

Chapter 5 Play Ball! It's Game Time!

Managing the games involves dual responsibilities.

1. Logistical responsibilities (pre-game)
2. Game elements

Pre-Game Things to Do

1. Home team managers are responsible for the following items:
 - a. Providing a plate umpire
 - b. Lining the field
 - c. Getting two (2) game balls from the Snack Shack
 - d. Keeping the "official" score book
 - e. Providing four (4) copies of your lineup card. (The opposing team, the official scorekeeper, and the umpire will need a copy. The fourth copy is for you.)
2. Visiting team managers are responsible for the following items:
 - a. Providing a base umpire
 - b. Providing four (4) copies of your lineup card. (The opposing team, the official scorekeeper, and the umpire will need a copy. The fourth copy is for you.)

Next Up, Umpires

First, you will receive a contact list of umpires from the League's Umpire in Chief. (U.I.C for short.) **Use this list to contact umpires via e-mail or phone to secure officials.** Review your parent's volunteer interest form to see if one of your parents is willing to call games. Umpires need to know the time of your game and the field number. Some managers choose to book umpires one game at a time while others put their entire schedule out in a group email and wait to see who agrees to pick up the games. Meeting a few umpires is a very effective way to secure officials. Another great way to get officials and learn the game backwards and forwards is to become an official yourself. **Trading umpire duties with another manager who is an umpire is very effective, especially in the rookie and minor divisions.**

The coordination of umpire coverage is managed via an online database that can be accessed through the following website: http://sports.groups.yahoo.com/group/eoll_umpire/

In the rookie and minor divisions your players are developing and learning the game. In these divisions, most of the umpires you will encounter are also developing and learning as well. Work with them to make it a positive experience so they want to come back and call another game for you in the future. Please make sure your parents are aware of this as well.

Lining The Field

In the dugout, you will find a chalk wagon and batter's box template. The template is an aluminum frame that lies over home plate and a batter's box frame hinges to either side of the plate. If you lay the template down, walk around the box template so that it leaves a slight impression in the clay. Lift off the template and use the chalk wagon to drop your lines following the impressions. To do the opposite box, you will need to flip the template over and repeat the process. Be sure to use the proper template. Sixty (60) foot baseball uses a 3 foot by 6 foot template. Ninety (90) foot baseball uses a 4 foot by 6 foot template. Softball uses a 3 foot by 7 foot template, with 4 feet forward of home plate and 3 feet behind home plate.

Foul lines are applied by following the previous lines already existing. If there are not lines existing, there is string and spikes in the "Snack Shack" that you can use to create lines from the plate to the bases.

Game Balls and Official Scorebooks

Game balls and the official scorebooks are located in the Snack Shack. Ask a worker for the appropriate ball size. The scorebooks are located in a file holder on the wall by the back door. Each book is clearly marked with a field number, so be sure to get the book with the appropriate field number for your game. Obviously, you will need a scorekeeper to manage this responsibility. **If you are the home team, having a scorekeeper is mandatory.** Every game has an official score book and it is used by the league as well as the umpires. Visiting managers do not have to keep a book, but it is recommended. You will find that it is easy to lose track of innings, score, pitch counts, playing time etc., during the game. Having a scorekeeper gives you a resource that you will use repeatedly.

Lineup Cards

You will need to provide a lineup card. You can find carbon copy lineup cards at most sports stores or you may choose to make your own. Be prepared to offer the opposing team and the plate umpire a copy of your line up. Be sure to denote pitching eligibility. List the kid's last names and the positions you intend them to play. Experienced managers have their lineup cards done prior to arriving at the field. It is a good idea to develop a game plan with regard to substitutions, pitching eligibility and batting order before you get to the park. It is easier to make a last second edit to your plan at the field than it is to create a plan on the spot. An organized manager is a less stressful manager. **When you have multiple games in a week, it is wise to have line ups and game plans done for the entire week.**

Assistant Coaches

It is a good idea to delegate some of your pre-game duties to your assistant coaches. You have a lot on your plate as it is, and if you try to do all of this by yourself, you will be stressed out before the first pitch. In addition, go over your game plan with your assistant coaches. Get their input. Make sure each coach knows what you expect of them during the game.

Who is coaching bases? Who is managing the dugout? Do they know the substitution plan? Review signals or pre-determined strategies for coaching bases. One manager stated, "I believe a well organized manager is a confident manager. That confidence transfers to their players, just as hectic, frantic and stressed coach transfers the same to his players". You may want to solicit alternate coaches in the event one of your designated bench coaches cannot make a game.

As a gesture of good sportsmanship, a visiting manager may want to see if the home team needs any help with setting up the field. Remember, everyone is a volunteer parent just like you.

You may want to set up a post game snack rotation with your parents. At the conclusion of your game it is customary to have parents take turns providing a drink and a snack, more commonly for the younger teams. This may be a task that you ask your Team Parent to handle for you.

Game Elements

As the manager, you will need to insure that the following items are in accordance with Little League rules and regulations and the East Orange Little League ground rules:

1. All equipment is in proper working order.
2. Each player has removed any and all jewelry with the exception of a medic alert bracelet or necklace. These items should be covered with tape or a sweat band for safety.
3. Kids are properly outfitted in their uniforms.
4. **There is always one adult in the dugout with the kids at all times** (remember, ANYONE in contact with the kids is required to fill out and turn in volunteer application forms.) No exceptions.
5. There are no more than three adults in the dugout at any given time.
6. All kids play in accordance with the Little League® minimum play rules.
7. Pitchers are eligible based on the pitching guidelines of the applicable division rules.

Reviewing the rule book and making yourself familiar with the rules and regulations is one of your most important tasks on your manager plate. The rule book outlines everything you need to know about Little League games. Good managers are familiar with the rules...GREAT managers study them intently.

It is important to point out a few game items that require a heightened sense of awareness.

1. Poor sportsmanship displayed by your players, coaches or parents are your responsibility. You should cover these expectations in your parent letter.
2. Ridiculing, attacking or intimidating umpires is not tolerated. Any violation of this rule is strictly enforced. Be sure to remind your players and parents to keep negative comments to themselves.
3. If you want to question a rule or call, ask the umpire for "time" and approach the officials with class and make your concerns known. Any attempt to publicly berate the officials will be met with strict disciplinary action not excluding an ejection and termination of your managerial duties.

In short, keep the games in perspective. It's an activity for kids to have fun and develop athletic skills, self-esteem and self efficacy. Your attitude towards the competitive nature of sports will be reflected upon your team and anything less than positive is not tolerated. Contrary to popular consensus; **you can coach competitive play AND be positive.**

And don't forget...

1. It is up to you to make sure that your substitutions are in accordance with the rules of Little League.
2. It is up to all managers to be aware of time limits and run rules.
3. It is up to you to make sure your kids are hustling in and out of the dugouts in between innings.

Sportsmanship may be the most valuable component that you pass on to your team.

Teaching the kids to see their opponents as members of their community first, and opposition second, is a suggested rule of thumb. The same applies to managers, coaches and umpires. Remember, your actions are being interpreted and validated by your team. They will look to you as a barometer on how to handle winning and losing. When the game is completed, each team

will line up their players at first or third base (depending on which dugout you are in) and the teams will walk across the diamond and congratulate each other for a game well played.

Some managers have their kids "thank the blue" once they have finished congratulating the other team. Quite honestly, more managers should apply this technique.

Post Game Items

At the conclusion of your game, **make sure the kids pick up their gear and clean the dugouts.** All trash and equipment must be removed quickly so the next game can begin on time. Make it a habit to have your team wait for you outside the dugout in an area that allows the next team to move in efficiently. **Also be sure your parents and fans clean up after themselves as well.**

Gather the kids together and give them recognition with regard to the game. Some managers like to give a "game ball" to an outstanding player or a player that got their first hit etc. If multiple game balls are warranted, do it. You do not have to physically give them a ball. It's an opportunity to make the kids feel great, so be sure to praise in public and criticize in private. **Anything that needs criticism can certainly wait until the next practice.** Teammates should never criticize each other, nor should your parents. Keep an eye on the chemistry of your club and address the team and parents as you deem necessary.

In conclusion, every person involved in our great league is a volunteer just like you.

The umpires, other coaches, scorekeepers, Snack Shack workers, Board members, site directors are all people donating their time and effort to the benefit of our community. When we put that in perspective, it is easy to take a step back and appreciate the power and history of Little League as well as the game itself. Honor the kids, honor the game and the horror stories of Little League will dissipate. When anyone puts themselves above the game, we bring a huge disservice to the very reason why any of us got involved in this activity. Use good judgment and common sense. Ask for help when you need it. Find a mentor. Seek out an experienced manager that appeals to you and find out what works for them and see if it helps you achieve your goals.