

Welcome to East Orange Little League

This East Orange Little League manual has been assembled for the purpose of assisting and informing new managers and coaches, as well as serving as a reminder for the seasoned coaches of the following:

- Manager? What Does that Mean?
- How the Teams are Put Together
- Welcome to the Team – Communication with your parents
- Inherent obligations and responsibilities
- Parents, umpires and league officials
- Primary goals and philosophical approach
- Wrapping up your season
- Coaching resources

The Board of Directors is acutely aware of the amount of time and effort that is required of our managers. **The manager is the primary volunteer that inherits the responsibility of providing our kids with the type of experience each child is entitled to.** Our league does not function without the dedicated men and women who graciously take on this position. Your efforts are greatly appreciated by the administration, parents and children.

Chapter 1 Before You Get Started...

Being a manager will require a few things to get you started and official. **First, you MUST complete the volunteer form for East Orange Little League as soon as possible.** This form is available online, as well as at the in-person registration days. It will require a copy of your driver's license be submitted along with it. The form, once completed in the spring, is good through the fall season as well.

Secondly, all managers are required to join as a Little League member – a nominal membership fee of \$1 is necessary, but this membership gives you opportunity to be a voting member of the league. Again, this membership is good from spring to spring.

Most importantly, you will have 12 pairs of eyes on you at all times, and watching every move you make. Your attitude toward Little League -- winning, losing, umpires, parents, etc. is contagious, so be a good advocate for youth sports and set a good example at all times for your players.

What's In It For You?

Managing a team can be a life changing experience for you AND for your players. Watching children grow and develop self esteem is extremely motivating. Using the "vehicle" of youth sports to teach determination, athletic involvement, perseverance, self control, preparation and a sense of community awareness are valuable tools that will build fine young men and women of the future. **You will have a direct influence on children and their development as human beings.**

Your own child will gain a new perspective of the depth of your commitments and be able to recall these most cherished times together for future use with their own children.

Winning and losing are very much a part of the game that you manage; however, they are a fraction of the "little picture" many people seem to find so attractive. When you embrace the challenge of developing young people (the "Big Picture"), you will find a feeling of accomplishment so deep and empowering that it stays with you forever. In a world of misplaced values and character, YOU will be making a real difference.

Please use the proceeding pages as a guidepost to team management. **Each manager is unique in style, priorities, strategies and temperament.** Be sure to consider the following information as you develop your identity as a youth advocate.

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.

Chapter 3 Got My Team – Now What?

Once these teams are assembled you will receive a team roster and contact list along with blank medical release forms for each player. **You must have ALL players' parents complete these forms and you must keep the medical release forms with your team at all times in the event a player gets hurt and needs medical attention.** Emergency services cannot assist a child without them.

When you get your team roster, you're ready to start contacting your players!

Hello? I'd Like to Introduce Myself...

When you begin calling your team members, it might be helpful to have a "cue" card in front of you, along with the team roster before you make your calls. **Be prepared for parents to ask a variety of questions.** They are excited and interested and want to know everything right away -- What color socks and belt do they need? What color pants? What do they wear at practice? **First year players come with first year parents. Be prepared to tell them where they can purchase pants and equipment.** See the Coaches Resources section for information.

It is important to be patient with the parents. We are all proud of our kids. It is very easy and common for parents to want to "talk up" their kid's ability and desires. It is also common for them to "talk out" their fears and/or previous bad experiences. Just remind them that you are looking out for their child's best interests and you will do all you can to assist them in getting comfortable with the new experience.

Giving the parents an opportunity to briefly express themselves to you is a great way to make an important first impression. Anything you can do to convey an organized and caring attitude will go a long way towards a positive season regardless of wins and losses.

Use this first phone call as a tool to get "inside" information that you may want to know about your team. Have a short list of questions that you may want to ask. For example: What position has your child played in previous seasons? Keep in mind, the practice field will tell you all you need to know; however, the inquiry about a child's previous team experience, alternate sport interests and/or outside interests are a welcome sign that you care. All parents want their kids to have a great experience. **Having an organized and inviting disposition is the best "bad parent experience" repellent you can employ.**

Remember, you have just become each parent's only means of communication with regard to expectations and valued information. **This is a great opportunity to confirm the information you have been given on your roster.** You can double-check email addresses, or inquire about the neighborhood they live in, which may be a great way to help parents plan car pools.

Ask to speak to the child. Introduce yourself. Let them know that you are genuinely excited for their presence and participation. They will appreciate the gesture. Most kids have an initial sense of anxiety about being accepted and you can alleviate that anxiety by showing excitement about their presence on the team. It is a proven way to begin building trust with each child. **Seasoned managers all know that trust is a crucial element to building a positive experience.**

You may want to use the first call as a means to convey information that you feel is important to the team. In your parent letter or email you will cover the need for snack shack volunteers, or scorekeepers, etc. but you can certainly use this opportunity to let your parents know you are counting on them and hoping they can help out as a volunteer. **The league will give you a Snack Shack assignment in your manager's packet, as well as score keeper and umpire clinics – please share this ASAP with your parents.**

If a parent on your roster has checked off “coach” or “assistant coach” you may want to find out their availability and sincerity of interest. It is a good idea to meet and evaluate coaches at the first couple of practices before making a commitment to use someone you don't know very well. Being honest up front will make this process a lot more tolerable and it will give you the time you need to find a good fit for your personal compatibility needs. **In any event, anyone who intends on coaching at games or practice is required to fill out all of the volunteer applications required by the league.** If they do not have their applications on file with the league, you will not be allowed to let them participate.

Finally, let them know that you will be emailing them a “parent letter” that will give them outlined details of how you intend on running the team, what you expect of the players, what you expect of the parents and what they can expect of you. Be sure to verify the best means of communication with them and be sure to advise them the best way they can communicate with you.

If you find yourself “trapped” in a diatribe of conversation over specific details, make them aware that the Parent Letter will cover all of their concerns and remind them (politely) that you have 12 more teammates to call.

The Parent Letter

A parent letter is one of the most valued tools you can use to communicate the details of your expectations of the players, parents and what they can expect of you.

Take the time and craft a letter that introduces yourself and what you want them to know about you as a person. This is a great time to remind them that you are **a parent volunteering your time.** Let them know what your expectations are with regard to attendance, effort, playing time, position assignments and competitive philosophy.

This is a great opportunity to lay down ground rules with regard to appropriate times to ask you questions and how. For example, you may want to let them know that during games you are not available to discuss playing time, batting orders, position assignments or anything of that nature. You may want to ask them to give you a 24 hour “cool down” period following games so you can digest the results and evaluations of the game before you can be approached with concerns.

You can let them know that you value their child's experience; however, it is in the context of the team's best interest. (Not to be confused with win at all cost) **In the minor divisions and below, the league approaches the season as instructional. It is all of our jobs to do the best we can with regard to player development and giving a fair distribution of playing time.**

If you plan on using practice attendance and effort as a barometer for playing time or starting games, your parent letter should articulate your plan. As the season progresses, you may find some parents inherently lose sight of your goals. With a solid parent letter, you can kindly refer them back to the letter.

There is a great website: www.qcbaseball.com. This site is a coaching resource center, free of charge. The site has a downloadable parent letter that you are given permission to use if you decide it fits your style and intentions. At the very least, you can use the letter as a model to build your own personal letter.

The best news is your letter can be recycled and/or retooled season after season.

In the brief amount of time it will take you to articulate this information in a letter form, you will be saving yourself a lot of trouble once the season begins. In addition, your parents will again be impressed with your ability to communicate.

In addition, copies of the **Parent Code of Conduct** are included with this handbook and can act as a tool to remind the parents that this great game of baseball is just that – a game – and that all of our behavior should reflect that. With code of conduct commitments from our managers, coaches and parents, we all work together using Little League as a vehicle to teach sportsmanship, in a fun yet competitive environment.

Finally, think like a parent. What do parents want? They want to know what to expect. When you run your team without communicating intentions or boundaries, you are enabling the perceptions of parents, good or bad. **When collecting input for this project, numerous managers recommended the parent letter as a key document that nurtures a positive environment.**

A Manager's Checklist

1. Get player roster from player agent
2. Call parents and players
 - a. Introduce yourself to both
 - b. Confirm their personal contact information and preference of communication
 - c. Share any information you have in regards to practice times
 - d. Baseball players need gray pants; softball players need black pants
 - e. **As manager, you will need to collect the shirt sizes for your players by the league's deadline as posted on the website.**
3. Got coaches/assistant coaches yet?
4. Status of paperwork
 - a. Have you completed your volunteer application paperwork?
 - b. Have you read and signed your manager code of conduct?
 - c. Have your coaches read and signed the code of conduct as well?
 - d. Did you pay your \$1 fee to join as a Little League member? (necessary for managers)
 - e. Do you have a signed medical release for all players (blanks are included in this handbook)? This must accompany you at ALL practices and games.
 - f. All parents must sign a Parent Code of Conduct (included in this handbook)
 - g. Your coaches must have completed their volunteer application paperwork.
5. Equipment
 - a. An equipment bag is made available to each manager, which includes this manager's handbook. A deposit is needed and held until the return of both the bag and this handbook. These are available at the manager's meetings.
6. Preparing for practices
 - a. Have you scheduled your practice times through your player agent or another designated league official?
 - b. If you have practices scheduled for Waterford or Eastwood communities, each player must have a completed liability waiver form on file. These can be downloaded from the EOLL web site, www.eoll.org, and must be completed PRIOR to practices on those fields. It's best to have these ready for signatures when parents attend the first practice. Please keep those with you during all practices at those facilities.
7. Write your parent letter
 - a. Introduce yourself and tell them about you
 - b. Let them know your expectations in regards to attendance, effort, playing time, position assignments and competitive philosophy.
 - c. Lay down ground rules
 - d. Great website for an example parent letter, www.qcbaseball.com. Use it as is or make it your own style.
8. Things to be thinking about...
 - a. You'll need a team parent (this could be a mom OR dad).
 - b. You'll need scorekeepers
 - c. Umpires
 - d. Will you have post game snacks and drinks?
 - e. Communicating your teams snack shack dates/times and recruiting volunteers

A Few More "Team Keeping" Items... Practice Fields

You will need to secure a practice field and time. In the spring season it's a little more challenging because baseball and/or softball games are being played every night of the week (with the exception of Sunday) at the Bithlo complex. As our league continues to grow, it may require you to be creative. There are batting cages at the Bithlo complex that you can take advantage of and there are wide open grass fields in several of our surrounding communities.

Avalon Park is a neighborhood with baseball fields. Contact the HOA representatives to get in touch with the person in charge of scheduling. The Eastwood, Waterford Lakes, and Wedgefield communities have baseball fields that are scheduled by East Orange Little League and those fields will be assigned at the manager's meeting.

There will be fields available for practice on Sundays at Bithlo. In order to secure one of those fields you will need to contact the league and make a request. One of the benefits of taking on the manager role is the ability to choose the practice times and days around your schedule.

Manager Meetings and Trainings

You will be required to attend a few mandatory meetings to maintain your manager status. The league has coach training sessions, equipment pick up, a safety meeting, uniform distribution, and game schedule distribution as meeting agenda items. The league makes every effort to value everyone's time. The meetings and training sessions are vital to the infrastructure of our league. Most meetings are held prior to the season opener and multiple topics are combined to make the most out of the time you are asked to donate. In the big picture, the Little League experience requires each manager to be a special member of the community. Any time children are involved, extra preparations must be taken to insure each manager is fully aware of their responsibilities.

When you pick up your equipment, be prepared to leave a \$75 deposit check with the equipment manager. The league holds your check without depositing it and will return the check at the end of the season when you return your equipment and manager handbook.

Volunteer Support

When you receive your roster, you will notice that each parent has checked off duties for which they may be willing to volunteer. This information will be very valuable to the quality of your season. **You will need to identify at least two other parents to be assistant coaches. You will need a parent to volunteer for the role of scorekeeper.**

You will be assigned one or two "Snack Shack" shifts, each approximately three hours long. You will need to recruit three (3) parents or volunteers age 13 or older to work these shifts. As you can see, our entire league is run by volunteers. As the manager, you are responsible for assigning, delegating or recruiting the parents of your club to fill these roles.

With a positive, organized approach you will find that a majority of parents are more than willing to step up and assist you. Please be confident that every effort is placed into avoiding scheduling your team's snack shack duty during your team's games.

Another option parents can offer to volunteer for is Team Parent (mom or dad). This is almost always a parent that has previous little league experience. A team parent can assist you with any items you feel you need help. For example, you can ask your team parent to take ownership of uniforms, post game snacks, end of the season party etc., etc.

Uniforms

Each player is provided a team jersey and hat/visor for softball. Pants, socks and belts are the players' responsibility. **All baseball players are required to wear gray baseball pants, while all softball players must wear black pants. The pants may NOT have colored piping on the seams or pinstripes.** Most local sports stores have these in stock.

Managers will be responsible for getting uniform shirt sizes for each player on their team and reporting it to the uniform coordinator by the mandatory date provided on the league's website. If the manager fails to submit the team's uniform sizes by the deadline, the uniform sizes will be based on size averages for the age group of players.

There are also numerous website stores available to parents. www.baseballexpress.com is an enormous online store that has everything you could ever dream of needing for baseball and/or softball.

With regard to socks and belts, as manager, you will choose the colors of these items. A lot of veteran managers have suggested purchasing all of the socks and belts together and collecting the money from individuals once they arrive. This insures that each child has the correct apparel. It is always a good idea to get this information out to your parents immediately and get these items ordered and purchased.

Safety

You will receive blank medical release forms to be completed for each player on your team. **It is critical that you have these forms with you at all times.** In the event that a child is hurt during practice or a game and needs medical attention, these forms are required before any medical treatment can be given. Keeping them in this manager handbook or another team folder is a great idea.

On opening day, Board of Directors will be visiting each team manager prior to your game to insure all players have a signed medical waiver. Players without a completed medical waiver will be unable to play until one is completed and entered in the manager's handbook.

You can also add to this notebook contact information, practice/game schedules, practice plans or anything you find relevant to your team. **You will be issued a medical kit with your equipment bag. This kit must be with you at all practices and games as well. Any injury, no matter how significant must be reported and documented by the league.** Injury report forms are included in this handbook, or you can pick them up from the Snack Shack at the Bithlo complex. You will learn about all of your safety requirements at the Team Safety meeting.

Chapter 4 Let's Hit the Fields...Practice Made Fun

Managers that have consistent success almost always operate with a practice plan. A literal road map that accounts for every minute of your practice. Most practice sessions run approximately 1 to 1½ hours in length. When you budget your time in an organized fashion, you will find that this formula works very well. Plan your work and work your plan.

A practice plan will aide you in communicating how other parents and coaches can assist you during your practice. Lots of parents want to help. They are counting on you to ask for assistance. Making a few extra copies of your plan to pass out will help keep your assisting parents on the same page as you. Jot down a few details about the drills you are using and how they should run. It is impossible to coach every kid, every minute of the practice by yourself. The parents that are willing to help with practice are certainly capable of facilitating a drill. The success rate of that drill will increase when you empower them with an explanation of implementation.

It is a good idea to inform your parents that your kids should arrive to the practice field at least 15 minutes early. Some coaches take advantage of a kid's natural desires to participate in batting practice as leverage to get them to practice early. The child who arrives at practice first is the first player to take the much desired swings in the hitting session. As in all things, you may implement what works for you. You will find the more you manage the easier it becomes to develop methods of motivation. **Of course, positive motivation is the only acceptable means.**

Warm Them Up!

Your practices should start with a warm up. Basic stretches and running are necessary to avoid injuries. When you attend the coach's clinic, you will be given a variety of stretches that are sure to achieve maximum protection.

Warming up their arms is a logical starting point once their bodies are stretched out. As a matter of expectation, you may be surprised at the number of players who need attention with regard to proper throwing technique. In general, the majority of players, especially T-Ball through Minor divisions, need numerous repetitions of basic concepts such as throwing.

In addition, it may relieve you to come to this conclusion. Some of the more notable concerns for new managers are thinking they have to teach multiple advanced strategy concepts and plays. In all actuality, the teams that play with fundamentally sound technique will rise up as the stronger teams in terms of game play. In other words, structure your practices around the development of the basics.

Using Stations To Keep Players Involved

As a parent, you are well versed in the area of a child's attention span. **It's much shorter than you may want it to be.** As much as you will want these kids to be "ball players" they are still kids. Developing a practice structure that keeps as many kids involved at one time is crucial. One way to accomplish this task is to set up stations.

For example: If you have a team of 15 players, you can set up three, five player stations. Station 1 may be fielding grounders. Station 2 may be working on catching fly balls and station 3 may be working on base running. The idea is simple. In a thirty minute period all 15 kids can

get 10 minutes of training in three different aspects of the game. With a group of five players, each kid will get more repetitions in a group of five than he would in a group of 15. While that may seem obvious, a lot of new managers do not implement this.

A Little Fun Competition – Individuals and Team

Another great device to captivate the player's attention is to make your drills a mini competition. For example: Each time a player successfully fields a grounder, they score one point and each time they make a successful throw to first base they score an additional point. Throughout the duration of the drill, have each kid keep track of their own scores. At the end of the session the player with the most points gets to count out ten pushups for the remaining players in their group. Using pushups or other conditioning elements is good for the kids and it will surely motivate intense concentration.

A portion of your practice may include team drills. Having nine players take the field while a coach hits the ball around is a time proven benefit. **Remember, anytime you can involve all of your players in the drills, you will maintain interest and effort from your entire club.** Using the additional players as base runners is an example of how to keep the other kids involved in this particular scenario.

Be sure to develop the depth of your team by rotating between the kids you identify as starters and non-starters. It is inevitable that a starter will miss a game. Don't get caught off guard by avoiding the development of ALL your players.

Batter Up!

Batting practice is the "pac man" of time. It will gobble up minutes very quickly. Time management is crucial in this area. First, there are many ways to structure batting practice. You may choose to have a coach pitch to the kids. You may choose to use a pitching machine. You may choose to have them hit off of a tee. Again, there are numerous ways to accomplish this skill. Regardless of choice, you will need to budget the time of each kid's plate appearance. Some managers predetermine the number of balls each kid will get. Other managers predetermine the amount of time each kid will have. The goal is to get every kid an equal opportunity to work on this skill.

After polling experienced managers, **many of them use a formulated rotation to achieve the maximum involvement during batting practice.** For example: Two players are designated batters, nine players are designated to defensive positions and the remaining players are either base runners, getting a drink or taking warm up swings with another coach. **Again, keeping everyone involved throughout the practice is the objective.**

Another great suggestion is to have a couple of ball buckets. You can find 5 gallon buckets at the local hardware chains or use discarded laundry soap buckets. If you hit grounders to your defense and you have the kids throw to first base, keep an empty bucket by first base. The first baseman can discard the thrown ball into the bucket instead of making another throw home. It might not sound like much, but this technique can save a ton of time and increase the momentum of a practice.

Even though you identify things to work on, you must remain flexible for things like wet practice fields, players not showing up on time or not at all, drills that are not working well or drills that take too long. It is much easier to edit your practice plan in the event you have a personnel issue and/or weather than it is to create a plan on the spot. **An organized manager is a less stressful manager.**

Conditioning For Everyone

Some managers like to save the last 5 minutes of practice for conditioning drills. At the coach's clinic, you will be offered a multitude of conditioning drills that you can alternate from practice to practice that will assist in getting the kids in better physical shape.

Wrapping It Up

Be sure to budget yourself a few extra minutes at the end of your practice to have a wrap up discussion. Any information that you may need to convey to your parents or players needs to be a part of your plan. Another factor of importance with regard to parents is ending your practice on time. Parents appreciate it. You will benefit from this gesture when it comes time to solicit volunteers.

Finally, the conclusion of practice begins a cyclical process of evaluating what works well in your plan and how the players responded. Retool your plan until you settle into a groove. Keep your practice plans and refer to the ones that work best.

If you want honest feedback... ask the kids! What is your favorite drill? What is your least favorite drill? Did you have fun? Did you learn anything?

Kids respond to structure. They light up when you ask them for input. It builds trust. When you ask them for input, it builds trust. **When you earn their trust you will surely earn their parent's trust and that can only improve your overall experience and effectiveness as a manager.**

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.

Chapter 6 End of the Season: Time for Celebration

At the conclusion of your season it is time to celebrate. Regardless of records, the kids, parents, coaches and you deserve a team party. **Each child, manager and two assistant coaches will receive a trophy provided by the league.** Your trophies will be delivered to your dugout following your final game and your last league obligation will be to turn in your equipment, along with this handbook, and collect your equipment deposit.

Having a team party is a great way to get together one last time and enjoy the journey of a season completed and a super assignment for the team parent to coordinate. Teams celebrate in many ways: some hold pool parties, ice cream parties, team BBQs, pot luck dinners etc. The idea is to gather and appreciate the progress everyone has made and to take advantage of this golden opportunity to make each child feel special and valued.

Some managers create their own additional awards for their teams. For example: you could create certificate awards for "Slugger of the Year", "Most Improved Defense", "Outstanding Sportsmanship" and such. Take the time to thank each player individually and mention something memorable about that player's season -- their areas of improvement, a great play, sweet hit etc., as they receive their awards. When you see the smiles on their faces, you will have finally answered the question: What's in it for me?

Regardless of what you choose to do, this is the moment that the real rewards for your hard work and extreme dedication are fully realized. Be sure to allow yourself the joy of seeing your team enjoy each other's company. You started as a list of names on a piece of paper and became a team or more sentimentally a baseball family.

Keep in mind, statistically; the probability of any kid becoming a professional baseball player is not likely. Not impossible, but unlikely. The probability of these kids growing up and coaching their own kids is significantly higher. Give them a great role model to refer to when it's their turn to contribute.

In the end, wins and losses will be quickly forgotten. The friendships, fun times and personal development will last a lifetime.

When the party ends, there will be a moment when the washing machines seem to slow down, the last bit of clay is vacuumed out of your car and an intense feeling of deep satisfaction settles in.

Great job coach! See you next season.

Chapter 7 Resources

This section is intended to provide you some insight to the many resources that are available to you with regard to Little League and coaching.

Internet

If you enter "Little League, coaching, free" in any search engine, the number of free resources is endless. There are literally, thousands and thousands of website that contain a wealth of information. Here is a short list of sites that you can surf directly.

www.littleleague.org

www.qubaseball.com

www.m-pactsports.com

www.coachescornerusa.com

www.youthbaseballcoaching.com

eteamz.active.com/llbsouth/handouts/

Books

Positive Coaching by Jim Thompson

The Double Goal Coach by Jim Thompson

Managing Little League Baseball by Ned McIntosh

Little League Drills and Strategies by Ned McIntosh

Baseball for Dummies by Joe Morgan

Coaching the Mental Game by H.A. Dorfman

Coaching Youth Baseball by John P. McCarthy Jr.

Baseball Skills & Drills by American Baseball Coaches Association

Equipment and Accessories

www.baseballexpress.com

www.sportsauthority.com

www.baseballoutlet.com