

# NDG BASEBALL COACHING GUIDEBOOK



## **Please note...**

- Due to its size and volume of information, rather than one bilingual version, there exists both an English and a French version of this document. Both documents contain the same information and can be found on NDGGBB's respective English and French websites.
- This is a living document that will be updated continuously.



# OUR PHILOSOPHY

- Our players should love playing the game
- Our players should be consistently improving their skills
- Our players should learn & personify sportsmanship

## PLAYER ENJOYMENT

Simply put, no matter their age or skill level, if the kids aren't having fun, they're not going to want to keep playing.

Our #1 job as coaches is to give the kids a great experience so they fall in love with the game of baseball.

## PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

This is all about opportunity for growth and development.

Our mission as an association is to teach the kids the game and give them access to the maximum amount of tools and resources to continuously improve as players and people.



## ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

**EVERY TEAM NEEDS AN HC, 2-3 ACs, AND A MANAGER**

### **Head Coach**

This is the leader of the team. The HC is ultimately responsible for the tone and tenor of the season, as well as for the overall performance of the team both on and off the field.

### **Assistant Coaches**

This is a group of 2-3 official assistants and typically 1-2 more helpers (who are all background-checked). An AC's job is to help the HC execute their vision for the team and serve as a sounding board for ideas.

### **Team Manager**

This is an often overlooked, but crucial position. The Manager's job is to help the HC manage the day-to-day, make sure the lineup card is filled out, book tournaments, coordinate team purchases and fundraisers, etc, as well as:

- Submitting scoresheets
- Resolving scheduling conflicts (on/off field)
- Communicating with the convener and or league administration

## EXPECTATIONS FOR EACH TYPE OF COACH:

### PARENT VOLUNTEER

This type of volunteer coach will make up the majority of the ACs and MGRs. Often, however, and especially at the youngest levels, less experienced coaches will have to take on the HC duties in order to ensure every team has an engaged and enthusiastic leader.

The expectations of a new coach are essentially to:

- Help the association to provide a safe and fun environment for the kids to play baseball in.
- Help manage the spirits and energy, as well as the participation and engagement of the kids.
- Help keep the parents in the stands engaged in the process, but separated from the kids who are on the field during a practice or game.
- Help maintain calmness and politeness during tense situations during a game - in particular if it involved a game official in any way.
- Learn from the more experienced coaches in order to develop into a more experienced coach and future leader themselves.
- Coaches are expected to teach their players every defensive position and **must** rotate them throughout the regular season games. Best efforts should be made to keep playing time equal for all players, regardless of skill level.

## EXPECTATIONS FOR EACH TYPE OF COACH: **HIGHLY-EXPERIENCED PARENT VOLUNTEER**

This is the group from which most HCs and leaders will come.

The expectations of an experienced volunteer coach/HC are essentially to:

- Help the association to provide a safe and fun environment for the kids to play baseball in.
- Set the culture of the team from Day 1 through a detailed and clear parents meeting. The parents need to know that their kids are going to be taken care of, safe, given good examples of how to comport themselves, and that they will be taught the skills they need for success.
- Coaches are expected to teach their players every defensive position and **must** rotate them throughout the regular season games. Best efforts should be made to keep playing time equal for all players, regardless of skill level.

## EXPECTATIONS FOR EACH TYPE OF COACH: **HIGHLY-TRAINED COACHES/TECHNICAL EXPERTS**

This group includes the most experienced coaches, the former pro/semi-pro ballplayers, and the technical coaches who are paid by the association as a service.

- HCs and ACs should defer to these expert coaches in practice and/or when setting up practice plans.
- HCs and ACs should be open to receiving advice on everything from technical instruction or game management/strategy to parent and player management techniques and strategies.
- Technical coaches will regularly plan or join team practices and should be deferred to/leaned on for advice, without exception.
- The Technical Director, Michael Pantin, along with the Competition Committee as a whole, will be evaluating coaches, teams, and individual players throughout the season and will provide feedback and/or design practice plans to work on the needs they determine when watching games.



## THE PARENT MEETING

### A GOOD SEASON STARTS WITH A GOOD PARENT MEETING

**It's no secret that getting buy-in from the parents is the first, and most important key to getting performance from the kids. The most efficient way to get buy-in from the parents, is to gain their confidence. They can become your best allies for encouraging their children to be attentive and try their best.**

If your parents don't trust you as the coach, then the kids will never trust you.

If you gather your parents together and establish who the leaders are and what the team's philosophies will be for the season, you will start to gain their trust right away and they will support you. If you don't take the time to show that you and your coaching staff are strong leaders from the get-go, you are setting yourself up for a difficult season full of challenges from parents, whispers from the stands, and resistance from the players.

#### **A good parent meeting includes, but is not limited to:**

- The head coach setting his/her standards from Day 1
- The assistant coaches being given the opportunity to introduce themselves and demonstrate that the whole coaching staff is on the same page
- An open forum for parents to ask questions
- The kids should not be present at this meeting (send them to warm up/do an activity with an adult if they're younger or with a veteran teammate if they're older)
- The whole meeting should take no more than 10-15 minutes



## OFF-FIELD REQUIREMENTS CERTIFICATIONS & OBLIGATIONS

All coaches are required to do the following:

- Attend and participate in the NDGGBB pre-season coaches meeting;
- Get certified as required (details to be provided once teams are made). **There is an automatic suspension per LSL rules for the head coach of any teams that has coaches who have not fulfilled their certifications;**
- Pick up the team equipment bag at Uniform Day, keep it for the season (it's suggested to share amongst all coaches on a team), and return it at Uniform Return Day;
- Pick up the team's BQ coaches kit and read the manual;
- Be prepared for basic first aid/make sure the association-provided first aid kit is in order and in the team bag;
- Plan & run team practices;
- Ensure players are properly equipped and in proper uniform including wearing their proper team-issued baseball cap;
- Provide game balls for home games;
- Upload scoresheets after home games. **Failure to upload the scoresheet to the LSL site within 24 hours of a game will result in a fine from the region that the team will pay out of pocket;**
- Do your level-best to always put the kids first and ensure a collaborative and productive atmosphere within your team environment.

## MEETINGS & TRAINING SESSIONS

### MANDATORY FOR ALL COACHES

NDG Baseball will host *at minimum* three mandatory sessions for all Head Coaches and Assistant Coaches (mandatory for at least one representative per team):

#### EARLY MAY PRE-SEASON VIDEO MEETING

As soon as the teams are finalized, we'll host an all-coaches meeting via video chat on which NDGBB administrators will set the tone for the season and field all questions.

#### MID MAY PRE-SEASON ON-FIELD TRAINING

Shortly after the teams are made and ideally before your first team activities, we'll have an on-field session to cover:

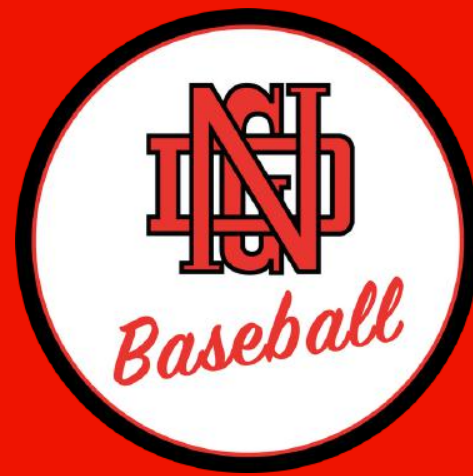
1. Basic practice management
2. The parent meeting/team management
3. How to teach basic skills

#### LATE JUNE MID-SEASON CHECK-IN VIDEO MEETING

As we head into late-June, we'll host another video meeting to discuss the season so far as a group and field all questions/comments as a team.

#### MID-AUGUST PLAYOFF PREP MEETING

This meeting is to ensure everything is in order before the playoffs regionals. ***For Head Coaches & Team Managers only.***



# CULTURE

**SUCCESS IS MEASURED BY DEVELOPMENT & HAPPINESS,  
NOT BY WINS & LOSSES**

## **WINNING IS FUN, BUT...**

There's no question that everyone likes to win, but by doing things like always playing your best players at SS and 1B and never or rarely giving other players the opportunity to those positions in games, you're failing everyone:

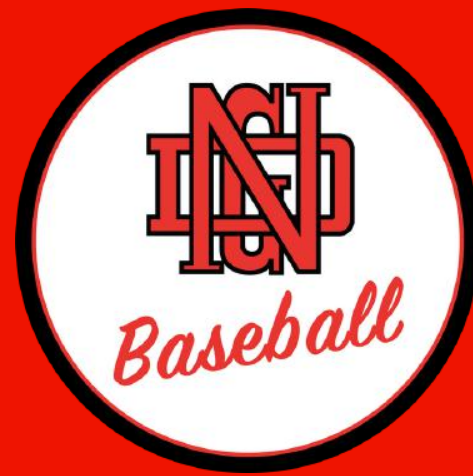
- Players only develop when given the opportunity to play
- Players who get stuck in RF or have to play C for 3 innings every game at younger levels get bored/discouraged
- For developmental purposes, it's generally just not a good idea to have any child focus on 1-2 single positions, at pretty much any age

## **THE KID ONLY PLAYING RF LOOKS HAPPY...**

They're not happy. They're trying to make *you* happy.

Of course you're going to try to put your best players in the key positions in the bottom of the last inning, but it is expressly forbidden to have any player play the majority of innings at any single position, full stop.

The kid who says they're happy to sit an extra inning or play 4 innings in the OF just to win a game is being robbed of the opportunity to develop - just like the kid who only plays SS or 1B is being robbed of the opportunity to learn how to sacrifice for their teammates.



# CULTURE

**SUCCESS IS MEASURED BY DEVELOPMENT & HAPPINESS,  
NOT BY WINS & LOSSES**

## DO

- Make sure every player plays several positions with regularity.
- Make sure the “best” player also does their share of the less desirable positions.
- Respect the BQ rule that no player may sit twice before everyone player sits once.
- Respect the fact that every player has paid to play and deserves equal opportunities to do so.
- Work with the weaker players in practice so they can play the tougher positions safely.
- Make sure that everyone knows that no player is bigger than the team.

## DO NOT

- Have any player play any given 1-2 positions exclusively, no matter if it's A or B level.
- Keep your “best” player(s) out of the less desirable positions.
- Violate the BQ rule that no player may sit twice before everyone player sits once. This will result in forfeits/coaching suspensions.
- Negate the fact that every player has paid to play and deserves equal opportunities to do so.
- Refuse to work with the weaker players in practice so they can play the tougher positions safely.
- Let any player be bigger than the team.



# PRE-GAME PLATE MEETING

## RULES VS REALITY

Every game is supposed to be preceded by a pre-game meeting at the plate with the two head coaches and the umpire(s). This meeting sets the tone of the game and is the time and place to go over any possible rule interpretation questions and/or ground rules.

- Understand that the umpires and coaches are all humans who **interpret** the rules. That means that sometimes rules are interpreted differently, and that also means that sometimes rules are simply made up or disregarded...
- This is the time to go over situations you've encountered in which rules were incorrectly interpreted or invented on the spot - Ex: In 11U-B, the rules state that players may not take a practice swing before hitting off the tee, but many umpires and coaches will disregard or change that rule on the fly. This can be resolved before a problem arises with a good pre-game meeting. **Remember that the umpires are often children themselves and are still counting on the adults to ... act like adults.**
- The rulebook should always be followed both in the letter and the spirit of the rules, but we must understand that we are all humans who have our own way of interpreting the rules. **Talk to the umpire and other coach before the game to make sure everyone is on the same page.**

# HOW TO BUILD A BATTING ORDER

## BALANCING EQUITY AND COMPETITION

It should be crystal clear that NDGBB is not in the business of wins & losses. Our job is to develop players and make sure they're enjoying themselves - development + fun will inevitably equal success on the field in the long run.

When building a lineup, consider the following:

### AT BAT

- A typical batting order will feature a “contact hitter” who gets on base a lot and is fast at leadoff.
- The second batter's job is essentially to advance the leadoff batter into scoring position (2nd or 3rd base).
- The third and fourth batter (known as the “cleanup hitter” will typically be the best hitters and/or those with the most power. Their job is to cash in the first two batters.
- From there, it's a question of balance - teams will generally want to have a mix of weaker and stronger players sprinkled through the order. Teams that place their 3-4 weakest hitters at the end will inevitably have a difficult inning when those players are up, which kills momentum and, more importantly puts an undue amount of pressure on those kids in particular.
- **For the sake of player development, all players MUST, at various points in the season, bat in all, or at least most, spots in the order.** Don't put a kid who is timid at the plate at cleanup in Game 1, but do work with that kid throughout the season to build them up to someone who is ready to try cleanup later in the year.

# HOW TO BUILD A DEFENCE

## BALANCING DEVELOPMENT & COMPETITION

It should be crystal clear that NDGBB is not in the business of wins & losses. Our job is to develop players and make sure they're enjoying themselves - development + fun will inevitably equal success on the field in the long run.

When building a lineup, consider the following:

### FIELDING

- Aside from pitcher, the most "important" positions in most levels of childrens' baseball are SS and 1B.
- Because of that, some coaches will go against the principles of development and only play their "best" players at SS and 1B, which is not acceptable and is in direct violation of the principles of youth sports. **Playing the same players at the same positions for all or most of the year is strictly forbidden at all ages and all levels - this applies to all Bobcats, Lynx, and Wildcats teams without exception.**
- Do not, however, play a weaker player at SS in the first game... the idea is to practice and develop all of your players so they are eventually able to play all positions. Considering safety first and before all else, all players should be given equal reps in practice and worked with so that they can safely play all positions by mid-season.

# SUBSTITUTE COACHES

## WHAT TO DO WHEN A TEAM IS SHORT ON COACHES

While most coaching staffs have 3-4 members, it will still inevitably occur that teams will need a substitute coach to help out. In order to be a substitute coach, the person filling must meet the 2 following criteria at minimum:

1. Be of legal age
2. Be registered with Baseball Quebec
3. Have a current successful police background check

In order to get a substitute coach, the Head Coach of the team in need should:

1. Inform their convener and work with their convener to find a suitable replacement
2. Ensure that any replacement found is confirmed to meet the criteria above
3. Ensure that the coach is **in full uniform**. They can borrow the uniform of the coach they are replacing, or if they are in a jam because of a last-minute replacement, they can simply wear black pants and a black or colour-matched shirt to the uniform with a number on the back that is not the same as any other player or coach. Ideally they can get an NDGGBB-issued baseball cap, but if they can't, they can wear any black cap (for Wildcats) or red cap (for Bobcats/Lynx).
4. Ensure the coach is recorded on the scoresheet.

Subsistute coaches can be any registered coach from any team in the associaiton or even a coach borrowed from another association, so long as they meet the two criteria above and are in uniform.



# CALL-UPS

## WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR TEAM IS SHORT PLAYERS

**DO NOT FORFEIT GAMES FOR LACK OF PLAYERS. THE TEAMS WILL BE DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR PAYING ANY FINES RELATED TO FORFEITED GAMES DUE TO LACK OF PLAYERS.**

Almost every team needs call-ups at one point or another during the season. to do so, the players must:

1. Be registered with NDG Baseball or another Baseball Quebec-affiliated association
2. Come from an age group or skill division that is lower (details below)

In order to get a call-up, the Head Coach of the team in need should:

1. Inform their convener and work with their convener to find a suitable replacement
2. Ensure that any replacement found is confirmed to meet the criteria above
3. Follow all of the call-up rules as listed per Rule 62 of the Baseball Quebec rulebook (this details everything from ages and skill levels to who can/can't pitch/etc.)

In a case in which a higher-skill/aged team needs a player, the higher-skill/age team takes precedence over the lower-skill/aged team, even if the lower team has a game. Ex: If a 13U-A or B team needs a player for a game, and the 11U-A and 11U-B team has a game the same night, the 11U-A/B team should still send a player up to 13U-A/B and then replace its own missing player from 9U-A/B.

No player can be forced to play with the higher team as a call-up, but the NDGGBB policy is to help the higher team in need as we are all one association working together on a common goal of building and developing a program that is bigger than the sum of its parts.

# REMINDER:

**PLAYING THE SAME PLAYERS AT THE SAME POSITIONS FOR ALL OR MOST OF THE YEAR IS **STRICTLY FORBIDDEN** AT ALL AGES AND ALL LEVELS - THIS APPLIES TO ALL BOBCATS, LYNX, AND WILDCATS TEAMS WITHOUT EXCEPTION.**

**Do not put your “best” players only at the key positions in every game. That is counter-developmental for everyone, including the “best” players.**

## WORKING WITH OFFICIALS

### BE MINDFUL, BE REASONABLE, BE RESPECTFUL

It's very hard to recruit and retain officials, and the primary reason is that people simply don't want to be abused by coaches and parents in the stands.

#### Remember the following when speaking with officials:

- You are not allowed to argue calls, ever. Full stop, no room for discussion. You may politely request a clarification of a call for your own understanding, but that is the limit.
- Most of the officials are, themselves, children. It is incumbent on you as the adult to... be the adult. Do not argue with, berate, or mock any official, let alone when the official is a child. This includes older teenagers who may look like adults, but are often still only just 15-16 years old.
- Always bear in mind that you are representing all of NDG Baseball at all times when you are coaching one of our teams. NDG Baseball does not and will never tolerate abusive behaviour from coaches and/or parents in the stands.
- On top of all of this, the Lac St. Louis region has put an *extremely* punitive system in place to deal with abusive parents and coaches. Your behaviour as adults will have a direct negative affect on the games themselves if you are out of line.

# DISCIPLINE

## HOW AND WHEN TO DISCIPLINE PLAYERS

In the normal course of managing a team, a coach will invariably have to discipline their players. This ranges from basic respect issues (kneeling properly during a coach address, behaving on the bench, being a good teammate, etc.) to bigger issues regarding behaviour or participation.

### **When handling regular day-to-day discipline, coaches should:**

- Make sure expectations are clear beforehand (the parent meeting is especially important for this);
- Ensure the team runs in an orderly fashion, but not so rigid as to not be fun;
- Give players and parents the opportunity to speak freely and honestly about how they feel things are going in the proper setting (privately between parents/coaches, not in front of the group) and deal with things as they happen (Ex: Don't discipline a child the next day - talk to the player after the game with the parent present, don't wait - kids need quick resolution);
- Make sure any disciplinary measures taken are reasonable, fair, and within BQ rules.

### **When handling regular day-to-day discipline, coaches should not:**

- Single out a player in front of the group;
- Yell at anyone (calling out plays, etc., is normal - yelling at players in anger is not acceptable);
- Be alone with a player (always have a parent and/or assistant coach with you, regardless of whether it's a disciplinary issue or not);
- Bench a player during a game - in an extreme case, this can be used for a future game, but play equity rules prevent this in-game. If you feel you need to escalate to a suspension, you must speak with the convener first.



# HOW TO BUILD A PRACTICE PLAN

## KEEP THEM MOVING, ENGAGED & HYDRATED

A basic practice plan consists of 3-4 stations, typically:

- An infield station with either a live batter or a coach hitting
- A station deep on one side of the outfield working on a specific skill
- A station deep on the other side of the outfield working on a different skill
  - A pitching station if possible/applicable
  - A batting station

Most practices are 90 minutes and can be broken into this or a similar format:

- 15 minutes: Arrival, warmups, running, stretching
- 2-3 minutes: Water break
- 45 minutes: Break into stations on an approx 15-minute rotation
- 2-3 minutes: Water break
- Remaining time: Live batting/base running/fielding, mini-games, or other team building activities

A typical practice layout,  
broken into stations ->

The pitching and/or individual  
hitting stations can be  
against a net/fence or off to  
the side on either  
side of the field



# GROUP PRACTICES

By policy, all B-level teams are **required** by NDG Baseball to practice in groups of 2-3 teams at a time. This is done to:

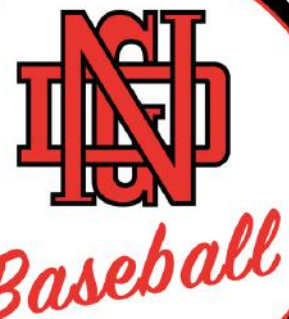
1. Ensure sufficient attendance
2. Ensure equal access to coaching
3. Build a collaborative association

Every year, there is a new coach that inevitably comes in and feels group practices are not in the best interest of their team and requests individual team practices, especially at the beginning of the season when attendance is high.

Please understand going in that no single team is bigger than the program itself and the group practice methodology has been put into place in the interest of overall player development.

Teams may have the opportunity to have private practices in addition to their scheduled group practices, but individual team practices will not be approved to replace group practices.

**We in the business of developing players in a collaborative, comprehensive way. Think about all of our players, not just *your* players.**



## RAINOUTS

### EVERYONE HAS THE SAME WEATHER REPORT - PLEASE HOLD TIGHT

Lac St. Louis obliges all associations to advise of game cancellations due to rain, poor field conditions, or city issues by no later than 2 hours before the game.

NDGGBB has, however, a *very* large territory with many fields and a limited amount of volunteers who can visit the fields in time, and the borough's field crew shifts typically don't start until just before that 2-hour barrier is broken.

Therefore:

- If you are a coach who can go check your own field earlier in the day, please do so and advise [info@ndgbaseball.com](mailto:info@ndgbaseball.com) on the conditions of the field (good or bad). **Please send pictures of poor conditions.**
- If you are a coach or parent who is simply waiting on information as to field conditions, **please do not call/text/email** the association... we all have the same weather report and we assure you we will advise you **proactively** as soon as we have the information. A deluge of calls only slows down the process.
- Please be patient. We are volunteers.



## REASONS TO CANCEL A **GAME**:

### **COACHES MAY NOT CANCEL GAMES ON THEIR OWN**

- Excessive rain and/or lightning (we play in a light drizzle)
- Unplayable field conditions
- The city has cancelled

**There are no other acceptable reasons to cancel a game, full stop.**

Make sure you are taking attendance and working with your convener if you are short players - having too few players results in a forfeit and a fine to the team and association.

## REASONS TO CANCEL A **PRACTICE**:

### **COACHES MAY NOT CANCEL PRACTICES ON THEIR OWN**

- Excessive rain and/or lightning (we practice in a light drizzle)
- Unplayable field conditions
- The city has cancelled

**There are no other acceptable reasons to cancel a practice, full stop.**

NDGBB is in a privileged position: As the only official minor baseball organization in CDN-NDG, we get first right of refusal on fields and we do not pay for field time, nor field maintenance.

If we no-show for practices, however, we will both lose our field times and have to pay. This is in our contract. **Do not cancel your practices without approval from your convener.**



**NDG Baseball functions thanks to great volunteers like yourself who step up to give our players a great experience.**

Our association's motto has long been "It's All About the Kids" and your commitment to our program allows us to fulfill our mission of providing a great service for the children and families of our territory.

Please email any comments or questions about this document or anything else you may need to [info@ndgbaseball.com](mailto:info@ndgbaseball.com).

Now let's Play Ball!

