



Wilshire Riverside Little League offers baseball to NE Portland kids so they can have fun, develop as players and teammates, learn life lessons, and be part of an inclusive community.

# ***Coach Handbook***

# **Double A**

Wilshire Riverside Little League  
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Dear Coaches,

Thank you for volunteering your time and energy to make sure the kids who play in our league have a great experience. The WRLL board is committed to giving you all the support you need so that coaching can be a rewarding and fun experience for you. This handbook contains materials you should use throughout the season, including: rules for your specific level of play; Positive Coaching Alliance resources for talking to kids and parents; information on concussions and safety protocols, and useful coaching resources.

A number of key pieces of information are not in this handbook, and will be communicated to you at the first coaching meeting, or by email, including: codes to access fields, equipment, and bathrooms; dates for additional clinics, and important dates for the season (such as Opening Day and Founders Day).

Additionally, on the league website ([wrll.org](http://wrll.org)) you will find an electronic version of this handbook; medical waiver for parents to sign; permits for the fields you will play and practice on (you should know where these are in case you find somebody using the field when you arrive); pitch count tracking form for the whole season; a form to easily plan line ups and keep track of which players have played what positions all season; umpire cheat sheet; and sample practice plans.

# “The Wilshire Riverside Way”

Mission Statement: Wilshire Riverside Little League offers baseball to NE Portland kids so they can have fun, develop as players and teammates, learn life lessons, and be part of an inclusive community.

To put this mission statement into practice, Wilshire-Riverside Little League believes that coaches must:

- Prioritize play over everything. This means relinquishing the game to the kids and encouraging them to have fun.
- Keep it simple. This means letting kids play games without constant instruction. Do the bulk of your teaching at practice.
- Be positive with kids at all times; build great energy and don't show frustration.
- Regularly ask for good effort and attitude.
- Encourage and reward sportsmanship. Make sportsmanship equal to competitiveness.

A successful season and rewarding experience for players and families depends upon a safe environment. To that end please follow the following guidelines:

- First and foremost, please use common sense for the protection of the kids.
- All players are required to wear protective cups in levels AA and higher.
- All players must also wear baseball or long pants to prevent scrapes and cuts from sliding. Molded rubber baseball cleats are recommended and preferred over tennis shoes. Players are not to wear sandals or any open toed shoes at practice or in games.
- Players are not to wear jewelry or watches. Rubber bracelets are considered jewelry.
- No food or seeds are allowed in the dugout or on the field.
- Be sure to leave your dugout and the bleachers clean after your game.
- No player is allowed to chew gum at any time during practice or games.
- During warm-up, players should throw parallel to each other.
- Only players, coaches, and adults who have submitted background checks and volunteer forms are allowed on the field and in the dugout during a game or practice.
- Head first sliding while advancing bases is not legal. Base runners must either slide or attempt to get out of the way of a fielder who is in possession of the ball. Base runners may not run into fielders under any circumstance.
- Teach bat safety:
  - a. Any player who throws a bat while at the plate should be warned on first offense. Any player who throws a bat afterward will be called out (in levels AA and higher). If a player habitually throws the bat, suggest having them carry the bat halfway down the first base path and drop it after they've hit a fair ball. Another suggestion is to place an orange practice plate about 10 feet up the line for them to drop their bat on.
  - b. Clear bat from the field as quickly as possible after the play is complete.

- c. There is no on-deck circle at any level (except 50/70). The only player who is allowed to hold a bat is the batter at the plate.

All managers are required to hold parent meetings prior to the start of the regular season. This is an opportunity to discuss safety, find volunteers (i.e. Team parent, additional coaching help), concession stand duties, and important dates like opening and closing ceremonies. It is also your opportunity to discuss the WRLL's philosophy and expectations. It is also an opportunity for the players' families to get acquainted with you and your coaching staff.

Rainouts are always the discretion of either of the two coaches and a list of coaches' phone numbers will be distributed to help facilitate those conversations. When deciding whether or not cancel a game player safety is the primary concern. If there are only a few wet spots on the field you may use a puddle pillow to soak up the water. Practices and games are not to be held when there is standing water or loose mud on the field. This is a significant safety issue both while the field is wet and when footprints dry causing an uneven surface.

### WRLI Levels of Play Matrix

	T-Ball	A	AA	Minors	Majors	50/70*
League Age <sup>1</sup>	5-7	6-8	7-9	9-11	10-12	11-13
Game Length	3 innings; 1:00 <sup>2</sup>	4 innings; 1:30 <sup>2</sup>	6 innings; 1:30 <sup>2</sup>	6 innings; 2:00 <sup>2</sup>	6 innings; 2:00 <sup>2</sup>	7 innings; 2:00 <sup>2</sup>
Extra Innings	No	No	No	Yes <sup>3</sup>	Yes <sup>3</sup>	Yes <sup>3</sup>
Tournament	No	No <sup>4</sup>	No <sup>4</sup>	Yes <sup>4</sup>	Yes <sup>4</sup>	Yes <sup>4</sup>
# players on field	All players <sup>5</sup>	All players <sup>5</sup>	9	9	9	9
Minimum playing time	N/A	N/A	N/A	On bench no more than 2 innings	On bench no more than 2 innings	On bench no more than 3 innings
Batting Order	Continuous	Continuous	Continuous	Continuous	Continuous	Continuous
End of a ½ inning	All players bat	All players bat	3 outs or 5 runs	3 outs or 5 runs	3 outs	3 outs
Ten-run rule	No scorekeeping	No scorekeeping	No scorekeeping	No	Yes	Yes
Bunting	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Base stealing	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Uncaught 3rd strike	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Infield Fly Rule	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pitching	Tee	Coach/Tee	Player/Coach	Player	Player	Player
Pitcher eligibility	N/A	N/A	Rule Book	Rule Book	Rule Book	Rule Book
Ball Type	T-Ball	T-Ball	LL Hardball	LL Hardball	LL Hardball	LL Hardball
Base Distance	50'-60'	60'	60'	60'	60'	70'
Draft	No - grouped by friends/school	No - grouped by friends/school	No - grouped by friends/school	Yes	Yes	No
Umpire	No	Coach on the mound. Judgement calls are not disputable	Coach on the mound. Judgement calls are not disputable	Plate & base	Plate & base	Provided

<sup>1</sup> A players league age is their age as of 8/31 of the Spring season.

<sup>2</sup> No new innings may start after this time has elapsed from the start of the game. For Minors and above, 4 innings (3½ if the Home team is ahead) must be completed for the game to be considered final.

<sup>3</sup> Ties will not count as completed games, so they must be finished at the soonest possible time.

<sup>4</sup> Tournament play is as follows:

- **AA:** Typically intra-league, coach managed.
- **Minors:**
  - Regular season team plays in a league managed typically inter-league with surrounding area. There is an end-of-season Tournament of Champions involving neighboring teams.
  - Then, based on a balloting process (players & coaches) and availability, teams are selected for the District Tournament or Honor's Tournament. District Tournament champions would move on to a State tournament.
- **Majors:** Same as Minors, except District Champions who win the State Tournament could advance to the Regional Tournament and finally the Little League World Series.

## Double A

### 1. Double A focuses on the following skills:

- How to confidently face a player pitcher. Hitters should know the proper way to move out of the way of the pitch and how to time their swing according to the speed of the pitch.
- Catchers should learn to crouch in the appropriate position, give a target to the pitcher, catch catchable pitches, and throw the ball back to the pitcher accurately and timely.
- Pitchers should know the basics of pitching. Balance and squaring the shoulders to the target need to be learned.
- Runners need to know how and when to run through 1<sup>st</sup> base, angle out to proceed to second or take a look and get back. They should be trying to hit the inside corners of bases and watching the 3<sup>rd</sup> base coach as they get close to 2<sup>nd</sup> base. They should understand tagging on a fly ball.
- AA players should have a fairly good grasp of what are outs and where to go for the easiest out.
- Fielders should know how to run a relay on balls to hit to outfield. First basemen should have a grasp on how to move around the base.

### 2. To accomplish these goals, coaches are encouraged to offer all players the opportunity to pitch and catch and to let all players rotate regularly through each defensive position.

### 3. Coaches are encouraged to hold practices to reinforce the above skills. Teams will be assigned practice times before and during the season.

### 4. Game Process (matters not covered in the above chart)

- Batters may take extra base(s) on a solid hit into the outfield (and everyone on base may advance), but triples should be rare. Advancing to the extra base (batter or other baserunners) must start before the ball reaches the infield on the return throw or the runner must return to the previous base. The idea is to reward batters who have hit the ball well. Coaches should also consider that sending runners for extra bases may result in fewer overall at-bats for their team in a given game due to the five run per inning limit.
- Base runners should not take bases on an overthrow.
- Base runners may advance on a hit, or when they tag up at third on a sacrifice fly.
- All outfielders must be clearly in the outfield and back up the infield allowing the infielders to play the ball first.
- Coaches maybe be in the field to help “direct traffic,” coach, and encourage their team. However, they may not interfere with the game when the ball is in play.
- The game score should not be communicated to the players. Players should be discouraged from keeping score.
- It is recommended to have a parent volunteer keep track of number of outs and runs per inning to ensure that limits are not exceeded (three outs or five runs).

### 5. Pitching:

- Players will begin pitching at the start of the season.
- In April - Coach pitch for the first 2 innings, the balance of the game is kid pitch
- For the remainder of the season, all innings may be kid pitch.
- No player may pitch more than 50 pitches in a day, and should be rested if the next game is within two days (therefore player pitch count must also be recorded). Ideally, all, or the majority of, players

are given the opportunity to pitch, which itself alleviates any concern about sufficient rest for pitchers because such a rotation creates a situation in which players pitch every third or fourth game, and sometimes more in the early part of the season.

- Players should only pitch one inning a game.
- Try to find ways to let pitchers know that when batters get hits or make contact that is a good thing—it means they threw a ball in the zone and it gives the defense a chance to field the ball. Pitching to contact is a goal a Little League.
- Both players and coaches should pitch from just inside of the softball circle when possible. Coaches should use their best judgment when considering adjustments to pitching distance; just keep in mind that players need to learn how to time their swings from pitchers standing in the area of the pitching plate. As players become more proficient, move the pitchers back toward the pitching plate.
- No mound should be used.
- Hit By Pitch - Batters may elect to take first base (sometimes they aren't able to continue at bat). Or they may finish the at bat, in which case the pitch counts as a ball. If a pitcher's control appears to put other players in danger then the pitcher should be replaced.
- Coach pitched innings: five pitches are allowed from the coach per batter. No called strikes are called on coach pitches; however if a player accumulates three swinging strikes before the five pitches are delivered, the player is out. If the player fouls the fifth pitch they are allowed another pitch. If the player does not put the ball in play in the five pitches, the player is out.
- Player pitched innings:
  - a. An offensive coach will be stationed behind the mound to call balls and strikes for his team's batters. After 4 called pitches, pitched by a player, the offensive coach will enter and pitch assuming the batters count.
  - b. The strike zone should be generous, but reasonable—this balance will encourage hitters to be aggressive with hittable pitches and reward pitchers for accuracy.
  - c. If the batter accumulates three strikes (swinging or called) before the coach takes over the batter is out.
  - d. Once the coach takes over, a batter with 2 or strikes gets one coach pitch; a batter with 1 strike gets two coach pitches; a batter with 0 strikes gets three coach pitches. If the batter does not swing or put the ball in play on the final pitch, the batter is out. A foul ball on the last pitch does not count against the batter's allowed pitches.
  - e. As the above indicates, the assumption is that all coach pitches are strikes; however, the coach may use his or her discretion to give the player another pitch if the final coach pitch is unhittable (falling in front of the plate, hitting the batter, etc.)



## **Dedicated to Injury Prevention**

Responsibility for procedures should be that of an adult member of Wilshire-Riverside Little League.

Arrangements should be made in advance of all games and practices for emergency medical services.

Managers, coaches and umpires should have training in first aid. This is provided at our annual coaches meeting. First aid kits are issued to each team manager and are located at each concession stand.

All managers, coaches, umpires, league officials, and volunteers will complete a background check through the JDP process. This is completed at registration. Any volunteers that engage with the league after the beginning of the season should be directed to register at wrll.org and complete the background check.

No games or practices should be held when weather or field conditions are not safe, particularly when lighting is inadequate.

Playing area should be inspected frequently for holes, damage, stones, glass and other foreign objects.

All team equipment should be stored within the team dugout or behind screens and not within the area defined by the umpires as “in Play”.

Only players, managers, coaches and umpires are permitted on the playing field or in the dugout during games and practice sessions.

Responsibility for keeping bats and loose equipment off the field of play should be that of a player assigned for this purpose or the team’s manager and coaches.

Procedure should be established for retrieving foul balls batted out of the playing area.

During practice and games, all players should be alert and watching the batter on each pitch.

During warm-up drills players should be spaced and aligned parallel to minimize endangerment by wild throws or missed catches.

All pre-game warm-ups should be performed within the confines of the playing field and not within areas that are frequented by, and thus endanger spectators (i.e. playing catch, pepper, swinging bats etc.).

Equipment should be inspected regularly for the condition of the equipment as well as for proper fit.

Batters must wear a Little League Approved protective helmets during batting practice and games.

Catchers must wear catcher's helmet, mask, throat guard, long model chest protector, shin guards and protective cup at all times (males) for all practices and games. NO EXCEPTION. Managers should encourage all male players to wear protective cups for all practices and games.

Except when a runner is returning to a base, head first slides are not permitted. During sliding practice, bases should not be strapped down or anchored (use breakaway bases).

Parents of players who wear glasses should be encouraged to provide "safety glasses". Players must not wear watches, rings, pins or metallic items during games and practices.

The catcher must wear a helmet and mask with a throat guard when warming up pitchers. This applies between innings and in the bull-pen during a game and also during practices.

Managers and coaches may not warm up pitchers before or during a game. On-deck batters are not permitted.

Parents are encouraged to provide mouth guards for players (especially infielders) and face guards on batting helmets.

**Failure to comply with the above may result in expulsion from the Wilshire-Riverside Little League fields or complexes.**

## **Accident Reporting Procedures:**

**What to Report:** An incident that causes any player, manager, coach, umpire, or volunteer to receive medical treatment and or first aid must be reported to the Safety Officer. This includes even passive treatments such as evaluation and diagnosis of the extent of the injury or periods of rest.

**When to Report:** All such incidents described above must be reported to the Safety Officer within 48 hours of the incident. The Safety Officer is Zander Brown Phone (cell) 503-320-1468.  
e-mail [safety@wrll.org](mailto:safety@wrll.org)

**How to make the report:** reporting incidents can come in a variety of forms. Most typically, they are telephone conversations. At a minimum, the following information must be provided:

- The name and phone number of the individual involved.
- The date and time, and location of the incident.
- As detailed a description of the incident as possible.
- The preliminary estimation of the extent of any injuries.
- The name and phone number/e-mail of the person making the report.

Reporting can also be done on the “incident/accident report form which can be scanned and emailed to the Safety Officer.

**Safety Officer Responsibilities:** Within 48 hours of receiving the incident report, the Safety Officer will contact the injured party or the parties parents and verify the information received, obtain any other information deemed necessary, check on the status of the injured party and in the event that the injured party required other medical treatment (i.e. emergency room visit, doctors visit, etc.) will advise the parent or guardian of the WRLI insurance coverage and the provisions for submitting any claims.

If the extent of the injuries are more than minor in nature, the Safety Officer shall periodically call the injured party to check on the status of any injuries and to check if any other assistance is necessary in areas such as submission of insurance forms etc. until such time as the incident is considered “closed” and no other claims are expected and or the individual is participating in the league again. Any player who has sought medical attention from a doctor, emergency room etc. must provide the Safety Officer a signed medical release from his or her doctor before playing or practicing. **NO EXCEPTIONS**

## **WRLC Concussion Policy**

Starting in 2014 there are important new legal requirements regarding the management of suspected concussions in youth sports. The 2013 Oregon Legislature adopted SB 721 which has been enrolled as 2013 Oregon Laws Chapter 489. The new legislation imposes requirements that affect all youth sports organizations including Wilshire Riverside Little League.

The new law requires us to take action to educate coaches, parents, and players 12 or older about concussions. The law further requires coaches to take action when one of their players shows signs or symptoms of a concussion.

### **Coach and Umpire Education:**

Guidelines for recognition and management of suspected concussions will be presented to coaches and umpires at the preseason meeting along with our annual first aid presentation. A reference guide will be provided as an addendum to the safety manual.

WRLC also requires coaches and umpires to complete an online concussion education course. While there are several sources of online concussion courses, WRLC recommends that every coach take the online course offered by the CDC, "Heads Up Coaches" Concussion Training.

### **Parent and Player Education:**

All parents and players over 12 years old will be provided with a concussion information sheet which they are asked to read. These will be provided at registration and acknowledgement of receipt is a required step in registration.

## Wilshire Riverside Little League Concussion Quick Reference Sheet

Use these guidelines when responding to concussions: 1) Recognize, 2) Remove, 3) Refer / Report, 4) Require Clearance

### **Recognize:**

- Whenever a player has a reported or observed blow to the head, fall, or collision - remove the player from the game and evaluate for injury.
- If the player has a suspected neck or back injury, or is unconscious call 911 immediately
- Otherwise observe for and ask about any signs and symptoms of concussion

<b>Signs (observed by others)</b>	<b>Symptoms (reported by player)</b>
Appears dazed	Headache
Responds slowly to questions	Nausea or Vomiting
Moves clumsily	Double or blurry vision
Forgets events before injury (the score, the last play)	Memory problems (ask detailed questions to evaluate)
Balance problems (can the player stand on one leg for 30 sec.)	Concentration problems (can't repeat five numbers in reverse order)
Player is easily confused	Feels tired or sluggish
Forgets events after injury	Sensitivity to light or noise
Loses consciousness, even briefly	Agitated or irritable

### **Remove:**

- Remove the player from activity and monitor them closely until care is assumed by parents or emergency medical personnel.

### **Refer / Report:**

- Contact parents or guardians and recommend evaluation by medical professionals. Share injury details and observed signs and symptoms with whomever is assuming care. Remind parents that clearance will be required before return to play.
- Document the incident and the action taken on an incident report form. Contact Safety Officer to report the incident within 24 hours. If the Safety Officer is unavailable, report the incident to the League President. Contact information for League officials is located in the safety manual.

### **Require Clearance:**

- Players will need to demonstrate evaluation and clearance by a medical professional prior to returning to league sponsored activity of any sort.

## Master Pitching Chart

Number of pitches a game (player name goes on the far left column; game date goes across the top)




BETTER ATHLETES  
BETTER PEOPLE

# Double-Goal Coach® Job Description

TO: All Coaches

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

FROM: \_\_\_\_\_

RE: What We Expect of You

As coaches, you determine the kind of experience our athletes have with sports. We are committed to the principles of Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA). We expect you to be a Double-Goal Coach, who strives to win (one goal), while pursuing the more-important goal of teaching life lessons through sports. PCA's Double-Goal Coach Job Description includes:

## **Model and teach your players to Honor the Game.**

- Teach ROOTS – respect for Rules, Opponents, Officials, Teammates, and one's Self.
- Hold a parent meeting and distribute PCA's Parent/Guardian Letter to help parents Honor the Game.
- Appoint a parent to be "Culture Keeper" for the team.
- Drill Honoring the Game in practice.
- Seize teachable moments to talk with players about Honoring the Game.

## **Help players pursue mastery of their sport, not just scoreboard wins.**

- Teach players the ELM Tree of Mastery (Effort, Learning, and bouncing back from Mistakes).
- Use a "Team Mistake Ritual" (like "Flushing Mistakes") to help players quickly rebound from mistakes.
- Reward effort, not just good outcomes. Recognize players even for "unsuccessful" effort.
- Encourage players to set "Effort Goals" tied to how hard they try.

## **Fill your players' Emotional Tanks.**

- Use encouragement and positive reinforcement as your primary method of motivating.
- Achieve the "Magic Ratio" of five positive reinforcements to each criticism or correction.
- Use the "Buddy System" to teach players to fill each others' Emotional Tanks.
- Learn to give "Kid-Friendly Criticism," such as criticizing in private, asking permission, using the Criticism Sandwich, and avoiding criticism in non-teachable moments.

## **Have conversations with your players at every practice and game.**

- Review Honoring the Game, the ELM Tree and the Emotional Tank throughout the season.
- Ask questions and encourage players to speak and contribute during team meetings.
- Use PCA's *Talking Points* e-mail series to guide discussions with your players.

Your adopting these philosophies and actions will contribute to a positive, character-building youth sports experience for all the children our organization serves. Thank you for all your time and effort!

For more Resources, visit: [www.PCDevZone.org](http://www.PCDevZone.org)

For more information on Positive Coaching Alliance, visit: [www.PositiveCoach.org](http://www.PositiveCoach.org)

There are people who bring you down in life.  
And then there are people who bring you up.  
You want to be around the ones who fill your  
tank. We had a lot of them on the team.

**Julie Foudy**  
Co-Captain, U.S. National Team &  
FIFA World Cup Champions, 1991 & 1999

## 2.2 Filling Emotional Tanks

People do better when their Emotional Tanks are full. The E-Tank is like the gas tank of a car. If your car's gas tank is empty, you can't drive very far. If you have a full tank, you can go a long way.

Triple-Impact Competitors understand a key way to make teammates better is to make sure they get their E-Tanks filled on a regular basis.

### ■ The Portable Home Team Advantage

The home team wins about 60 percent of the time in professional sports. There are several reasons for this, but there is no doubt the emotional support of the fans is a big part of it.

This isn't rocket science. People perform better when they feel better about themselves than when they are down on themselves. Having people cheer for you makes you feel better and helps you perform better.

When their E-Tanks are full, your teammates are more open to improvement, they are more optimistic, deal better with adversity, have more energy, and respond better to challenges.

If your team members routinely fill each others' tanks, your team can develop a *portable* home team advantage. It's as if you play all your games – home or away – in front of a huge supportive crowd who has your back. And we know that means better results on the scoreboard.

### ■ Natural Tank Drainers

Humans are natural tank drainers who don't need to be taught how. We are better at draining tanks than filling them, often doing it without even realizing it.

Criticism and sarcasm, which can be very satisfying, are deadly tank drainers. Nonverbal actions like frowning, rolling your eyes, and sighing dramatically also drain E-Tanks. Ignoring someone when he or she speaks? Ditto.

### ■ Using the Magic Ratio to Fill Teammates' E-Tanks

Triple-Impact Competitors constantly look for opportunities to fill teammates' E-Tanks. And it turns out that it takes a lot of tank filling for people to be able to do their best.

Research indicates optimum performance comes from about five tank-fillers for each criticism. This is called the "Magic Ratio" (5:1) because people improve so much it seems like magic.

Tank fillers can be verbal or nonverbal, extended interactions, or quick hits that take virtually no time. Here are some tools guaranteed to fill the tanks of your teammates, and make your team better, if you employ them.



Tank-Filling Tools	Examples
<b>Names</b>	People love to hear their own name, so use your teammates' names often: "Hey, Gabriel, how's it going?"
<b>Comings &amp; Goings</b>	Greet teammates and say goodbye after practices and games: "Sandra, see you at practice tomorrow!"
<b>Praise</b>	Praise works best when it is truthful and specific: "Enrique, your hustle in the fourth quarter got us all going!"
<b>Express appreciation</b>	Simply saying thanks fills E-Tanks: "Daniella, thanks for showing me how you do that move."
<b>Offering to help</b>	Offering help to a teammate is a potent tank filler: "Need any help getting ready for Friday's game, Ralph?"
<b>Glue actions</b>	Be the person on your team who notices and comments on the unsung things that hold a team together: "Jaya, great pick for Carla on that game-winner. We wouldn't have won without it!"
<b>Check-ins</b>	Look out for teammates who seem down and check in with them: "How you doing, Rashad? You seem a little down today."
<b>Watching out for younger players</b>	If you are an older or more talented player, being friendly to younger or less talented players can make them more confident, more likely to work hard, and a bigger contributor to the team's success.

Tank-Filling Tools	Examples
<b>Asking and listening</b>	Being asked for your ideas and being listened to are big tank fillers: "I'm having trouble getting open on that new route. How do you do it?"
<b>Mistake Ritual (see Chapter 1.4)</b>	A person's tank is lowest after a mistake: "Don't worry, Marjorie, we'll get it back. Just flush it!"
<b>Nonverbal actions</b>	Tank filling doesn't have to be talk. Smiling, clapping, fist bumps, head nods, thumbs up, and eye contact all fill tanks.

Triple-Impact Competitors commit to making their team better by becoming a regular tank-filler. Use Exercise 6 on the following page to create a plan for filling your teammates' E-Tanks this season.

### Exercise 6: Creating an E-Tank Action Plan

In Chapter 2.2 you learned about the power of filling Emotional Tanks. Here are some ideas for how you can fill your teammates' E-Tanks:

- Give specific, truthful praise during practices and games.
- Invite a teammate you don't know well to join you for lunch.
- Go out of your way to look out for teammates who need extra tank filling.
- Send tank-filling messages via texts or Facebook.
- Rally teammates to go to the junior varsity or freshmen game to root for the younger athletes in your program.
- Identify the kinds of things – music, exercise, games, naps, hanging out, journaling – that fill your own E-Tank and do them regularly.

1. Identify a few teammates who might need tank-filling right now. What specifically can you do to fill their respective E-Tanks?

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2. What are you going to do to fill *your* E-Tank during the season?

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To learn more about *Elevating Your Game* and other PCA books visit [www.positivecoach.org/our-work/our-books](http://www.positivecoach.org/our-work/our-books)

For more Resources, visit: [www.PCDevZone.org](http://www.PCDevZone.org)

For more information on Positive Coaching Alliance, visit: [www.PositiveCoach.org](http://www.PositiveCoach.org)

# Reward Effort Until Effort Is Its Own Reward

By David Jacobson

Among the most important life lessons youth and high school athletes can take from sports is the value of effort. Throughout their lives – in sports, in school, in family and friendship and career – success will require tremendous effort. Eventually your players may come to view effort as its own reward. They may enjoy the sheer exhaustion of sprints or the reassurance that seemingly endless rote repetition of skills has prepared their minds and muscles to perform at gametime.

However, most youth (and adults!) balk at this type of work. Until they learn to experience effort as its own reward, you will need to coax and cajole players into making the necessary commitment during practice. Here are a few approaches:

## **Introduce Competition**

Nothing relieves the mental or physical fatigue of drills and conditioning like a competitive challenge. If players are simply ordered to run sprints, for example, they may just go through the motions. Once players feel there is something at stake, they will expend extra effort. Competition need not pit player against player. For example, if you time sprints, whoever improves the most on their personal best can be the winner. This approach has the added benefit of making conditioning fun, rather than it being seen as punishment.

## **Targeted Symbolic Rewards.**

Establish an award for the player who expends the greatest effort. The award should not have monetary value, nor should it excuse the player from further conditioning or drills. For example, the proverbial “hard hat” or “lunch pail” type of effort might earn the player an actual hard hat or lunch pail as a symbolic trophy at the end of practice.

## **Keep “Emotional Tanks” Overflowing**

Remember, we’re talking here about players enduring drudgery. Getting players to go all out in drills and conditioning calls for even more positive reinforcement than the normally recommended five specific, truthful praises for each piece of constructive criticism.

Even though your players may just be running, they will appreciate hearing, “Wow, look at Bill! He’s picking up the pace today!” Focus on keeping enthusiasm in your voice. If you sound as excited about effort in a sprint as you do about a great shot, your players are more likely to feel that same excitement for the task at hand.

*continues*

## Reward Effort Until Effort Is Its Own Reward, continued

### **Provide Continual Inspiration.**

Players must understand the equation  $S=E/T$  (success equals effort over time). Keep them mindful that drills and conditioning are building blocks that yield mostly long-term results.

To keep your players inspired, have a ready supply of examples of hard work paying off. Inspiration may be drawn from pro sports or other high-profile endeavors, but it can be even more effective to discuss a local example or one close in age to your players. That may make your players' long-term goals seem more achievable so that they are sold on the idea that with extra effort, they can succeed, too.

Along the way, emphasize that effort is its own reward. Players may not believe or understand this at first, but when they start to see results from their efforts, they will catch on and improve as athletes and as people.



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# Coach-Parent Partnership

Following are guidelines for how sports parents can contribute to a Coach-Parent Partnership that benefits youth athletes.

**Recognize the Coaches' Commitment.** Your child's coaches have made a commitment that involves many hours of preparation beyond the time spent at practices and games. Quite likely in youth sports they are volunteers. Respect their commitment and imagine yourself in their place before approaching them to discuss any issues you may perceive.

**Make Early, Positive Contact with the Coach.** As soon as you know who will coach your child, contact those coaches to introduce yourself and offer any assistance you may provide. Establishing a positive relationship with the coaches will help you proactively shape a positive experience for your child and will lay the foundation for respectful, productive conversations with coaches should a conflict arise later.

**Fill the Coach's Emotional Tank.** Too often, coaches hear only from parents who have complaints. Filling the coaches' Emotional Tanks with specific, truthful praise positively reinforces them to continue doing the things you see as benefiting the youth athletes.

**Don't Put the Player in the Middle.** You wouldn't complain to your children about how poorly their math teacher explains fractions. Don't share your disapproval of a coach with your children. Doing so may force the child to take sides, and not necessarily *your* side! If your child has an issue with the coach and can maturely articulate it, encourage your child to approach the coach and at the very least learn some life lessons in self-advocacy with an authority figure. Otherwise, if you disapprove of how the coach handles a situation, seek a private meeting to discuss the matter.

**Let Coaches Coach.** It can confuse players to hear someone other than the coach yelling out instructions. Also, your instructions may counter the coaches' strategy and tactics, undermining team performance.

**Fill Your Child's Emotional Tank.** Competitive sports can be stressful to players. The last thing they need is your critiquing their performance...on top of what the coach may deliver and what they already are telling themselves. Let your children know you love and support them regardless of their performance.

**Contribute to a Positive Environment.** Fill all the players' Emotional Tanks when you see them doing something well. Honor the Game as a spectator, respecting ROOTS (Rules, Opponents, Officials, Teammates and Self), and encourage others around you to Honor the Game.

For more Resources, visit: [www.PCDevZone.org](http://www.PCDevZone.org)

For more information on Positive Coaching Alliance, visit: [www.PositiveCoach.org](http://www.PositiveCoach.org)



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# Parent-Guardian Letter

As a coach, I am committed to the principles of Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA) and against a “win-at-all-cost” mentality. I aim to be a Double-Goal Coach®, who strives to win, while also pursuing the more-important goal of teaching life lessons through sports. I hope you will help me by reinforcing three principles:

- **The ELM Tree of Mastery**
- **Filling Emotional Tanks**
- **Honoring the Game.**

Here are some details on these principles.

## **The ELM Tree of Mastery**

While winning is important and learning to compete is one of the major life lessons available through sports, not everyone can win every game. Still, youth athletes are winners, regardless of what the scoreboard says, when they pursue mastery of their sports. As a way to remember key elements of mastery, PCA uses the acronym **ELM for Effort, Learning and Mistakes are OK.**

Youth athletes who keep these things in mind develop habits that will serve them well throughout their lives. As an added benefit, athletes who are coached toward Mastery tend to have reduced anxiety and increased self-confidence, because they focus on things they can control. Therefore, they are more likely to have fun and perform better. Here's how you can help:

- Tell your children it's OK to make a mistake.
- Tell them you appreciate their best effort even if they fall short of the desired result.
- Recognize that Mastery is hard work and an ongoing process over time that can fuel great conversations with your children about sports and life.

## **Filling Emotional Tanks**

An “Emotional Tank” is like the gas tank in a car. When it's empty, we go nowhere, but when it's full, we can go most anywhere. The best fuel for an Emotional Tank is an average of **five specific, truthful praises for each specific, constructive criticism.** Here's how you can help:

- Encourage your children with specific tank-fillers regardless of scoreboard results. Be honest, but remember the value of that 5:1 ratio.
- Avoid an immediate and critical debrief right after the game.

## **Honoring the Game**

To help remember the ideals of sportsmanship, which PCA calls “Honoring the Game,” we talk about respecting ROOTS, an acronym for Rules, Officials, Opponents, Teammates and Self. Here's how you can help:

- Review ROOTS with your children (you can learn more about the meaning of each letter by visiting PCA's website at [www.positivecoach.org](http://www.positivecoach.org)).
- Model Honoring the Game yourself as you watch your children compete and even as you watch sports on TV together.
- Encourage other spectators to Honor the Game.

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