



EAST NEPEAN
LITTLE LEAGUE
2005

COACHES HANDBOOK

SPRING HOUSE LEAGUE
&
SUMMER COMPETITIVE LEAGUE

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A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF COACHING

We at ENLL want to ensure our children receive the best possible coaching, which in turn, will ensure they enjoy playing the game because they have been taught by knowledgeable coaches using recognized methods. One way we can do that is to encourage aggressively all of our Coaches to successfully complete the National Coaching Certification Program Level 1 Technical (baseball specific) and Theory courses offered to all coaches of all sports. Please contact me for information on the next available session.

It is gratifying to ENLL that you have taken the time and effort to volunteer to coach our children. It is even more gratifying to know that you have made a commitment to doing the job in an experienced manner.

Although you may not have plans to coach after this season is over, it is reasonable that the children you coach this year can expect that the information you are giving them, is as good as the information that their friends on other teams are getting.

In 2002 we were commended for consistency of coaching within ENLL because the majority of our Coaches took the Level 1 Technical course. In 2003 we ask those same Coaches to take the Level 1 Theory, and/or Level II Technical Course. The Theory course provides our children with the best possible coaching available in a general sense, and the Technical provides you the tools to give them the best baseball specific information.

That is not to say that we, as coaches, all have the same coaching philosophy - which, I am certain, we don't. Philosophy is gained and adjusted through experience and participating in the Level 1 Theory course. Just remember, the player's philosophy will be learned from you, the Coach - teach them well and enjoy the feeling you get from a job well done.

Some new rules have been put in place to insure the player's enjoyment of the game. We have instituted a 6 run maximum per inning throughout the whole season for Major levels and down. This should speed up the games, and reduce the one sided blowouts. However, should you find yourself in one of those games, remember, this is a perfect opportunity to teach the value of Sportsmanship. There are many ways to do this discreetly, so that all can feel good about themselves at games end.

And remember, individual coaching philosophies must be in harmony with ENLL stated objectives.

Sincerely,

Mike Crepin

Director of Coaching and Player Development

East Nepean Little League

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

Safety is Job One

Be vigilant, alert, and make personal safety on the field a priority for your players and volunteers. Make sure all your players wear a protective cup during both games and practices. Ensure long pants are worn for practices, and that the proper, recognized uniform attire is worn for all games. (Important: enforce the ‘no cup - no play’ rule). And the most important of all, no swinging the bats during games unless at the plate (there is no "On Deck" batter allowed for Rookie, Minor or Major Divisions, Little League Safety Rule), or under the coach’s supervision in warm-up. In addition, players should never handle bats without the coach’s supervision during practice.

All Players Deserve Equal Playing Opportunities

Plan your line-ups carefully and with fairness to all. Our emphasis must always be on player development. Maintain records of all game line-ups and score sheets. By doing so, you can demonstrate to anyone asking, that each player has had an equal opportunity to play various positions. When deciding where a player should be positioned, safety must be kept in mind, but never used as an alibi to regularly position your strongest players in the key positions. As long as East Nepean has the enrolment that allows us to tier our divisions, safety issues at “skill” positions would rarely be a concern at the “AA” Divisions in Minor and Major.

No Coach is an Island

Get parents involved in helping out in any way they can. You can’t run a practice or a game alone. You will need someone to keep score, monitor the players on the bench, assist with distribution of handouts, whatever - you need to establish your volunteer base at the onset of the season. A Team Manager is key as a go-between for the parents and coaches and is invaluable for handing out information. Try and find a volunteer for this position at your first team meeting.

Respect Others

Demonstrate respect of Umpires, opposing Coaches and their players, and spectators by setting a good example. It is easy to get caught up in the emotion of the moment of an exciting play, but we must remember it is a game, and we are there for the players. Rest assured, they are watching, and will emulate your behaviour. Recognize the value of volunteers and rely on one another for assistance and guidance from time to time. You will always receive help when you need it - all you have to do is ask.

EQUIPMENT

As an ENLL Coach, you will receive a bag of equipment for your team's practices and games. Much thought and experience goes into preparing these bags. Equipment is selected based on the age and size of the players. Every bag contains a number of bats of different length and weight, a set (or two) of catcher's equipment of the appropriate size, enough practice balls for the whole team to play catch at the same time, game balls for use in games only, and a League approved score pad.

Equipment sharing is normal during games. Borrowing a catcher's mask to warm up a pitcher or sharing bats (although every team has the same assortment of bat sizes and weight) are quite common with young players. Please ensure that the same distribution of equipment (not necessarily the same equipment) goes into your equipment bag after the game.

Please do not allow anyone to deface equipment. Bats are designed to hit baseballs, *not* stones or metal pipes. There is no need to identify any of the league-owned equipment as belonging to your team, such as painting or scratching identification onto the bat. Marking equipment can shorten its life span and usability.

All equipment has been inspected and is in useable condition when you receive it. Should any equipment become broken, unusable or unsafe or lost while in your possession, please call the Equipment Manager to arrange repair or replacement.

It is imperative that at season's end, you **promptly** return your equipment in the original bag, all used or unused balls and the uniforms in the bins that they came in.

The executive position of "Director of Equipment" is one of the most difficult portfolios for any Little League Association to fill, as it requires great dedication and many hours of volunteer work from the person filling that position. Not returning the uniforms and equipment in a timely

fashion is unacceptable. Sometimes recovering uniforms from players can be a challenge, so here are some tips:

- 1) The best solution is to arrange a season end party by which you can celebrate the year's enjoyment, and hand out the league awards and pictures from picture day. Make it clear to parents that you must "trade in your uniform" for these extras.
- 2 If you do not plan a season end party, ensure that players bring a change of clothes to every game that has the potential to be the "last game" of the season. Once again, withholding season end awards and/or pictures can be effective.

Important Note: The League does not provide first aid kits, but this is always a good idea, and could be incorporated into a personal team budget.

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

It is ENLL policy to promote the principle of equal play throughout the House League season.

House League

An introductory letter and subsequent Coach/Parent meeting is not a requirement for house league, but is strongly encouraged. An example of such a letter is included at the back of the book.

On Defence, all players will share equally infield and outfield play except for skill and safety positions such as pitcher, catcher and first base. This does not mean that there is a 50-50 rule for infield and outfield. **There are six infield positions and three outfield positions. This means that all players must see two thirds infield positions and one third outfield positions. To be fair, the following should be observed:**

- innings played in the outfield be spread out evenly among the three positions
- innings played at 2nd, 3rd & SS be spread out evenly among the infield positions. Catcher, Pitcher and 1st base positions are at the Manager's discretion as described under the "Safety Considerations" stated in the Coach's handbook.

It is however the league's expectation that as Team Manager, you will make every effort to develop each player so they may be exposed to each of the nine positions on the field".

As well, all players will share equally in 'sitting out'.

Should a player not begin the season with the skills to pitch, catch or play first base, every effort must be made to help the player develop the skills required to play those positions (if requested) at practice. Once again, keep in mind, at the "AA" level, first base would rarely be a safety concern. Understand that the "skill positions", are infield positions and should be considered in that player's infield/outfield ratio of playing time.

Coaches must strive to achieve the above objectives on a game-by-game basis, on not spread out over a week or a season. In addition, there is rarely a reason for a player to sit out two consecutive innings, and a Coach should never plan this while doing a line up. It happens too often that you do not get to finish all six innings; therefore, you must avoid planning two consecutive innings for any one player to sit.

On Offence, all players will bat and share equally in the number of 'at bats' and experience different positions in the batting order.

In Playoff and Tournament play, Coaches can use discretion to determine where players will be positioned and how the batting order will be set. The ENLL philosophy of equal play *shall* determine your decisions.

Summer Competitive A Level (Playdown) and B Level (Developmental)

All selected players and their parents/guardians should be advised in writing in advance of player selection of the time commitment required by the team. A letter from the League/Coach may be distributed ensuring that all parents recognize the competitiveness of 'A' and 'B' Level baseball.

This is done at the "A" level to clearly lay out, and have them recognize that during "Competitive Play", decisions made by the coaching staff will be made for the benefit of the team, not individual players. Competitive play is limited to, and is defined as "Playdowns at all levels". Equal play is not guaranteed in these situations.

This letter should be distributed before team selection, and clearly explain the selection process, and should include a 'rider' specifying that the Coach will make decisions (once the team is selected) based on the player's attitudes, hard work and improvement. or, conversely, poor attitude or work habits or lack of improvement or effort. Very often most players and parents are happy just to have made the 'A' team. They may not hear or understand when they are told that the player will sit on the bench and not bat, or play defensively during competitive play. An example of such a letter that was used for a team preparing for a Canadian Championship is included.

Beyond the competitive play in "A" ball, and with the "B" program, we resume a program of development. Unlike house league, there is no mandate for equal infield/outfield play, but there is for equal playing/sitting time. Development can be, but is not limited to, positional play & team concepts.

It is not reasonable to expect a family to travel out of City, Province, or Country, and incur all of the associated expenses to watch their child sit on the bench, and not receive fair playing time, if just for an Exhibition Tournament. The same can be said in regards to regular season games and City Playoffs.

Coaches of Competitive Summer Teams

1. Where sponsorship dollars are used to buy equipment for your summer team, the equipment becomes the property of ENLL at the end of the season.
2. For a player to be eligible for selection for the summer team, that player must have met the minimum requirement of having played at least 50% of games in the spring house league season. As a coach of a competitive summer team you recognize and accept that your child must qualify for the team just as all other players must.
3. When advising players and parents of selection results, please ensure responsible procedures are followed. For example, it is a lot more respectful of the player's feelings if the coaches contact the parents/players by telephone after careful reflection - lining up winners and losers on different sides of the field would not be acceptable.
4. Equal play for all players may not be feasible/possible during Playdowns but is ENLL mandated when not in competitive play. During Playdowns keep in mind the player's feelings and if the situation presents itself get everyone in to the game in a meaningful way. These players were chosen to make the competitive team because they are good ball players. Remember, you can always re-insert if things change.
5. The League will supply summer jackets or shells for a cost, and you can contact your Director for details and prices. However, the League does not pay for tournaments on behalf of the teams. The purchase of these items, or registration fees for tournaments can be accomplished through fundraising by the individual team parents for their children.

Please make certain your parents are made aware of this at the beginning of the summer season.

- 6 At no time is any logo, other than League Approved East Nepean Little League logos, to be used for any clothing, promotional material or advertisement. The artwork for your “East Nepean” logo can once again be attained from the League President, or your Director.

For All Coaches 4. Encourage your team to respect the opposing team and the rules of baseball and to accept the judgements of officials and opposing coaches without argument. Teach your players how to manage conflict and stress, and attempt to use good judgement in tough situations. Your team will be playing other teams from the Ottawa area and the impression we leave is important to ENLL and our families.

5. Avoid overplaying talented players. Allow lesser talented players equal playing time. Remember, players need a Coach they can respect. Be generous with praise and set a good example.
6. Remember - WINNING ISN'T EVERYTHING'. While it is great to win, ensure the game is fun for your players.

COMMUNICATIONS

Last year parents were pleased with the communication between the League and its families. This year we will attempt to continue that practice. You can never provide team members with too much information.

Little League Canada has produced a brochure describing how coaches should communicate with a variety of groups. In summary, this is what the brochure says:

Players: A general team meeting before the first game is a good idea. A team meeting immediately after being assigned a team is an even better idea. Points to cover include:

7. your coaching philosophy

8. any rules you see as important to make parents and players aware of
9. acceptable behaviour by players and coaches
10. procedures for missing games and/or practices
11. sportsmanship
12. impress the importance of commitment to self and team

Parents: A pre-season meeting with parents will pay big dividends before the season is over.

Points to be covered include:

13. your coaching philosophy
14. the goals and objectives of both ENLL and the coaching staff
15. your general rules regarding player conduct
16. team practice and game schedules
17. procedures for missing games and/or practices
18. again . . . having a Team Administrator is key to communicating with the parents and/or the League.
19. request that your parents, should they have a problem, discuss it with you, or your Team Administrator if they feel comfortable, prior to contacting the League. Let them know that if you cannot work it out then a League representative would be available to assist.
20. discuss the need for volunteers - many parents do not indicate on the registration form their willingness to assist their child's coach, but will, when asked, be happy to lend a hand.

LEAGUE EXPECTATIONS

The League expects that each and every Coach will:

21. provide a safe and fun atmosphere for their players
22. respect other's point of view
23. at all times, show courtesy and respect to Umpires - remember, they too are volunteers
24. lessen the amount of stress placed on the players by exhibiting calm and organization in difficult situations
25. advise the League immediately of any recurring problems involving disgruntled parents
26. arrive early for games and practices where possible to ensure you put forth an organized image - this, in itself, is one of the main concerns of parents - having their children arrive to find the Coach has not arrived, or that the Coach has arrived but is not ready for them.
27. you are a representative of East Nepean Little League and should, at all times, attempt to present yourself in a positive manner.

You can't please all of the people all of the time, but do your best.

AWARDS AND TROPHIES

Participant Trophies

28. Participant trophies or medals will be given to all players in the Spring House League, from Rookie to Major Levels.
29. Participant trophies will be given to all players in the Competitive Summer League, including Big League.
30. At the Summer Competitive League Level only, three awards will be awarded to players on each team - the Coaches, using input from other Coaches and players, will select the recipients and only in exceptional circumstances will an award not be presented.

Awards

The following criteria will guide Coaches of the Summer Competitive Leagues in their selections:

The Grounders Most Improved Player Award

Presented to the player who most

31. demonstrates a willingness to learn and improve his/her baseball skills
32. demonstrates a significant improvement in his/her basic skills over the season
33. shows improved self-confidence

The Campbell Family Award for Sportsmanship and Leadership

Presented to the player who most

34. demonstrates respect for rules, officials and their decisions
35. shows respect for the opponent
36. shows a sense of dignity under all circumstances

Umpire of the Year Award

Each year, Coaches vote for the Umpire of the Year. Spring Coaches should inform the Director of Coaching, in writing, of their choice so their votes may be counted with the votes of the summer Coaches. Presented to the ENLL Umpire who, during the spring and summer programs, best meets the selection criteria of

37. commanding respect
38. knowing the rules of the game
39. applying good judgement and common sense in the interpretation of the rule book.

Buddy of the Year Award

Each year, East Nepean gives this award in recognition of the player most dedicated in assisting in our challenger program. This program is run specifically for the physically and mentally challenged, and all Coaches are encouraged to make players and families aware of the program, and to encourage all players to anticipate.

Example of House League letter to Parents

Dear Parent:

I will be coaching your child for this house league season in East Nepean Little league. I am writing this letter to invite you to a parents meeting, and tell you a little about how the coaches will be approaching the season.

In short, we will be emphasize having fun and working co-operatively. We do this because we feel that forming friendships, learning to share things with others, and belonging are important at this age. We would like participants to learn all of the basic skills and to be the best that they can be. On this team, all individuals have an equal opportunity to play or compete during the regular season.

I would like to invite you and the other parents to my short meeting at my house next Thursday night. At that time we can discuss:

40. The things you want your children to get out of this experience.
41. Transportation to and from practices.
42. Administration of Team Budget.
43. Volunteers required beyond coaching.
44. Family fun nights
45. Any questions or suggestions about the upcoming season.
46. Informal socializing.

Hope to see you next Thursday between 7:30 to 8:30 P.M.

Sincerely,

Example of Letter for Competitive Try Outs to Parents

Dear Parents,

As we near the midway point of our season, preparations are already underway for the Summer (Competitive) Season. This began last Friday night with the first of several Excellence Clinics to come. Although these clinics are intended for all of the membership, it is a must for those who intend to play summer ball, especially if it is your child's intention to compete for one of the spots on the Summer "A" Team.

It is important for the summer coaching staff (John Smith and myself) to know your child's intentions for the summer season, and would therefore appreciate it if you could immediately advise your coach of your plans level of interest. Obviously, knowing who will want to compete for the "A" Team saves us time and effort.

As part of our decision making process, I have been, and will continue attending most of the house league games at the Minor "AA" level. This is done to insure that each and every player receives a fair look not only for their individual ability, but their knowledge of the game and aptitude to expand on that knowledge.

Throughout the remainder of the season, I will also be inviting some *independent* baseball knowledgeable people to attend some games and to give their input. I will also be asking the Minor "AA" Coaches for their opinions.

The final decision making tool will be the participation of two East Nepean Teams in an out of town tournament (dates & location to follow) in mid-end June. These two teams will be made up of 24-26 players who are playing summer ball, and all of those who intend on competing for the "A" Team. To date, all of our neighboring associations bring one team of 15-16 players to make their choices. It is my philosophy that every player who wants to make the team should get one last look, and overall it is a good experience for all players to see this type of competition. Hence the two team format in East Nepean's participation of this *cut-down* tournament.

Although I'm aware that there will always be some disappointments, as a coaching staff we are making every effort to make the selection process for the Competitive "A" Team one of integrity, where every player has received their *fair* chance.

I ask that you read on, as the following information will lay out what is expected of the players and their families of the Competitive "A" Team. In lieu of the special season that lies ahead, a great deal of commitment is required from all of those involved. Should you feel that the commitment is too extensive for your child or your family, I will personally guarantee that a withdrawal on this basis will not effect your child's selection to any team I coach in the future. I would rather have a player withdraw before the season should he/she not be able to participate in crucial tournaments due to other commitments, than find out after he/she has been selected to the team.

Players:

47. Baseball ***must be*** the primary sport for this summer. A secondary sport is ***strongly discouraged***. The coaching staff must be made aware of any intention to participate in any other sport this summer. Failure to notify *could* result in a call up of a player from the taxi squad to replace your spot on the roster. Your participation in other sports does not exclude you from the team, but *will be* part of the decision making process. This includes Soccer, Lacrosse, mid-summer hockey activities, or any activity that will interfere with your availability to fulfill the baseball schedule.
48. Your attendance is mandatory for two a day practices beginning Friday June 30, ending Sunday July 9th. There will be no practice on Canada Day so that players may celebrate with their families, but beyond that you must be available. Families who are not taking holidays at this time can make arrangements through the coaches and other team members to have the players picked up and dropped off safely. Making these arrangements have never been an issue in past years.
49. Your attendance is mandatory for the District Playdowns, date to follow, but likely beginning Friday July 14th, through July 22.
50. Should we win our District, you must be available for the Provincial Playdowns, date to follow but likely beginning Friday July 28th through August 4th.
51. And of course, your attendance is mandatory for National Championships, should we advance.

Families:

52. You can count on contributing at least 10 to 15 hours of volunteer time throughout the summer. Tasks primarily will be for fund raising (bar-b-q's, auctions etc), but will also include on sight duties during tournaments and home games. This participation is critical to the success of the season.
53. Holidays: As a coach I have always believed that it is beneficial for players and their families to get away for a week or a weekend or two during the baseball season, however, you must be flexible. I ***cannot*** be left in a situation where I have 6 of the twelve to fourteen families vacationing at the same time, leaving us without enough to field a team. This can be avoided with communication.
54. Families are *positive factors* in the stands. It is the coach's jobs to coach the players. It is the coach's jobs to question umpires. It is the family's responsibility to cheer on the team in its entirety, and to represent *our community* as fans.
55. There is no way shape or form payment to players for successful play. Although you may be well intending in doing this, it is totally contrary to our philosophy of "***Team Play***". If being there for his/her fellow teammate is not enough reason to want to do well, he/she is not there for the right reasons.
56. Equal Opportunity, but perhaps not equal play. During the competitive tournaments, we will be fielding the best nine players for that situation. Little League rules stipulate that each player must get into the game for at least three consecutive defensive outs, or one at bat. That is the only guarantee we give while trying to advance during the Playdowns. However, each player will receive equal instruction, and equal opportunity to *earn* a starting position during these tournaments.
57. It goes without saying that in regular season play, City Playoffs, or exhibition tournaments, our prime objective is developing players, and consequently each player will receive fair plating time.

There will be more communication during the season, and if you have any questions please do not hesitate to approach me at the games, or call me at my home.

John Jones
Head Coach
Minor "A" Eagles
Phone Number

LITTLE LEAGUE PLEDGE

I trust in God,
I love my country
and will respect its laws.

I will play fair
and strive to win.

But win or lose,
I will always
do my best.