

# 7th Inning Stretch

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



January 2007

Volume 2, Number 11

## Happy New Year!

Hopefully you all had a great Holiday season, and have started your New Year off on a good note! Happy New Year to ALL!

Now that the holidays are over it's time for me to get back into the swing of things...notably getting the new issue of this newsletter out.

Not much local news to report this month, so the concentration is on the new pitch count regulations this month, as well as the "expectations of your Little League Coach", and tools for talking and teaching in the off season. This month Mike Lalonde checks in for Blues Corner with his take on Pregame Rituals that Umpires should adhere to. I have also listed Umpire clinics coming up in the US, and the Williamsport clinic dates.

I can't believe that next month marks the last issue of the 2nd full year that I have been producing The 7th Inning Stretch...time flies...there will certainly be a third year, and hopefully I can continue to count on the good people of Canada to contribute pictures and stories from around the Leagues...send them to me any time, and they will be included.

I hope you all enjoyed the baseball puzzle last month...the answers are in this issue, as promised...There is a new quiz to test you again.

Until next month...

Thanks for taking the time to read this and every issue.

Bob Taunton, DA ON D7

**Play Ball!**

Email: [btaunton@littleleague.ca](mailto:btaunton@littleleague.ca)

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**The Little League Road Show is in Calgary,**

**Alberta, January 13 - 14, 2007**

The Canada Regional staff will be conducting the clinic on "A Year in the Life of Hometown Little League"

For information, contact Darlene McLaughlin, DA, Alberta District 8 at (403) 251-2589 or E-mail- [dmclaughlin@littleleague.ca](mailto:dmclaughlin@littleleague.ca)



### Pregame Rituals

Before I begin I would just like to wish everyone a merry Christmas and a happy new year and apologize for not having the time to get in an article last month. I also umpire Ringette in Quebec and it was tournament season. I was travelling from the South Shore to Gatineau towards the end of the month and it completely slipped my mind.

### Preparing for your games!

Time and time again I observe umpires showing up at the ball field 15 minutes before a game getting on the field when the first pitch should already be thrown, doing their coaches meeting and then starting the game late. There is no excuse for starting a game late. The thing that upsets me the most about seeing this is when an umpire shows up late, he is 90% of the time completely off his game. Sure, things come up and sometimes you cannot show up on time, but when it happens every single game, and every game the umpire has a bad game there is a problem.

After observing my local umpires for the entire season, I had a young umpire who takes umpiring very seriously come up to me and ask me why it always takes him a good 4 or 5 sometimes even 6 innings to get into the game. I knew the answer but I made him tell me what he did before the game to prepare himself. You guessed it, he showed up 15 minutes before, rushed to get dressed and always started his games 2-3 minutes late.

The players usually show up to a game 1 hour before, to warm up physically and mentally. As an umpire you owe the kids a strong outing every time you step on the field. If the kids show up 1 hour before, the umpire should be doing the same. You do not have to go and get dressed immediately but I usually walk around and talk with some of the people in the stands, administrators, directors or anyone I come upon just to stay relaxed. Of course 30 minutes should be enough to get to the park and take it easy and get dressed, but I've always preferred to get there a little earlier. At this point I am already focussing on the game ahead of me. One thing a lot of umpires tend to do however, is if the game is supposed to be an easy one, he'll prepare for that type of game. ALWAYS prepare for the toughest game you can imagine! If you're at the top of your game even in an easy outing you will rarely run into surprises.

Continuing on preparing before a game, an umpire should always take a small walk around the ballpark to see if there are any problems with the field, if it is playable and if the field is safe to play on! As an umpire you are there for the safety of the players on the field before anything. Whether you are a volunteer umpire or a paid umpire your job is the same. And yes, umpiring is a job, and like all jobs, it should be taken seriously.

Now to get back on track, at this point, the umpire should be mentally prepared and be ready for any field defaults or problems that might occur during the game. The reason you want to get there early is not only to prepare yourself, but to also allow your partner to be prepared as well. If your partner is ready and you show up late, you are stressing him out and many times he will not be on his game because he will have to change his mental set to umpiring with a partner to doing the game alone. Now there should be about 20 to 30 minutes left before the game, get dressed, take it easy, but make sure that by 10 to 15 minutes before the game, you are on the field! While you are getting dressed do not forget to use this time to discuss coverage and signs before the game with your partner. Communication between umpires is the most important part of umpiring in a 2-6-man crew. Being on the field before the game also gives a good impression to the coaches and shows them that you are early and ready for your game. If you take the game seriously the coaches will take you seriously.

### 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

Make sure that your meeting is done AT LEAST 5 minutes before the first pitch, and not while the players are warming up on the field. I usually like to do the meeting 10 to 15 minutes before the game, that way it's done and the players can begin to warm up at 5 minutes to game time so the first pitch is on the scheduled game time.

If you guys can prepare as such before a game, I can guarantee that more often than not you will be on your game! Which means all games, even the difficult ones, will go much easier than you have imagined.

Once again, I love hearing from you guys, questions or suggestions. Feel free to e-mail me at [arbitresbrossard@yahoo.ca](mailto:arbitresbrossard@yahoo.ca) anytime, and I will make sure to answer to all your questions as quickly as I can.

## Umpire Schools / Clinics

### Eastern Region - Bristol, Conn.

[eastregion@littleleague.org](mailto:eastregion@littleleague.org)

860-585-4730

Umpire Clinic – Feb 10 - 11

Umpire School - Mar 28 - Apr 3

Umpire School - Apr 25 - 29

Umpire School - Sept 19 - 23

### Central Region - Indianapolis, Ind.

[centralregion@littleleague.org](mailto:centralregion@littleleague.org)

317-897-6127

UIC Clinic – Feb 16-18

Rules Clinic - Mar 2 - 4

Basic Umpire Mechanics Clinic Mar 9 - 11

Umpire School - May 6 - 11

### Western Region - San Bernardino, Calif.

[westregion@littleleague.org](mailto:westregion@littleleague.org)

909-887-6444

Umpire School Week 1, Jan 13 - 19

Umpire School Week 2, Jan 20 - 26

Umpire Mechanics Clinic, Feb 9 - 11

Rules Clinics - Feb 10 - 11

Umpire Mechanics Clinic, Feb 23 - 25

Rules Clinics - Feb 24 - 25

Junior Umpire School, June 23 - 29

### Little League Baseball

Williamsport, Pa.

Umpire Clinic – Mar 31 - April 1

Umpire School – April 22 - 27

Umpire Clinic – Sept 15 - 16

**If you have a local clinic that you don't mind Umpires from other Districts attending, please forward them to me at [btaunton@littleleague.ca](mailto:btaunton@littleleague.ca) and I will include them in the upcoming issues.**

### 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

## Brain Teasers

1- The count on the batter is two balls and two strikes. The pitcher delivers ball three to the batter and the catcher throws the ball back to the pitcher. While the batter is adjusting his/her batting glove the pitcher toes the pitcher's plate and fires strike three. The manager of the offensive team argues that this is a quick return pitch and should not be allowed. The umpire rules in favour of the defence – strike three.

**True or False?**

2- The local Little League elects to use the continuous batting order in their Major divisions for the upcoming season. In the top of the third inning the visiting team has a player that becomes ill and must leave the game. In the top of the fifth inning, the player is feeling better and the visiting manager inserts the player back into the original spot in the batting order and the game continues. The home team manager protests and the umpire agrees that the player can't return.

**True or False?**

**Answers on the last page...**

## Expectations of a Coach..... By Al and Al



**The easiest way to predict whether a Little League team is going to have a positive and successful season is to listen to the expectations of the coach.**

Coaches, it is critical to set goals and expectations that are reachable and focused on the developing your players and the team.

When you are talking to your team be careful not to use “I” statements. Here are a few I have heard; *“I want to win the league this year.” ...or... “I have always had a winning season, and I expect you to give me another one.” ...or... “I expect you to win today and so do your parents...don’t let me down.” ...or... “I can’t believe you are not blowing these guys away today... you are embarrassing me out there.”*

You see, coaching a Little League team is not supposed to be about you. You can’t go out on the diamond to field a ball, pitch or step up to the plate to hit, so how can you get credit for a win? I have never seen wins and losses recorded next to a coach’s name in the league standings and I hope I never do. Winning and losing is what teams do and as you know there are so many things that influence the outcome of a game and most are completely out of your control.

The longer you coach the more you realize winning looks after itself, so just step up and support your team on game day and enjoy watching your players compete.

Here is how I set and shared my expectations with the Little League teams that I worked with:

First, you don’t have to tell your players that one of your goals is to win. The players already have that one covered, they want to win every game and the championship.

Each pre-season I would work with my assistant coaches and assess the talent and experience on our team. Then we would estimate the number of wins we believed the team could achieve during the season and set our expectations accordingly. Here are a couple of typical scenarios coaches will experience:

### **Scenario #1 - Setting expectations for a team with average talent and experience**

We have a look at the team and predict we should end up in the middle of the pack and win about eight games in a 16-game schedule. Knowing this, we would set expectations at a level we are pretty sure the team will reach. I would tell the players; “Given our experience...and how solid the other teams are in the league... “I am going to be excited and proud you guys when we win our fourth game”. If you pick a goal that is well within reach you take the pressure off the players. In this case your team will probably meet your goal of winning four games early in the season. When that happens, I let them know how excited I am and we have a little mid-season celebration. Of course you have bigger goals and so do the players (and their parents) but approaching team goals this way builds confidence and momentum early on and will likely spur them on to several more victories during the balance of the season.

### **Scenario #2 - Setting expectations for a team with lots of talent and experience**

The toughest team to coach, by far, is the team that is favored to win the league championship. I use the same approach and set expectations at a level that I know the team would reach. If I had a team with lots of experience, several of the best players in the league, with solid pitching and hitting I would set my expectations at winning eight games of a 16-game schedule. In this case we should be able to celebrate the eighth win as a team well before the end of the season and then go out and get more wins and build some momentum for the play-offs.

Over the years, I have learned, it is a big mistake to set expectations too high, especially when you think you have a great team. If the team performs below the coach's expectations everyone gets frustrated. The coach, players and parents and it is no fun for anyone. In Scenario #2, coaches often fall into the trap of saying things like; "This is our year to win the championship." Players interpret anything short of winning the championship as a total failure, and it shouldn't be. A team could go 16-0 and lose a close playoff game on an unlucky bounce or when they run into a hot team and they feel like losers. Going 17-1 is a tremendous year and goes way beyond the expectation of 8-8. Of course players are always disappointed when they lose but should be very proud of their accomplishment.

Coaches, remember players are very motivated to reach your expectations as long as they are within reach and at the same time are never limited by them.

Written by Al Price (for al and AL)

Al Herback and Al Price, authors and instructors of the Little League Education Program authored this coaching tip. The training materials they have put together include hundreds of drills, competitions and fun activities. They also include progressions to help you teach the fundamental skills and guidance on how to plan practices for all levels of play. Please go to [www.alandalbaseball.com](http://www.alandalbaseball.com) for more information on the complete program library and to order your own set of training materials. To date, thousands of leagues and over one million coaches, managers, players and parents have taken advantage of the training materials.

## Tools for Teaching and Talking in the Off-Season

*by Jim Thompson*  
**Positive Coaching Alliance**

In much of the United States, winter weather means no outdoor baseball. Although players still can work on their games at batting cages and other indoor facilities, let's face it, November through February means baseball downtime for most Little Leaguers.

That does not mean baseball must be forgotten. In fact, winter is the perfect opportunity to work on mental aspects of the game. Players are free from practices, which tend to focus on developing physical skills, and games, where reaction often overrides mental preparation, no matter how often you remind players to be aware of base running situations, the number of outs and the count.

Using the winter for "mental practice" prepares players for those situations in the coming season. More importantly, it encourages conversation among coaches and parents and their players, giving players a better chance to learn life lessons -- such as conversation skills and problem-solving abilities -- from baseball and softball.

To do this, pose a problem such as, "You're playing third base with runners on first and second and one out when a slow roller is hit down the third base line. What do you do?"

One correct answer would be, "See if I can get the runner going to third and if not, throw to first." Because there is more than one right answer, you can keep a dialogue going, improving the player's on-field IQ and conversation skills, while strengthening your bonds and keeping the player's love of the game stoked even through a long, cold winter.

Little League coaches can learn more about helping players reach their potential on and off the field by registering for the online Little League Double-Goal Coach™ course at [www.PositiveCoach.org/LittleLeague](http://www.PositiveCoach.org/LittleLeague).



## Here's the Pitch: Little League Volunteers Ask for Clarification of What Constitutes a Countable Pitch

**By Chris Downs, Media Relations Manager, Little League International**

WILLIAMSPORT, Pa. (Dec. 12, 2006) – When the Little League International Board of Directors voted in August to adopt the pitch count rule in place of the innings-pitched rule governing a baseball pitcher's eligibility, a recurring question from Little League managers and coaches has been: Under the pitch count rule, what is the definition of a countable pitch?

All of the current information on the pitch count can be found here: [http://www.littleleague.org/media/pitch\\_count\\_10-03-06.asp](http://www.littleleague.org/media/pitch_count_10-03-06.asp)

In the weeks since the announcement, Little League International has produced information and released perspectives from Little League volunteers designed to inform and educate local leagues on the rules that will be in place for the upcoming 2007 season. That effort will continue in the months ahead.

Last month, Nick Caringi, director of operations for Little League Baseball and Softball, was a guest on "Ask Little League," Little League's on-line chat series. Of the more than 275 questions submitted, Mr. Caringi fielded many queries about what defines a pitch.

The full transcript of Mr. Caringi's remarks can be found here: <http://www.littleleague.org/askll/06octsession.asp>

Responding to a question from Daniel, a vice president and player agent in a local league in New Castle, Ind., Mr. Caringi said, "(The rule defining a legal pitch) is the same as always. The definition of a pitch is Rule 2.0. It is a pitch delivered to a batter."

Other questions revolved around the difference between a pitch and a throw.

Willis, a local Little League president in South Harrison, N.J., wanted to know, "At the Junior, Senior and Big league levels, does a pick-off attempt count as a pitch?"

Mr. Caringi took the opportunity to answer related questions with his response, stating, "Pick-off attempts are not pitches, so they would not count. Also, warm-up pitches are not counted. Also not counted are the times a pitcher has to throw the ball to make a play (such as on a bunt the pitcher might field). The key is in the definition of a 'pitch,' located in Rule 2. It is defined as a, 'ball delivered to the batter by the pitcher.'"

The interpretation and execution of an intentional walk was addressed by Mr. Caringi in his response to a question from Alan, a District Administrator in Massillon, Ohio.

Mr. Caringi said, "When we released the text for the new pitch count regulation, it included a provision for intentional walks. You can see the regulation here: [http://www.littleleague.org/media/Rule\\_Changes\\_09-06.06.pdf](http://www.littleleague.org/media/Rule_Changes_09-06.06.pdf)."

Bill, an information officer in Pittsburg, Calif., asked, "If a manager decides to intentionally walk the batter after a pitch is thrown, may that batter be sent to first base with no further pitches being thrown?"

"The answer is no," Mr. Caringi said. "The only time a 'no-pitch' intentional walk can be granted is if it is indicated before a pitch is delivered to that batter."

Counting pitches thrown in a suspended game is also important to note as Mr. Caringi pointed out in a reply to a question from Lee, a local Little League coach in Black Rock, Conn.

"All the pitches count in such a game," Mr. Caringi said. "That has not changed, as the innings counted in such a game in previous years."

The only exception is when less than six outs have been played, and the game is re-started on a subsequent day, as explained to Manny, a district umpire consultant in Alexandria, Va., who asked, "Are the pitches counted, and is (the pitcher) required to observe one day's rest, if the pitches were delivered in innings that 'never happened?'" His examples were: A 12-year-old pitcher, who delivers 24 pitches in the top of the first inning before the game is called in the bottom of the first inning; or both opposing pitchers deliver pitches in the sixth inning, but then the outcome of the game reverts back to the end of the previous inning under Rule 4.11(d).

"First, pitches delivered in the first inning of a game that does not advance beyond that inning, will not be counted," Mr. Caringi said. "This is the same as in previous years, when that inning was not charged to that pitcher. In answer to the second question, (Little League International) treats it the same as previous years, i.e., the pitches do count in that situation."

Expectations are that under the new rule more emphasis will be placed on establishing a pitching rotation. Bob, a local Little League umpire in Coon Rapids, Minn., pointed out, "The pitch count rules for the 2007 regular season state a pitcher may throw 20 pitches and require no rest, yet for many years prior, 'one pitch constitutes an inning,' and would require a day of rest. This rule appears to allow a star pitcher to pitch every day, just not more than 20 pitches a day. Why the variance?"

"You are absolutely correct," Mr. Caringi said. "The reason it is different is that the experts (Little League International) consulted said that a low number of pitches does not require a full day of rest. Just because 'we've always done it that way,' does not mean we cannot change."

The 2007 tournament rules with reference to the pitch count are listed here: [http://www.littleleague.org/media/New\\_T\\_Rules\\_10-06.asp](http://www.littleleague.org/media/New_T_Rules_10-06.asp)

## Protecting Young Pitching Arms: The Little League Pitch Count Regulation Guide for Parents, Coaches, and League Officials is Now Available...

The new Little League publication "The Little League Pitch Count Regulation Guide For Parents, Coaches, and League Officials" is now available for downloading, free of charge, at [http://www.littleleague.org/media/pitch\\_count\\_publication.pdf](http://www.littleleague.org/media/pitch_count_publication.pdf)

Just click on the link to view it as a PDF file. The publication can be saved onto your computer, and can be printed at will for others in your league.

The publication includes great information on the best ways to implement the Pitch Count Regulation in your league, as well as tips on the care and conditioning of the pitching arm, sample forms, and much more.

Little League International wishes to thank the thousands of volunteers and hundreds of local Little Leagues that took part in the Pitch Count Pilot Program during the past two seasons. Your input helped make this publication possible!



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](mailto:Canada@littleleague.org).

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### Baseball Puzzle

Here are the answers to last months Baseball quiz...

1. Bill Veeck, Indians Owner (1946-50)
2. Bob Feller, Indians Pitcher (1936-1956)
3. Pete Rose, Reds/Phillies/Expos (1963-1986)
4. Carl Yastrzemski, Red Sox Outfielder (1961-83)
5. Ted Williams, Red Sox Outfielder (1939-60)
6. Sandy Koufax, Dodgers Pitcher (1955-66)
7. Tom Seaver, Mets/Reds/White Sox Pitcher (1967-83)
8. Jackie Robinson, Dodgers infielder (1947-56)
9. Reggie Jackson, A's/Orioles/Yankees/Angels Outfielder (1967-87)
10. Yogi Berra, Yankees/Mets Manager (1964, 1972-75, 1984-85) Did you get them right?

### And now, here is one for this month...enjoy!

1. Even though it isn't true, we've come to accept the legend that baseball was invented by \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_, New York in 1839.
2. The record, held by Lou Gehrig, for greatest number of consecutive games played, was broken in a 1995 game by \_\_\_\_\_ Jr.
3. How old is too old? Little League Baseball rules state that no player shall compete if he or she turns \_\_\_\_\_ years old before May 1st of the current year.
4. It's been called a dinger, a circuit blow, a four-bagger and a round-tripper, but most people just call it a \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The \_\_\_\_\_ earned the record of most home runs hit by one team with a total of 10,953!
6. Most home runs are hit during the month of \_\_\_\_\_.
7. In the very early days, baseball was called \_\_\_\_\_.
8. The only man to ever hit five home runs in a single World Series, three of them in the same game, was \_\_\_\_\_.
9. It's 315 feet from home and 37 feet high. It's the \_\_\_\_\_.
10. Can you remember these famous players nicknames? \_\_\_Dean, \_\_\_Keller, \_\_\_Reese, \_\_\_is Reggie Jackson, \_\_\_Medwick, \_\_\_Ruth

**The answers will be revealed in next months issue...thanks for playing**

## Answers to Brain Teasers

- 1- **False.** Rule 2.00 – Quick Return. Never, ever allow a pitcher to pitch when the batter is not alert and paying attention.
- 2- **False.** Rule 4.04. With a continuous batting order a player is in the lineup and is allowed to come back when available.

### Legal:

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