

5 Pitch

Richmond Munster Minor Softball Association.

Little League

5 - Pitch

Coaching Handbook

The League:

The Richmond Munster Minor Softball Association provides opportunity for children in the community to participate in team sports in a safe and fun atmosphere.

As Coach, your objective is to ensure every child on your team (and throughout the league) derives enjoyment and feelings of accomplishment from their participation.

The children you'll coach are in the formative period of their lives. Since sports play influences each child's character development, your role as coach is of utmost importance within the league.

How you perceive your role with your players will affect the quality of your leadership and the positive results experienced by all of the players. The kids who have coaches who are positive, understanding, encouraging and fair, will reap untold benefits throughout their lives. The attitudes you foster towards team sports and cooperation may last a lifetime.

Your behaviour sets the standard as a role model, through strong and positive leadership. Remember your emphasis must be on cooperation and participation, rather than a "win at all costs" attitude.

- A good coach should strive to develop the whole person, not just those talents which may benefit the team.
- A good coach sees team play and fun as primary goals, game skills as a key focus and winning merely a bonus.
- A good coach is primarily dedicated to teaching wholesome attitudes and practices as positive life skills.

All Richmond Munster Minor Softball coaches have the responsibility to reflect and uphold this coaching philosophy.

Coaching Notes

These notes have been put together to help you prepare – modify, adapt to your style.

SEASON'S START - COACHING CLINIC

At the beginning of the season there is a coaching clinic, which must be attended by at least one coach from each team. If you can't make it, arrange for another team coach or parent to come. This is the only time you can pick up team uniforms (t-shirt & hat), equipment (team ball and bat) coaches' handbook and copies of the rules for team parents.

The clinic will feature a brief session on coaching, organization, the rules and the league's philosophy, with a question period following.

TEAM PHONE CALLS

You will receive by e mail your team list and game schedule. The players do not receive team lists in the mail. The team lists will be posted on www.rmmsa.org by May 1st. First games for Little League commence during the same week. Please call your teams to introduce yourself. You need to make sure each player is called before the first game.

Please go over the following with each child's parent or care giver:

1. Parents' names, tel. numbers (home & work & cell) and e-mail, in case of rain.
2. Ask about the child's ability, experience, and any special needs (i.e. allergies)
3. Review the date and location of the first game (or practice). Parents should arrive 15minutes before the first game so you can hand out team uniforms, and review rules,etc.
4. Discuss location of the various fields and parking.
5. Parents are responsible for their children and **must remain** at the field during the game. Remind to arrive (at least 10 to 15 minutes) & "check-in" with you.
6. Confirm each player has their own baseball glove. Canadian Tire has low priced options.
7. The team uniform (hat & t-shirt handed out at the first game) are mandatory. Team t-shirt must be worn over any other garments. The hat must also be worn. Kids might want to bring sweat pants/shirts in cool weather.
8. Running shoes are mandatory footwear. (spike baseball shoes are not permitted in the Little League.)
9. Snack participation. Advise each parent that they are responsible for bringing snack to at least one game during the season. (See "Snack Notes" below) Ask for a parent volunteer to organize a list of snack dates and volunteers (and follow-up weekly).
10. Ask parents to help with coaching. Most will with a little encouragement and support.

THE FIELDS & EQUIPMENT STORAGE

Richmond Munster Minor Softball Association

- **Richmond Public School – Ball Diamond:**

The ball diamond is located behind the school. Access the park from Martin Street or Colonel Murray Street. Map is attached. Street. Parking is available on both streets.

- **Munster North – small diamond :**

This ball diamond is located past the stop sign at Macs Milk Convenience store on Munster Road. (Map is attached)
Parking is available either in the parking lot (shared with soccer parents) or on the street. Please note that the street is a very busy one with lots of traffic.

- **Munster Community Park :**

This ball diamond is located before the stop sign at Macs Milk Convenience store on Munster Road. (Map is attached)
Parking is available either in the parking lot (shared with soccer parents) or on the street. Please note that the street is a very busy one with lots of traffic.

EQUIPMENT

T Ball

The most obvious difference in T-Ball is that there is no pitcher. An adjustable batting tee is set at home plate to hold the ball for the batter to swing at. The batter is allowed to swing as many times as possible (at the umpire's discretion) in order to hit a fair ball. Every player on the offensive team is allowed to bat before that team's turn at bat ends.

The portable T's are stored with the equipment bags, but NOT in the bags. A small, safety ball is used. It is slightly spongy.

5-Pitch

We use a special safety ball which is much softer than a regulation softball, and the younger kids use a smaller bat. Please take care of all equipment and return it to its proper location at the end of the season.

Each equipment bag includes: Helmets for each batter and base runner, extra bats, home plate, 1st plate safety base, 2nd and 3rd plate bases and catcher's gear (mask, chest protector and shin guards). Shin Guards are optional but the mask and chest protector should be worn.

THE FIRST GAME

At the first game, you need to arrive early to hand out team uniforms (team t-shirt and hat) to each child. While some of your kids may have played before, others will be playing for the first time.

Please review key baseball rules and organizational strategy (your rules) with the whole team.

Some players at this age probably haven't played before and will need some extra coaching in batting and fielding.

Arriving at least 10-15 minutes before game time allows you to organize field positions and batting order. Kids (and other coaches) prefer a coach who lets them play for a full hour. **PLAN AHEAD!**

Upon arrival at the field, introduce yourself to the other coach and plan when you'll start the game, ideally 30 minutes of warm up and 30 minutes of game time. If you go over that time that is fine as long as each player has a turn. Don't cut the game short because of the time.

For 5-pitch the umpire is one of the coaches or a parent volunteer.

Ask a parent to help out. It doesn't matter from which team.

If your team is in the field first, you need a parent to help the catcher put on their equipment, while you organize field positions.

If your team is batting first, and for that matter, whenever your team is at bat, make sure the ball is not put into play until the umpire has signaled ready.

Make sure that if kids want to practice batting or swinging a bat, they do so under supervision and away from everyone, for safety.

First at Bat

In 5 pitch one of the coaches of the team at bat or a parent pitches to the team. This is a most critical part of the game, because, if you can't pitch, you'll strike out all of your own players. You should decide who will pitch, or take turns. Don't be shy about asking a parent to help if they can pitch. The kids sure appreciate a good pitcher. Each batter should take a few practice swings. Gage the height of their swing so you can adjust your pitching height.

- Each batter is allowed 5 pitches to make contact with the ball.
- A foul ball counts as a strike. Discretion is allowed, so if a coach wants to give a player that needs help or encouragement an extra pitch this is ok **BUT IT SHOULD NOT BE ABUSED AND DONE ALL THE TIME.**

At the beginning of the season, the coach remaining at the batting cage should watch the batters' swing. This will allow you to correct their grip (hands should be touching each other with forward arm hand at the bottom of the bat), stance (feet should be parallel, shoulder width apart, and at right angles to the direction the ball should go), and position (kids will have a tendency to stand too close to the plate).

When the ball is hit, the batter should drop the bat and run to first base. Note that kids at this age will sometimes throw the bat (make sure they understand the rule on bat throwing). Ensure that all players not in the field and all spectators are safely out of any thrown bat's reach. The runner may overrun first base.

When the runner is heading home from third base, they **must not touch** home plate, but rather **run across** the "Home Plate Line" (see applicable rule). Again, this is for safety reasons, to avoid collisions.

First in the Field

When the first ball is hit, many of the fielders may run for it. You will find this an opportunity (continuing all season long) to coach the kids on playing positions and backing up each other.

As throwing is starting to be successful for many at this age, we encourage kids to make a play (throwing the ball to 1st base, as an example) as it follows the true spirit of Baseball. Where possible, try and have able catchers playing at 1st base. Kids who chose to make a play (throw the ball to 1st base, as an example) may find they overthrow, or the base player will not catch the ball, and the runners will be allowed to move forward one base. You may find it safer not to make a second play after an error.

After the game all coaches and players shake hands.

ORGANIZATION

Practices

There are no formal practices arranged. However, please try and arrange one before the first game if you can.

Encourage the kids to arrive 10-15 minutes early for each game so that you can be assured that everyone shows up on time for the game. It is very difficult to start the game and have a line made and have late arrivals.

During the warm period you can practice various skills, such as; throwing, batting, catching, and fielding.

Encourage the parents to practice both batting and catching with their kids at home.

It only takes a 5 minute practice a few times a week to have a significant impact on their children's' progress.

Batting Order

You may want a clipboard for your team list, batting order, rules, etc. However, the best batting organizer is a bunch of clothes pegs. Start with your clipboard or a paint stir stick. Attach a coat hanger wire through the hole at the top and hang the clipboard or stick from the batter's cage. Write the names of each of your players on their own clothes peg. Clip the pegs on the side of the board/stick in that day's batting order, with the first batter at the top. You'll find this tool indispensable, as the kids can now read their batting order without having to ask you. Change the batting order at each game so that all children have a chance to bat first or last. Easy formats include alphabetical from A to Z, from Z to A, and numerically by T-shirt number, forward and backwards and from the middle on.

Field Positions

It is extremely important for the kids that field positions be rotated. This can be slightly more difficult to organize, but not unmanageable. First of all, every child should have a chance to play most positions. Fundamentally, those who play infield one inning should play outfield the next. (Understanding that with higher numbers of players on a team, there can be some overlap). Some coaches use a table to keep positions organized week to week. You might want to do up your own list.

PARENTAL HELP

Ask parents to help. There is much to organize with this age group, and you will appreciate any and all help. Particular areas for help are:

Batting & Line-up

You will need a coach to organize the rest of the team when you are at bat. This coach will ensure all team members stay behind the batter's cage and that no one holds onto or climbs the batters cage (thrown bats break fingers). He or she will coordinate the batting order and make sure the next batter is ready with their helmet on, and ensure that the team is quiet and respectful of their teammate currently at bat. This coach should ensure that only the batter in the batter's box has a bat in hand.

Batting demands the most attention, and should be coached by someone who knows:

- A. How the bat is held.
 - B. How the feet are positioned
 - C. How the swing is made
 - D. What to do with the bat after hitting the ball. (Don't throw it!)
- Ensure everyone, including spectators, are standing clear.

Base/Fielding Coaches:

When your team is at bat, you are allowed to have coaches at 1st and 3rd bases. These coaches help the runners to know when to run and when to stop. When your team is in the field, you are not allowed to have any coaches on the field.

Umpire:

The umpire's job has more to do with ensuring safety and general organization than with the rules. He or she also has to keep track of the number of pitches, outs and the overall score. This is an important job as the umpire's calls are final. Each team is responsible for providing an umpire for the opposite team. (You may use the same umpire, however both coaches must agree)

DISPUTES

Baseball has lots of opportunities to question calls and plays, but in this league there will be no disputes. This makes it simple for the umpires to run the games and makes sure that all the kids will have lots of opportunity to play and have fun. Don't waste time disputing line calls. It also keeps the focus where it belongs, with the kids learning to play and building their confidence throughout the season.

Parents, kids and coaches have been told that verbal abuse of any kind will NOT be tolerated, in particular towards; the kids, volunteer coaches, and umpires.

If there are any abusive situations, or behaviour that is not in keeping with league philosophy, please contact your convener.

SNACK:

One of the highlights for the kids at each game, is a snack, organized by the coaches (or a volunteer parent), but brought by alternating parents. Coaches should bring snack for the first game and arrange for different parents to bring snack for each of the season's games. Good things to bring are cut-up oranges, apples, water and juice (in juice boxes). Cookies, fruit roll-ups, and pop are popular options. If bringing anything messy, remember face clothes or wet rags, and garbage bags. Please advise parents not to bring anything with **peanuts**, so as to avoid this allergy issue.

RAIN:

If it's raining heavily in the morning, and stops in the afternoon, you should still play. The fields will drain, "it almost never rains on a ball park!" History has shown that most games canceled at 3:00 p.m. end up with sun breaking through the clouds at 5:30. If in doubt go to the field and make your decision there, within 15 minutes after game start time. Safety, however, will not be compromised because of field conditions or possible thunderstorms.

If you cancel the game, call and advise all of your players. If there is any sign of lightening or thunder around game time or during a game, the game must be canceled.

We would like the players to show up at the field unless the coaches of both teams make a decision early in the day and advise their players. If you haven't called and spoken to all of your players, you should expect them to show up at the field. You must go to the field, and remain there until 15 minutes after start time, to make sure you advise anyone who shows up.

THE END OF SEASON GAME:

At the final season game, the league will arrange a Fun Day. (Date to be confirmed) Trophies will be provided to coaches to be handed out to each player. Hot dogs, drinks and activities will be there for all to enjoy.

FIRST AID:

Parents must remain at the field as they are responsible for their children. If they must leave, they must ensure that another parent will take responsibility for their child. The majority of our coaches have First aid and CPR. However since our coaches are volunteers we rely on some parents that have First Aid and CPR to assist in an emergency.

CONVENERS:

If you have questions about teams, scheduling, rules, anything about the league, please call the league convener. They can answer your questions directly.

Little League Convener – Shari Crawley @ 613-838-4994 (home) or 613-724-0642 (cell) or kermittbaby2001@rogers.com

THANK YOU FOR COACHING !!!

This is a volunteer run league for the benefit of the children who play. We receive much praise from parents who appreciate the time and effort you give to help their kids learn a sport in an encouraging environment. Remember, if you're having fun, the kids probably are too!
