

# **RIVER FALLS YOUTH BASEBALL ORGANIZATION**

## **10/11 LEAGUE SKILLS/PHILOSOPHIES TO BE TAUGHT**

### **I. 10/11 LEAGUE PHILOSOPHY (TO HAVE FUN AND PREPARE KIDS FOR 12/13 LEAGUE)**

- A. Learn: baseball skills in organized, safe, FUN environment; sportsmanship and teamwork
- B. Instructional, NOT COMPETITIVE! Game scores/standings are not kept; skill emphasis
- C. The most BASIC concepts (positions, bases, strike zone, etc.) will be taught at this level
- D. Equal playing time for ALL players; rotate batting order each game, rotate most positions
- E. Pitching – managers and coaches will use good judgment re: who pitches and who doesn't

### **II. TEACHING “THE BIG 3” FUNDAMENTALS (THROWING, CATCHING, FIELDING)**

- A. Throwing the Ball (Season End Goal: Kids Should Improve Throwing & Proper Mechanics)
  - 1. Learn the “proper throwing steps”: (1) Pop; (2) Crow hop; (3) “T”; (4) Throw; (5) Finish
  - 2. Emphasize balance, and the “power position”; always get kids on the “balls of their feet”
  - 3. Emphasize that throwing is done with LEGS! Teach crow hop, moving forward to throw
  - 4. Emphasize OVERHAND throwing motion! Do NOT let kids drop down sidearm
- B. Catching the Ball (Season End Goal: Kids Should be able to Track and Catch the Ball Better)
  - 1. Learn the “proper catching steps”: (1) See where ball is going; (2) Move to ball, get nose to ball; (3) Be in power position, get SQUARE to ball; (4) Extend both arms to ball; (5) Catch ball with TWO hands, teach pinkies or thumbs; (6) look ball in, with “soft hands”
  - 2. Emphasize balance, and the “power position”; always get kids on the “balls of their feet”
  - 3. Emphasize that catching is also done with LEGS! Teach moving to the ball, nose to ball!
  - 4. Emphasize aggressiveness during the catching steps; try to overcome kids fear of the ball
- C. Fielding the Ball (Season End Goal: Kids Should be able to Move into Position to Field Ball)
  - 1. Ready positions-all players; athletic position, knees bent, balls of feet, butt down, balance
  - 2. Learn the “proper fielding steps”: (1) See where ball is going; (2) Move to ball, get nose to ball; (3) Be in power position, get SQUARE to ball; (4) Extend both arms to ball; (5) Field ball with TWO hands, teach pinkies or thumbs; (6) look ball in, with “soft hands”
  - 3. Emphasize balance, and the “power position”; always get kids on the “balls of their feet”
  - 4. Emphasize that fielding is also done with LEGS! Teach moving to the ball, nose to ball!
- D. General Issues – Throwing, Catching, Fielding (Season End Goal: Understand Situations)
  - 1. Place the kids in fun, competitive, team situations while teaching baseball fundamentals
  - 2. Teach kids to communicate on every play; “ball!” for grounders, “I got it!” for pop-ups
  - 3. As their skills progress over time, practice drills and games are more baseball-situational
  - 4. Teach kids to think about where they are going with/without the ball, before each play
  - 5. Kids will always be practicing “the big 3” – throwing, catching, fielding

### **III. HITTING FUNDAMENTALS (TEACH “AGGRESSIVE” HITTING AND MECHANICS)**

- A. Bat Selection and Grip/Depth and Distance from Plate (Season End Goal: Comfort as Hitter)
  - 1. Choosing a bat: hold bat straight out to one side, one arm; hold easily for 30 seconds, OK
  - 2. Hold bat loosely in fingers, knuckles in line. Don't “choke” bat, jam it back in the hands
  - 3. Depth: as a general rule front foot should be at midpoint of the plate to see the ball longer
  - 4. Distance: in “power position”, batter should be able to comfortably touch the outside front corner of plate while holding bat in his lead hand; should not have to bend way over
- B. Power Stance/Bat Angle/Location (Season End Goal: Kids Have Balanced, Prepared Stance)
  - 1. Pigeon toes, balls of feet, feet slightly wider than shoulders & lined up straight to pitcher
  - 2. Hands high (at ears), knees bent, shoulders level (front shoulder down a bit), head up/still
  - 3. Emphasize balance, and the “power position”; always get kids on the “balls of their feet”
  - 4. Arms (hands to elbows) form a 90-degree angle (upside-down “V”); no “chicken wings”!
  - 5. Bat angle: 45 degrees; not flat across back (swing gets too long), not straight up (hitches)
  - 6. Bat location: hands back comfortably; not too far back (turns shoulder) or up (hitches)
- C. Hitting Steps (Season End Goal: Kids Know “Strike Zone” and Develop Good Sound Swing)
  - 1. Five steps of hitting: (1) Power Stance; (2) Load (Inward Rotation); (3) Small Step (Stride); (4) “Squish the bug” (back foot planted, rotates forward); (5) Swing-EXPLODE!
  - 2. Should be balanced from start to finish; do balance checks on players during all five steps
  - 3. Teach kids to swing at strikes; know the strike zone! If pitch is a “strike”, be aggressive!
  - 4. Hitting drills at practice: start kids on some tees; call out 5 steps; soft toss, balance drills!

### **IV. BASERUNNING FUNDAMENTALS (TEACH BASERUNNING MECHANICS, IDEALS)**

- A. Home to First (Season End Goal: Kids Should Properly Run to First Base in Each Situation)
  - 1. Running through the base: on or just outside baseline, hit front of the base, “peel” to right
  - 2. Making the turn: “banana peel” as you approach the base, hit the inside corner of the base
  - 3. Teach kids to listen for YOUR instruction early as they approach the base (“run through the base”, “make the turn”, “go to second”); do not leave this decision up to them, EVER
  - 4. Send kids to second base ONLY when it is reasonable; NEVER “show up” an opponent
- B. First to Third/Second to Home (Season End Goal: Kids Should Know How to Properly Run the Bases Mechanically, and Should Understand Proper Situational Base Running Approach)
  - 1. No lead-offs, but teach them a base runner's stance; punch with the left arm when starting
  - 2. Making the turn: “banana peel” as you approach the base, hit the inside corner of the base
  - 3. Teach kids to listen for YOUR instruction early as they approach the base (“make the turn/hold”, “go to third”, “go home”); kids should ALWAYS pick up the 3rd base coach!
  - 4. Send kids to the next base ONLY when it's reasonable; NEVER “show up” an opponent