

Kennebecasis Valley Minor Baseball Association



Introductory Coaches Manual

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Introduction

This manual has been developed through extensive experience, research and consultation with numerous coaches and students of the game. Instruction and information is based upon teaching of Baseball Canada, American Baseball Coaches Association and several other reputable sources. Initially draft was completed by our Technical Director and underwent revision, edit and approval by the Boards Members of Kennebecasis Valley Minor Baseball Association.

Objective

This manual has been established to serve as a precedent for general instruction, techniques and mechanics to create universal skill set foundations for players across KVMBA. There is so much information available it can be hard to filter out what is best practice. All coaches will have differing opinions but in this Manual you will find material that can be adapted by a beginner coach or a veteran one. Hopefully this will serve as everything you need for general instruction, all in one spot.

PRACTICE

- Plan
- Prepare • Adjust
- Execute

PLAN your practice in advance. Give yourself time to reflect and share your plan with assistant coaches so everyone knows what's going on.

PREPARE the field and your equipment. Arrive to practice early and get the necessary equipment set up to maximize your field time.

ADJUST to what is working and what is not. Sometimes a drill that looked good on paper doesn't pan out on the field. Make particular adjustments to tailor to your players' and their abilities.

EXECUTE with confidence. Be sure you fully understand the drill and its purpose before trying to teach others. Being able to troubleshoot is key.

OBJECTIVE

- We are seeking to make sure every player feels as though they've been given ample attention and instruction. The majority of player development comes in practice. Players will get out of it, what they put into it.
- Explain the practice plan to your players and lay out expectations. Review things you've done well in the past and where to seek improvement.

1h 30min Practice

- Dynamic Warm Up & Stretches (10 Minutes)

Develop a recurring routine so that when players show up they know exactly how to get warmed up and speed things along. Players should never throw first when arriving to the field. They need to warm up with cardio and stretching before throwing.

- Throwing Routine (15 minutes)

Again, have a routine in place that promotes proper mechanics and throwing with a purpose.

- Skills & Drills (25 minutes)

This is the time to work with specific groups (I.e pitchers , catchers etc...) Using stations is a great way to keep everyone moving and involved. Begin with station work then end with team drills incorporating what you just developed in your stations.

- Enhanced Batting Practice (30 minutes)

Batting practice can be BORING. Don't let one guy hit while 12 others are standing around. Have a man on deck, two hitting off to the side with a BOWNET and TEE, have a few more down the line throwing bullpen sessions etc... Keep everyone involved and limit down time for players.

- Review of Practice & Game (15 minutes)

Visit what you just worked on in practice. Provide players with a refresher of key points. Wrap things up with a fun drill or game that players enjoy to end on a high note.

*****See practice plans to use a template to building your own practice!*****

HITTING

1. Stance

2. Load & Stride

3. *Launch Position*

Slow controlled repetitions are the best way to improve. In a game we aren't taking 10 swings in a minute. Player should approach every swing with a purpose and analyze what went right and what went wrong. Quality over Quantity.

1. STANCE

GRIP

- The bat should be held loosely in our fingers more so than the palm. So many players squeeze the bat too tightly therefore putting unnecessary strain on the forearms, taking away power.
- A general rule would be once gripping the bat point your two index fingers upwards and they should be fairly in line with one another.

LOWER BODY

- Step into the box. Back foot, front foot. Feet should be roughly shoulder width apart. Players should feel that they are in a strong athletic position (you couldn't walk up and push them over). Feet parallel and pointed into opposite batter's box.
- Slight bend in the knees with about 60% of our weight on the back leg 40% on front.

HANDS/UPPER BODY

- Our upper body is slightly bent over. Chest leans just over our knees.
- Hands are about shoulder height, and around six inches away from the body.
- Front elbow is relaxed and pointed towards the ground back elbow is upwards in a comfortable position (usually around 90 degrees)



2. THE LOAD / STRIDE

- As the pitcher begins to deliver the baseball we load our weight onto the back leg, front foot stays in contact with the ground
- When this happens our upper body and hands coil back to the point where the butt end of the bat should be pointing at the catchers' feet. We are not just rotating our hands. The core and hips also need to rotate to be fully engaged.
- Our front foot strides and lands on just the ball of our foot. THE HEEL IS NOT YET ON THE GROUND. We are now in our Launch Position
- The most important and common flaw here is that the hitter tends to alleviate the weight from the back leg forward when striding. This is not correct. Post stride we want the player's weight to still be about 80% on their back leg, hands remain coiled back.



Note his front foot here. It has landed from his stride and just the toes are on the ground. Heel has not touched down yet. Weight is still heavily on his back leg.

3. LAUNCH POSITION

- This is what we call our launch position. From here we are ready to launch our weight forward and strike the ball.
- As the weight pushes off the back leg, the front heel comes down and we swing through the zone hitting the baseball.
- At the point of contact we want our arms extended and at their most powerful point
- Post swing should finish with good posture (not falling out). Our stride went straight ahead toward the pitcher, two hands on the bat, finish near the form of a golfer after his swing.

HITTING



Driving his back knee forward and launching his weight behind the baseball. Heel planted and looking directly down at the baseball



Picture perfect follow through. Composed, perfect posture and both hands on the bat.

INFIELDING

1. Pre Pitch Routine
2. Posture
3. Attacking and Receiving the ball
4. Release

1. PRE PITCH ROUTINE

This is a simple step that should be done every pitch at every level. It is what we like to call Prep Steps. Too often we see players flat footed in the infield and they are late and slow getting to a ground ball. Prep steps are a series of quick little steps to get our body moving towards the pitch and ensure we are on the balls of our feet.

Prep Steps : *A series of 3 small steps that gets our bodies moving towards the ball:*

LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT into fielding posture. Opposite for left handers. Three little steps that get our body moving towards the baseball and keeps us on the balls of our feet.

2. POSTURE

Posture is a crucial technical point in all aspects of baseball. Good posture leads to proper mechanics and good habits. Following our Prep Steps, proper posture is as follows :

- Feet just over shoulder with apart, weight out front on the balls of the feet.
- Knees bent, butt down almost in a sitting position
- Hands and arms are loose with a slight bend, out in front of our body where we want to receive the baseball
- Palm of the glove is wide open and facing the batter

- Should be able to extend your arms from ready position and have the glove able to touch the ground
- Chest leaning forward over top of the knees, head still and upright



Note the slight bend in his glove arm and the palm facing the batter. Weight leaning forward.

3. ATTACKING & RECEIVING THE BALL

Infielders must learn to charge ground balls, rather than wait for the ball to come to them or throwing out runners becomes much more difficult. Every ground ball will warrant a different approach but here we will focus on charging the ball, angling our body towards the target and fielding square to our chest

We've done our prep steps, our posture looks good and now it is time to attack the baseball:

- When charging the ball, we never want to have our body fully upright. Stay as low to the ground as possible, palm of the glove still open and facing the ball

- As we approach the ground ball footwork is crucial. You want to set your feet up in a good position to make the throw so once you catch the ball you can get rid of it quickly if required.
- Get to the ball first, then take your smaller steps right before receiving the ball to get your body and feet pointed in the direction of your target
- Field the ball in front of you, out by the brim of your hat, square to the body
- Glove goes down to receive the ball, second hand is there to cradle the ball into the glove
- From there, the ball is brought to the centre of our chest and as this motion is happening our feet are also getting set to throw
- Right foot to left foot, left foot to the target. (Reverse for LH)
- Again, the body is not coming fully upright, when we plant the feet to throw, we should have bend in our knees and drive off the back leg
- The release point is similar to that of a bow and arrow, bring the ball up quickly to around the ear and release in one swift motion
- To retain good posture once the throw is released players should let their momentum carry them a few steps towards the target



Body angled towards the target, good bend in the knees, bow and arrow throwing position for quick release.

OUTFIELD

1. Ready Position
2. Tracking
3. Receiving Fly Balls
4. Receiving Ground Balls

The outfield can sometimes be a boring place but as the last line of defense there is no position more important than the outfield. Especially as players get older and there is more and more action.

1. READY POSITION

- In between pitches, outfielders can be walking around and moving, or doing whatever we feel is comfortable, it doesn't really matter. Don't fall into the trap of not moving your feet for 2,3,4 pitches. Keep your legs light and ready by moving in between pitches.
- As the pitch is about to be delivered, we want to be in an athletic position. This position would mirror a basketball player playing defense, or a tennis player about to return a serve.
- We want to have our legs a little wider than shoulder width and have some movement with our legs.
- Our hands are off of our knees and we are anticipating a swing and getting a good first step.

2. TRACKING

- Let your eyes guide you
- First motion is always to rock back as it is easier to come in for the ball opposed to go back
- The first step is the most important, whether a drop set or side step we need to focus on the legs
- Staying low and athletic drive off your plant foot when making that first step
- Run on the balls of your feet to feel more like gliding and keep the head as still as possible

3. RECEIVING A FLY BALL

- For a fly ball the player should be making the catch just off their glove side eye, by their shoulder
- We do NOT want them catching the ball in front of their face as that is when you lose sight of the ball temporarily
- Second hand accompanies the glove and squeezes the ball.
- If no one is on base the player should be situated directly under the ball

- If the player needs to make a throw after the catch, they should have the front shoulder pointed in the direction of the throw and be two or three steps behind the ball so they can run into the ball and build some momentum upon the catch.

4. RECEIVING A GROUND BALL

Know the situation. As mentioned the outfield is the last line of defense. If there is no need to make a throw players should be solely focused on keeping the ball in front of them.

- Players may drop to one knee to field the ball making themselves as big as possible and preventing the ball from going by
- They can play the ball like an infielder, squaring up to the ball
- Should a throw be required they should play it similar to an infielder. Attack the ball and come through it. Angling the body towards the target. Stay low and field the ball just outside of the glove side foot, plant and drive off the back leg to throw.
- Practice taking the best direct route to the baseball. That means sometimes players will have to run to the ball at an angle to ensure they can get to it as quickly as possible. Footwork here is just as important.

PITCHING

1. Set Up
2. Mechanics
3. Follow Through

Pitching is a very in depth part of Baseball. For the purpose of this manual we are going to cover basic mechanics. Coaches should do their own research and be cautious of a young player`s arm and the rest and recovery it requires. The player`s well being and long term development should be the first priority.

1. SET UP

We are going to keep things simple when going through our set up on the mound. For players just beginning to pitch and veteran players alike, it can be easier to simplify the delivery. You so often see pitchers nowadays pitching from the stretch at all times. This is useful because not only does it help us practice for when runners reach base, it eliminates any unnecessary steps in our delivery and creates less room for error.

- To begin, feet should be wider than shoulder with apart at a comfortable distance. Slight bend in the legs, loose not stiff. Back foot resting against the pitching rubber
- Where the player holds the baseball is strictly preference, whether it is in his bare hand or glove hand it does not matter
- From here, the player will come set. When coming to the set position, the feet should not come too close together. This creates an unbalanced base from which to deliver. Instead, feet should come set about 8 - 10 inches apart, in a balanced and athletic position.

- As the feet come set, so do the hands. The pitcher should bring his hands together to the centre of his chest. Anywhere between his waist and shoulders is where his hands should rest before delivering the pitch, again depending on comfort.
- Be conscious to keep the ball hidden in the glove as to not tip off the grip of your pitch.



2.MECHANICS

- From here we begin our delivery. Weight loaded onto the back leg and our front leg raises to a 90 degree angle, heel away from the back knee and toe pointing down in a relaxed position

PITCHING



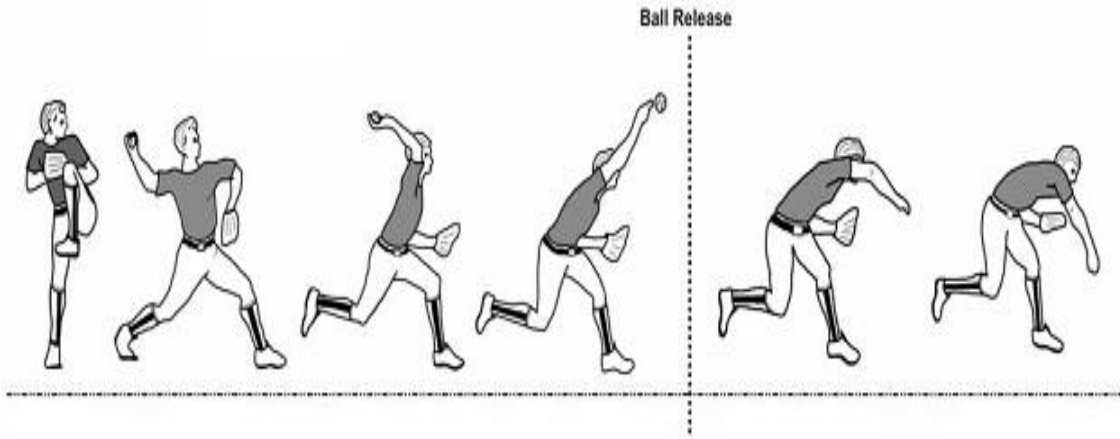
- Drive off the back leg, leading with the hip towards home plate our front foot strides in the direction of the batter, staying closed until the very last second when we begin to release the ball
- When the stride foot lands we still want our upper half to be behind our front knee and back, exploding forward as the stride foot lands and staying “ behind the ball”



3.FOLLOW THROUGH

- Post Pitch follow through is just as important to stress proper mechanics. Back legs comes around to square up to the ball. Glove is tucked into our body, back is pushed down as flat as possible, throwing arm is stretched across the body towards opposite knee.





CATCHING

1. Set Up
2. Blocking
3. Runners On Set Up
4. Throwing To Bases

1.SET UP

- Squat and position your arms. Your normal position is squatting behind home. When doing this, your left foot should be a little bit in front of your right foot (an inch or two). Your left arm (or whichever catching arm) should be bent a little at the elbow. Avoid holding your elbow on the inside of your left knee.
- Relax your arm. Before catching a ball, you need to relax your arm. After you relax your arm, focus on where the ball is headed.



2.BLOCKING THE BALL

- To take proper blocking position, drop from your receiving stance to your knees and keep a wide base. Sit up on your toes rather than back on your heels. Place your mitt in between your legs, touching the ground to keep balls from going through the “five hole.”
- Tuck your arms in tight to your body to keep baseballs from sneaking between your torso and arms. Angle your chest forward towards the plate with your chin down and keep your eyes on the ball, following it into the dirt.
- The goal is to deaden the ball, keeping it close to your body so you can recover and stop runners from advancing.



3.RUNNERS ON BASE

- When there are two outs or runners on base, use your secondary stance. Position your feet wider than in the primary stance.

- Hold yourself a few inches higher off the ground to give yourself more mobility when it comes time to make a throw or play on the ball.
- Angle your chest slightly to the plate so you can handle lower pitches while maintaining your balance. It will also help with blocking pitches in the dirt.



4. THROWING TO BASES

- When receiving the pitch, catch the ball low so that you can swiftly throw out runners. Starting low allows you to stand while simultaneously squaring your body to the target, shifting your hips and feet toward the base you're throwing to.
- When you transition the ball from your mitt to your throwing hand, be quick but precise and also transition into your throwing position.
- To increase the speed of your throwing motion, use a shorter arm action to release the ball, extending to your target with a good four-seam grip.



