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AAA and Majors - Coaches Overview

The Coaches Overview document is designed to guide coaches at the AAA and Majors level to create league wide alignment on overarching goals and values.

- (a) High Level Objectives for the Season
- (b) The Highlands Way - a Standardized Routine for Players at the start of each Game or Practice
- (c) Practice Structure and Recommended Concepts
- (d) Game Setup and Rules

A. High Level Objective: Tie it all together and Execute and Compete!

At the AAA and Majors level, all players should be comfortable with the fundamentals of baseball, and we start to introduce more advanced skills and strategies. Players at this level will start to specialize in positions and games have minimal rule modifications compared to younger age groups. The atmosphere is more competitive, especially at the Majors level, but fun is always the #1 priority. Consistent with overall Little League culture, there should be a focus on decorum and compliance with rules. Hats should be on and Jerseys tucked in when on the field and pitch counts are to be followed.

AAA Theme: Tie it all together!

- Player led Highlands Way of Warmup
- Continue advancing pitching and catcher position
- Introduction of off-speed pitches for 10 year olds (change up, possibly a basic curve ball depending on player)
- Bunting
- More advanced defensive scenarios – double plays, cutoffs, stealing scenarios
- More advanced offensive strategy – baserunning, bunting, stealing
- Coach signals

Majors Theme: Execute and Compete!

- Efficient Player led Highlands Way of Warmup
- Build on AAA skills
- More competitive atmosphere
- Last Year of Little League

B. The Highlands Way: Daily Warm up Routine

At the AAA level, players should be comfortable with the routine and eventually lead it themselves. The goal should be knowing the warmup and executing it efficiently. Ball should not be flying everywhere; throws should be accurate, and players should transition between drills at roughly the same time.



At the Majors Level, players should drive the warmup and make sure it is efficient. Coaches should not have to guide them. The goal should be executing the warm up on their own and synchronization – each player throws at the same time, each player catches at the same time, everyone starts and stops at the same time.

Warm Up

- Jog – 100m
- Sprint – 50m
- High Knees – 25m
- Butt Kickers – 25m
- Forward Lunges with a twist – 25m
- Side to Side Groin Stretches with Pivot – 25m

Stretching

- Circle around leader
- Arm Circles – Forward and Back, start big circles to small tight circles
- Cross Body Arm stretches
- Quad Stretch
- Sitting Hamstring Stretch
- Sitting Groin Stretch

Dailies

1. Kneeling No Glove
No glove, kneeling on both knees, partners about 6 feet apart, partner rolls ball lightly, player receives ball, fingertips down, palm facing partner, go through the ball forward, don't stab at the ball.
2. Standing Grounders with Glove
Roll ball to partner, but focus on foot work (right foot down, then left foot down (for righties)) to receiving the ball, go into throwing motion, but don't throw. Fingers down, palm facing partner.
3. Backhands
facing 90 deg to partner, ball is rolled parallel to players toes, player plants back foot, and steps through the ball, and extends glove towards back foot, then sweeps their glove forward to pick the ball. Do not stab at the ball – glove down first, then work through the ball path.
4. One Hoppers
As progress is made, revise above drills to use one hoopers instead of rolling the Ball

Throwing - 10 throws each

Tens Toes – Partners 25-30 feet apart



Players start by being grounded with ten toes facing partner, feet shoulder width apart, player should rotate their upper body so their chest faces 90 deg, getting into the proper throwing position each time (both elbows at shoulder height, throwing arm close to 90 deg upward, front elbow/glove pointing at target)

Rockers – 40-50 feet apart

Feet facing 90 deg to partner, slightly more than shoulder width apart. Keeping feet grounded, player rocks forward, then back, extending front leg straight and taking majority of their weight on their back leg, separating glove and throwing hand as they rock back, bringing elbows to shoulder height and using proper throwing technique

Hoppers – 40-50 feet apart

Player is positioned 90 deg to partner, standing on back leg, two small hops on back leg, and plant and throw

Regular Throwing – 40-50 feet apart

Players face each other, feet shoulder width apart, throwing foot steps forward and turns 90deg, player raises their glove leg and rotates 90deg to their partner, glove and ball hand separate into proper throwing form, back leg is loaded and player pushes off with back leg and throws the ball, when throwing, glove hand should be pulled to hip

Crow Hops – 60-70 feet apart

Players move laterally towards target to create momentum – avoid vertical movement. Player catches the ball and brings their throwing side leg forward to plant and shuffle once, loading the back leg up and throwing in one full motion. Throws should be catchable for their partners – between their chest and just above their head.

C. Practice Structure and Concepts

At this age level, coaches have most likely been coaching for several years and understand the development arc for the various age groups. It cannot be stressed enough that practices are for team development, except maybe the first 2 practices of the season.

Individual skill development should be avoided unless absolutely necessary. Individual skill development is where the player needs correction of posture or technique of a fundamental skill. Generally, this cannot be corrected in a single practice session and is a longer term “project”. It does not include small verbal guidance during drills. If a player needs specific attention to a fundamental skill, one coach should take the player aside, while the practice continues.

Practices should focus on defensive strategies and scenarios such as cutoffs, rundowns, and base stealing. Players should understand coach signals and be taught how to bunt. Coaches should implement bunting into their game strategies during the season.

All practices (and Games) should start with the Highlands Way of Warm Up, followed by team development drills. Players and Coaches should know how to run an infield, so it is suggested after



warm up, a proper infield is run to get coaches and players comfortable with the routine. This can also be used as an early season refresher of base coverage.

D. Skills and Drills

In addition to the above, the following can be included into practices:

1. Cutoffs
 - a. Basic Cuts to 2nd base (2nd and SS depending on location)
 - i. [Baseball Relays and CutOffs \(probaballinsider.com\)](http://probaballinsider.com)
 - b. Advanced cuts to other bases including home
 - i. [Baseball cut-offs and relays – Defensive Positioning, Part 1 \(probaballinsider.com\)](http://probaballinsider.com)
2. Position Specific Training
 - a. Pitcher and Catcher
3. Baserunning
 - a. Foot placement on bases
 - b. Sliding
 - c. Stealing
 - d. Follow base coach instruction:
 - i. Running through 1st and turning outward
 - ii. “Take a turn”, then either go or get back to 1st
 - iii. Go to 2nd and pick up 3rd base coach when approaching 2nd
 - iv. When on a base, practice looking at 3rd base coach for signals
4. Game Scenarios
 - a. Tie infield, outfield and cutoffs together using base runners
 - b. Different hit locations
 - c. Bunting defense
5. Hitting
 - a. Soft toss, machine, and live pitching (coach)
 - b. Bunting
 - c. Practice looking down to 3rd for signals (players are supposed to keep one foot in the box between pitches)
 - d. Swing should:
 - i. Finish high
 - ii. Don’t roll wrists early
 - iii. Load early and be ready for the pitch (this cannot be stressed enough)
 - iv. Keep chest closed for as long as possible, head in
 - v. Strong base after swing



E. Game Play

Games focus on tying everything together and getting more competitive. Please see separate Highlands Rules for AAA and Majors.

F. Field Set up and Equipment

- Home team should set up the field, however visiting team is encouraged to assist
- All Infield areas to be raked before and after games (including Mound, Home plate and base paths)
- Bases placed
- 1st and 3rd base lines chalked
- Batter Boxes chalked (metal template available)

G. Coaching and Scorekeeping

- 3 x Coaches during games – Bench Coach plus 1st and 3rd Base Coaches
- A Coach or Parent Volunteer should track pitch counts (see Rules)
- Each team should have a designated scorekeeper using the official scorebook

H. Rules

- Coaches recommended to download the Little League App which has all LL Rules
- Rules on the Highlands website, linked here: <https://www.highlandsbaseball.com/divisions/>