coaching goals are listed above, nowhere did you see the word “WIN”. Winning is a bi-product of playing fundamentally sound baseball. In the divisions where we have playoffs, we have incorporated a playoff system in which all teams qualify, allowing you the freedom to coach without the bindings of winning and losing.

If you have an addiction to winning; or have deep rooted personal issues that will effect how you work towards achieving the QYBA goals, please do not volunteer to coach!

This manual was created to give you some of the tools needed to be a head coach, and help to make the job easier. Coaches will bring his or her own personality to their team and QYBA. We encourage you to incorporate these “Goals”.

2. LEAGUE COMMUNICATION

Website: The QYBA website is a powerful tool to help you communicate to your team. We encourage you to read the online instructions to use the site to its fullest.

Chain of Command:

Player/Parent → Coach → Division Coordinator → Vice President → President

Complaints/Questions:

- **Coaches** - any question or concern should be directed to the Division Coordinator. If the question or complaint concerns the Division Coordinator, or has not been resolved satisfactorily, then the issue should be elevated to the Vice President. The Vice President will resolve the issue according to the Division Rules and/or Code of Conduct. If necessary he will convene the Disciplinary Committee or address the League Board for final resolution.
- **Parental** - Each Head Coach is required to address the Chain of Command with their parents. Most issues come from the lack of communication between the coaches and parents and we encourage you to generate an open and ongoing dialogue.

Practices: The League will provide a pre-season schedule for game fields (Quakertown and Unami) as soon as the fields are open for the season. It is the head coach's responsibility to find a field(s) other than the QYBA fields and communicate that information to their team.

Schedule: The Schedule for the regular season will be posted on the website, if at all possible before April 1st. It is the head coach's responsibility to make the information available to their team. The website will automatically send email reminders to all players and coaches provided they have supplied an email address.

Rain Outs: If at all possible, a league representative will view the field conditions by 3:30 PM. If the fields are unplayable, or any location or time changes are made, these changes will be posted on the website and an email will be sent to all email addresses.

- **Re-scheduling of rain outs:** Rainouts can be rescheduled at the discretion of the two coaches subject to the availability of a field. All attempts to reschedule a game will be through the division coordinator.

3. **REQUIREMENTS:**

Safety: As head coach, you are responsible for the safety of all players on your team. Therefore, all safety rules must be followed in games and practices.

First, the head coach and all assistants must have an *annual background check* certificate filed with your league coordinator. At no time can your team be supervised without at least one certified coach, and no uncertified parent or assistant can be left alone with a child other than their own. Annual Background checks cost \$10.00 and can be obtained at:

<https://epatch.state.pa.us/RecordCheckEntry.jsp?action=new>

Please insure that *no player is left alone* following a practice or game. You, or a certified assistant coach, need to remain with the player until they are safely picked up by their parent or guardian.

Each coach should have a copy of the *league's insurance certificate* (found on the website). Please have this with you at all practices and games. In general, this policy provides secondary insurance for all participants. In the event of an accident or injury, please do not try to settle the matter yourself. Rather, collect the appropriate contact information and communicate the incident to your league coordinator.

Proper *protective gear* must be worn at all times. While catching in practice or games, catchers must wear a protective cup, chest protector, pads, and catchers mask with helmet and throat guard. Batters and baserunners must wear protective chinstraps. Also, players coaching bases or "guarding" the warm-up pitcher must wear a helmet. All equipment bags contain at least one batter's helmet with a faceguard and protective batter's vest. Please review these items with your team parents and players. If a parent requests that their players use this equipment, you need to insure that the player always does unless instructed otherwise by the parent. Your equipment contains a first aid kit and several ice bags that should be with you at all practices and games.

Lastly, QYBA collects information regarding any *medical conditions* during the registration process. If listed, this information is provided to the head coach. Should it apply to any of your players, contact the parent or guardian to get more information if necessary, and also seek permission to share the information with your assistant coaches. Except for the player, family, and assistant coaches, please keep the information confidential.

Team Mom: Each head coach must obtain a Team Mom. This person is instrumental in helping to coordinate snackstand duties, fundraiser duties such as Joe Corbi's, helping with Photo Day, etc.

Snackstand: The league will assign each team to snackstand duty. Each team will be responsible for supplying (4) individuals to run the snackstand. A snackstand committee member will assist in opening and closing the snackstand. The website will have the snackstand schedule posted.

Coaches Clinic and Meeting: Each head coach must attend the Coach's Clinic and their Division Meeting.

All-Star Game: The head coach from the team with the top two regular season records will be the head coaches for the All-Star Game. Each head coach, or an asst. coach from the remaining teams, is required to attend to either help coach or umpire.

End of the Year Player Evaluation: At the end of the season, your Division Coordinator will send you the Player Evaluation Spreadsheet. You must complete and return the form as quickly as possible. This form is one of the main tools we use to help create parity in our League.

Home Team Game Responsibilities (see Divisional Rules & Codes of Conduct for details): After your game is over, the home team is responsible for raking the infield, repairing the pitcher's mound, removing dugout trash, and locking up the equipment shed or press box. If you are the home team for the last game for the evening played on the Major field, you are also responsible for turning off the lights and scoreboard. Additionally, for the safety of our volunteers, please remain until the snackstand is closed and all volunteers have left.

4. COACHING - PRACTICE:

In The Beginning (before your 1st practice):

- Draft Meeting – player selections (see Divisional Rules & Codes of Conducts)
- Identify potential asst. coaches, Team Mom, umpires, etc.
- Contact team - let players/parents know you are their coach and that practice will be starting soon
- Find a practice field that works for you & your team
- Mandatory parents meeting – you can do it at the 1st practice, in an email, or both (see Communication with Parents)
- Coaches Meeting to go over league issues, using the QYBA website, and other items in preparation for the season.

Communication with Parents:

- Communication is the key – BE PROACTIVE
- The head coach, CAN NOT DO IT ALL! The more you delegate effectively, the more success (as defined by the QYBA goals) you will have
- Hold a mandatory parents meeting: tell them who you are; your team's goals; establish how you will communicate, e.g., emails; let them know the team rules for the players; discuss the importance of volunteers & how many you will need; etc.
 - A sample letter to email to parents, or to use as an outline for the parents meeting, is available in the Addendum section of the manual.
- ***You shouldn't have to, but you should be able to*** defend every decision you make, i.e., if a parent asks you why you are playing their child in a certain positions or batting a certain places in the order, you should be able to explain why.
- Provide parents with times you are available to talk, e.g., after practice or call @ home. Let the parents know that talking before practice is usually a bad time because you are preparing for practice.

Assistant Coaches:

- This is the most underrated aspect of youth coaching
- If you, as a head coach, do a good job working towards creating an environment where the goals we listed earlier are met, you will be successful. If you have (3-4) assistant coaches duplicating your efforts, you have that much more success.
- Don't be the 'egomaniac/control freak coach' who needs to run everything; have the self-confidence to delegate.
- But, at the same time, you need to control your asst. coaches & set the right example
- Set rules (see QYBA Goals & Proper Behavior)
- Baseball knowledge is not necessary; it is more important to be able to follow instructions from the head coach & handle kids correctly
 - The head coach provides the assistant coaches with instructions, i.e., teach the teachers.

Proper Behavior (towards players):

- Remember who your audience is, i.e., 5-12 years old (their maturity level will vary)
- Be organized - children need structure & routine
- **Do not 'publicly humiliate' the kids** - praise in public, criticize in private
- **Kids need constant encouragement** - most kids start out playing baseball scared, play tentative and are afraid to make mistakes
- Coach ALL your players, not your top 3 or 4. Set individual expectations/goals based on each child's maturity & skill level, i.e., make every child on your team a better player.

Organization:

- Be organized & come with a plan
 - People want to be associated with people who look like they will succeed
 - The people who need the most help, get the least; and the people who need the least help, get the most (it's just human nature)
- Be there 15 minutes early if possible; or, if you can not, ask one of your assistant coaches to be early.

Schedules:

- Pre-season practice schedule – send them out weekly based on weather forecasts, i.e., see how the weather looks for the week
 - Or, send out a pre-season practice schedule leading up to Opening Day
- Regular season schedule – once you get your game schedule, make a master schedule (to include all practices) & send it out
- Post-season schedule - send them out weekly based on the playoff schedule & include practices
- Try to avoid sending emails the night before a 'last minute' practice
- Meeting with your team 2 times a week is enough; don't cram in too many dates to make up for rain-outs.

Keys to a Good Practice:

- Come organized, i.e., with a plan
 - It's OK to improvise a when you get there, because of weather or too few kids
- Routine is critical

- Get to the point where the kids know what is expected & they are comfortable
- The fear of the unknown will go away
- They can relax & their natural abilities will come out.
- Communication
 - At the beginning of practice – review what you are going to teach them
 - During practice – teach them
 - At the end of practice – review what you just taught them. Example: if you discussed proper batting stance, demonstrate the stance yourself. Then ask for a child to demonstrate the stance. Make any adjustments in a positive fun manner and give them positive reinforcement when finished. Throughout the season, try to get all players involved in the demonstrations.
- NO STANDING AROUND, i.e., have (3) stations, everyone is busy & moving
- Practice Time – should be 1 – 1 ½ hours. It’ll be a challenge in the early spring because of lack of daylight, but weekend practices can go 1 ½ hours. Don’t go past 1 ½ hours!
- Break everything down into easy steps

Sample First Practice Plan (see Addendum)

Sample Midseason Practice Plan (1 ½ hours) (see Addendum)

5. COACHING STRATEGY - GAMES

There is very little strategy during a T-ball or Colt game, other than to be sure the kids are having fun and are safe (see QYBQ goals). The division rules (see addendum) indicate the strategy, e.g. no score kept, all players are in the batting order, and you must play all players defensively at the same time. But, here are a few tips to make things go a little smoother for you, the kids and the parents.

- **Come With a Plan, e.g., written**
 - It doesn’t have to be written; if you are an oral person, have it in your head
 - Change the batting order every game; let every kid lead off at least one game
- **Pre-game**
 - Have your team arrive prior to the game; giving enough time to properly prepare (30 min. is plenty, they have a short attention span)
 - Have a consistent warm-up routine (kids love routine)
 - If you get the infield - do a quick infield practice with easy ground balls hit that the kids can handle & build their confidence (note: home team uses field first)
 - Do not introduce anything new prior to a game, they will not retain it, i.e., save it for practice.
- **Less is More**
 - Stay relaxed & don’t over do it. The game should be the “funnest” part of baseball
 - Get the easiest out – keep it simple.
- **Coach the Practice & PLAY the Game !!!!!**

- SAVE those great coaching instructions you always hear yelled out during a game, in such a warm and tender tone, e.g., “Let’s go Johnny, you gotta make that play” or “What are you doing out there Joey”?
 - News Flash! ... These classic coaching instructions DO NOT WORK
 - Think about everything that comes out of your mouth during a game; and whether it helps the kids, or scares them.
- **Keep Them Focused**, i.e., little things you can do to keep their interest during a game
 - Have (1) coach assigned as your ‘bench coach’ when you are batting, i.e., call out who are the first 3 players up to bat every inning; be sure the batter ‘on deck’ has his helmet on and is getting ready
 - Have a plan (see above), i.e., don’t be caught trying to figure out who is going to play where, when you should be taking the field & the other team already has their batter standing at the plate and ready to bat.

6. **DRILLS (& Techniques)**

- **Throwing**
 - Have it as your warm-up drill for every practice and game
 - One row of kids on the 1st or 3rd base line & the other row across the pitchers mound; facing each other (towards the end of the season you can have the kids each take 1-2 steps back)
 - Pair off kids with similar skill levels
 - Techniques: Brake down the throwing & catching into steps: turn your hips & shoulders; throwing elbow above your shoulder; point with glove, i.e., the power ‘T’
 - ALWAYS GIVE A TARGET when you are waiting for the throw
 - If you miss the throw, run back to your position before you make your next throw
 - Make it fun, once the kids get it down, do a presentation at the end of the drill for most consecutive successful throws and have a defending champion. You’ll be amazed at how they can focus on the task at hand when it is a competition.
- **Bases & Positions**
 - Gather all your players at home plate
 - Go over all the bases & positions, and have the kids repeat the bases & positions back to you
 - Call players’ names out and a position, then have them run out to the position
 - Call a base out and have all the players point to the base
 - Have them all run back to home and do it a 2nd & 3rd time.
- **Catchers** (for Colts only; there are no catchers in T-ball)
 - Remind catchers to give a target
 - Catchers MUST (after they receive the pitch) stand up, turn hips & shoulders (to make Power ‘T’) and throw the ball back to the pitcher’s target
 - Do not put a child behind the plate who is not ready (they should not be afraid of the ball & must be able to make the throw back to the pitcher)

- EVERY TIME, during practice, a catcher misses the pitcher's target, stop, hand the ball back to the catcher & have him throw it again; then give the catcher positive reinforcement that he can do it every time

- **Batting**

EVERY PRACTICE HIT OFF THE BATTING TEE

- You can break this up, occasionally, with the soft toss
- The TEE creates good habits/muscle memory (you CAN NOT do this as effectively when you are trying to hit a moving ball)
- **Mechanics** – knuckles up & elbows down (like a boxer); feet slightly wider than shoulders; knees slightly bent; nose pointing to ball; bat flat and just above & behind your shoulder; slight step with front foot; lead with knob of bat; swing down (don't drop hands); make contact; follow through up
- Teach the hitter to 'stay back', i.e., hit and think *line drives over the 2B's head* (for RHB; & over SS's head for LHB). Wait on the ball; do not lunge at it and try to hit it out in front. In order to do this, the TEE/ball must be placed back in the strike zone and on the outside part of the plate.
- Once the batter (RHB) is consistently stroking line drives over the 2B's head, move the TEE/ball up in the strike zone & on the inside part of the plate in order to "jump or turn" on the ball, i.e., line drives over the SS's head
- Note: it is much easier to learn to hit to the opposite field & then jump on an inside pitch; than to be taught to pull the ball & then try to hit an outside pitch.

BP Drill – WITH GAME SITUATIONS, e.g., backups, cutoffs, baserunners, base coaches, etc.

- Batter hits away & fielders make the play like it's a game situation
- After 5 hits, batter runs out last hit and fielders make play on ball, i.e., everyone moves
- Batter, running out last hit, stays on base; every fielder slides over one position (RF to CF, CF to LF, LF to 3B, 3B to SS, SS to 2B, 2B to 1B); 1B goes to batting TEE; child hitting off TEE goes to batter's box to hit
- Baserunner works way around bases until they score. If the baserunner is out on the base paths during the drill, send them back to the base they came from & let them keep running till they score (*get your player used to scoring & scoring often*)
- Once baserunner scores, they get ready to go to RF (or, you can have them go around the bases a second time if they scored too quickly).

- **Fielding**

Baseball Ready (sometimes called Ready Set Position, or Touch Up) for infielders -

- Before the ball is placed in the pitching machine, the infielders position their glove below his waste, feet spread wider than his shoulders & knees bent placing his body into an athletic position
- Once the ball begins to come towards home plate, the infielder takes (2) very small steps in, right handed fielder goes right foot first & left foot second (left handed fielders goes left foot first & right foot second)
- This should be done first EVERY TIME you do an infielding drill and for every pitch during the BP drill. If you expect it, they will do it.

Baseball Ready for Outfielders

- Knees slightly bent, feet spread wider than shoulders, knees bent placing body into an athletic position, and glove & throwing hand placed on knees

Infielding

- After the infielder demonstrates the 'baseball ready' position, roll a ball towards the infielder's glove from about 8-10 feet away and have the infielder field the ball using their bare hand to trap the ball (alligator like) into the glove, then the infielder runs to the coach and places the ball in a bucket
- After this is done consistently, repeat but have infielder bring his glove up to his ear, turn hips & shoulders, and make power 'T' as if throwing towards 1st base, then the infielder runs to the coach and places the ball in a bucket
- After this is done consistently, have the kids throw the ball to 1st base with another child playing 1B
- The throw to 1st base should be done from the 2B position so it is a fairly easy throw, with the child playing 1B being one of your more experienced players
- After all these steps are done consistently, roll the ball a few feet to the side of the fielder so they have to move laterally to get their body & glove behind the ball

Outfielding

- Start off with tennis balls, and toss pop flies.
 - Stress getting their **body under the ball** & using (2) hands to make the catch
 - Once the kids are comfortable with this, and are you are confident you won't be putting ice packs on bloody noses, switch over to incredible balls
 - Once they are comfortable with the incredible balls, toss pop flies over their shoulders and have the kids turn and run sideways to catch pop flies
 - Stress running without stretching out the glove, but running with their arms at their sides in a natural running motion
 - Communicate that they should not stretch out their glove until they are under the ball and ready to make the catch
- **Cut 2s** –
 - This is a concept that can be introduced at the Colt level – here is a very basic drill
 - Get (3) outfielders & (2) middle infielders in position
 - Coach positions himself between 2nd base & the mound
 - Coach tosses balls into the outfield, i.e., pop flies, ground balls, at fielders, over fielders, in gaps & down the lines
 - Outfielders play the ball and hits the cut-off man, i.e., 2B if the ball is hit to the right side & SS if ball is hit to left side
 - Cut-off man relays the ball to the player covering 2nd base
 - The player covering 2nd base applies the tag and throws the ball back into the coach
 - The other outfielders must position themselves for the backup, either behind the outfielder making the play on the ball, or behind 2nd base for the throw from the cut-off
 - Correct any mistakes & have it redone correctly
 - This works well when a 2nd coach is working with batters on the TEE
 - **Baserunning**

EVERY PRACTICE during BP

- Work on it with every player in a game situation

1st base

- Line up the kids behind the plate & put your 1st base coach in position
- Have the kids run towards 1st base & the coach instruct the runners to: run thru the bag & look over right shoulder for the overthrown ball
- Once this is done correctly, expand to: making your turn forcing the fielder to throw the ball
- Once this is done correctly, expand to: having the 1st base coach send them to 2nd base
- Stress good turns, hitting the inside of the bag with your foot; & demonstrate for the kids
- Keep it fast passed and interesting for about 15 minutes; the kids will like it

Home to Home

- Have your players lined up behind home plate and your 1st & 3rd base coaches in position
- Say “go” and let them run one at a time with a coach at home plate working a stop watch
- Have the base coaches simulate sending the runners all the way home
- Stress good turns, hitting the inside of the bag with your foot & demonstrate for the kids
- So simple, but the kids love the drill; tell them their times & crown a champion
- You’ll be surprised, the best base runner is usually not the fastest kid

7. ADDENDUM

Sample Parents Letter

Sample First Practice Plan

Sample Midseason Practice Plan

Divisional Rules & Goals

Sample Parents Letter:

Dear <team> Parents,

This letter is to introduce myself, communicate my coaching philosophy, and give you information about the upcoming season.

My name is <name>. I've been involved with <state experience here>. My goal for this team is <state goals here>.

One of the recent changes the QYBA Board has made was to institute a "blind" draft. Collectively, the coaches divided the players in to evenly matched teams. After that, the coaches drew numbers to find out which team they would be coaching. This was done so that we could have fun and competitive games. Another important change is that <state any other important changes here>.

Typically, we'll meet 3 times each week for practices and/or games. This year I plan to practice at <state field here>; the exception is when we have any of the Unami and Quakertown fields reserved. Shortly, I'll put together the practice <state how you plan to schedule practices leading up to opening day>. My practices usually run <length> during the week and <length> on Saturdays. Each player should bring a baseball cap, glove, cleats, and water to practice. Also, please do not wear shorts; we will slide a lot at practice. If you opt to supply a bat for your player, please make sure you buy a bat that is 2 ¼" barrel or less. The larger bats are approved by Little League but are not allowed by QYBA.

I expect we'll play <number> games during the regular season. The days, times, and locations will be posted on the web site, www.qyba.org. Please plan to have your player(s) at the fields <number> minutes prior to the starting time for the game.

In the games, <state your philosophy on how you will position or rotate players>, but will not put them in positions where they are not comfortable or if I feel they may not be safe.

Regarding games, like any other coach and I would prefer winning to losing. However, I stick to those simple goals mentioned earlier and not judge our team on the number of wins. If we do those simple things, the wins will take care of themselves. Regardless of the game situation or behavior of another player or coach, neither my assistants nor myself will act inappropriately. I'm asking the same of all the parents. Please enjoy the games and feel free to hang out at practices, pickup a glove if I'm short a fielder for a drill, or run a few laps with the team.

We ask that you help **volunteer** for activities for which our team is responsible. First is the Joe Corbi Pizza Sale – we need orders handed in by <date>. Please sell as many as you can. Our registration fee is lower than most other organizations, yet we continue to make improvements to our facilities. The proceeds from the Pizza sale help pay for those capital improvements and allow us to maintain a low registration fee.

Next is the snack stand – as a team, we will be responsible for covering the snack stand a few times throughout the season. The team mom will ask for volunteers for the different days/times once the schedule is published

Lastly, I want to thank you for the opportunity to coach your player this season. I'm looking forward to it. If at any time you have questions about your player or other league activities (tournaments, fall ball, etc.), please feel free to ask. You can usually catch up with me just after practice. I'm also available via email at <email address> or you can call me at <number> (home) or <number> (cell).

Thanks,
<name>

Important Dates:

- <date> – Work Day (Milford or Quakertown TBD)
- <date> – Work Day (Milford or Quakertown TBD)
- <date> – Pizza Orders Due
- <date> – Work Day (Rainout Date)
- <date> – Opening Day (Ceremonies at the Quakertown Field Complex)
- <date> – Pictures (**Rain or Shine**)

Sample: First Practice Plan (1 hour):

“Routine is critical: your greatest competition is weather, daylight, wasted time & boredom”.
(Bucks County Baseball Academy).

15 min. – Warm-up

- Throwing
- Reviews team rules; (5) basic rules are:
 - You must have fun
 - You must work hard
 - You must be respectful to your coaches, teammates, parents, umpires, etc.
 - You only throw to a target, i.e., other player must be looking & have glove open for a throw
 - You only swing a bat when working with a coach or in a game (bats a carried in a baseball bag; or below your waste, bat barrel down, like a caveman)
- 1 lap around field

30 min. – Skills (split into stations and rotate players)

- Throwing – provide special attention to kids still struggling with proper throwing mechanics
- Batting TEE – (2) players at a time
- Fielding

15 min. – Fun Drill

- Bases & Positions, Baserunning (1st base)

5 min. - Wrap-up

- Review team rules

Sample: Midseason Practice Plan (1 ½ hours):

“Routine is critical: your greatest competition is weather, daylight, wasted time & boredom”.
(Bucks County Baseball Academy).

15 min. – Warm-up

- Throwing
- Discussion: e.g., review team rules, a situation that occurred in the last game, a great play your team made in the last game, a new skill that you will introduce, etc.
- 1 lap around field

30 min. – Skills (split into stations and rotate players)

- Throwing – provide special attention to kids still struggling with proper throwing mechanics
- Batting TEE – (2) players at a time
- Fielding or Cut 2s

30 min. – Batting Practice (see BP Drill)

15 min. – Fun Drill

- Review Bases & Positions, Baserunning, Relay races