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Davidson Youth Baseball Association Coaching Handbook (T-ball)

Dear DYBA Coach,

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On behalf of Davidson Youth Baseball Association (DYBA), thank you for volunteering to coach this season. We could not offer a great baseball program without the commitment and dedication of our volunteer coaches. This document is intended to introduce you to the DYBA program, our guiding principles and philosophy and to share some proven practice plans from some of our best coaches.

By way of background, DYBA has been providing baseball in our community since 1952. Our mission is to provide every child in our community the opportunity to participate in America's favorite pastime of baseball. With Davidson's historic McEver Field as its centerpiece, DYBA's goal is to provide an environment that enhances a player's self-esteem and embodies the spirit of teamwork, sportsmanship, and community. DYBA is affiliated with the national Cal Ripken baseball program and provides baseball in the spring and fall at the following age groups/programs:

- T-ball (5-6 yrs old)
- Rookies (machine pitch) (7-8 yrs old)
- Minors (9-10 yrs old)
- Majors (11-12 yrs old)
- Babe Ruth 14U (13-14 yrs old)
- Babe Ruth 17U (15-17 yrs old)

Community Recreation Program: community based instructional league interlocking with adjoining communities in the spring and fall; and **Davidson Force:** community based team providing more competitive opportunities at the 9U-14U age groups.

Our philosophy and approach is simple. We strive to provide a fun and rewarding experience to players (and parents) while reinforcing the value of teamwork and sportsmanship and teaching the fundamental elements of the game. DYBA does not condone coaches that put winning above all else and that do not provide equitable and appropriate development opportunities for all players on the roster. Coaches should be measuring success based on how well all players are developing and ultimately if they decide to come back and play the next season. Player development in its broadest sense – baseball skills and the life skills of teamwork, effort, resilience – is the mission.

We hope the following information is helpful as you prepare for the upcoming season. Thank you again for your time and commitment to DYBA. If you have questions or comments, please contact me at any time.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Kevin M. Bringer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

President, DYBA

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Section 1: DYBA Coaching Philosophy

Davidson Youth Baseball is a community-based recreational and instructional league. The philosophy of the league is valuing instruction and recreation beyond the concerns of winning. We strive to create and maintain a positive and encouraging environment for all participants to improve their skills as baseball players and their character as human beings who are part of a broader community. This league works to create a sense of competitiveness and quality play but only to the extent that a certain degree of competitiveness is consistent with an environment of fun and positive energy.

Key Aspects of DYBA's Coaching Philosophy

1. Be Positive and Patient

Players need a patient, supportive coach that can teach and motivate in a positive way. Knowing how to be positive and having the ability to communicate with your players is more important to a successful season than being an expert of the game. Cheer for your players and avoid being negative. Teaching the players the value and fun of bringing of positive energy and high effort is a high priority for the season!

2. Be a "Teacher" and a Role Model

Players learn by doing: You hear, you forget. You see, you remember. You do, you understand. You do many times, you master. Teach by demonstration then let the players learn by doing it over and over again. Remember teamwork and sportsmanship are cornerstones. Organizing a "high repetition" practice is a key.

3. Have Fun

Make practices fun and engaging. Suggested practice plans are outlined herein.

4. Communicate with Parents Early and Often

Please reach out to parents as soon as rosters are set to introduce yourself and communicate frequently on practice and game schedules. Ask parents to volunteer to participate in practice and/or games (scorekeeper) and don't assume they don't want to help. Practices are more effective when you have at least three "coaches" running stations/drills.

5. Remember Safety First

Players should always wear helmets when batting, in on-deck circle or running the bases. Players should not swing bats unless they are batting or on-deck. Enforce a "no bat in hand" rule in the dugouts at younger age groups. At the Tball level, the on-deck batter will wear a helmet to be ready but will not have a bat in their hands until they are at the tee. A coach or assistant should be in the immediate vicinity of the catcher to ensure the catcher's safety.

6. Be Well Prepared and Organized for Practices and Games

Players respond better when coaches are well prepared. Start practices on time and communicate to players the goals and what you plan to work on during practice. Line up at least 2 other coaches or parents to assist. Don't just throw batting practice and let kids stand around as they will lose interest fast.

7. Be a Coach on the Field and Parent Off

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Remember to be a coach on the field and a parent off the field. Often it is a good idea to have your assistants instruct your son or daughter to avoid potential conflicts.



Section 2: Rules of the League

League Rules: T-Ball

1. A team should appear at the field, ready for play, at least 15 minutes prior to the scheduled start of the game. There will be no score keeping of any kind as this is a non-competitive league.
2. Players must bat off a tee (unless coaches decide at beginning of season to throw 3 pitches and hit 4th off the tee). When there is a stronger batter, please notify the other coach so they can protect their smaller players.
3. On defense, the entire team shall take the field. Players will be positioned at catcher, 1B, 2B, SS, 3B and pitcher. All other players will be positioned evenly in the outfield area.
4. There will be no standings or score keeping in the Tball league.
5. There will be no strikeouts, base stealing or base leading allowed.
6. Game length will be no more than 1 hour of playing time or five (5) innings. An inning will end when all players on both teams have batted.
7. Opposing coaches have the right to call their scheduled games due to inclement weather or field conditions. Games may be re-scheduled with the help of the coaches involved and the DYBA Coordinator.
8. Managers and/or Coaches should be on the playing field to explain to the players what they are doing wrong and to show them proper procedure or play.
9. The entire team roster shall constitute the batting order for each inning. Reverse the batting order each inning.
10. No defensive player shall play the same position for more than one (1) inning per game. All players must play at least one (1) inning in the infield per game. Of course, pay attention to safety. For example, very player is probably not developmentally ready to safely play first base (with throws being made) or pitcher (close to the hitter, pay attention with "bigger" hitters).
11. Outfielders cannot make an out by tagging a runner or stepping on a base.
12. The pitcher must be in contact with the pitching rubber when the ball is hit.
13. The ball shall be live after it is hit into fair territory, and shall remain live until it is returned to the player at the mound or Batting Coach. The ball shall be considered dead when it reaches the baseline between first and second bases or the baseline between second and third bases. Once the ball is judged dead, the play is stopped, runners still advancing to a base may continue to the next base if they have advanced at least half way to that base. If the runner is not half way to the next base, then he must return to the previous base.
14. One base is allowed for runner(s) on an errant throw that goes into foul territory.
15. There will be no forfeits. Players may be borrowed from the opposing team if necessary.
16. Leading off is not permitted. The runner may not leave the base until the ball is struck by the batter.
17. Base stealing is not permitted
18. An offensive inning is not three outs. An inning will end after all batters have batted. The last batter shall run the bases back to home.
19. Coaches are encouraged to teach players to only play their defensive positions.

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20. A base runner will be allowed to tag-up after a fly ball out, only if the ball is caught in the outfield. Tagging-up is not allowed on fly outs in the infield.
21. Outs should be recorded in the sense the runner that is out should return to his bench. However, coaches may mutually agree to allow lesser experienced players remain on the base for additional base running experience.



Section 3: Fundamental Development Goals - Tball

For Tball (T-ball), at the end of the season all players should be able to successfully demonstrate or understand the following basic concepts:

1. How to hold a bat and to demonstrate proper batting stance
2. The concept of keeping their head down during their swing
3. The concept of a level swing
4. How to alligator trap ground balls
5. How to make a two handed catch for fly balls
6. How to make a pivot after a catch, "tree" and "throw"
7. How to run through 1st and home base and not to overrun 2nd or 3rd base
8. How to run the bases in a home run scenario
9. Basic concept of defensive position and basic skills for each position
10. How to work together as a team

Recommended Practice Plan - Tball

Each practice should have a plan where specific skills are developed. Start every practice off with the same routine. Bring kids together before practice to talk about what they will focus on that practice and close practice with a summary of what they learned. After the team warm-up, if possible, break-up into 3-4 groups with 1 coach or (mom or dad) leading each group. At this age group, keep them moving every 5 min.

- Warm-up/Stretching: 5 minutes
 - Jogging around outfield
 - Stretching arms & legs
- Fundamental Development: Consisting of at least 3-4 "skill" stations of throwing/catching, hitting, infield and outfield; rotate kids every 5 min
- Defensive practice: Have kids run to each position as a team when you call out the position (3-5 minutes); place kids in positions and do infield/outfield ground balls. Kids should focus on getting in front of ball and fielding the ball first then throwing.
- Base running: 5 min in duration; learn running through first base and stopping at second and third.
- Closing remarks: 5 minutes. Congratulate them on their achievements and cover upcoming schedule.

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Early in the season, consider spending more time on fundamental development and less on defensive practice. Hitting should be a very high priority. Tee work, front soft toss with wiffle balls, and live coach pitching are all appropriate. 50 swings per practice for each player is a reasonable practice goal.

Tball Coaches Checklist

First Base

Show where 1st base person is to stand when no runner is on base and when one is on the base. Practice fielding plays; ball thrown to 1B by infielders.

Second Base

Position player in place, anticipating action. Practice fielding plays; such as, tagging a runner out at 2nd base and if running in the base line to the base.

Shortstops

Show positions: one between 2B and 3B. Practice fielding balls and throwing to 1B or 2B for an out. Remind them they can tag a runner.

Third Base

Show position, anticipating action. Practice action such as, player fielding ground balls and fielding pop-ups in foul territory.

Pitcher

Stands in pitcher's area but acts as an infielder. Practice fielding ball and throwing to 1B. This position sees a lot of action and the player must pay attention.

Catcher

Stands behind and away from home plate until ball is hit. Demonstrate: after ball is hit, adult removes tee and bat; catcher moves up to cover plate. Practice actions: catcher tagging base runner out, catcher throwing to 1B.

General Infield Activity

Catching short fly balls.

Field balls and throwing to a base or to home plate. (Do not run with ball)

Tagging runners on the base path.

Relaying a ball from an outfielder to a base; to the catcher at home plate.

Outfielders

Position players.

Practice catching fly balls in a crowd. "I've got it."

Practice catching ground balls and throwing to infield.

Batter

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Give basic hitting instructions. Athletic starting hitting stance. Small stride, hip twist. Head "still".

Practice hitting ball, then dropping bat properly and running to first. Don't watch the ball when running to first base.

Base Runners

Instruct runners to look for 1B Coach signals to run past base or to turn and go on to 2B. Instruct that forced runner on base must advance. Non-forced runner can hold position on base. Players on base watch what next batter does; where the ball goes.

Instruct sliding.

Bench

Team sits in batting order, encouraging the batter.

Coach talks to team: Listen for instructions. Play fair; follow the rules. Have fun.

Coach

Talking to team, after the game:

Summarize team's activity. Be specific and recognize progress. Note any humorous thing that happened. No public criticism; as necessary, take player aside. What's next: i.e., practice at home, next team practice and game schedule.

Section 4: Tips – Tball

1. Incorporate games into every practice.
2. Build confidence every opportunity. For example, as needed, use a tennis ball to reduce the "fear factor" and build confidence.
3. Remember to show kids the proper mechanics, not just instruct.
4. Cal Ripken website has good coaching information.
5. Good luck!