

**LAKE ZURICH
BASEBALL &
SOFTBALL
COACHES
MANUAL**



A close-up, high-angle photograph of a baseball's stitching. The white, raised stitches are arranged in a diagonal pattern across the frame. The background is a dark, textured surface, likely the leather of the baseball glove, which is slightly out of focus. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of the threads.

TRAINING MISSION

- To provide LZBSA Coaches and players with a curriculum that establishes a coaching consistency within age groups and a developmental progression across all age groups.
- The curriculum will standardize youth baseball best practices and facilitate learning through an integrated body of knowledge, principles, values and skills

CURRICULUM



Player Development

- League Progression
- Fundamental Absolutes
- Position Specific Techniques

Coaching Development

- Success in coaching
- Maximizing practices

LEAGUE PROGRESSION

ROOKIE

Keep it simple, fun and active

- Learn simple characteristics of the game and field
- Building block fundamentals
- Coach pitch with tee when needed
- Station to station baserunning

TYRO

Building Baseball Foundations

- Emphasis on learning fundamentals
- Introduce positional play
- Develop eye/hand hitting coordination
- Introduce pitcher and catcher
- Learn basic rules of play (outs, strikes/balls)
- Advancing extra base on hit

MINORS

First Step to Real Baseball

- Good grasp and execution of core fundamentals
- Advance positional, situational, and team play
- Advance hitting mechanics and philosophies
- Pitcher and catcher development
- Secondary leads and steal after ball cross plate

MAJORS

Playing Real Baseball

- Full grasp and execution of fundamentals
- Specialized positional, situational and team play
- Introduce situational hitting
- Pitcher and catcher specialization
- Introduce mental approach to play
- Full leads and steal – dropped third strikes

PONY

High School Capable

- Refinement of fundamentals
- Positional expertise
- Execute situational hitting
- Pitcher and catcher specialization
- Advance mental approach to play
- Capable of taking next step

COLT

High School Baseball

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

FUNDAMENTAL ABSOLUTES

Hitting:

- Athletic stance
- Head quiet; eyes horizontal
- Hands quiet and back
- Feet quite; wide; no stride
- Lower rhythm
- Back & Attack
- Shoulder to shoulder

Outfield:

- Ready position; step into circle
- Drop step and read
- Catch 2 hands
- Catch glove side; above eyes
- Elbows down
- Glove foot forward
- Catch, step, throw

Infield:

- Ready position; step; hop
- Glove quiet; open, out Field trainable
- Back flat, butt down
- Work down to up
- Block step through
- Low toward target
- Nose to leather

Catching:

- Receive square to target
- Stay off knees
- Go get baseball
- Arm length + glove length = set up
- Head behind ball
- Glove off ground, catch/freeze ball
- Keep square and down to block

Pitching:

- Hip leads to target
- Stride long, be tall
- Back leg drive
- Land flat & straight
- Equal & opposite
- Trunk; slam the trap door shut
- Throwing is movement

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

POSITION SPECIFIC TECHNIQUES

Hitting:

- Athletic stance
- Head quiet; eyes horizontal
- Hands quiet and back
- Feet quite; wide; no stride
- Lower rhythm
- Back & Attack
- Shoulder to shoulder

Outfield:

- Ready position; step into circle
- Drop step and read
- Catch 2 hands
- Thumbby/thumbby glove side; above eyes
- Elbows down
- Glove foot forward
- Catch, step, throw

Infield:

- Ready position; step; hop
- Glove quiet; open, out Field trainable
- Back flat, butt down
- Pinky to pinky; work down to up
- Block step through
- Low toward target
- Nose to leather

Catching:

- Receive square to target
- Stay off knees
- Go get baseball
- Arm length + glove length = set up
- Head behind ball
- Glove off ground, catch/freeze ball
- Keep square and down to block



I'VE FOUND IN LIFE THE MORE YOU PRACTICE, THE BETTER YOU GET. IF YOU WANT SOMETHING ENOUGH AND WORK HARD TO GET IT, YOUR CHANCES OF SUCCESS ARE GREATER.

Ted Williams



COACHING DEVELOPMENT

- Success in Coaching
- Maximizing Practices

SUCCESS IN COACHING

- **Success in coaching is all about the kids and players experience, enjoyment, fulfillment and success.**
- **Displays Commitment - coaches display a clear commitment to looking out for the best interest of the individual players**
- **Lead by Example - coaches should adhere to the same rules he/she expects of the players. A coach who wants respect should also show respect. A coach who expects players to remain positive needs to display a positive attitude. A coach who wants athletes to listen will also listen to players.**
- **Knows the Sport – to be able to teach effectively the coaches must have in-depth understanding of the sport from the fundamental skills to advanced tactics and strategy. Coaches may have experience playing, but not all former players make good coaches. Coaches must plan for the season, know the progressive nature of training adaptations, know the rules and provide simple, structured environment for athletes to succeed.**
- **Coaching Success = Player's learning, improving, having fun and wanting to play again next year!**

MAXIMIZING PRACTICE

THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN PLANNING YOUR PRACTICES

- **Make sure practice is Fun! There are many different games you can do to engage the kids and make it fun.**
- **Be on time as a coach and as a player**
- **Create stations and expectations**
- **Practice at game speeds**
- **Create opportunities for competition**
- **Quality versus quantity – practice is where you learn, game is where you execute**

MAXIMIZING PRACTICE

HAVE HIGH EXPECTATION FOR PLAYERS, COACHES AND PARENTS

Make a BIG deal about being prompt and communicating when you are unable to attend games or practices (life Lesson)

MAXIMIZING PRACTICE

HAVE A PRACTICE PLAN

- What am I working on today as a coach?
- What should be part of every practice?
- If you do not know, please ask, or consult with someone from LZBSA
- How long, Long often
- What is my space?
- What equipment do I have?
- What are my priorities/goals?

MAXIMIZING PRACTICE

CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMPETITION

- Kids like to compete
 - Competition is a life skill
 - How can we create opportunities like this in practice?
- Examples:
 - Pop up bubble
 - Baserunning game
 - Tic tac toe relay game
 - Form throwing drills for accuracy
 - Pitching bubble
 - Etc

MAXIMIZING PRACTICE

HOW LONG – HOW OFTEN

All LZBSA House League teams are expected to follow the following guidelines:

- Minimum 1 hour practice, preferred 1.5 hours
- 2 times a week until games start

WHAT IS MY SPACE?

Where my space be and how can I organize my time for space?

You will be assigned a LZBSA field. You will be the only team assigned to a field for your practice time.

Make sure you utilize the entire field, infield, outfield, pitching mounds etc.

SAMPLE PRACTICE PLANS

- 4:30-4:40:** Team warm up (See Warm up Slide for LZBSA standard pre-practice and pre-game warm up)
- 4:40-4:55:** Throwing mechanics and drills (See Warm up Slide for LZBSA standard pre-practice and pre-game warm up)
- 4:55-5:25:** Team hitting stations, wiffle balls, tee work, soft toss into netting
- 5:25-5:45:** Team concepts: baserunning, infield work, outfield work, pitching
- 5:45-6:00:** Mini games, fun games, scrimmage games

**FUNDAMENTAL
ABSOLUTES OF
HITTING**



ATHLETIC STANCE

- Feet Square
- In a straight line
- Front foot in line with home plate
- Not closed or open - neutral





QUIET HEAD

- Head should remain still
- Chin to chest, not ear to shoulder
- See with both eyes

QUIET HANDS

- Hands back passed shoulder – LOAD
- Hands placement – Chest to ear
- Keep your hands quiet - still





QUIET FEET

- Work the line – small stride forward, not open or closed
- Back foot pivots
- Balanced – under control

RHYTHM – DO NOT BE A STATUE

- Overcome being still
- Rhythm should come from lower body





ROCK BACK & ATTACK

- Swing – Launch
- Barrel above hands
- Not up hill or downhill
- Level though the hips
- Hands inside the baseball
- Contact spots
- Swing hard but under control

SHOULDER-TO-SHOULDER

- Follow-through
- Two hand on bat **ALWAYS** as long as you make proper contact based on pitch location





MENTAL ASPECT – POSITIVE PITCH COUNT

- **Hit early in the count – don't wait**
- **0 strikes = batter in charge**
- **1 strike = pitcher in charge**
- **2 strikes = umpire in charge**
- **Learn to swing the bat – Don't wait for a walk.**

HITTING DRILLS

- No feet drill
- Step through drill
- Step back drill
- Rotate drill
- Throw back hip – bat behind back drill



MECHANICAL FAULTS

- Over striding
- Dropping hands
- Wrapping bat
- Casting the bat
- Hitting too far out front





FUNDAMENTAL ABSOLUTES OF PITCHING



HIP LEADS TO TARGET

- Moves first to target
- One a slightly bent but not collapsed back knee
- Before ball comes out of glove
- DRILL – partner lean

STRIDE LONG – BE TALL

- Straight
- 100% of pitcher's height
- Drill – Hat Drill



BACK LEG DRIVE

- Complete back leg drive before landing
- Back leg should be straight
- Make sure to push off
- DRILL – Drag back foot



LAND FLAT FOOTED IN STRAIGHT LINE

- Foot will be straight or slightly closed upon landing
- DRILL – One legged drill



EQUAL & OPPOSITE

- Need to brace
- Do not allow to drift forward
- Upper body stacked over belly button
- The arm should be up and semi-cocked behind head
- DRILL – Equal and Opposite



TRUNK-SLAM THE TRAP DOOR

- Flex trunk forward (nose over toes)
- Back gets parallel to ground
- DRILL – one knee progression





THROWING IS MOVEMENT

- No delays
- No hesitations
- No slow movements
- No swinging the leg
- DRILL – Happy Gilmore



**FUNDAMENTAL
ABSOLUTES:
OUTFIELD, INFIELD,
CATCHING**



OUTFIELD

1. Ready position – Step into circle, knees bent, glove and hand at waist
2. Drop step and read
3. Catch two hands
4. Pinch on throwing side above eyes
5. Elbows down when making a catch
6. Glove foot forward
7. Catch, step, throw

INFIELD

1. Ready position – glove on hip, one walking step, left or right foot depending on righty or lefty, then hop into square position glove out front
2. Glove quiet, open and out front when fielding (no glove turners), to create the fielding triangle with feet
3. Back flat, butt down, hands out front, eyes up when fielding the ball
4. Block Step through
5. Move low towards target, level shoulders (right to left) – get on the surfboard





CATCHING

1. Receive ball square to target
2. Stay off your knees
3. Go get the baseball
4. Set up one arm length plus a glove length from target
5. Keep head behind the ball
6. Glove off ground, catch and freeze the ball
7. Blocking position – knows square, chin down, glove near crotch, chest over glove