

## **2017 Brownsburg Little League Coaches Clinic**

### **Ages 5-8**

- **Throwing and Catching**

- Teach the proper grip, Two fingers on top, thumb on bottom. Some players will have pretty small hands at the younger ages so three fingers on the top of the ball is acceptable. The important thing is to grip the ball with the fingers and not the hand.
- As a coach, stay positive and focus on form and technique rather than results.
- Two step release is what you should ultimately be striving for at the younger age. Try to stop the multi-step release as soon as possible.
- We want to make the catch and the throw into one motion.
- For the very young ages, you will want to incorporate tennis balls, for very obvious reasons, into your practice. The same throwing principals apply.
- Throwing progression drills are a natural starting point for any throwing practice. Start with two lines positioned across from each other. The players start fairly close together and on one knee. They will throw across to their partner while coaches check for proper grip and upper body rotation as well as follow through. They will eventually get to their feet and spread a little farther apart. Technique is the focus. It may seem boring to some of your players but all players can improve technique including the ones who may have advanced skills. Another option to consider for the young players is to utilize a coach with a player until the player becomes proficient. One other drill that deserves mention is called the sock drill. We have modified it and use a terry cloth rag. Utilize this rag in place of a baseball and have your player try and hit a target out in front of him. On the practice field this is usually a coach but at home you can

use something like a chair. Have them try and hit the target with the rag and coach them on their throwing motion. This is a very easy drill and useful for the player who has extra energy he needs to get rid of.

- As coaches we will also teach the proper position of the non-catching hand during the catch. Teach your players to have the throwing hand up comfortably near the glove in order to make an efficient transfer to the throwing grip and motion.
- Remind players not to “stab” at the ball with their glove during the catch
- The player should try to maintain a good athletic position throughout. Do not stand in one spot, keep the knees flexed and keep moving. This will help them adjust to last second variations of ball flight.

- **Baserunning**

- Batters should be taught to run on contact. Do not look for the ball or assume that it is hit foul. Run.
- Run all the way through first base and finish in foul territory breaking down as though they have a parachute on their back. Another thought would be to have them look to foul territory. This will help them see an overthrow and it also affords some protection for their face on an errant throw situation. Remind them that this is the only base they can run past and not be tagged out for doing so.
- When teaching players to run to second, they will make a wider turn around first base and touch the bag on the inside portion with their right foot, not on the top of the bag.
- Teach the players to pay very close attention to their baserunning coaches. They will help the players determine if they should advance or not. Remind them to do their best. They may get thrown out when a coach tries to advance them but once again, as a coach, look at effort and technique rather than results.

- **Hitting**

- At the younger ages you may find that most players can hit a baseball pretty decent already. Take caution not to over coach hitting. You will find that confidence is the most important thing for the young players.
- Be sure that the bat is sized correctly for the player.
- Corrective coaching should be done in practice, not during a game plate appearance. You can coach up a player once he finishes running the bases but try not to do it during his or her at bat.
- Essentially, you'll want to mainly coach that balance from the start of the swing to finish is the most important thing for the young players. As players get older more points of detail can be taught. Confidence and having fun are elements we want to promote. We want them to play again when the next season comes around.
- Be sure to get your players used to training off of a hitting T. Use it every practice.

- **Defensive Fundamentals**

- In training, you want to keep as many players as possible engaged in drills that have them moving. You will want to have two or three additional coaches (dads or moms) helping you. Try to use competition within your rec team as a training motivator. Almost every drill you have available to you can be done with teams within your team.
- Start out by getting them into a solid defensive position. This would include knees bent, wide base, weight on the balls of their feet rather than flat footed. Glove presented forward and open. Most coaches teach their players to "creep" from their ready position. "Creeping" would be taking a couple balanced steps toward the the batter during the batter's swing. A visual cue you can teach is to tell them that there is an eyeball in the palm of their glove and it is looking for the baseball. Roll ground

balls to their fielding position in lieu of the fungo bat. You will be more accurate and your drills will be more efficient. There are videos of this on the Brownsburg Little League website. Keep it fun and fast paced.

- Fly balls for outfield work should also be thrown rather than hit off of the fungo bat. With the young players you may need to mix in tennis balls to avoid some fear issues. As confidence builds, switch to the baseballs the League provides. As with fielding ground balls on the infield, be sure to coach the player to have their throwing hand up and near their glove-ready to transition to the throwing part of the motion. There are many drills available on YouTube or from other coaches in the league.
- Some other basic drills that the younger players enjoy are bare hand underhand toss/catch from opposing staggered lines. It's simply a hand eye drill that is beneficial at all ages. Place a coach and a bucket of balls on end of the drill to get them started and just toss a ball to the opposite line and they continue tossing back and forth working their way toward the other end of the drill. Challenge your team to get all the way through the bucket without dropping a ball. Remind them that if they fail, which they will do, to let it go and get onto the next play, just like in an actual baseball game.
- Another hand eye drill is simply juggling baseballs. Start as basic as you have to even if it's with a single baseball. Make it a competition. Just help them develop the hand eye coordination.
- YouTube is another great resource for drills. Have a great season. Go Bulldogs!!!!