The following plan outlines the SYBA’s visionary player development plan for area baseball players as they play through the organization from T-Ball all of the way into High School Varsity baseball.
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3 PILLARS OF A GREAT YOUTH BASEBALL TEAM

The **Best** Players Always **HUSTLE**!

I will **HUSTLE** when I...

1. **Run** **ON AND OFF THE FIELD**
2. **Hit** **A BALL IN PLAY** – No matter how hard it is hit!
3. **Hit a FOUL BALL** – until I hear the umpire yell “FOUL!”
4. **Get a WALK** – we never walk to first base!
5. **Get HIT BY A PITCH**
6. **STRIKE OUT** – as rare as that might be!
7. **FIELD A BALL** hit to or near me
8. **BACK UP** my teammates
9. **RUN THE BASES**
The **Best** Players are **AWARE**!

I will always be **AWARE** of...

1. The number of **OUTS**
2. The **RUNNERS ON BASE**
3. The **COUNT**
4. The **SCORE**
5. How the other **PITCHER** is doing
6. Where the batter might **HIT THE BALL**
7. Where I should **BACK UP**
8. Who **HITS NEXT**
9. Who **HAS THE BALL**
The **BEST** Players are **MENTALLY TOUGH**

I will be **MENTALLY TOUGH** when...

1. I get **HURT** (not injured)
2. My team or **I SUCCEED**
3. My team or **I FAIL**
4. My team has the **LEAD**
5. My team is **BEHIND**
6. There are **DISTRACTIONS**
7. I am in the **SPOTLIGHT**
8. I am at the **PLATE**
9. I am in the **FIELD**
Fundamentals for All Levels

There are fundamental aspects to the game of baseball from the T-Ball level all the way through the Major Leagues. No player should ever be considered too young to practice these skills or to exhibit these actions.

Sportsmanship
- HAVE FUN
- Learn from mistakes – don’t dwell on them
- Respect your coaches and teammates
- Always give your best effort
- Cheer on and encourage the other players
- Shake hands with the opponents – AND- umpire(s) after every game

Safety
- Helmets are to be worn whenever in the field of play as the offensive team including:
  - At bat
  - In the on deck circle
  - As a base runner
- Bats are only to be swung within the field of play in the batter’s box or on deck circle
- Be prepared for the ball to come your way at all times of the game
- Preservation of youth arms
  - Report all soreness to the coach immediately. Do not continue to pitch through arm soreness.
  - Always ice arm after pitching in a game
  - Be aware of pitch count and frequency of pitching
    - Pitch count limits and required rest recommendations (Pitch Smart USA Baseball)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Daily Max (Pitches)</th>
<th>Required Rest (Pitches)</th>
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Warming Up
- Warm up to throw, Don’t throw to warm up.
  - Jogging, Arm preparation movement and Dynamic stretching

Know the Position Names
- Pitcher
- Catcher
- First Base
- Second Base
- Third Base
- Shortstop
- Left Field
- Center Field
- Right Field

**Playing the Game**
- Always warm up before playing
- Hustle on and off the field
- Pay attention to the game – even while sitting on the bench
- Run hard all the way through first base every time
- No swinging the bat outside of the fence – be aware of surroundings before swinging
- Offensive players must always wear a helmet when on the field. No exceptions.

**Ready Position**
- Balanced, athletic stance on the balls of the feet
- Glove out – palm up
- Understand the situation – KNOW WHERE THE THROW IS SUPPOSED TO GO

**Fielding Position**
- Feet wide
- Glove foot forward – toes of the opposite foot even with the heel of the glove foot
- Rear end down
- Glove thumb out – elbow in – flat on the ground
- Ball hand on top
- Flat back
- Eyes down watching the ball all of the way to the glove – should be able to see the button on top of the player’s hat
- Ball hand immediately covers the ball inside the glove

**Throwing**
- Proper ball holding technique – two fingers on top and thumb on the bottom
- Stepping with foot opposite throwing arm with a motion over the shoulder
- Arm extended behind the body and ball thrown over shoulder with arm follow through to opposite leg (prevent “short arm” and side arm throwing)
- Aiming for the catching player’s chest

**Catching Techniques**
- Watch the ball all the way to the glove

**Proper catching techniques for catches at:**

**The chest**
- Glove held at the chest
- Glove facing outward
- Fingers up
- Arm partially extended with a “soft” elbow

**Groundballs**
- Tip of glove touching ground
- Palm of glove facing up to receive ball
- Non-glove hand about 9 inches above ready to cover the caught ball
- Placing the 2\textsuperscript{nd} hand over the ball once inside the glove

**Fly Balls**
- Run to the location of the ball
- Square up under the ball
- Both hands over head with glove facing upwards to receive the ball
- Non-glove hand should help to squeeze the glove to help prevent the ball from popping out

**Batting Techniques**

**Bat sizing**
- Use the proper bat weight – player should be able to hold the bat steady parallel to the ground with an outstretched arm for at least 10-15 seconds – if they can’t, then the bat is too heavy
- Use the proper bat length – bat should reach approximately waist height when stood next to player
- Relaxed grip – knuckles aligned – bat should be in the “middle knuckle” area or the hand grip – not deep in the palm of the hands

**Batter’s Stance**
- Feet shoulder width apart
- Knees bent
- Balanced and relaxed
- Front foot at approximate middle of plate (slightly back in the batter’s box)
- Should be able to reach outer edge of home plate with bat

**Top to Bottom**
- Head facing the pitcher so the batter can see the pitcher with BOTH eyes
- Keep head still – track the ball with the eyes only
- Hands together on grip
- Load weight to back foot prior to swing
- Stride (short or no stride)
- Front foot has to be planted \textit{before} swinging
- Hip rotation as bat comes through
- Back foot pivots with the hip rotation – back heel should be off the ground
- Head should go from the front shoulder to the back shoulder

**Swing**
- Short, compact swing
- Level swing path
Follow through

**Before leaving the field**

- Throw away your own garbage
- Throw away any other garbage laying around
- Be sure you have all of your own gear:
  - Glove
  - Hat
  - Cleats/shoes
  - Water bottle
- Help coaches carry equipment
T-Ball

Ages
4 – 6 year olds (JK & K Grades)

Purpose
A FUN introduction to the very basics of baseball in a POSITIVE environment.

General Baseball Concepts
All players should have an understanding of the following:

Warm ups
- Warm up to throw, Don’t throw to warm up.
  - Jogging, Arm preparation movement and Dynamic stretching

Positions
- Pitcher
- Catcher
- 1st Baseman
- 2nd Baseman
- 3rd Baseman
- Short Stop
- Outfield

Bases
- 1st Base
- 2nd Base
- 3rd Base
- Home plate

Foul Balls
- 1st and 3rd base lines
- 10ft arch

Outs
- Ways to record an out
  - Force out
  - Tag out (tag must be made with ball in hand or ball in glove)
  - Catching fly ball
- If batter/base runner is out, they are to return to bench

Scoring Runs
- Run scored once base runner safely reaches home plate

Performance Goals

Fielding
- Ready position when batter is in the batter’s box
- Proper throwing technique – throwing over the shoulder
- Proper ground ball fielding – palm up, glove tip on ground
- Proper catching technique – palm out, fingers facing up
- Focus on throwing to 1st base once ball fielded
- Position boundaries (1st baseman not running in front of 2nd baseman to field ball)
- 1st baseman responsibilities

Hitting
- Basic Fundamentals
  - Proper bat grip
o Batting stance
o Position in batter’s box
o Level swing

**Base Running**
- Proper order for running bases
- Foot needs to touch each base
- Always run bases as fast as possible
- Don’t watch ball once hit, focus on running to base
- Run through first base
Machine Pitch

Ages
6-8 year olds (1st & 2nd Grades)

Purpose
Build upon the basics learned in T-Ball as players learn to hit a moving ball (review T-ball Concepts and Goals).

General Baseball Concepts
All players should have an understanding of the following:

Warm ups
- Warm up to throw, Don’t throw to warm up.
  - Jogging, Arm preparation movement and Dynamic stretching

Home Team vs Visiting Team
- Visiting team begins the game batting

Performance Goals

Fielding
- Understanding what bases are force outs throughout the game and when to cover these bases
- Fly ball fielding techniques
  - Caught fly ball can be thrown to base with runner in attempt to record a double play
- Concept of backing teammates up

Hitting
- Proper position within the batter’s box to be able to reach far side of plate
- Watch the ball all of the way to the bat

Base Running
- Eyes on 1st and 3rd base coaches for instructions when running bases
- Touching inside corners of bases while running
- Fly balls require hesitation of running to next base to confirm whether ball is caught
  - If fly ball caught, runner needs to return to base
Pony League

Ages
8-10 year olds (3rd & 4th Grades)

Purpose
Build upon the basics learned in T-Ball and Machine Pitch as players learn to hit a ball thrown from a pitcher (review T-ball and Machine Pitch Concepts and Goals).

General Baseball Concepts
All players should have an understanding of the following:

- **Warm ups**
  - Warm up to throw, Don’t throw to warm up.
    - Jogging, Arm preparation movement and Dynamic stretching

- **Pitching**
  - Pitching from the windup
  - Proper lower and upper body form
  - Proper arm and leg follow through
  - Proper fielding position following the pitch
  - Covering 1st base

- **Catcher**
  - Importance of keeping ball in front of catcher
  - Throwing ball back to pitcher following each pitch
  - Throwing to base when base runner is stealing (3rd base)

- **Pitch Count**
  - Balls and Strikes

Performance Goals

- **Fielding**
  - Execution of a cutoff for balls hit to outfield

- **Defensive Shift**
  - Right handed vs. left handed batter

- **Infield Defensive Base Focus – 2nd/3rd Bases**
  - 2nd base responsibilities (2nd baseman vs. Shortstop)
    - Begin the concept of backing up the throw from the catcher back to the pitcher
  - 3rd base responsibilities
    - Covering base when base runner is attempting to steal (3rd base)

- **Positional Backup Focus – Pitchers**
  - Plays at any base when ball hit to outfield
    - Positioned in line with the throw at an appropriate distance to react to a passed ball

- **Introduction of Positional Backup – Outfielders**
  - Errant throws/passed balls in infield

- **Hitting**
  - Understanding the difference between balls and strikes

- **Base Running**
  - Leading off once pitch crosses home plate
  - Stealing (3rd base)
  - Proper feet first sliding technique
  - Ability to advance to next base on overthrown ball
Little League

**Ages**
10-12 year olds (5\(^{rd}\) & 6\(^{th}\) Grades)

**Purpose**
Build upon the basics learned in T-Ball, Machine Pitch and Pony League as players learn more in-depth baseball knowledge (review T-ball, Machine Pitch and Pony League Concepts and Goals).

**General Baseball Concepts**
All players should have an understanding of the following:

**Warm ups**
- Warm up to throw, Don’t throw to warm up.
  - Jogging, Arm preparation movement and Dynamic stretching

**Pitching**
- Pitching from the windup and the stretch
- Continued refinement of pitching mechanics

**Catcher**
- Throwing to base when base runner is stealing (2\(^{nd}\) or 3\(^{rd}\) base)

**Performance Goals**

**Fielding**
- Proper way to cover bases when base runner is attempting to steal (2\(^{nd}\) and 3\(^{rd}\) base)
- Run down execution
- Bunt fielding

**Defensive Shift**
- Infield in for plays at the plate

**Infield Defensive Base Focus – Home Plate**
- Catchers responsibility to cover
  - Positioned in front of plate (approximately one foot)
- Catcher as the field “director”
  - On in progress plays
    - Prior to play beginning (calling outs and shifts)
- Throws to plate from outfield should be backed up by pitcher

**Positional Backup Focus – Outfielders**
- Any ball hit being an infielders responsibility
- Right Field
  - Throws to first base
    - All fielded balls
    - All pickoff attempts
  - Throws to second base from left side of field
- Center Field
  - Throws to second base
    - From middle of field
    - From the pitcher on a pickoff attempt
    - From the catcher on an attempted steal
- Left Field
  - Throws to third base
    - All fielded balls
    - From the pitcher on a pickoff attempt
- From the catcher on an attempted steal
  - Throws to second base from right side of field

**Hitting**
- Proper bunting technique
- Picking up hitting signs from 3rd base coach

**Base Running**
- Leading off once ball leaves pitchers hand
- Stealing 2nd and 3rd base
Babe Ruth

Ages
13-14 year olds (7th & 8th Grades)

Purpose
Refinement of all concepts learned throughout youth baseball prior to transitioning to the high school level.

General Baseball Concepts
All players should have an understanding of the following:

Warm ups
- Warm up to throw, Don’t throw to warm up.
  - Jogging, Arm preparation movement and Dynamic stretching

All concepts reviewed throughout each youth baseball level

Performance Goals

Fielding
- Complete and thorough understanding of defensive position requirements including backing up

Infield Position Focus
- Pitcher
  - Balk’s
  - Pick off Moves
  - Bunt Fielding
- Catcher
  - Calling Pitches
  - Giving signs for a pickoff or throw down

1st Base
- Playing on the grass vs playing deep
- When to hold runners
- Watching for signs from the catcher for a pickoff or throw down

2nd Base
- When to cover the bag on a steal
- When to play the gap
- When to cover 1st base
- Backing up the throw to the pitcher

Hitting
- Understanding the mechanics of hitting
  - Impact hitting early or late has on the location of the ball
  - Making adjustments to pitching speeds
  - Reading the ball out of the pitcher’s hand
  - Understanding the physics of the different types of pitches

Base Running
- Leading off once pitcher is on pitching rubber
  - Primary leadoff
  - Secondary leadoff
- Proper way to return to base if in a pick-off situation