

Coaching, volunteering – and how you can help

There are so many ways a volunteer can step forward to help with the operation of one of our teams. While it's great if someone volunteers to "coach" (and then recruits assistants as needed), more often than not this is not the case and then a "group" needs to be relied on. Regardless, ideally each team would have 4, 5 or 6 volunteers at each game to ensure things run smoothly and all players receive adequate attention and instruction.

Coach: A "coach" is generally someone who is willing to take charge and recruit others as needed. Generally it's someone with prior experience that knows the role and what is expected. Generally people who want to be "the" coach are "ball" people and tend to focus on skill development, practices, drills, etc.

Assistant Coach: Ideally an "assistant" would be paired with a coach but this is not always possible due to a shortage of willing volunteers. The result is that our "**Assistant**" volunteers are usually paired together to fill the coach's role as neither wants to be solely responsible.

Without a team coach as outlined above, then a **volunteer group needs to be in place** to get things organized and keep them running smoothly. (The coaches can generally mandate their own list of "volunteers".) Roles such as the following, depending on the talents and availability of the team's volunteer base, generally cover all the tasks which need to be covered. Certainly people can take on multiple roles and their roles will certainly vary from week to week - the point is that there's a lot to do and if everyone does what he/she can it will work out to the benefit of all.)

All leagues:

- **Team co-coordinator** – someone that "chairs the meeting" and gets everyone to step forward and do what they can when they can. .
- **Equipment manager** - generally has the equipment and either gets it to games and practises or gives it to another team representative to ensure it's at a specific event. Also in charge of tracking the lending out of any equipment to individual players so they can practise on their own. It may not be this volunteer that lays out the bases but someone has to – usually first team there with the equipment to do so (and often reps from both teams.) .
- **Sportsmanship Manager** - ensures all is good and stays that way. Willing to step in and be proactive regarding all sportsmanship issues. Ensures all sportsmanship contracts are signed.
- **Batter coach - when batting** - helps batters needing assistance with stance, grip, positioning, swing etc and ensures the next batter is ready wearing a helmet. (Helmet is optional in Blastball)
- **Website (Team)**- ensures all are able to participate. Responsible for team portion of site, posting of photos, messages etc and monitors the team's player input for suitability
- **Practices - anyone** at any time could & should step forward and volunteer to run a "practice". Could be just hitting for some of the weaker hitters, or a session of throwing and catching. There can never be too many sessions - all are optional - it's the only way the kids are going to get better. All sessions have to be fun. Lots of suggestions on our website. Depending how many kids are attending, more than one volunteer may be required at that session.

- **Communications person(s)** - ensures all team members are fully aware of upcoming team events and/or changes to any. Relays messages regarding rainouts, reschedules, etc. Usually works best with a hierarchy - i.e. head & committee of 3 with each responsible for contacting 3 others.
- **Snack coordinator - Possible** (based on team agreement) many teams operate with someone who schedules a healthy post-game "snack" rotation and each takes turns bringing something on an agreed list. Just as often, for whatever reason, many prefer to bring their own - or none. You cannot require participation in anything involving money.
- **Season wrap-up** - The team could probably use someone to coordinate a "party" to celebrate the end of the season. If none of the coaching staff can do it, someone is also needed to take responsibility for the player packages and ensures each player gets his/hers.
- **Sponsor contact** - Really nice if a team rep would take the sponsor's package (photo/plaque) to the sponsor at the end of the season - and thank the sponsor on behalf of the team - and the league (us). Contacting the sponsor earlier in the season and extending an invitation to come out to some of the team's games, maybe even get in the team photo is even better!
- **Recruiter** - Nice to have someone who'll look after recruiting "fill-in(s)" should the team know it'll be short players. Sources are other teams in the same league with no games at that time or call-ups from the league below. Usually this involves establishing contact ahead of time so you have a list of known willing players (last minute scrambles by phone generally do not work). This position is not generally filled on Blastball and Junior teams.
- **Supervising the post-game handshakes:** The volunteers who coached at that game participate, and help supervise, the post-game handshakes.

Specific to Blastball:

- **Team A and B reps:** Since we play with "split squads" in Blastball, each team (of 5 or 6) needs its own set of batting, base, lineup and fielding coaches so that's double the number, i.e. two of each at every game. This is one reason that "Volunteering" with blastball is compulsory!
- **Playing field layout:** As we're playing with "split squads" each team has to have someone set up the Tee, nail in the base and set out the left-field line with the cone.
- **Supervising the post-game handshakes:** The volunteers who coached at that game participate, and help supervise, the post-game handshakes. In Blastball, this is after each of the mini-games.

Specific to Junior T-Ball:

- **First base and third base coaches - when batting** - nice to have people who know a little about the game but not necessary at this level of play. (We play with a "one error" rule and allow runners who are "out" to stay on the base for running practise so there are usually lots of runners on base.)
- **Field coaches - when fielding** – one, or two – even 3 - coaching personnel are allowed in the outfield to help with fielding instructions.
- **Pre-game meeting at the plate** - one or two (preferably in team shirt(s) to represent the team at the pre-game meeting at the plate with the umpire. Also present are two team "captains" who we ask be different each game so all players get to be in that role during the season at least once. Coin toss if necessary to determine who bats first.

Specific to Senior T-Ball & 3-Pitch:

- **Scorekeeper** - at games to track the score. Sometimes also ensures the batting order is followed.
- **Fielding positions - (clothespin movement)** - Initial assignments may be done by any designated person by someone needs to be responsible for ensuring the rotation is followed by moving the pins at the completion of each fielding inning. Usually also makes sure that all players are aware of their upcoming positions to minimize delay between fielding changes.
- **First base and third base coaches - when batting** - nice to have people who know a little about the game (or who at least have read the rules) - generally varies from game to game - often older siblings of team players or (I did this when I coached) more experienced team players themselves. This really gives the players a chance to work together as a team.
- **Field coaches - when fielding** - at games early in the season only - one or two coaching personnel may be allowed in the outfield to help with fielding instructions. Decided at the pre-game coin toss with the other team's coaches and the umpires.
- **Pre-game meeting at the plate** - one or two (preferably in team shirt(s) to represent the team at the pre-game meeting at the plate with the umpire. Also present are two team "captains" who we ask be different each game so all players get to be in that role during the season at least once. Coin toss if necessary to determine who bats first.

Specific to 3-Pitch:

- **Catcher assistant - when team is at bat** - at the first appropriate time, assists the catcher for the next inning get all the equipment on to minimize delay in changeover. IF catcher is on base with two out then brings this to the umpire's attention so a substitute runner (the last out) can be inserted and the catcher can get ready.
- **Pitcher - when batting** - really nice to have some who can throw underhand to let the team hit. Not that hard if they just throw to the catcher's mitt. Can move up or back depending on the batter - better than trying to lob it and drop it in which generally means it lands on the plate and is even harder to hit. Nice to have one or two pitchers so the players can get used to the pitching style. Nice if also practised with that pitcher. We do NOT allow our players to pitch in Junior 3-Pitch. Only pre-qualified Senior 3-Pitch players will be allowed to pitch (to their own team) in Senior 3-Pitch.
- **Hitting coaches** – help players by holding the hitting stick so they can practice their hitting skills – an excellent activity for batters waiting to hit.

High School Volunteer Credit:

High school students can fulfill their "volunteer" requirement - or at least a good portion thereof. We'll use you to help "umpire" the Junior T-Ball program, co-ordinate the Blastball games, supervise our "Play Fair" initiative or, perhaps, help coach. Use the COACHES application link to apply. Once the season ends, we'll tally the hours you've contributed and credit you accordingly. Umpires for our Senior T-Ball and 3-Pitch programs are not eligible for volunteer credits as they are paid. (Use the OFFICIALS application link to apply.)