

# Practices

## Youth(T-Ball – Age 14)

### Reminders

- Youth coaches are the backbone of a program.
- Some kids are only there because their parents signed them up. Coach them, but don't get frustrated and understand they may not want to be there.

### Positivity – Keep things positive and uplifting. (Research shows this is effective)

- Most kids stop playing a sport because it's not fun for them anymore. This comes back to coaching.
- Fun > Competition especially in this age range.
- Use positive reinforcement.
- Use rewards rather than punishment. (More of their favorite drills/less of their least favorite as a reward) or (More of their least favorite as a "punishment")
- Running is used to get better not as a punishment (use wall sits or planks if need be at higher levels). We don't want kids dreading running or sprints.
- Don't talk down to them.
- Equal playing time.
- Everyone should pitch.
- Everyone should play in the infield and the outfield.
- Incorporate a game/competition into practice once a week.

### Plan – Develop a plan, not just for every practice, but for the year.

- Use your yearly plan to decide your individual practice plan.
- Have a focus for each practice (Fielding, hitting, base-running, situationals, etc.)
- Hit every day. Have a short batting practice routine(fielding or base-running days) and a long one(hitting heavy practices).
- Have a warmup, throwing, and infield/outfield routine involved in every practice as well.
- Your plan and your goals depend on the age of the players.
- T-Ball = Very basic. Throwing, swinging, ground balls, fly balls, running to the right bases, getting the ball into the infield.
- Bunting, bunt defense, stealing, delayed stealing, 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> situations(offense and defense) come into play when players start pitching.

### Efficiency – No idle time, no standing around.

- Practices should be 60-90 minutes. Longer practices as the kids get older.
- T-Ball = 60 minutes. Practices should be over 75 minutes until age 9/10.
- Keep things moving.
- Allocate specific times for warmups/drills.
- If you have 10 minutes for a drill, move on after 10 minutes. If they haven't picked up on it you'll revisit it in another practice anyways.
- Use 2-4 stations and groups of 3-5 kids if possible. Rotate, and repeat.

## **Drills/Skills**

- Warmups – same as pregame. CONSISTENCY. Importance. Familiarity, routine. Throw. Hit every day
- Cut offs
- 1st and 3rd situations - offense and defense
- Bunting situations - offense and defense
- PFP - Pitchers covering first, backing up bases, throwing to bases, pick-offs
- Base-running - run through first, setting up and rounding bases, stealing (straight and delayed), sliding, tagging up, situational
- Fly ball priority
- Footwork on fly balls - drop steps, C circle turn, feet position on catch, catch with 2 hands, Crow hops, blocking the sun
- Throwing motion - throwing drills - quick feet/hands, hip turns, hand on top of ball, over top, etc.
- Ground balls - footwork, hands out front, attack ball, two-hands, double-plays, underhand feeds, barehands
- Tagging
- Hitting stations - tee work, soft toss(hi/low), front toss, heavy bat, wiffle balls, tennis balls, live
- Situational hitting - moving the runner, getting the run in(sac flies), hit and run
- Bunting – sac, drag, push
- Hitting the count, 2 strike approach, going the other way
- Pitching - mental aspect, pitch counts, pitch selection, mechanics
- Catching drills - blocking, footwork, throws to bases, receiving

## **Mock Practice Plan A**

### **Hitting Heavy**

15 minutes - Warmup: Jog, stretch, catch.

15 minutes – Short Infield/outfield routine. Infield: 2 Groundballs-throw to 1<sup>st</sup> each, 1 DP each, 1 Home-1<sup>st</sup> each. Outfield: Flyballs, 2 throw to 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, Home.

45 minutes - Long Hitting Routine. 4 Stations: T, soft toss, tennis/wiffle, live. Players partner up(8 hitting, the rest in the field/shagging) and rotate. Live: 2 bunts, 7-5-3-2-1 swings. 10-20 swings at each other station.

10 minutes – Bunting. Barrel above the knob, don't jab, start at top of the strike zone, move knees to get down etc.

5 minutes – Recap practice.

## **Mock Practice Plan B**

### **Fielding Heavy**

15 minutes - Warmup: Jog, stretch, catch.

30 minutes – long infield/outfield routine. Infield: 5 GB Throw to 1<sup>st</sup>, 3 DP, 1 home-1<sup>st</sup>. Outfield: Flyballs: 5 Throw to second, 3 to 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2 to Home.

10 minutes – Cutoff relay drill

10 minutes – 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> defense

10 minutes – bunt defense

15 minutes – short hitting routine. Soft Toss and Live. 20 soft toss, 2 bunts, 15 minutes - Warmup: Jog, stretch, catch.