

Chapter 2 Putting the Teams Together...

Each division of baseball and softball is assigned a Player Agent. **Player Agents are board members who are the manager's contact person with regard to your specific division.** A current list of these members can be accessed at the East Orange Little League website, www.eoll.org. Regardless of your needs, unless you're specifically instructed to contact another individual, **your division's player agent should always be your first line of communication.** Be sure to take note of your player agent's contact information and keep it convenient should you need assistance.

T-Ball, Coach Pitch, Rookies and Minors Divisions

In the fall and spring season T-Ball and Coach Pitch teams are assembled by the league. Each division of softball or baseball is assigned a Player Agent. Because the teams are manually assembled by the Player Agent, the league can only consider requests made by managers for specific coaching partners, as long as the coaches also make those requests. This should be done during registration, or for genuine transportation hardships. Additionally, those wanting to help coach must also complete the proper volunteer paperwork during the registration period.

Majors, Juniors and Seniors Divisions

In the fall seasons, these divisions are assembled by your Player Agent. Because the teams are manually assembled by the Player Agent, the league can honor requests made by managers for specific coaches, as long as the coaches also make those requests. This should be done during registration. Additionally, those wanting to help coach must also complete the proper volunteer paperwork during the registration period.

In the spring season, the Major and above divisions are assembled with a Draft or Selection process. Every child is required to attend a player evaluation if not already assigned to a majors spring team the previous year. Player evaluations are usually held on a scheduled Saturday, approximately one week after the final registration day. In addition, there is a makeup or alternate player evaluation night scheduled during the week to accommodate anyone with a schedule conflict.

East Orange League officials will run various "stages" of the player evaluation. **The kids are organized in "like age" groups.** For example: nine year olds tryout together, ten year olds are evaluated together etc., etc. Each player has an identification number posted on the back of their shirt to help you distinguish them.

Be sure to arrive at the field early. You will want to check in and pick up the evaluation roster that the league provides you to rank and rate the players.

Each kid will demonstrate and/or participate in the following skills:

- Sprint for time (60' Rookies, Minors, Majors) (90' Juniors, Seniors)
- Hitting (Pitching machine or soft toss)
- Fielding/Throwing (infield/outfield)
- Pitching (Includes players who have previously pitched during a season at EOLL, as well as those interested in demonstrating their abilities)

It is MANDATORY that every available player attend a player evaluation. Only those players will be eligible for the selection process. All other players will be required to submit a waiver to the board and must be approved to be eligible to play.

You will notice that each manager has a unique approach to the player evaluation. **The basic objective of the selection process is to identify players that reflect your style and approach to the game, within the guidelines and rules of Little League ®.**

You should bring pencils and a clip board or another portable surface on which to write. Wear something comfortable. Some managers bring fold up chairs while others move around the field. **Give a little thought to how you are going to rank and rate players in the various skills.** Some managers use letter grades A, B, C, D etc. Some assign point values. Some use neither of these. Utilize what works for you.

The drills have a tendency to move quickly, so having a game plan coming into the tryout may be advantageous to you. There are no tricks to this process. You have to attend the tryouts and pay close attention. Some players will undoubtedly stand out. The vast majority of the players are of equal or average ability. You cannot overcome another manager's experience of having managed in the league for several seasons. Watch the player evaluations with an open mind because the 'stand out' players are far and few between and they get selected quickly. **The goal is to get a nucleus of teachable talent.** Arm strength and throwing mechanics are considered critical qualities by many managers. As you gain experience, you will find that teaching a child how to throw properly and/or developing arm strength is a slow process. It's certainly not impossible; however, it requires a little more time than other skills. **If you identify players with decent throwing mechanics and arm strength, you will also have an advantage when it comes to developing pitchers.**

Save your player evaluation sheets to reference them at the draft / selection meeting. Again, you will see a variety of approaches to this step. Some managers compile their collected data into a variety of formats, charts and lists. Some managers use the evaluation sheet as is. You will come to realize, there is more than one way to do all of this.

Ultimately, you want your process to make sense to you.

Managing and Understanding the Draft/Selection Process Majors, Juniors & Seniors Divisions

The selection process is hosted by your Player Agent. Take the time to get to know your player agent and utilize him/her as a resource. **Remember, player agents, board members, site directors and umpires are all volunteers just like you.** Each plays an intricate role in the function of our league. Treat each of these people as you would like to be treated.

With the exception of the Major division, all other managers will draw numbers from a hat to determine selection order. Major division managers will select based on previous year records picking in reverse order of finish.

For the Major division the selection process begins with the team that had the worst record the previous year and proceeds in reverse order of finish to the first place team in both baseball and softball. Since we have two divisions at EOLL (American and National) in baseball we alternate picks by division with the American picking first in odd numbered years (2009) and the National picking first in even numbered years (2010). For example, in 2010 the draft order is based on the finish from 2009. The 2010 selection order will be National 6th place, American 6th

place, National 5th place, American 5th place ... National 1st place, and American 1st place. The draft order in all rounds is the same sequence as the 1st round. Each team picks until they have a full compliment of 12 players. Once a team reaches 12 players, they are skipped in subsequent rounds. Once all teams have 12 players, the draft is complete. All 12 year olds in the draft pool **MUST** be selected. All players from the draft pool that were not selected are assigned to minor teams.

In the major draft, you must notify the player agent in advance of the draft in writing or e-mail of your intention to select your own child. The round your child must be selected by is outlined in the operating manual and is dependent on their league age. The operating manual also addresses picking siblings.

For the Junior and Senior divisions the selection process begins with the manager that draws the first pick and proceeds incrementally upward until the last manager has made their first pick. This completes the first round. At the conclusion of each round, the selection order is reversed. For example, in a ten team selection, the manager making the first selection will have the 1st and 20th picks in the first two rounds. This is known as the serpentine selection process.

Your own child will automatically be assigned to your team. You do not need to bear the burden of losing your own child to another team. If you have more than one child in the same division, you will have to use your first selection on the second child etc.

If you have a specific person you plan to use as a coach and they have a child in the selection pool, you must use a draft pick to secure that child on your team. You will be advised by your Player Agent to select the corresponding player with your first selection.

When consulting experienced managers in our league, **most agree that pitching is the primary focus.** As a point of strategy, you may want to have a desired number of kids who have pitching experience or are able to pitch. Many believe "good pitching beats good hitting any day". **Identifying strong arms in the tryout is imperative as experienced pitchers will be selected continuously until they are all gone.** This may be the very reason that a lot of manager's children are pitchers.

Each manager will assume a reasonable risk with regard to position experience. The tryouts will not reveal what position each kid can or has played. You may find that most kids who can pitch are usually the better athletes on the team and can be utilized in a number of different defensive assignments.

Some managers look for the kids that can throw the ball well. They believe that throwing well demonstrates a strong sense of athleticism and they believe they can teach the other areas of skill.

Truthfully, the division you are managing will dictate a bell curve of ability that you will find easy to distinguish once the evaluation process begins. **Trust your instincts, organize your desires and have fun with the process. Remember the "Big Picture": youth development and fundamentals.** It is a process of steps. The type of development will be dependent on the division. For example, in minors and below in both softball and baseball, players are learning the basics of the game and the fundamentals. From there, once they move up to majors, it is more about their ability and the competition of the game. At the conclusion of the process your Player Agent will collect your evaluation sheets and any notes you may have used to assist your decisions. **It is critical that drafting order is not shared with any parents and/or players. Draft order is insignificant once the players are on the field.** Children's feelings are on the line, so keep your process and order to yourself.

Now that the selection process has ended, you will receive your team roster. The roster will contain contact information for the parents of the kids you just selected. Kids and parents are usually aware of the selection night date and will be expecting a call from you. **Please contact them within 24 hours to let them know the news and introduce yourself.**

Be prepared for a list of questions. At a minimum, parents will want to know the following information:

- What is our team name and colors?
- When do we practice and where?
- What does my player need to bring to practice?
- When is the first game?
- Who else is on the team and who are the other coaches?

In the event a parent asks you anything about the selection order, you should inform them it is a league policy to keep that information confidential for the benefit of each child's self esteem. You should dispose of your selection list at the conclusion of your session to protect yourself and the kids of unnecessary hurt feelings.