

Tryouts for youth tournament baseball — or any sport for that matter — are stressful for parents and kids. Coaches analyze every move the kids make, marking down notes that could determine their future.

Tryouts typically consist of simple drills for hitting, fielding and pitching. Parents will prepare their kids for these drills. But what most parents don't realize is that coaches watch far more than what happens between the lines, and if you don't prepare your child appropriately you may be harming their chances.

The truth is that tryouts are imperfect. It's often not easy to separate one kid from another based on a small sample size of throws, catches and hits. And since being a good member of a team involves far more than just throwing, fielding and hitting, expect that the coaches are watching more than these things.

Personally, I have a good idea of a kid's ability before the tryout even begins. Often, his team is on Gamechanger, and I can go back and see how he has done and where he has played. In terms of ability, that tells me more than what a small sample of drills can say.

So, I use the tryout to provide a backdrop to what I saw in the stats. I chart the basics, but I also keep notes on things that kids, and parents do when they think I'm not looking. And I routinely choose not to draft kids as a result of these tryout sins.

1. Warmups

Tryouts haven't yet begun, but your child is warming up with his friend. I'm watching closely. Does he have a good process? Does he practice well, or does he warm up lazily?

I can often tell whether a kid is draftable before tryouts even begin based on how he warms up. Make sure your child takes this time seriously.

2. Appearance and Equipment

This sounds cruel, but appearances matter. Does your child look like a baseball player?

Understand, this doesn't mean I'm downgrading the small kids versus the big kids. It doesn't mean they need to have all the greatest, most expensive equipment. These things are not what I'm referring to.

But I've seen kids show up to tryouts in jeans and no baseball cap. That tells me baseball just isn't that important to them.

Also, if they think they are a catcher, do they have catcher's gear? Did they come properly equipped, or do they need to borrow a friend's gear to participate?

3. Obnoxious Parents

Parent, I know you mean well. But you are killing your kid's chances.

When I add a player to my team, I add his parents, too. And while one bad kid can certainly make my life difficult, a bad parent may be even more damaging.

You can spot these parents a mile away. They are loud. They are obnoxious. They are too pushy and overbearing.

Let go. Once the tryouts begin, give your child a comforting hug and wish them good luck. You've prepared them until now, but this is the time to let them show what they can do without you.

If you are loud and critical during tryouts, I know you will be worse during games. Just keep your mouth shut.

Believe it or not, being too supportive can be an issue as well. They made a nice catch, that's great. But reserve your celebration during tryouts. The "that's my kid!" parent is also one who often doesn't see their child's flaws and will be first to get upset about playing time.

4. Goofing Off

These are kids. I expect they will behave as kids. But I also want the kids who take this seriously.

Your kid didn't notice, but when he was being loud and distracting while others were hitting, I checked out the number on his back and made a note of it not to add him.

I'd also include the ability to follow instructions here. If a player isn't well behaved and doesn't follow instructions well during a

tryout, a coach can expect it will be infinitely worse during a practice or game situation.

Coaching kids is a lot of work. That work multiplies with poorly behaved kids, and sometimes we can see these things during the tryouts and save ourselves some unnecessary stress.

5. Ridiculing Others

If you want your child to be immediately removed from consideration, allow them to laugh at others who aren't performing well in their tryout. I want nothing to do with this kid on my team.

Kids with bad attitudes often out themselves. They can't help but make that rude or offensive remark. That just makes my job of assembling a team easier.

6. Showboating

There is a fine line here. Yes, I am looking for talent. I need your child to show that talent. I want them to be confident. But this can be taken too far.

I have removed kids from my list who at the age of nine felt it necessary — at an obnoxious parent's urging — to hit from both sides of the plate. You are not helping your kid. Don't do this.

I'm sure your kid is an amazing hitter, and it sure is spectacular that they can already hit from both sides of the plate at the age of

nine. But you know what? There is absolutely no advantage to that at a young age.

Will your kid be seeing sliders at the age of nine? If so, that's when it helps to hit from the side that is opposite of the pitcher. Otherwise, feel free to practice it, but this doesn't help you in tryouts.

Since it's highly unlikely your child hits equally well from both sides of the plate at a young age, you are only hurting them. There is no utility to hitting them from both sides until they get older, so why should I care if they can do it now?

As a coach, I want you to hit as well from one side of the plate as you can. By trying to hit from both sides in a tryout, you are only exposing a weakness. It wasn't your intention, but I now question whether your child is coachable.

[NOTE: Obviously switch-hitting can be a benefit for older kids, but make sure they are exceptional hitters from both sides before doing this in a tryout.]

7. Timeliness

This one isn't necessarily fair, but it sends a bad message if you show up late to tryouts or have to leave early. This tryout is an important part of your baseball future, and if you don't take it seriously why should I add you?

This is a commitment for everyone — the coaches, parents, and players. I want the kid who shows up early and stays until the end.

The kid who shows up late or leaves early is likely to be the same kid I can't count on to show up to games or practices.

BONUS. Respectfulness

When I'm talking to the group, you stop what you're doing, put your hands on your hips, and give me eye contact. When I ask you to do something, you say, "Yes, coach" or "No, Coach."

This isn't the military. I'm not trying to make it seem that way. But respectful kids are a coach's dream. You can count on them to listen and pay attention. They set a great example. They aren't the players who create problems.

Being respectful in a tryout is a great way to make a good impression and set yourself apart from other players with similar abilities. Being disrespectful will do the complete opposite.

BONUS. Versatility

If you played shortstop for your last team, that doesn't mean you'll be the shortstop — or even a shortstop — for mine. While it's important to let me know what you're capable of doing, your position does not define you.

Don't be that kid who refuses to do anything but take grounders at shortstop. Let the coach know that you'll play wherever he wants you to play.

Even if you're a catcher, try not to pigeon-hole yourself here. If the coach only sees your skills as a catcher, what's he going to do if

you aren't one of the top two players available at that position? Make sure he knows that you can play elsewhere and that you'd like to show what you can do in the field.

BONUS. Hustle

Hustle is so important, not only in games but in a tryout.

So, few kids do it consistently. There is no reason whatsoever not to hustle every moment you can during a tryout. It shows your commitment and focus. It shows the coach that you're always willing to give your best.

Bust your butt. Leave everything on the field. Have no regrets. Whatever cliché you need. You need more than talent. You need to show the coach that you're willing to push yourself to get the most out of your talent.