

7th Inning Stretch

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



April 1, 2006

Volume 2, Number 2

Play Ball!

That phrase is going to be heard officially in a Major League game starting tomorrow, and for some of you fairly soon as well. Welcome to another season, and another edition of the 7th Inning Stretch.

This month Andy O'Brien takes a look at volunteer umpires, training after you have had your clinic, and outfitting your umpires in his Blue's Corner column.

For the first time, Canada is playing host to two Little League Road Shows. The first of which occurred a week or so ago in B.C., and the second one next weekend in Ottawa.

In the coach's corner, an interesting article from AI and AI on teaching the young ones how to throw a baseball (a daunting task, to say the least).

I have included a listing of all the available Canadian and Provincial Championship sites and dates for this season. If anyone has confirmation of dates that are not listed, please feel free to forward them to me, as well as any official websites set up for your tournaments.

Need help in setting up a successful practice? A few tips from AI and AI on how to do that.

And to end the newsletter this month, a letter from Little League Canada President, Joe Shea, about Little League Canada's National Volunteer week coming up later this month. It takes a huge number of volunteers to keep a League running, and I tip my hat to all of you who take even 1 hour a year to help out your local Leagues.

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

If there is anything you would like to see added to the newsletter, please forward it to me for inclusion...all entries are welcome!

See you all next month.

Bob Taunton, DA ON D7

Play Ball!

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Blue's Corner by Andy O'Brien

Welcome to the April edition of The Blue's Corner! In this edition we'll discuss volunteer umpires, training after the clinic, and outfitting your local crew.

Lend a Hand and Volunteer Umpire

This is quite possibly the most forgotten aspect of all Little League volunteers. Generally, volunteers play common roles in organizations. Dedicated volunteers fill positions in coaching and on the league executive. However, a role quite often overlooked, is that of the volunteer umpire. Why not? We have volunteers operating the rest of the league. Unfortunately, in Canada we have so many other local baseball and softball associations that pay premium rates for umpires. Although this makes recruiting volunteer umpires more difficult, it does not make the task impossible. After all, most provinces have requirements for secondary school students completing community service hours. What better way to earn those hours than volunteering at a local Little League? Contact your local high school to find out more.

Although outsourcing your volunteer umpire work may not be best for your league, look at other options. Every league has a division with ball players older than the one under it (if that makes any sense). For example, Junior League players could arbitrate Little League Majors games. Little League Majors players could arbitrate in the Minor Division, and so forth. A properly trained Little League volunteer will easily be able to complete the tasks of a paid individual.

At any rate, it should be the goal of all leagues to recruit and utilize as many volunteer umpires as possible. For more ideas, check out Andy Konyar's article called, "Where are all the Volunteer Umpires?" You can find this article, and many other volunteer programs at www.LittleLeague.org.

Post-Clinic Training

Each spring every league hosts a clinic. We try and cram as much information as possible in as little time as possible. Young umpires won't grasp all of the information, but we close our eyes and hope for the best. All in all, there is no substitute for game experience. Some viable options open to leagues are on-field mentoring programs in the pre-season, continuous evaluations, and an umpire-buddy system. I have briefly explained each program below.

On-field mentoring is a newer concept. It involves a senior or more experienced umpire working with a less experienced umpire. The mentor is on the field to shadow the young official and correct any mechanical and positional mistakes the individual may make on the bases. The mentor is not supposed to overrule decisions made by the inexperienced umpire, but is on the field to assist the umpire in the beginning.

Continuous Evaluations are a sure fire way to track each umpire's improvements throughout the season. Evaluations also ensure that umpires are able to correct mistakes they may be making on the field. At any rate, it should be the goal of every league to initiate some kind of written evaluation program. Perhaps you can download a sample form online, and implicate appropriate evaluation categories for your own league. I would suggest evaluating each umpire at least three times per season (preferably: 2 plate and 1 base).

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



The **Umpire-Buddy** system may be difficult for some associations. It requires the utilization of senior umpires (preferably with four or more seasons experience). Each senior umpire is assigned to work with a small group of junior umpires throughout the season (approximately 3 or 4). The inexperienced umpires develop a relationship with their “buddy” and are not afraid to ask questions or to go to for help. It is preferable that the new umpire and the umpire buddy work their first few games of the season together. If you have a small group of senior umpires and a larger group of junior umpires, this can be tricky. If you can make this work, the umpire-buddy system is a really great program

Umpire Uniforms

Its time to outfit your local group of umpires! Be sure to purchase quality equipment and uniforms to ensure they will last longer. By purchasing cheap attire, you are ensuring that you will be making the same investment year after year. Check out www.Honigs-Canada.com for some creative ideas.

Stump The Ump:

Minor and Major only: Bases loaded. One out. R3 leads off. BR hits a beautiful infield line drive. He beats out the throw to first. All runners advance one base successfully. **What's the call blue?**

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**

Little League Road Show Comes To Canada

WILLIAMSPORT, Pa. – Furthering its commitment to help each chartered program become the best it can be, Little League Baseball and Softball will be teaming with local volunteer administrators again this year to bring the education and support of the “Little League Road Show” to a community near you.

“The Little League Road Show is a local league administration clinic, with an available umpire clinic component, that allows volunteers to have direct access to the resources that can help make their leagues become more organized and operate better,” said Joe Losch, vice president of operations for Little League International. “Last year’s Little League Road Show was a success on so many levels as it enabled us to take the program to the volunteers.”

The Road Show clinics revolve around the presentation of “A Year in the Life of Hometown Little League,” in which the workings of a fictional league are followed throughout an entire year. “Hometown” will again be the focal point of the Road Show in most cities. This format provide local league administrators an opportunity to review the latest information on Little League rules, equipment, and programs, while creating a forum to speak directly to Little League staff members

Coquitlam, British Columbia, Canada – March 25, 2006

This event has already been completed.

Ottawa, Ontario, Canada – April 8, 2006

On April 8, 2006, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, Districts 2 and 6 will host a Little League Road Show at Travelodge Hotel and Convention Centre Ottawa West, 1376 Carling Avenue. There is no charge for this event. Lunch is up to each individual. For additional information, or to register, contact Jim Dean, Ontario District 2 Administrator, at: 613-794-5134; or jimdean@littleleague.ca.

Little League Baseball World Series Fences Moving Back 20 Feet

WILLIAMSPORT, Pa. (March 27, 2006) – Doubles and triples should be more plentiful at the Little League Baseball World Series, as the outfield fences at Howard J. Lamade Stadium and Little League Volunteer Stadium are moving back 20 feet.

Construction began last week, by the Little League maintenance department, at the two stadiums in South Williamsport where the annual tournament for 11-12-year-old Little Leaguers is played. The project is expected to be completed in July. The 60th Little League Baseball World Series will be played Aug. 18-27.

The distance from home plate to all points at the fence at Lamade Stadium was 200 feet from its construction in 1959 until 1996, when it was moved to 205 feet. From 1947 until 1958, the Little League Baseball World Series was played at Original Field in Williamsport, where the distance varied, but was less than 200 feet.

The distance from home plate to all points at the Volunteer Stadium fence has been 205 feet since it was built in 2001.

“While home run production has remained fairly constant over the last several years, we have noticed there are few doubles and triples in the Little League Baseball World Series,” said Joseph W. Losch, senior vice president of Little League Baseball and Softball and director of the Little League International Tournament. “By the time teams get to the World Series, they are extremely talented, particularly on defense. This move, while probably decreasing home run production by a small fraction, will increase the possibilities for other extra-base hits.”

Over the past 20 years in the Little League Baseball World Series, a total of 571 home runs have been hit -- about one home run in every 26 at-bats. During that same period, only 36 triples (one in every 406 at-bats) and 502 doubles (one every 29 at-bats) have been hit.

With the fences 20 feet farther back, outfielders will have more territory to cover, and will have longer throws from the warning track to the infield. This should result in more doubles and triples.

By comparison, none of the 30 current Major League Baseball franchises have hit more home runs than doubles in their entire histories.

Batting Statistics – Little League Baseball World Series – 1986 to 2005 (20 years)

Games 322

At-bats 14,617

Hits 3,798 (11.8 per game; one in every 3.85 at-bats; .260 batting average)

Singles 2,689 (8.35 per game; one in every 5.09 at-bats)

Doubles 502 (1.56 per game; one in every 29 at-bats)

Triples 36 (.11 per game; one in every 406 at-bats)

Home runs 571 (1.77 per game; one in every 26 at-bats)

“Bubba Throwing” – A Fantastic Way to Teach Players 5-8 Years Old How to Throw!

Volume 2, Number 2

By Al Herback and Al Price

Taken From “The Coach’s Box”, a Little League Publication

Throwing is by far the most important skill to develop in baseball or softball. We need to find a fun and effective way to teach throwing at this age level.

- Before we move right into the throwing technique, it is important to recognize the special attributes players this age bring to the ball diamond. These impact how we introduce and practice the skill.
- Players this age learn by doing, not by listening. This means that you should not have them sit down or stand around while you attempt to teach them something. Instead, get them going and use verbal cues while they are doing the activity.
- Players this age don’t like to wait their turn. If you organize them into lines and they have to wait around before they finally get to throw, or catch, hit or run they become bored and lose interest.
- Remember, in most cases they have not yet developed the most basic skills. So some of the more traditional approaches, drills and activities that we use with players that are 9 to 12 just don’t work very well.



How do you get players 5 to 8 years old to throw the ball 40 to 50 times in 15 minutes with decent technique without having to wait their turn? The activity needs to be fun and we need to organize the activity so there is no fear for players to hit a little buddy in the face with a thrown ball.

Most coaches fall into the trap of getting players to partner up and play catch. Al and Al call this the “pitch-duck-and run” drill because that is what happens. Playing catch is a great way to practice throwing and catching once players actually know how to throw and catch.

Why not create a fun throwing activity that looks similar to the way golfers are organized at a golf driving range. Give each player an ice cream bucket full of balls. Place five or six old tennis balls, a couple of whiffle balls and 1-2 regulation balls in each bucket.

Then take the lids to the buckets and print the first name of each of your players on it. Line up the buckets and matching lids down the right field line.

On your cue, direct the players to pick up a ball from their bucket and practice throwing to the open field. When all the buckets are empty, the coach has the players hustle out to gather up a bucket full of balls and return to their lid for another round of Bubba Throwing.

[Click here](#) to view a short video clip taken from the Throwing chapter of the al and Al Getting Started DVD.

It’s lots of fun; players have their own station so there is no standing around waiting their turn. Coaches, this is a great way to have your players practice the correct arm action and the second step of a two-step throw.

Break tradition and give “Bubba Throwing” a try, you will be amazed at the results.

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. To date, thousands of leagues and over 1 million coaches, managers, players and parents have taken advantage of the training materials.





Little League Canada Provincial And National Championships

Here is a current list of all the Provincial and Canadian Little League Championship sites and dates. I will add this info and update it every month until the tournaments are completed.

Little League (Major) Division:

World Series: August 18 to 27, 2006 Williamsport, Pennsylvania

Canadian Championships: August 5 to 12, 2006 Vancouver, B.C.

Provincial Championships:

Atlantic Division: St. John, NB

Quebec Division: Montreal / Rouyn

Ontario Division: Windsor

Prairie Division: Regina

B.C. Division: Vancouver

Junior Division:

World Series: August 13 to 19, 2006 Taylor, Michigan

Canadian Championships: August 3 to 10, 2006 Lethbridge, AB

Provincial Championships:

Atlantic Division: St. John, NB

Quebec Division: Montreal

Ontario Division: Cornwall

Prairie Division: Calgary

B.C. Division: Vancouver

Senior Division:

World Series: August 13 to 19, 2006 Bangor, Maine

Canadian Championships: August 3 to 10, 2006 Sydney Mines, NS

Provincial Championships:

Atlantic Division: Nova Scotia

Quebec Division: Montreal

Ontario Division: Thunder Bay

Prairie Division: Calgary

B.C. Division: BC District 3

Big League Division:

World Series: July 29 to August 5, 2006 Easley, South Carolina

Canadian Championships: July 20 to 26, 2006 Brossard, QC

Provincial Championships:

Atlantic Division: N/A

Quebec Division: Montreal

Ontario Division: Thunder Bay

Prairie Division: Edmonton

B.C. Division: Vancouver

Little League (Major) Softball Division:

World Series: August 10 to 17, 2006 Portland, Oregon

Junior Softball Division:

World Series: August 13 to 19, 2006 Kirkland, Washington

Senior Softball Division:

World Series: August 6 to 12, 2006 Lower Sussex, Delaware

Big League Softball Division:

World Series: August 14 to 19, 2006 Kalamazoo, Michigan

Canadian Championships for all above: Not Confirmed

What Are The Steps to A Successful Practice? - by AI and AI

Fun Practice Plan Checklist:

- Have a plan
- Get to the field 20-30 minutes before the start time so you can spend individual time with players that arrive early
- Start the practice on time with a short meeting and share your plan with the team
- Run before you stretch
- Warm-up before every practice
- Introduce a new skill in a progression oriented way
- Incorporate the "Throwing and Catching Long-Toss Drill" into every practice
- Break down into small manageable groups...more repetitions per player
- Teach one skill a practice and do it in 15 minutes or less
- Review the skill you taught in the previous practice
- Use high activity drills to provide the repetitions players need to improve their skills
- Keep hitting practice to 25 minutes or less in every practice
- Build in fun games and competitions into every practice
- Use stations to keep the lines short and the activity high
- Close your practice with a fun competition that involves everyone on the team
- Finish with a team meeting to review of the skill taught and provide positive feedback to the players
- Finish the practice on time

From "The Coach's Box", a Little League Publication



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 baseball game the batter comes to bat with a bat marked "Softball". The defensive manager protests to the umpire that the bat is illegal. The umpire allows the bat to be used because it is only 2 1/4 inches in diameter and only 32 inches long.

True or False?

Monthly Baseball Funny

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A little boy was overheard talking to himself as he strutted through the backyard, wearing his baseball cap and toting a ball and bat:

"I'm the greatest hitter in the world," he announced.

Then, he tossed the ball into the air, swung at it, and missed.

"Strike One!" he yelled. Undaunted, he picked up the ball and said again,

"I'm the greatest hitter in the world!"

He tossed the ball into the air. When it came down he swung again and missed.

"Strike Two!" he cried.

The boy then paused a moment to examine his bat and ball carefully.

He spit on his hands and rubbed them together. He straightened his cap and said once more,

"I'm the greatest hitter in the world!"

Again he tossed the ball up in the air and swung at it. He missed.

"Strike Three!"

"Wow!" he exclaimed. "I'm the greatest pitcher in the world."

Stump The Ump – Answer

The run (R3) does not count. Nothing happens to him, he just disappears. As he cannot return to a previous occupied base due to the batter's infield single, he simply disappears. This is the famous Little League "poof" rule.

Brain Teaser Answer

False. Rule 1.10 only allows a baseball bat in a baseball game and a softball bat in a softball game.

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Little League Baseball Canada



National Volunteer Week

April 23rd -29th, 2006

National Volunteer Week is an annual celebration of the spirit and energy of Canadian Volunteers. This week also raises awareness of the vital contribution volunteers make to our communities and to the identity and values of our country.

The strength of the Little League program lies in our adult volunteers and the success of our organization is dependent on those volunteers that willingly give time and effort to serve in their area on behalf of Little League.

Little League Canada works hard to provide volunteers meaningful volunteer opportunities, a safe supportive environment, a clear understanding of what is expected of them, so to all the Little League Canada Volunteers I would like to extend a warm thank you for your hard work, endless hours and dedication to the Little League family.

"Have a great season!"

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Shea".

Joe Shea
President, Little League Canada