



Major / Minor

COACHING MANUAL

2012

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

1. Introduction

- Have fun, teach fundamentals, teach hard work & self confidence, make lifelong friends

2. League Communication

- Website, chain of command, complaints/questions, practices, schedule, rain outs

3. Requirements

- Safety, background check & code of conduct, umpiring, Team Mom, snackstand, tryouts, coaches clinic & meeting, tournament team, all-star game, game scores & summaries, player evaluations, home team responsibilities

4. Coaching – Practice

- In the beginning, communication with parents, assistant coaches, proper behavior, organization, schedules, keys to a good practice, sample pre-season practice plan, sample mid-season practice plan

5. Coaching Strategy – Games

- Plan, pre-game, less is more, coach the practice & PLAY the game, a position to succeed, pitchers, focus

6. Drills

- Throwing, bases & positions, pitchers & catchers, batting, fielding, situations, cut 2's, cut 3's & 4's, baserunning, taking the field

7. Addendum

- QYBA Website Instructions, Sample Parents Letter, Sample Midseason Practice Plan, Divisional Rules & Goals.

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, report scores and submit game summaries. This manual has a few of the basic functions, but 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 Milford) 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:** see Divisional Rules & Goals (in Addendum).

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 QYBA 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 catcher's 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 (helmet with a faceguard and protective batter's vest), 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.

Umpiring: Each Pony, Minor & Major team will be responsible for umpiring a certain number of games. The head coach is responsible for providing two individuals for each assignment. It is not required that the head coach be one of the individuals, but only that the individuals are qualified enough to properly do the job. QYBA conducts at least one umpiring clinic and it is required that at least two attendees from each team are present. It is highly recommended that each individual who expresses interest either verbally or on the registration form attend the umpiring clinic, especially if they have never attended before. Each coach will be given the umpire schedule and the schedule will be posted on the website. The website will also email the head coach a 'reminder' the night before. If you cannot supply an umpire for a designated game, it is your responsibility to find a replacement. Please communicate any changes in umpire assignments to your league coordinator and the

head coaches for your assigned game. In the event of a rainout, your team is still responsible to provide umpires for the rescheduled game unless the rescheduled game interferes with one of your scheduled games. If this occurs, please contact your league coordinator as soon as you recognize the conflict.

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.

Tryouts: All Major head coaches are responsible for attending both of the Major tryouts. The Major Coordinator must approve exceptions.

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

Tournament Team Tryouts: During the season, tournament teams will be selected for each age group. It is important that head coaches participate in the selection process for the ages that fall into their division. Head coaches may also be asked to supply information regarding prospective tournament players including statistics. In general, Pony league head coaches will participate in the selection of the 9U team, Minor league head coaches participate in the selection of the 10U team, and Major league head coaches select the 11U and 12U teams (with input from the Minor league head coaches if a Minor player tries out for the team).

In the event you cannot participate in the tryouts, please be sure to send an *objective assistant coach* in your place for the evaluation. Also, make sure to discuss the qualifications of every player on your team who is trying out for tournament ball with the tournament team head coach *prior to the tryouts*. Your participation in the process is key to making tournament selections fair and failure to participate may result in a deserving player not getting a strong advocate.

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. Note: players who have made their tournament teams are not eligible for the all-star game.

Posting Game Scores and Summaries: In the divisions where the score is kept, it is the responsibility of the winning head coach to post the final score and game summary. The score and summary can be submitted on the website. In the Coaches Website Instructions there is detailed information on how to submit the game summary. Please note it is mandatory that all game summaries be submitted to the Division Coordinator for review before it can be posted in a local news paper. ***The League must approve any submissions to any media source, regarding QYBA!***

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 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 & Goals)
- 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 - 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 be able 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 teacher

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 approximately 3 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 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, *why* you are going to teach it & why it is *important*
- During practice – teach them
- At the end of practice – review what you just taught them.
- NO STANDING AROUND, i.e., have (3) stations, everyone is busy & moving
- Practice Time – should be 1 ½ – 2 hours. It’ll be a challenge in the early spring because of lack of daylight, but weekend practices can go 2 hours. Don’t go past 2 hours!
- Break everything down into easy steps

Sample Practice Plan (2 hours): (see Addendum)

5. COACHING STRATEGY - GAMES

- **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
 - Keep the batting order and fielding positions somewhat consistent; move the less experienced players into the infield when they are ready
 - Everyone should sit the bench approx. (1-2) innings a game
- **Pre-game**
 - Have your team arrive prior to the game; giving enough time to properly prepare (approximately 30 min. for Minors & 60 min. for Majors). The home team gets the field first and then the visitors.
 - Have a consistent warm-up routine done at a fast pace to get them loose & focused (kids love routine); do the warm-up drill mentioned in the Drills section
 - Have your pitchers warm up (have 3 ready for every game)
 - When you get the infield - do a quick, fast passed, infield practice with ground balls that the kids can handle & build their confidence (note: home team uses the 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
- **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., “Come on Jimmy, you gotta throw strikes” or “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, i.e., you want your kids to be “fearLESS” during the game
 - Make notes of things you need to work on during the game, and work on them during practice (not during the game)
- **Put your kids in a position where they can succeed**

- Put a child in a position where they have the best chance of success
 - Be consistent where you play your kids, e.g., for most kids (1-3) positions is enough; try to develop an infield and outfield position for each child
 - Give your kids a chance/challenge when they are ready, e.g., move that new kid to 2B for a few innings when he is ready
- **Pitchers**
 - Start the first few games with your more experienced pitchers
 - Have (3) pitchers ready for every game
 - Work in your less experienced pitchers by setting an expectation that they will pitch to a limited number of batters or pitches their first time out. If they are doing well, reward them and keep them out there. If they struggle and have to come out of the game, they will be expecting it
 - Give pitchers a chance to work out of jams to build confidence, but don't let them struggle too long.

6. **DRILLS (& Techniques)**

- **Stretching**
 - Stretching should take place as a team in the outfield after warming up (make this the routine). Have them form lines (3-4 kids) with the front line facing the rest. Front line will call out the stretches, and everyone will count out loud for the stretch. Do this as a team.
 - Shoulder Stretch – Large arm circles forward for a count of 10. Large arm circles back for a count of 10.
 - Forearm Stretch – One arm extended out in front of you, fingers point toward the sky, palm facing away from body. Use other hand to pull fingers back towards body stretching the forearm. Stretch for a count of 10. Point fingers toward the ground, palm facing out. Pull fingers toward body for 10 count. Repeat for other arm.
 - Triceps Stretch – Place your arm behind your head with your hand in between your shoulder blades (elbow pointing towards the sky). Use your other hand to grab your elbow and pull back for a count of 10. Repeat for other arm.
 - Hurdler Stretch (works both hamstring and quad) – Sit down, one leg straight out and other leg folded back. Reach out and grab your toe for a count of 10. Lay back for a count of 10. Repeat for other leg.
 - Butterfly Stretch – Sit down, put bottom of your feet together and pull them in as close to your butt as possible. Push your knees to the ground for a count of 10.
 - There are many other stretches that are good (jumping jacks, push-ups, etc.), but the above are excellent for the muscles used in baseball.
- **Throwing**
 - Have it as part of your warm-up drill for every practice and game
 - Warm-up in the outfield with the players on the outfield foul line and the others in the outfield, about 30' away (stay off the infield). After approximately (10) throws, then move back to 45', then to 60', then in to 45', and back in to 30'.

- For the Major level you could work this drill starting from 45', and moving back to 60' & 75'; then working back in to 60' and 45'.
- For the Minor level, you may have to pair off kids with similar skill levels
- Techniques: brake down the throwing & catching into steps: turn your hips & shoulders (point your throwing shoulder at the target); 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
- As the kids throwing skills improve, work up to having you players simulate how they would throw & catch the ball, and position their body in a game. Example: your pitchers throwing 2-seamers, 4-seamers & change-ups; your catchers turning their hips & shoulders simulating a throw down to 2B; your infielders 'running around the ball' simulating a play in the infield & a throw to 1B; your infielders fielding any short throws like they would play a ball in the infield; your outfielders fielding any short throws keeping the ball in front of them like they would a ball hit to them in the outfield.

- **Pitchers & Catchers**

- HAVE **PITCHERS** THROW EVERY PRACTICE (exception would be a pitcher who has just thrown several innings within the last day or two)
- Show the 4-seamer, 2-seamer and change-up; no breaking balls
- When a pitcher can consistently throw strikes with a 4-seamer (gripped ACROSS the seam, with 4 seams rotating), introduce the 2-seamer (gripped WITH the seams, with 2 seams rotating).



- The 4-seam will stay straighter, while the 2-seam pitch will dart down slightly. You may only see a slight difference at first, but as the pitchers arm strength improves, and when the pitcher moves back to a 50' and 60' pitching distance, you will see a significant difference.
- The change-up should be taught to the more advanced pitcher. The ball is gripped back into the palm of the hand, restricting the snap of the wrist when the ball is released. The pitching motion does not change at all; but the velocity of the pitch is decreased.
- Line up 2-3 pitchers & have them throw one after the other to a catcher
- While pitcher #1 is throwing, have pitcher #2 & #3 stand behind pitcher #1 and watch their mechanics/form; and discuss it, i.e., make them think

- At the beginning of the season put a cone about 1/3 the way from the plate to the mound and have your pitchers throw from the cone. When they are consistently throwing strikes from the cone, move the cone back a few feet; keep working back to 46'. Goals are by opening day have (3) pitchers confident that they can throw strikes from 46' - 50', and by season's end have (5+) pitchers confident they can throw strikes.
- Set expectations, very early, that they should be throwing strikes - it should be a reasonable expectation, because they are starting out pitching so close to the plate
- Tell your pitchers that you would prefer to see someone hit a double off the fence, than waste 7 pitches and walk the batter (you need to remove that fear from your pitchers, i.e., it's OK to get hit around & it's part of the game)
- Balance & direction is the key to throwing strikes
- Techniques: the preference is to pitch out of the stretch; no rocking; glove, foot, knee & nose should fall towards the catcher's glove (watch where the front foot lands, don't be falling off to the side); make the 'C' from the cap to the knee (don't keep your back straight); front foot calf should be vertical & toe pointing down (no cork screws); bend the back knee for the push off the rubber
- To teach balance, pitch from the stretch first and bring the knee up. Stop there and make sure they are balanced. They should be able to hold the position for 3-5 seconds. Tell your pitchers to hold that position while brushing their teeth at night.
- Keep the head quiet, i.e., no rocking (if the head is smooth, then the body will follow), always focused on the catcher's glove.
- Start the pitching motion after the catcher has given a target
- Every child is different when it comes to pitching arm angle. Ideally, you would want the child's arm to come over the top, but you need to work with the kids to see where they are comfortable. Slightly above $\frac{3}{4}$ or at $\frac{3}{4}$ arm angle is not bad, but sidearm pitching will (in time) hurt the arm and shoulder.
- For the more advanced pitcher pitching from the motion, be sure they are not taking a huge step. It should be a slight step to the side with the 'head quiet' allowing a smooth transition for the foot on the rubber
- After the pitch – take 2 or 3 steps towards the catcher & give a target
- Catchers: give a target on the inside part of the plate and just above the knees (remember: young pitchers will shy away from throwing inside & the ball will cross the plate while traveling slightly downward)
- Catchers MUST (after they receive the pitch) stand up, turn hips & shoulders (to make the 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
- Catchers need to be on the balls of their feet when in their stance (never flat-footed). They need to be able to quickly come out of their stance with their body in a position to throw to a base (shoulder pointed towards the base).
- Minor and Major catchers should be ready to block balls in the dirt. When rotating catchers through the BP Drill, or when working on skills, have your catchers work on blocking tennis balls thrown in the dirt in front of them. Do this EVERY PRACTICE

for 5 minutes! Mechanics: position body in front of the ball; drop to the knees with the glove between the legs; smother the ball with the body (that is why they have equipment) and keep the ball in front of them. For balls to the side, slide body to where ball will be and deflect the ball back to home plate. If you practice it, they will get it!



- Teach how to apply the tag when there is a *play at the plate*. Hold the ball in the glove with your bare hand (i.e., two handed), go to one knee in the baseline in front of home plate, and put the tag on the ground. All kids are required to slide and the catcher has more protection than the runner.
- Involve your catcher in the pre-game infield. Go around the infield with a “Get 1”. Then go around the infield with a “Get 1 and a Throw”, i.e., after the infield makes a play at first and throws to the catcher, the catcher will throw to the base where the play originated, e.g., 3rd base for 3B, 2nd base for SS or 2B, 1st base for 1B. This works on their throws for stealing and gets them more involved.

- **Batting**

EVERY PRACTICE HIT OFF THE BATTING TEE

- You can break this up, occasionally, with the soft toss (the soft toss is great drill for Minors and Majors, it teaches muscle memory and hand/eye coordination)
- The TEE creates good habits, i.e., muscle memory (you CAN NOT do this as effectively when you are trying to hit a pitched ball)

Mechanics

- **Knuckles** up (line up ‘knocking knuckles’) & elbows down (like a boxer)
- **Toes** - feet wider than shoulders
- **Knees** slightly bent
- **Nose** pointing to ball
- **Bat** - flat and just above & behind your shoulder
- **Slight step** with front foot (always on the balls of your feet) once you see pitcher raise arm for delivery
- **Drive back knee into front knee** to turn hips
- **Lead with knob** of bat; swing down (don’t drop hands); make contact; follow through up; explode hips open as contact is made (power comes from hips, thighs &

forearms); head follows ball through the strike zone; chin should start on front shoulder and finish on back shoulder, ‘shoulder to shoulder’.

- 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.
- Place ball on tee with 2 seams vertical and facing catcher. Hitter should hit inside seam. This will allow to: keep hands in; stay back; not lunge at ball; and hit to the opposite field.
- Once (RHB) batter 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.

Teach the bunt

- *Mechanics* – There are two traditional techniques for bunting: (1) spin on the balls of your feet; square around your hips & shoulders (not your feet); and, (2) bring your front foot back and your back foot forward squaring your hips and shoulders
- *Mechanics continued* – place bat horizontal with the barrel up on a slight 15% angle at the top of the strike zone; barrel hand holding bat just below the label with index finger & thumb; bend knees to make contact with balls thrown down in the strike zone (do not stab with the bat)
- Bottom hand controls the angle of the bat and direction the ball is bunted
- THIS IS A KEY SKILL THAT IS NOT TAUGHT ENOUGH

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

- Coach pitches & calls out game situations constantly throughout drill
- 3rd base coach is giving signals to hitters & baserunners on every pitch
- Batters must lay down one good bunt
- Batter hits away & fielders make the play like it’s a game situation
- After 5-10 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
- Rotate your catchers as needed
- 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 easily)
- Whatever is done wrong, repeat it until it is done correctly – whenever possible, but don’t have a child repeat something they are not capable of doing correctly, e.g., bunting may take more time to learn

- This is a drill that you must work up to in increments, e.g., you may not want to bunt the first few times; and you might not want the 3rd base coach giving signals until the kids get have gotten the hang of the drill.
- If you do this drill every practice, by the end of the year, you will be the best baserunning and defensive team in your league
- Note: don't hit live pitching until the kids are ready and the weather allows; you can start the BP Drill hitting off the TEE or use the soft toss

- **Fielding**

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

- When the pitcher sets to throw, the infielder positions his glove below his waste with palm side facing up, feet spread slightly wider than his shoulders & knees bent placing body into an athletic position
- When the pitcher begins to come towards home plate, the infielder takes (2) creepy steps in, righted 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.
- On the balls of your feet and ready to move in any direction
- Watch that kids don't drop the glove below the waste & then stand straight up

Baseball Ready for Outfielders

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

Infielding

- *Technique:* teach to "field throw the ball". Never field a ball while flat-footed and not moving. The glove should stay down on the ground and only adjust upward at the last minute. Glove hand and bare hand should funnel the ball into the stomach/chest area as the body is positioned to throw to the base (point the throwing shoulder, etc.)
- Teach to *field the ball on both sides*, glove side and backhand. The footwork for these techniques is very different. Backhanding the ball requires the planting the outside foot to stop the momentum and start the movement towards the target. Fielding to the glove side should be smooth with a simple shuffle to position the body correctly for throwing
- Simply rolling balls to the infielders (from about 10-15 ft away) making them work on fielding the ball in all directions is an excellent drill. This can done with multiple station around the infield so kids don't have to wait in line long
- Working on *fielding short hops* can be done with two players on their knees about 10' apart (bare hands – no gloves). Using a tennis ball, throw a short hop to the other player. Using your glove hand (with no glove) with palm up and bare hand, the player should funnel the ball into their stomach/chest area (fielding the ball).
- The Minors and Majors are ready to work on *turning two at 2nd base*. Teach the 2B to come across the bag and take the throw from the SS on the SS side of the bag (almost fielding like a 1st baseman but at 2nd base). After taking the throw from the SS, the 2B should come off the bag out of the baseline and position their body to throw to first (pointing throwing shoulder). It is key that the 2B have his throwing hand near his

glove for a quick transition of the ball from glove to throwing hand. The SS should take the throw from the 2B on the back corner of the bag on the 2B side; and take the throw moving forward towards 1st base in order to immediately throw to 1st base. Again, throwing hand near the glove for a quick transition.

- The 1B should always put their non-glove side foot on the bag, which will allow them to stretch the furthest for the ball, and their foot on the edge of the bag (not on top). Work with their footwork to position themselves for throws that are not directly at them; note: the 1st baseman should not stretch until the ball is thrown and they know in which direction to stretch.

Around the Horn

- Put all (6) infielders in position
- P throws to C, C to 3B, 3B to SS, SS to 2B, 2B to 1B & 1B back to P
- While ball is being thrown around, 3B takes 1 step in, SS takes 2 steps in, 2B takes 3 steps in & 1B takes 4 steps in, to where the 1B just needs to 'flip' the ball to the P

Outfielding

- Stress getting their body under the ball & using (2) hands to make the catch above their head
- Toss pop flies over their shoulders and have the kids turn and run sideways to catch pop flies
- The first step should be with the foot closest to the ball and toward the spot where they think the ball will come down. A good first step is key.
- Stress running without stretching out the glove, but running with their arms at their sides in a natural running motion; communicate not to stretch out the glove until they are under the ball and ready to make the catch
- Teach to try to field the pop fly moving forward to be in position to throw the ball
- Teach the "crow hop". Get the body under the ball, under control and in position to catch and immediately throw the ball. Body moves forward towards the infield as the catch is made, crossover feet with throwing-side foot and hop. While crossing over and hopping rotate body to the Power "T" position turning hips and shoulders, take another step with glove-side foot and make throw with body falling forward.

• **Situations**

- This can be run with all players
- Put a team of 9 players in positions and have the rest of the team put on helmets to run the bases
- Pitcher will pitch to the catcher like a live game. The coach will hit the ball to different spots to work on situational baseball
- Players will run the bases and stay on if they are not out. Work the fielders to know where to go with the ball in many different situations
- Rotate all players through the field and running

• **Cut 2s** –

- Get (3) outfielders & (2) middle infielders in position
- Coach positions himself between 2nd base & the mound, and 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 must be positioned half way between outfielder retrieving ball and 2nd base, e.g., if ball goes down right field line, 2B must run out and to the right to be positioned half way between the RF retrieving the ball and 2nd base
 - The cut-off man, when receiving the ball from the outfielder, should have their body turned and the front shoulder pointing towards the base they will be throwing to (have the throwing hand near his glove for a quick transition of the ball from glove to throwing hand). Always try to catch the cut-off throw before it hits the ground.
 - Cut-off man relays the ball to the player covering 2nd base
 - The player covering 2nd base directs (shouting) the cut-off man to his right or left to be sure he is lined up correctly and applies the tag when he receives the throw (apply tag **to ground in front of bag** allowing the baserunner to slide into the tag)
 - 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 pitchers & catchers, and a 3rd coach is working with batters on the TEE
- **Cut 3s & 4s**
 - Cut 3s are the same as Cut 2s, except for adding a 3B to the drill to receive the ball from the cut-off man
 - The 2B directs (shouting) the cut-off man to his right or left to be sure he is lined up correctly and applies the tag when he receives the throw (apply tag **to ground in front of bag** allowing the base runner to slide into the tag)
 - Note: you would not be able to work on cut 3s (with throws coming in from RF to 3rd base) while a 2nd coach is working with pitchers on the mound
 - Cut 4s are the same as Cut 2s, except for: adding a C to the drill to receive the ball from the cut-off man
 - When balls are hit over the outfielder's head, the cut-off man is the 2B or SS; and when the ball is hit at, or in front of the outfielder, the cut-off man is the P
 - The C directs (shouting) the P (cut-off man) to his right or left to be sure he is lined up correctly and applies the tag when he receives the throw (see "apply the tag" in the "Pitchers and Catchers" section); the C may also direct (shouting) the P to "cut-off" the throw if the C sees there will not be a play at the plate - this allows the P to prevent other base runners from advancing.

Note: cut-offs should be worked on during the BP Drill and the Situations Drill. Whenever it is done wrong, send everyone back and repeat it until it is done correctly.

- **Base Running**

EVERY PRACTICE during BP

- Work on it with every player in a game situation
- E.g., with a runner on 2nd base, and a ball hit to SS, the runner should come off 2nd base as far as the 2B will allow, and then break to 3rd base on the throw to 1st base

- If it is not done correctly, send everyone back, roll the ball back to the SS & have it done correctly

Note on time management: base running is a great way to end every practice. It is a good warm down for the kids and you can do it even if daylight is sparse.

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 THROUGH the bag, veer off to the right into foul territory & look over their right shoulder for the overthrown ball
- Occasionally roll a ball past the base runner when running through the bag to simulate an overthrown ball; and the runner should immediately run to 2nd base
- Once this is done correctly, expand to: making your turn & simulate making the outfielder throw the ball as if the ball has been hit out of the infield
- Stress good turns when making the turn and getting a good angle towards 2nd base
- The 1st base coach should be yelling, “make the turn”. As soon as the player knows the ball is out of the infield or hears “make the turn”, they should start running on the outside part of the first baseline dirt ‘grabbing grass’. This will allow the runner to make the turn, hit the inside corner of 1st base and run straight towards 2nd base.
- Once this is done correctly, expand to: making your turn and going to 2nd base, i.e., home to 2nd base
- Stress picking up the 3rd base coach about half way between 1st & 2nd base.

2nd Base

- Have your 1st & 3rd base coaches in position and have a coach (head or experienced coach) playing SS, and occasionally switching to 2B.
- Line up the runners behind 1st base in foul territory; have (1) child on 1st base and say, “go”.
- For Minors - the base runner should not have his chest facing home plate. Have the inside foot on the back part of the bag with the outside foot in a runner’s position. This will allow a quicker jump leaving the bag
- For Majors – the base runner should have a lead with chest facing home plate.
- The coach playing SS will simulate getting into position to take a throw and make a tag at 2nd base, or get into position for a cut-off.
- The runner will, depending on what the SS does, slide into 2nd base, or look towards the 3rd base coach to either make a turn and stop, or proceed to 3rd base.
- Stress good slides, good turns and following the base coach’s directions.
- Keep it fast passed and interesting for about 15 minutes; the kids will like it.

3rd Base & Home

- Continue with (the 2nd Base, base running drill) above, focusing on 3rd base
- Stress good slides, good turns and following the 3rd base coach’s directions as the runner is approaching 3rd base
- When rounding 3rd base and heading home, the foot should be hitting the inside corner of the bag and head as straight as possible towards home
- The proper way for the base runner to come off the 3rd base bag is in foul territory (the base runner is out if hit by the batted ball in fair territory); and come back to the

bag in fair territory (i.e., block the catcher's line of vision to the 3B when throwing down to 3rd base).

Base running notes: always address proper base running during your BP Drill & Situations Drill.

- Another good base running drill is, while working on pitchers & catchers and hitting off the 'T', have base runners at 1st, 2nd, and 3rd base. When the pitch crosses home plate (Minors), or is delivered (Majors), have the runners take their secondary lead. The runners at 1st & 3rd base should take about 2 good steps, and the runner on 2nd should take about 4 good steps. The base runner should never take their eyes off the ball, and should be looking for balls overthrown back to the Pitcher.

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 & 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

Sliding

- Tell your players that they are expected to come to practice dressed like a baseball player, i.e., no shorts (you can't slide in shorts)
- Coach lays down in front of a base to demonstrate how to position your body for a slide; left leg straight, right leg bent in with bottom of foot towards right knee (legs can be reversed), back up off of ground on approx. 30% angle, arms in air
- If the slide is done correctly, there should be no dirt directly on your butt. The dirt should be between the side and back of your thigh/hip area
- Be sure the runners "pop up" after the slide in order to be ready to advance on an overthrow
- Practice this during the situations, baserunning and BP drills

Stealing 2nd

- Line up players behind 1st base in foul territory WITH HELMETS ON
- Place 1st base coach, a pitcher, catcher & (2) middle infielders into position
- Have pitcher throw ball to catcher & the runner on 1st base steals
- For Minors - the base runner should not have his chest facing home plate. Have the inside foot on the back part of the bag with the outside foot in a runner's position. This will allow a quicker jump leaving the bag. Note: the runner can't leave 1st base until the ball crosses home plate.
- Be sure catcher stands, turns hips & shoulders, i.e., power 'T', prior to making throw
- Middle infielder (usually SS) gets into position to take throw & apply tag; straddle bag with feet on both sides of bag and apply tag **to ground in front of bag** allowing the baserunner to slide into the tag
- Other middle infielder (usually 2B) gets into position behind 2nd base, on grass, for backup

- Rotate all your pitchers & catchers into the drill.
- **Taking the field** – do it just like you would do it in a game
 - Get all your players on the bench
 - Start calling out players' names & positions, and have them hit the field (require them to run, there is no walking on the baseball field)
 - Be sure the 1B, CF and guy on the bench take balls with them for the warm-up
 - Be sure your 3B shuffles over towards the SS (so the Pitcher doesn't get hit by a warm-up ball being thrown across the infield); and the 2B moves back by 2nd base (to stretch the arm out)
 - Have your Catcher count off (10) warm-up pitches & yell out "balls in, coming down"
 - Fielders throw warm-up balls into the bench player warming up the outfielder closest to your dugout
 - Have your SS cover 2nd base for the throw down from the C; & 2B on the grass behind 2nd base for the back up
 - Have the SS flip the ball to the 2B & the 2B thrown the ball in to the Pitcher
 - Call them in, and do it again (be sure your team runs off the field)
 - Repeat this about 3 times moving kids around into positions they will play in the game; your kids will hit the field with confidence during the game.

7. **ADDENDUM**

OYBA Website Instructions

Sample Parents Letter

Sample Midseason Practice Plan

Divisional Rules & Goals