

7th Inning Stretch

Remember...If it isn't fun...it isn't Little League!!!

March 1, 2006

Volume 2, Number 1



Happy Birthday To The Stretch!

That's right! It's been a year already for the 7th Inning Stretch.

I want to take a second here to thank all who contributed to making the first year successful.

I thought that since it's been a year, that I would make some changes to the format of the newsletter. Some of the newsletters from the past year got to be a little cumbersome, and I thought a new look and some new ideas might make it a bit easier for me...hopefully it's a change for the better, and I hope you all like it. Of course you are free to send me your comments about what you like or don't like, and I can take it all into account and make further changes as required.



I am hoping to be able to have pictures posted to a website with links from the newsletter...this makes it easier for me, and doesn't fill your email inbox with files of 2mbs!

Other new ideas I am working towards for this year are profiles of Little League personnel, whether it's DA's, Presidents, Coaches, Umpires or even players...I am trying to come up with something that I can send out across the country to get an idea of who you are out there, and show the rest of Canada who our volunteers are. I have also received some good ideas from Kevin Kvame, DA from Alberta D1, that I am taking into consideration, and will try to add a couple of them shortly...Thank You Kevin!

So enjoy this issue...spring is almost here!

Bob Taunton, DA ON D7

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Whalley, BC Goes Online For LL Championships



Whalley Little League has now got an official website for the upcoming Canadian Little League Championships.

The site is adding information daily as it gears up for the big tournament. Take a minute and check it out at www.whalley2006.com.

Blue's Corner

Welcome back to The Blue's Corner. After a quick break last month, we're back with additional content for the month of March. Enjoy! As always, if you have any ideas for contributions, please contact Andy O'Brien via email at andrewobrien@rogers.com. Yours ideas are appreciated!

Williamsport Umpire School & Clinics

FYI: Each year Little League International Umpire-In-Chief, Andy Konyar, operates two weekend clinics and one weeklong school. Below you will find dates for these training sessions:

April 1 & 2, 2006 – Clinic

April 8 to 13, 2006 – School

September 16 & 17, 2006 – Clinic

Contact Andy Konyar via email at akonyar@littleleague.org for more information.

Rule Changes

Check out the link below for the changes to Little League's Rules & Regulations in 2006:

<http://www.littleleague.org/media/BaseballRuleChanges06.pdf>

Don't forget that the rulebook is also available on a CD. You can order it from Little League Canada or from: www.LittleLeague.org.

Tips For Planning Your League's Umpire Clinic

- Plan for the weather (do you have indoor space available in case of rain?)
- Teach for your audience (two hours of reading rules is stretching it for youth umpires)
- Distribute all equipment/uniforms (all umpires should be properly equipped)
- Ensure umpires are made aware of special house league rules (not only should umpires receive the rulebook, but also a copy of all special rules that your league enforces)

Have fun and keep it exciting! Allow plenty of opportunity for questions. Most youth umpires will be too nervous to ask questions in front of everyone, even though there "is no such thing as a stupid question." Give them a piece of paper and read/answer the questions in front of all of the umpires. This will eliminate any nervousness.

Stump The Ump – Question of the Month

With the bases empty and two out in the bottom of the seventh inning, the number 8 batter is due up. His manager feels the batter has little chance to hit safely and, with no more pinch hitters available, decides it would be better to open the eighth with his leadoff man. Therefore, he tells the number 8 hitter to stay put and sends out number 9, the pitcher, who pops out to end the inning. No appeal is made, the teams change sides and the eighth inning starts. Who is the proper batter when the home team comes to bat again?

Please see the last page of the newsletter for the answer.

The Little League Pledge:

I trust in God

I love my country

And will respect it's
laws

I will play fair

And strive to win

But win or lose

I will always

Do my best



Set Up Your Hitting Practice Like The Pros

Volume 2, Number 1

Twice As Many Hits In Half The Time

By Al Herback and Al Price

Article courtesy of The Coach's Box...A Little League Publication

Wherever Al and I travel around the world, Little League Coaches ask the same question:

"How do I keep hitting practice to 25 – 30 minutes so I have time to work on all of the other important parts of the game?"

For many coaches hitting practice is "two bunts and 10 swings" for each player. A coach stands on the mound with a bucket of balls and pitches to each player, one at a time. The rest of the players spread out and pick up the balls and throw them into the coach. It takes most coaches over an hour to get through the line-up.

Using this old traditional approach, players basically stand around waiting for their turn and are active at the plate for only about five minutes. Hitters get frustrated because very few pitches are actually strikes, fielders get bored standing around and even parents get frustrated because, to them, it looks like there is a lot of wasted time. We know one of the reasons players quit baseball is because many coaches still use old drills like this.

Al and I suggest you modify your hitting practice to make it more fun for players and more effective for you as a coach. The goal is to get every player on your team 20 swings in less than 30 minutes. To do this we need to make sure:

- 95 percent to 100 percent of the balls pitched are "strikes"
- the speed of the ball matches the skill, strength and confidence of each player
- the reaction time for the hitter is the same as what they will face in a game
- the spin on the ball coming into the plate is similar to a pitched ball from the mound
- we eliminate any fear a player may have in the batters box
- the other players in the field are very active chasing down balls and having fun
- the coach is in an excellent position to provide coaching guidance and tips to the hitter

We knew the new approach needed credibility so we copied the Major League Baseball batting practice and just scaled it down for Little League coaches.

The next time you get the chance, watch a professional team take batting practice. The BP pitcher throws from behind an "L" shaped protective screen from about 40-45 feet. This is 15 – 20 feet inside of Major League pitching distance and in fact is even inside Little League distance. The pitcher moves in so he can throw strikes and at the same time simulate the reaction time his hitters will face in the MLB game. (Remember, when a ball is pitched at 70 miles per hour from 46 feet it is about the same reaction time as 90 mph fastball.)

If a Major League BP pitcher can move in front of the mound and provide "million dollar" hitters exactly what they need...why can't we?

Here is what you need to do:

First build your own scaled down "L" shaped screen. Design it so that you are fully protected when you are sitting on your favorite lawn chair. An "L" screen should have a space to pitch the ball through to the hitter and fully protect you once you release the ball. Al and I build our "L" screen using black plumber's pipe and hockey mesh. Make sure the design is sturdy, safe and the mesh should be weather resistant. If you would like our plan for the "L" screen design, email us at Bigal@alandalbaseball.com and we will email it to you.



The Little League Parent / Volunteer Pledge:

I will teach all children
to play fair and do
their best

I will positively support
all managers, coaches
and players

I will respect the
decisions of the
umpires

I will praise a good
effort despite the
outcome of the game

7th Inning Stretch

AI and I sit about six or seven steps out in front of the plate about half the way to the Little League mound. From this distance we sit on the chair and consistently throw strikes. Hitters can see the arm action and the ball at release, so it is easy to time their swing. The ball is at the correct height and arrives at the hitter in nearly the same reaction time they will face in a game. It is easy to toss it in slower for the weaker players and challenge the better hitters with harder throws. No one is afraid of the ball, "Who would be afraid of an older person sitting on a lawn chair?" Players love this hitting drill because almost every pitch is a strike. Fielders love it because there are so many balls in play and no time to stand around. If Major Leaguers can easily adjust from taking BP at shorter distance to a pitcher on the mound in the game, so can Little Leaguers.

Here is how you should organize the team for hitting:

1. Number your team off 1-12.
2. Have numbers 1 and 2 stay in to hit.
3. Have numbers 3 and 4 go out to deep center field with an empty ball bucket (number 3 stands in front of the bucket facing home plate and protects number 4 from getting hit by a ball, number 4 picks up the balls and tosses them in the bucket).
4. Numbers 5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12 spread out around the outfield (don't have anyone play the infield, it is too dangerous with so many balls in play).
5. Sit on the chair and pitch 5 balls to player 1 then 5 balls to player 2...etc until all the balls you have are gone.
6. Every ball that is hit is fielded and thrown to center field where 3 and 4 are positioned.
7. When you are out of balls...all the balls are in the center field bucket.
8. Call "SWITCH", players 1 and 2 gather up any balls at the screen, bring them to you, and then hustle out to outfield positions.
9. Players 3 and 4 hustle in bringing the balls in from center field and then get ready to hit.
10. Players 5 and 6 now move over to the center field station with the empty ball bucket.
11. Continue through the rotation until everyone has hit.

If you have space you could have half the team hit for 15 minutes and the other half with your assistant coach doing another drill at another station. After 15 minutes, switch.

Give the new approach a try; we know your players will love it!

Al Herback and Al Price, Authors and Instructors of the Little League Education Program developed this approach to hitting practice for Little League Managers and Coaches. The training materials they have developed include hundreds of drills, fun games and activities, progressions to help you teach the fundamental skills along with tips on how to plan a practice for all levels of play in Little League. [Click here](#) for more information on the complete program library and to order your own set of training materials.



Little League International, Positive Coaching Alliance Partner to Enhance Educational Offerings to Volunteers

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WILLIAMSPORT, Pa. (Feb. 24, 2006) – Making better Little League coaches and administrators through enhanced education is the driving force behind Little League International's partnership with Positive Coaching Alliance.

For more than six decades, Little League Baseball and Softball has been a program dedicated to helping children become good and decent citizens by melding healthful athletic activity with the discipline of teamwork.

Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA), established in 1998 by founder and Executive Director, Jim Thompson, was created to transform the culture of youth sports to give all young athletes the opportunity for a positive, character-building experience, while enlightening and educating adult volunteers on what it means to 'Honor the Game.' It is based at Stanford University's Department of Athletics in Palo Alto, Calif.

"This special partnership gives our program's volunteers the tools to teach Little Leaguers much more than just the skills of hitting, throwing and catching a ball," Stephen D. Keener, president and chief executive officer of Little League Baseball and Softball, said. "Positive Coaching Alliance's Double-Goal Coach™ method affords Little League International the opportunity to enhance its educational material for our adult volunteers, so they can present the most well-rounded, healthy and positive experience regardless of skill level."

Mirroring the basic values of Little League, the goals of PCA seek to replace the 'win-at-all-cost' model of coaching with the Double-Goal Coach model, where goal No. 1 is striving to win and (the more important goal) No. 2 is teaching athletes positive and enduring life lessons.

PCA is designing an on-line Double-Goal Coaching Course specifically for Little League Baseball and Softball managers and coaches. The intent of the course is to help Little League administrators and coaches create healthier leagues and the kind of league culture where children look forward to practices and games as times when they will have fun, and where the joy they find in playing will last a lifetime.

"We are thrilled and excited to partner with an icon of the youth sports world, and one that I have a long relationship with," Mr. Thompson, a Little League graduate from San Diego, Calif., said. "I got my start as an athlete in Little League, and have coached my son's Little League teams. The sheer breadth of Little League in the United States and abroad affords us an unrivalled opportunity to advance the Positive Coaching movement, while at the same time furthering Little League's mission."

Another component of this national partnership will be the creation and delivery of varied PCA educational content, along with news articles and related features stories for the Little League's monthly "Little Leaguer" and "The Coach's Box" electronic newsletters.

For more information on Positive Coaching Alliance, visit its website, at: www.positivecoach.org. Little League's website is: www.littleleague.org.

Little League Baseball and Softball is the world's largest organized youth sports program, with nearly 2.7 million players and 1 million adult volunteers in every U.S. state and scores of other countries.

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Become an Alumni Member and support Little League in your community and across the Country.

The Little League Canada Foundation's goal is "to ensure that all children in Canada have the chance to participate in Little League regardless of their abilities, either physical or financial". For an annual membership of \$10.00 or three year membership of \$25.00, as an Alumni member you will have the opportunity to have input into the growth and direction of Little League and its programs.

For a membership application form, please contact Little League Canada at Canada@littleleague.org.

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Brain Teaser

In a Little League Major Division game the pitcher may pitch from the set position; however, the pitcher is required to come to a complete stop when pitching from the stretch.

Answer at the bottom of the page

Monthly Baseball Funny

A doctor at an insane asylum decided to take his patients to a baseball game.

For weeks in advance, he coached his patients to respond to his commands.

When the day of the game arrived, everything seemed to be going well. As the National Anthem started.....the doctor yelled, "Up Nuts" And the patients complied by standing up.

After the anthem ...he yelled, "Down Nuts". And they all sat back down in their seats.

After a home run was hit, the doctor yelled, "Cheer Nuts". They all brokeout into applause and cheered.

When the umpire made a particularly bad call against the star of the home team, the Doctor yelled, "Booooo Nuts!!!" and they all started booing and cat calling.

Thinking things were going very well. The doctor decided to go get a beer and a hot dog, leaving his assistant in charge.

When he returned, there was a riot in progress. Finding his assistant, the doctor asked, " What in the world happened? "

The assistant replied, "Well, everything was going just fine till a vendor passed by and yelled PEANUTS!"

Stump The Ump – Answer

When an improper batter makes the final out of an inning, the opposing team must appeal before a pitch is made to its first batter of the following half-inning. If this is not done, the actions of the improper batter are legalized and the lead-off man is the first batter in the next inning. (6.07c, 6.07d-2)

Brain Teaser Answer

False. Rule 8.01 (b) NOTE. Runners are not permitted to leave their base before the pitched ball gets to the batter, thus relieving the pitcher of coming to a complete (discernable) stop.

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