

New Look for Lake Leota Little League

Summer will be here soon and with it baseball will be resuming action at Lake Leota Park. Each summer over 300 eager baseball players ages 4-12 come together to take part in what is known as "America's Game." This year baseball at Lake Leota is going to have a couple of slight revisions. The changes are in place to help facilitate the development of our future all-stars as well as to help grow and improve the city Program. Our new City program is going to be divided into three developmental levels: T-ball being the introductory level, Coach Pitch 1 is the beginning baseball level, and Player/Coach Pitch 2 is the advanced baseball level.

T-ball

The T-ball level is meant as the introductory level for young athletes to learn the game of baseball. The Evansville T-ball Program will be a non-competitive, non-threatening atmosphere in which fundamental skills and understanding of the game is emphasized over winning and losing. Coaches will be encouraged to be ambassadors of the game, teach a general knowledge of the game of baseball and above all else model good sportsmanship. T-ball will have a time limit or each player will go through the batting order twice. Defensively coaches will not allow "piling on" of fielders, and emphasis will be on positions and their proper names to encourage proper throwing, fielding, and catching mechanics.

Offensively Coaches will try to emphasize how to hold a bat and how to stand in order to swing. Coaches will not be expected to teach the "swing" at this level, just "swing hard." Every player will bat each inning; there will be a minimum of two innings. Coaches will have their team line up at the end of the game to shake hands.

Key Points to T-ball

- ✓ A pre-season coaching clinic will be scheduled to help coaches teach basic hitting, pitching and fielding mechanics.
- ✓ Emphasis is on fun and sportsmanship first and foremost
- ✓ Kids have glove on correct hand and are attempting to throw the ball to first base
- ✓ Coach is in the field with players coaching introducing positions
- ✓ No "piling on" ballplayers start to learn an idea of playing an area or position
- ✓ All players will bat holding the bat correctly (hands together, feet shoulder width apart, knees slightly bent, knocking knuckles lined up)

American League - Coach Pitch 1

Coach Pitch 1 is the introduction to a pitched ball by a pitcher. Defensively the emphasis again is on fundamentals such as throwing and catching mechanics but there will start to be more of an emphasis on learning positions. Athletes will learn each position and their responsibilities and coaches

will introduce the defensive “ready stance.” A catcher will also be introduced at this level but will not be expected to throw the ball back to the coach pitch, instead putting them in a bucket.

Base running will also be an emphasis on watching the base coaches, knowing that it is ok to run through first base and when it is okay to take the extra base.

Offensively coaches will again emphasize how to hold the bat and how to “measure up” or where to stand in relevance to the plate. There will be more of an emphasis on the swing and staying balanced through the swing, finishing the swing all the way through contact and not throwing the bat after contact.

Key Points to Coach Pitch 1

- ✓ A pre-season coaching clinic will be scheduled to help coaches teach basic hitting, pitching and fielding mechanics.
- ✓ Umpire or Park official will be provided to pitch to both teams unless the Coach is comfortable pitching to their own players.
- ✓ Coach Pitch 1 allows the flexibility to adjust the velocity of the pitch to the player’s level of ability.
- ✓ After 6 swings a hitting tee will be set up in order for the player to focus on the ball and successfully hit the ball.
- ✓ All players will bat once through the lineup each inning
- ✓ Bases will be cleared each time the defense gets three outs.

National League – Player/Coach Pitch 2

Coach Pitch 2 is made up of a wide variety of talent and ability levels from age 8-12. Coach Pitch 2 is designed to develop skills and give all players an opportunity to play the game. It will be the gateway to bridge the gap to the more competitive traveling baseball that starts at age 9 with the B.Y.E. (Baseball Youth of Evansville). B.Y.E practices and games will not interfere with the city baseball program, and all 9 year old baseball players including traveling players are encouraged to join the city program. The more ball players that are involved at this level the better the program can become.

Good sportsmanship and player development will be a priority over wins and losses but scores will be kept. Pitching and catching will be the big emphasis at this level, but there will be some flexibility according to ability level by team. Ideally each team will have player pitchers that can throw strikes consistently and coaches will be able to develop pitchers by the end of the year. Early in the year the official or umpire will be on site to take over pitching duties if the player pitching is struggling. Catchers will be required to catch the ball and throw it back to the pitcher between pitches.

This is a change as we transition from a pitching machine to live pitching. Change will be minimal the first year of the program but will be noticed on the second and third levels and be part of an ongoing improvement process for the betterment of baseball in Evansville and to facilitate an easier transition to ball players that choose to join the B.Y.E traveling program that starts at the 9 year old level.

The 8 year old players will outnumber the other age levels as there is not a traveling program at this age group. Players older than 8 will be dispersed as evenly as possible throughout Coach Pitch 2 to ensure equity in the league. Pitchers competing in the traveling league will not pitch in the city program as it is designed as a developmental league.

Key Points to Coach Pitch 2

- ✓ A pre-season coaching clinic will be scheduled to help coaches teach basic hitting, pitching and fielding mechanics.
- ✓ Catchers and pitching will be an emphasis at this level
- ✓ 12 year olds will not be allowed to pitch to 8 year olds.
- ✓ Coaches are encouraged but not required to have players show up at least 45 minutes before games in order to practice or have separate practice during the week.
- ✓ Pre-game practice should consist of fielding, pitching and a session in the Batting cage with soft toss outside the cage.
- ✓ Teach Sportsmanship & development over winning and losing. Scores will be kept but have fun and learn baseball teach by example.
- ✓ Balls and strikes will be called (with some flexibility). Batters will receive three swinging strikes and balls within the strike zone. NO WALKS will be issued.
- ✓ Teams may play two innings at a time to save time (clear bases after three outs)
- ✓ With the emphasis on fundamentals and development week one may look very different than the end of the season. We must have flexibility within our guidelines.

Conclusion

Baseball is known as America's Game, and it has a long and storied tradition at Lake Leota Park. Evansville baseball is currently going through a transition in its City league and will need volunteer coaches to ensure that baseball will exist for years to come at the younger levels. It is our mission to have a competitive "in house" program for all players 12 and under. In order to accomplish this goal we will need players and coaches at the ages of 9 -12. One of the greatest rewards in life is to be able to coach a little league team and give back to your community. Parents your involvement is critical to the success of this transition be it as a volunteer coach or as a good sport in the stands or at home.

Signups for the city baseball league will be daily at City Hall through May 6 and also at the Fieldhouse on Friday, April 26 during the week of the young child starting at 5:30 P.M. If there are any question comments concerns regarding rules and set up of these levels you are encouraged to email Michael Maves at coachmaves1973@gmail.com or Dan Wietecha at dan.wietecha@ci.evansville.wi.gov.