

WHAT IS A GOOD YOUTH COACH?

A coach is defined as the manager of a team responsible for training players. A good coach should be a quality leader genuinely interested in the development of young people. A good youth coach's primary responsibility is to ensure that baseball and/or softball is fun, challenging and rewarding experience for kids. He or she must adhere to the principle that success is measured by player skill development, not wins or losses.

The following are characteristics of a good youth baseball coach:

LISTENER – A good youth coach first listens to players, parents, officials and other coaches, then responds. Pay close attention to everything a player is trying to tell you (both verbally and non-verbally). Being a good listener allows you to quickly identify player needs and issues before they become problems.

COMMUNICATOR – A good youth coach instructs kids on a level they understand. Players need to know where they stand in terms of progress, playing time and their role on the team. The good coach avoids negative “non-verbal” communications such as stamping feet, glares, looks of disgust, hitting equipment, or throwing objects. Effective communications involves clearly presenting instructions and key points to groups as well as individual players.

MOTIVATOR – Good youth coaches provide players with positive reinforcement. Effort and results should be praised equally. Good coaches are enthusiastic when presenting ideas or offering instruction, and persistent (not overbearing) in striving for achievement. They create a sense of belonging, worth and dignity in each player. Never assume all players are motivated the same. Take time to discover motivating factors for each individual player. Build players up more than you criticize them. The more nervous players are, the more praise and positive motivation they need.

EDUCATOR – Youth baseball coaches must educate FIRST. Win SECOND. A good youth coach is aware that learning the game of baseball is an educational process for players. Details about the game should be presented to young players by teaching – by understanding and practicing the principles of Process Coaching (E+E+M=S). Take time before and after each practice or game to discuss performance with each player. They are constantly looking for your approval and positive feedback. Teach players to trust in their own abilities.

MODEL OF GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP – A good youth coach demonstrates good sportsmanship in all aspects of the game – at practice, games, and in dealing with parents, opponents and officials. Players copy coach's actions. Be positive, optimistic and aggressive (within the context of good sportsmanship). Remember you are a role model for young players.

MANAGER – A good youth coach handles all team management responsibilities in an orderly, well-organized manner. Have a plan for all practices and games. Be fair and subtle in discipline and patient with players as they learn tasks and develop skills. Players need to trust you in order to perform their best. Trusting players focus on their tasks instead of whether they are going to be benched.

FAIR AND OBJECTIVE TALENT EVALUATOR – A good youth coach is fair and objective is assessing each player's physical ability, game skills and projected potential. Never compare the talent or skills of players.

RESPONSIBILITY – A good youth coach wants to create a fun, challenging and rewarding baseball experience for young players. Respect from parents, officials and an opponent is earned. The good coach supports league programs, and does not act in a manner that reflects negatively on the team, the league, the community or himself.