



Around the Plate

2009 NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 4

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Parent - Coach Agreements

By Deb Yeagle

There is nothing more disturbing than sitting in the bleachers watching your son play baseball while angry parents sit beside you and second guess your team's coaches. I've heard some ugly comments and criticisms about our coaches over the years. Never mind that one of them is my husband, and that the parents providing the commentary don't realize who I am, nor do they realize that I am well within hearing range of the condemnation and damnation being launched directly toward my better half.

"Hey, take it easy, cut him some slack," I want to fire back. "You're not supposed to yell at him - that's my job, and he gets enough of that at home." But rather than violating the golden rule, I sit there in silence, try to tune out their sniping, and focus on watching my son live his dream and cheer on the team.

In today's competitive society, parents seem to value winning more than their children's well-being and the benefits obtained from playing competitive sports (can you spell fun?). Baseball is not the only sport that parents become wannabe coaches. I've

seen some of the worst behavior during soccer games, when parents who aren't coaches actually run on the field to bark instructions at their child.

To establish a healthy relationship between players' parents and coaches, youth baseball should take a page from the youth soccer playbook. Some leagues require parents to take an on-line course and obtain a parent certificate before they are allowed to participate in their children's soccer activities. The educational program includes material on how to deal with the child's coach. Other areas designate "Silent Saturdays" when parents are restricted to polite applause - no yelling or coaching from the sideline is allowed.

Perhaps youth baseball does not need to go to these extremes, but it might be a good idea for coaches to lay out the ground rules to parents when their son joins the team. These rules should be documented and can even be used as a basis for a contract, with the players' spot on the team conditional based on the

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Message from the President

In my first two seasons as your President, we focused on accountability for the coaches and Board members alike. While we will continue to do so, this year we will be including Parents into the mix.

Last year, Little League launched a Public Service Announcement on ESPN. The PSA depicts a 10-year-old boy berating his father for his lackluster cheering, and ends with the message, "Now you know how it feels. Just let them play."

Too many games have we heard parents coaching their child from the sidelines; questioning coaching decisions; or offering their eye glasses to the umpire. Unfortunately, as soon as one parent starts, it spreads to other parents. It quickly turns into an embarrassment for the kids and coaches alike.

As parents, we all want nothing more then to see our sons or daughters have a great experience which includes succeeding. However, we sometimes forget that this is THEIR experience. Our roll is simple; we are a "cheerleader" and demonstrate what good sportsmanship is. If they hear your voice, it should only be words of encouragement!

Our coaches are volunteers and have taken on the enormous responsibility of teaching how to be good stewards of the game which, not only includes how to play, but how to win and lose gracefully. When our children are adults,

Robbie Duke



they will look back at their Little League experience. They will not remember the score, the hits, or the catch in center field. They will remember their experience which will be the way they were treated by their coach and the fans (parents).

Coaches remember how parents act. It was disconcerting to hear coaches pass on kids because he or she has "luggage" or they select a player because the player has "good" parents. It is a shame that we let our behavior influences whether a coach wants our child or not?

Later in this newsletter, you will see a copy of Sport Parent Code of Conduct I ask that all of us read this contract, sign it and turn it in to your team's coach. As we approach the Opening Day for 2009, let us all make sure that all of our kids have an enjoyable time. **BE POSITIVE AND ENJOY THE GAME!**



Sincerely,

Robbie Duke
President
"It's for the kids!"

Play the Ball, Not the Other Team

By Olan Suddeth

Raise your hand if you have ever uttered one of the following phrases in a close or important game:

"This is it... it's do or die time!"

"The game is on the line!"

"We win now, or we go home."

"We've got to have some runs now!"

"Jimmy, we've got to have an out right here."

Now, the rest of you liars raise your hands.

Yes, we're all guilty of it - adding artificial pressure to a game situation. We want our players to realize how important this game/inning/at bat is, but we end up instead reducing their chances to perform well, thanks to the added pressure we just placed on them.

I once read a very enlightening

article by Jack Stallings, who at the time of his retirement was the winningest active baseball coach in the NCAA. Coach Stallings spoke about performance in the clutch, and how baseball was a percentage game. If a player performs at regular levels in clutch situation, he is absolutely a clutch player. The key behind this is to remove the outside pressures associated with a clutch situation. After all, the rules don't change - a batter still has to hit the ball, a pitcher still has to throw strikes, a fielder still has to scoop and throw.

How many times have you heard coaches moan that "if only their team could play as well as they practice"? Did you ever wonder exactly why the team did so poorly in those situations? Sure, the other team has something to do with it, but a team that fields well in practice should still field well in games. A pitcher who throws strikes in warm-ups should do so in clutch

situations. A batter who has a good eye and makes solid contact in laid back situations has the ability to do so when the game is on the line.

The secret is to get your team to not look at the scoreboard, to not think about what is at stake, and to not worry about the other team. Baseball comes down to a distinct set of skills, and in practices, those skills are all you care about. Now, translate this to game situations.

Keep your players loose. Focus your coaching on the technical aspects of the game, just as you do in practice. Don't get upset or tense - these emotions are conveyed to your team. Reiterate that they are playing the ball, not the other team, not the scoreboard.

If you can reduce the pressure that kids (and coaches) place on them in "clutch" situations, you will see drastic improvements in their results.

Go forth and follow this advice! I promise that I will try to do the same. ♦

Reprinted with the permission of Youth Baseball Info (www.youthbaseballinfo.com)

Important Dates

Gunther Toody's Night (Palmer Park & Powers)
Tues., 4/7, 4:30-9:00pm

CSLL Opening Day (El Pomar)
Sat., 4/11, 10:00-11:00am

McDonalds Day (by El Pomar)
Sat., 4/11, 11:00am - 1:00pm

Picture Day (El Pomar)
Sat., 4/18, Time TBD

Team Rosters
and Schedules
will be posted
on our website
by April 11.

Lightning Safety

Keeping The Game Safe:
NOAA Teams With Little League
on Lightning Safety Awareness
(A news release from the
National Oceanographic and
Atmospheric Administration.)
When the thunder that Little
Leaguers hear is not the roar of
the crowd, it is time to get inside,
because lightning may be close
behind. That's why the NOAA
National Weather Service is
teaming up with Little League
Baseball and Softball to provide
valuable life-saving information
regarding the dangers of
lightning.

"NOAA is proud to partner
with Little League on our
effort to educate the public
on the dangers of lightning,
particularly the coaches,
umpires, parents and children
who are involved with Little
League Baseball and Softball,"
said retired Navy Vice Adm.
Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Ph.D.,
undersecretary of commerce
for oceans and atmosphere and
NOAA administrator. "Lightning
is an underrated killer, claiming,
on average, more lives than either
tornadoes or hurricanes."

Little League has been
proactive in providing lightning-
safety information to officials
across the country through their
safety newsletter, ASAP (A Safety
Awareness Program). In a recent
newsletter, Little League included
a copy of a "Coach's and Sports
Official's Guide to Lightning
Safety," developed by the NOAA
Weather Service. Previously,
the April 2002 issue of ASAP
included an article written by
NOAA on lightning safety.



"The safety of our players,
parents, coaches and spectators is
of utmost importance to us," said
Stephen D. Keener, president and
chief executive officer of Little
League International. "Lightning
is one of our greatest concerns on
the field, and we appreciate the
safety information that NOAA
provides to us. We want everyone
involved in Little League Baseball
to understand the dangers of
lightning so that they will take
the appropriate action when
thunderstorms threaten."

"The bottom line is that if
you hear thunder, you need to
get inside immediately," said
retired Air Force Brig. Gen.
David L. Johnson, director of
the NOAA National Weather
Service. "Lightning can strike up
to 10 miles from a thunderstorm,
which is about the distance that
the sound of thunder can travel
and be heard. All thunderstorms
produce lightning, and each
lightning strike is a potential
killer."

Lightning casualties can occur
at any time of the year but are
most frequent in the late spring

and summer thunderstorm
season, when people tend to
be outside. Annually, about
25 million cloud-to-ground
lightning strikes occur in the
United States. From 1971 to 2000,
lightning killed an average of 73
people each year in the United
States and injured hundreds
more.

The NOAA National Weather
Service is the primary source
of weather data, forecasts and
warnings for the United States
and its territories. The NOAA
Weather Service operates the
most advanced weather and
flood warning and forecast
system in the world, helping to
protect lives and property and
enhance the national economy.

NOAA is dedicated to
enhancing economic security
and national safety through
the prediction and research
of weather and climate-
related events and providing
environmental stewardship of
the nation's coastal and marine
resources. NOAA is part of the
U.S. Department of Commerce.



CSLL Bat Rule

March 26, 2009

Don't Forget These Other Important Rules

Catchers must wear catcher's helmet (with face mask and throat guard), chest protector and shin guards. Male catchers must wear long-model chest protector (divisions below Junior league), protective supporter and cup at all times.

Except when runner is returning to a base, head first slides are not permitted. This applies only to Little League Majors, Minor league and Tee Ball

Players must not wear watches, rings, jewelry or other metallic items.

The manager must remove the pitcher when said pitcher reaches the limit for his/her age group as noted below, but the pitcher may remain in the game at another position:

13-16 - 105 pitches
11-12 - 85 pitches
9-10 - 75 pitches
7-8 - 50 pitches

NOTICE TO PARENTS, PLAYERS AND LEAGUES: IF YOU ARE CONSIDERING THE PURCHASE OF A NEW COMPOSITE METAL BAT FOR USE IN LITTLE LEAGUE BASEBALL (Major Division and below), BE SURE THAT THE BAT YOU ARE PURCHASING HAS THIS MARKING: BPF 1.15 ON THE BARREL OR HANDLE OF THE BAT. IF NOT, IT WILL NOT BE ALLOWED FOR PLAY IN LITTLE LEAGUE GAMES.

Little League officials are aware that there are bats for sale in stores, online or that may have already been purchased that are Little League approved, but do not have the required bat performance standard (BPF) markings. In fact, some of the bats on the Little League approved bat list may not carry the required BPF 1.15 marking on the bat, depending on when they were manufactured and licensed. Currently manufacturers are conducting an inventory and re-testing of all approved bats. The results of this study / retesting is to be finished by March 31, 2009. We are building a list of certain bats that are approved, but do not have the BPF marking due to special circumstances. For these bats, we are extending eligibility for play until December 31, 2009. As we are made aware of bats that meet our criteria for this extension, we will add them to the list. Please check this list regularly for updates. HOWEVER, ONLY BATS WITH THE BPF 1.15 MARKING AND THE BATS ON THIS LIST WILL BE ALLOWED FOR PLAY IN 2009.

Bats with the special exception include the following:

Adidas Vanquish Blue design (There is a newer model of this bat, also named the Vanquish and it has copper and black markings. It contains the proper labeling and therefore is not subject to the one-year rule).

DeMarini - Black Coyote, Rogue, Distance, Rumble, Tengu, Mach 10, Patriot

Easton - LZ-810, LZ-800, Stealth Optiflex LST 1,

Louisville Slugger - YB31

NIKE - Areo

Sincerely,

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Treating Umpires with Respect

By Deb Yeagle

Umpires seem to be going the way of the dinosaurs. No wonder, given all of the harassment they receive from coaches, parents, and spectators.

I cringe when sparks fly between coaches and umpires. For young players, this is a bad example for a coach to be setting. Kids follow by example, and if they see their own coach confronting an umpire, they think it's OK for them to do the same.

Why is it the baseball highlight shows will repeatedly display an altercation between a manager or player and umpire in a Major League Baseball contest? I may not be able to prevent my son from seeing these disturbing scenes on SportsCenter, but I can remind him of the consequences (the manager or player being tossed from the game), and reiterate the need for him to treat umpires with respect both as a player and a spectator.

More disturbing to witness than a parent critiquing a coach is a parent barraging an umpire with a blue streak of unkind words, unfit to be heard by spectators and young players alike. Many leagues have instituted a zero tolerance policy for spectator parents, which results in ejection of both the parent and their player from the game if umpires are taunted or verbally jeered.

The role of umpire must be recognized and respected by the coaches, the players, the scorekeepers, and the parents. The umpire in a baseball game has complete authority over players and coaches from the moment that he or she walks onto the field until the game is over.

Youth umpires must be given the same respect as the adult umpires. I have attended many games as a spectator / parent and observed other spectators and

parents dishing out excessive abuse to the younger umpires. It was embarrassing! What these spectators didn't realize was that they were only hurting the young ump's concentration on the game and possibly discouraging him from continuing to work as an umpire.

Many of today's umpires are experienced, senior citizens at retirement age or greater. Working part time as umpires, they deserve the same respect as any other adult umpire. Parents can help ensure the health and safety of these senior umpires by offering water to them between innings and making sure they are hydrated, which is particularly important for any age umpire during games in the peak of summer. It's also a nice gesture to offer your umpires a complimentary snack and drink from the concession stand if your team is handling concession duties, especially if the umpires are working multiple games for a tournament or doubleheader.

Coaches, players, parents, and spectators should never argue or dispute the decision of an umpire, make negative or derogatory remarks or gestures towards an umpire, or otherwise behave improperly to disturb the normal course of play in a game. Not only is this behavior setting a bad example for young players, it distracts the umpire, makes the coach's job harder, and takes away from the enjoyment of other parents, spectators, and fans. Remember, it's only a game, and it's important to set a good example of respecting the umpire for the young players. ♦

Don't Forget to purchase Sky Sox Tickets for \$8 each on CSLL Opening Day, Sat., 4/11 from 10:00am - 12:30pm in the El Pomar Registration Office (behind the concession stand).

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Volunteer Umpires Needed

We are looking for volunteers to umpire games for the Minors division (9-11).

We will train interested candidates on Sunday, April 26th.

Contact Phil Andrews at umpires@coloradospringslittleleague.com for more information.

El Pomar Sports Park Concessions and Batting Cages will be open soon! They will be posting signs outside each for your reference.



Parent - Coach Agreement cont.

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parents' behavior. Alternatively, conducting a parents' meeting to go over these rules and expectations will help hold all parents accountable. Stating expectations up front will go a long way in preventing issues between parents and coaches down the road, not the least of which is critiquing the coaches from the stands.

The parent-coach agreement should include information about the coaching philosophy. For example, if the primary purpose of the team is to develop players, then the coach should state his intention for minimum playing time and assigned positions for each player. However, if the team is competitive,

then the coach should state his intention of putting the best 9 players on the field, with no minimum playing time guarantee. Based on my experience in youth baseball, I've observed that unrealistic expectations about playing time is clearly the #1 issue parents have with coaches.

Using lessons learned from youth soccer, the agreement should also include expectations for positive parenting both during practice and game

situations. Respecting the coaches and umpires and encouraging the players is the expected behavior of all parents. The agreement could also include monthly dues requirements and expectations for parents' involvement in fundraising activities.

None of this will totally eliminate complaints from parents. A coach should be proactive in dealing with parents' complaints. One approach is to provide regular feedback on the player's performance directly to the parents – this may help explain the rationale of why their child is hitting in the #8 spot instead of clean up, pitching in relief

instead of starting first in the pitching rotation, or sitting the bench instead of hitting the field. Another approach is to establish a complaint moratorium, in which parents are not allowed to complain to the coaches about anything until the moratorium is lifted. Within the span of 3-5 games, the parents' complaints are usually overcome by events, saving a lot of heartache on everyone's part.

Parents will always have a tendency to want to coach from

the sidelines. Entering in a parent – coach agreement, with ground rules and expectations stated clearly up front, helps parents channel this tendency

to become more supportive and respectful.

I've always wanted to tell the parents-turned-coaching critics, "If you think you're so smart, why don't you go

out there and coach yourself!" And I've always wondered what kind of response I'd get. If the wannabe coaches took a step back and considered the time commitment and dedication required to be a youth baseball coach, then maybe they wouldn't be so critical after all.



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A coach should be proactive in dealing with parents' complaints.

Unrealistic expectations about playing time is clearly the #1 issue parents have with coaches.

Sport Parent Code of Conduct

We, the _____ Little League, have implemented the following Sport Parent Code of Conduct for the important message it holds about the proper role of parents in supporting their child in sports. Parents should read, understand and sign this form prior to their children participating in our league.

Any parent guilty of improper conduct at any game or practice will be asked to leave the sports facility and be suspended from the following game. Repeat violations may cause a multiple game suspension, or the season forfeiture of the privilege of attending all games.

Preamble

The essential elements of character-building and ethics in sports are embodied in the concept of sportsmanship and six core principles:

- Trustworthiness,
- Respect,
- Responsibility,
- Fairness,
- Caring, and
- Good Citizenship.

The highest potential of sports is achieved when competition reflects these “six pillars of character.”

I therefore agree:

1. I will not force my child to participate in sports.
2. I will remember that children participate to have fun and that the game is for youth, not adults.
3. I will inform the coach of any physical disability or ailment that may affect the safety of my child or the safety of others.
4. I will learn the rules of the game and the policies of the league.
5. I (and my guests) will be a positive role model for my child and encourage sportsmanship by showing respect and courtesy, and by demonstrating positive support for all players, coaches, officials and spectators at every game, practice or other sporting event.
6. I (and my guests) will not engage in any kind of unsportsmanlike conduct with any official, coach, player, or parent such as booing and taunting; refusing to shake hands; or using profane language or gestures.
7. I will not encourage any behaviors or practices that would endanger the health and well being of the athletes.
8. I will teach my child to play by the rules and to resolve conflicts without resorting to hostility or violence.
9. I will demand that my child treat other players, coaches, officials and spectators with respect regardless of race, creed, color, sex or ability.
10. I will teach my child that doing one’s best is more important than winning, so that my child will never feel defeated by the outcome of a game or his/her performance.
11. I will praise my child for competing fairly and trying hard, and make my child feel like a winner every time.
12. I will never ridicule or yell at my child or other participants for making a mistake or losing a competition.
13. I will emphasize skill development and practices and how they benefit my child over winning. I will also de-emphasize games and competition in the lower age groups.
14. I will promote the emotional and physical well-being of the athletes ahead of any personal desire I may have for my child to win.
15. I will respect the officials and their authority during games and will never question, discuss, or confront coaches at the game field, and will take time to speak with coaches at an agreed upon time and place.
16. I will demand a sports environment for my child that is free from drugs, tobacco, and alcohol and I will refrain from their use at all sports events.
17. I will refrain from coaching my child or other players during games and practices, unless I am one of the official coaches of the team.

Parent/Guardian Signature