

# **RIVER FALLS YOUTH BASEBALL ORGANIZATION**

## **14/15 LEAGUES SKILLS/PHILOSOPHIES TO BE TAUGHT**

### **I. 14/15 LEAGUES PHILOSOPHY (HAVE FUN, PREPARE KIDS FOR H.S. BALL)**

- A. Learn: baseball skills in organized, safe, FUN environment; sportsmanship and teamwork
- B. Instructional, MORE COMPETITIVE! Game scores/standings are kept; skills emphasized
- C. Complete baseball concepts (positioning, stealing bases, situations, etc.) taught at this level
- D. Playing time may not be equal, develop 2-3 positions each
- 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 Master Proper Mechanics of Throwing)
  - 1. Master 5 “proper throwing steps”: (1) Pop; (2) Crow hop; (3) “T”; (4) Throw; (5) Finish
  - 2. Good balance, use legs working forward through throw; “balls of their feet”; overhand!
- B. Catching the Ball (Season End Goal: Kids Should Now be able to Track and Catch the Ball)
  - 1. Master 6 “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. Good balance working through the play; work on forehand & backhand (one-handed) too
- C. Fielding the Ball (Season End Goal: Kids Should be able to Move into Position & Field Ball)
  - 1. Master 6 “proper fielding steps”: (1) Ready position, see ball; (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”
  - 2. Good balance working through the play; work on forehand & backhand balls in the holes
- D. Pitchers (Season End Goal: Kids Should Learn & Improve on Pitching Mechanics, Strategy)
  - 1. Teach locations, changing speeds, and pitches to throw in specific counts; no curve balls!
  - 2. Teach the “proper pitching steps”: (1) Rock/set; (2) Balance; (3) T; (4) Throw; (5) Finish
  - 3. Emphasize balance (leg bent at 90 degrees), the “power position” (elbow above the shoulder, also bent at 90 degrees), always finish on the ball of leading foot, OVERHAND
  - 4. Learn to hold base runners on, vary looks over to runner, throw over
- E. Catchers (Season End Goal: Kids Should Learn and Improve Catching Mechanics, Strategy)
  - 1. Good receiving position; balls of feet, balanced; catch “around” ball; learn calling pitches
  - 2. Good target with catcher’s glove, proper depth in box; work on blocking balls in the dirt!
  - 3. Work on throwing out base-stealers; good balance & footwork, quick release; overhand!

F. Specific Issues – Throwing, Catching, Fielding (Season End Goal: Improve Situational Skill)

1. Teach special infield situations: slow rollers, high choppers, rundowns, double plays, etc.
2. Work on communication/priority on balls in the holes; converging infielders, calling off
3. Work on communication/priority on pop-ups behind bases; converging fielders, call off!
4. Teach kids bunt coverages, steal plays, 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> situations, etc.; improve communication!
5. Teach special outfield situations: fly balls, ground balls, angles to ball, cutoffs/relays, etc.
6. Work on communication/priority on balls in the gaps; converging outfielders, calling off
7. Work on communication/priority on pop-ups behind infield; call off converging infielders
8. Teach outfielders “sliding catch” for sinking line drives hit right at them, shallow pop-ups
9. Teach special offensive situations: sacrifice bunts, drag bunts, hit-&-run plays, steals, etc.
10. Teach kids to always be moving & covering, back up appropriate bases on infield plays
11. Work on pitchers covering first base on ANY ground balls to the right side! Practice it!
12. Kids will STILL always be practicing “the big 3” – throwing, catching, and fielding skills

**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. Hold bat loosely in fingers, knuckles in line. Depth: front foot is at midpoint of the plate
2. Distance: batter can easily touch outside front corner of the plate holding bat in lead hand

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 “power position”; arms (hands to elbows) form a 90-degree angle
4. Bat angle 45 degrees, not flat across back or straight up; hands back comfortably & loose

C. Hitting Steps (Season End Goal: Kids Know Strike Zone and Situations, Refine Good 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 pitch count! Learn situational hitting approaches
4. Hitting drills at practice: work on hitting high strike & low strike; hitting to opposite field

**IV. BASERUNNING FUNDAMENTALS (BASERUNNING MECHANICS AND STEALING)**

- A. Home to First (Season End Goal: Kids Should Master “Running Through”, “Making Turn”)
- 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)
- C. Stealing: Fight for Good Leadoff, Go on Pitcher’s First Move to Home; Proper Slide