



Berlin Youth Baseball – Defensive Lineup Tips

Goal of this document: This document is intended to give some general guidance on how to create a successful defensive lineup for your team.

Pitcher: At nearly all of the youth age levels, you DO NOT need the fastest pitcher. What you need to be a successful team is have NO WALKS. Thus you need to find the pitcher that can consistently deliver strikes, no wild pitches, no walks, and will force the other team to make contact with the ball.

Catcher: At nearly all of the youth age levels, you DO NOT need a catcher with a strong arm who can throw out runners. What you need is a catcher who can BLOCK THE BALL, who is not afraid of a foul tip, who does not turn their head or close their eyes. You need a player who blocks the ball, keeps it in front, and allows no wild pitches. You also need to make sure your catcher has stamina and hustle, they can't start getting tired, and they need to hustle back to the fence to retrieve a past ball every time as fast as possible.

First Base: First base is arguably the most important position because at most youth age levels, this is the person that will get you the outs. You can expect your infielders to field the ball and make some wild throws. You need a first baseman that knows how to catch the ball, regardless of how good or bad the throw is.

Outfield: In most of the younger youth age levels, you may have really good players that want to play the outfield (probably because they see their idol professional players playing outfield). But at these younger age levels, depending on the team you're playing, it can sometimes be pretty rare for balls to actually reach the outfield. Thus it's usually more advantageous to put your best players in the infield, to ensure you have somebody that can field and get the guaranteed groundball outs. Thus sometimes you have to make that tough call of telling your best player they cannot play outfield, and put the weaker players in the outfield. It's not a bad philosophy to have, at the very young ages, that if the other team hits it all the way to the outfield they deserve a hit and thus you're not expecting the outfielder to catch it but only to retrieve it and return it to the infield. If you do have excess good defensive players, you should put your player best able to catch high flyballs in left center as that is where most of the balls will likely go if they are power hits from the other team.

Right Field: Right field in many older leagues is many times one of the weaker players, but in young youth leagues right field deserves a special call-out, because you need a player that isn't necessarily a great fielder, but is a very good listener, and a player who is always paying attention and into the game. The reason being, is that the right-fielder becomes a critical player, as they must back-up every throw to first base. If the first baseman misses a throw, you want to have chosen a right-fielder that you know will be racing to pick up that ball every single time.

Shortstop: Shortstop is generally where most balls are going to get hit in a young youth baseball game, thus you want your best groundball fielder at this position who also makes very routine consistent good throws to first base. This player also needs to be smart and understand baseball rules as they will need to go out and be a cutoff, as well as start double plays and know the difference between tag outs and force outs.

Second baseman: In older leagues and the major leagues, many times the second baseman is the weakest player (except perhaps right field), but you do not want that to be the case in young youth baseball. At the young ages, it is much more likely that a ball will get hit to second base than it will to the outfield, so you will want most times weaker players in the outfield, and have a really strong fielder at second base so that you are certain you'll get those guaranteed groundball outs when the other team hits them.

Third Baseman: Third base is a tough position in most young youth leagues because the throw is so far and the runner has a lot of time thus to get to first base and beat it out. Thus third base is perhaps less important in many cases and you may be able to get away with putting a weak fielder, who can't always catch, but perhaps has a super strong arm so that on the chance they field it cleanly they could potentially still get the runner out.